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MUMBAI: FRIDAY, 4 SEPTEMBER, 2026 • VOL. NO. 3 • Issue No. 61 • DIV. OF FLYCREATIVE ONLINE LIMITED (A unit of Creative Group) • 6 PAGES

Maharashtra Labour Minister Assures Support to Strengthen Overseas Workforce Mobility

MUMBAI: Akash Pandurang Fundkar, Labour Minister, Government of Maharashtra assured his full support to the overseas recruitment and workforce mobility fraternity during a meeting held to discuss various issues concerning international employment and mobility of Indian workers.

During the meeting, VS Abdulkareem, representing the overseas recruitment fraternity, highlighted the ongoing challenges faced by stakeholders in

facilitating overseas employment and sought the State Government's support in resolving these issues.

The discussions focused on strengthening the ecosystem for safe, legal, ethical and transparent workforce mobility, while creating greater opportunities for skilled and aspiring Indian workers to access international employment markets.

It was highlighted that a well-coordinated approach between the Central and

State Governments, regulatory authorities and authorized recruitment agencies can significantly enhance India's global workforce mobility and generate multiple economic benefits, including increased employment opportunities, foreign exchange earnings and remittances.

Minister expressed his appreciation for the issues raised and assured all necessary support and cooperation to the fraternity in

(Cont. on page - 2)



IPEPCIL delegation with Maharashtra Labour Minister Akash Pandurang Fundkar and Pasha Patel, Chairman, Chief Minister's Task Force for Environment and Sustainable Development, Government of Maharashtra, during a meeting in Mumbai

INDO-ARAB CONNECT TOURISM SUMMIT IN KOCHI

Keralam to become global hub for Tourism, knowledge, healthcare: CM

KOCHI: Chief Minister VD Satheesan has said that his the government would implement major development projects to strengthen

the centuries old ties between Keralam and Arab countries and transform in the state into a global hub for tourism, knowledge and healthcare.

Inaugurating Indo-Arab Connect 2026 conference here, Satheesan welcomed Arab investors and tourists and said at-



tracting more visitors and investors from Arab countries was a key priority of the government.

"The people of the Arab countries and Keralites share a deep, brotherly

(Cont. on page - 6)



Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan addressing the Indo-Arab Connect Tourism Summit at Crown Plaza, Kochi

flynas Launches Direct Riyadh-Kochi Flights, Strengthening India-Saudi Air Link

RIYADH: Saudi low-cost carrier flynas has launched a new direct air service between Riyadh and Kochi, connecting the Saudi capital with Kerala's commercial hub from September 1, 2026.

The airline is operating three direct flights a week on the new route, offering greater convenience and travel flexibility for passengers between Saudi Arabia and southern India. The new service is part of

flynas' continued expansion in the Indian market and is expected to further strengthen air connectivity between the two countries.

With the addition of Kochi, flynas' total number of weekly flights between Saudi Arabia and India has increased to 39.

The airline now serves six Indian cities from Riyadh - Delhi, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Kozhikode, Mumbai and Kochi - besides operating a direct

(Cont. on page - 2)



Industry status to tourism in Keralam by October

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM:

Keralam will provide industry status to the tourism sector by October 26 fulfilling its longstanding promise, Tourism Minister PC Vishnunadh said.

The minister made this announcement during his visit to Kanakakkunnu Palace, the main venue of the Onam Tourism Week celebrations, in the state capital. "The draft proposal for granting industry status to tourism sector has been



Keralam Tourism Minister PC Vishnunadh

prepared and consultations with industry stakeholders are under way. The move will provide benefits

(Cont. on page - 6)





A Herculean feat

Much to the disappointment of Doomsayers such as Raghuramrajans and Chidambarams, India’s economy grew faster than expected in the quarter that ended June despite the higher energy prices and disruptions due to global trade caused by the war in West Asia and El Nino. India grew at 7.8pc compared with the same quarter last year, beating Reserve Bank of India’s own seven per cent forecast and Reuter Economists’ Polls prediction of 7.1 pc. Economy remained resilient despite the higher cost of raw materials such as oil, gas and fertilizer from the Middle East, suggesting that businesses had been able to pass on a meaningful portion of their increased costs to consumers. It’s a Herculean feat, to say the least.

True, the economy slowed from 8.6pc growth in the previous quarter. India, the world’s fastest-growing economy, is a major energy consumer and relies on imports for 90pc of its oil needs, more than half of which comes from the Middle East where blockade of Strait of Hormuz is on and off. Bold tax cuts — both on goods and services and on incomes-- and increased



DA for central government staff lit the fire under consumer spending, with personal consumption rising 7.1 pc, up from 6.8pc a year earlier. Private investment, meanwhile, doubled its pace, surging close to 12pc from just 5.8pc previously.

RBI had estimated that India would grow by 6.7pc in the current financial year, which began in April, as a result of the delayed impact of the Iran conflict. Analysts now expect this figure, which was down from 7.9pc the previous year, to be revised upwards. Sakshi Gupta, principal economist at HDFC Bank, said that growth had crossed its estimate of 7.5pc, thanks to “upbeat domestic consumption, continued support from government spending and investments and healthy export performance”. Indian purchases of Russian oil have reached an all-time high in recent months as the Strait of Hormuz remained closed in the absence of a peace deal between. While the government initially resisted increasing domestic fuel prices to shield its citizens from any direct impact, the higher costs of energy were eventually passed on to consumers. India’s inflation rose to 4.45pc in July, a 19-month high, and surpassed the central bank’s target of four per cent.

“Robust credit demand and resilient domestic consumption despite elevated prices further highlight the underlying strength of economic activity,” opined Tanay Dalal, senior vice-president for business & economic research at Axis Bank. Credit is flowing freely across the economy. The RBI’s August bulletin showed farming, industry and services sectors all posting healthy loan growth, with lending hitting an 18.3pc pace at the end of the June quarter — the fastest in more than a decade.

“The key risks are now less about a softer domestic story and more about the persistence of high oil prices, rupee weakness and tighter global financial conditions. Scope for full-year growth to be north of seven per cent is high,” said Radhika Rao, senior economist at DBS Bank.

Exports have held up so far this fiscal year, but the oil price surge is muddying the inflation picture — the central bank expects headline inflation to average around five per cent this year. Farming — a sector employing more than 40pc of India’s workforce — grew 3.6pc.

LIPSYNCH

“Every man is guilty of all the good he did not do.”
-- Voltaire

LuLu Expands Footprint in Madinah

MADINAH: LuLu Retail has strengthened its presence in Saudi Arabia’s holy city of Madinah with the opening of a new hypermarket, aimed at serving pilgrims, residents and visitors while supporting the Kingdom’s Vision 2030 objectives.

The newly opened outlet is LuLu’s second store in Madinah and its 79th store in Saudi Arabia, further expanding the group’s retail network in the Kingdom. LuLu also operates four stores within the Holy Sites, providing essential shopping facilities for pilgrims during the Hajj season.

Located strategically on King Khalid Road near the Haramain Train Sta-



tion, the new hypermarket covers approximately 95,648 square feet across two floors. It offers a wide range of fresh food, groceries, daily necessities and departmental products, including home essentials, electronics and mobile accessories. The store also features ample parking facilities for customers.

The outlet was inaugurated by Fahad Alyan Al-Mughir, Chairman of the Board of the Madinah Chamber of Commerce, in the presence of Ahmed Bakr Zaidan, Secretary General of the Madinah Chamber of Commerce, and Yusuffali M.A., Chairman of LuLu Group, along with other senior officials

(Cont. on page - 6)

UAE Ambassador Presents Credentials to President Murmu

NEW DELHI: United Arab Emirates Ambassador-designate Abdulla Saif Ali Slayem Al Nuaimi presented his credentials to President Droupadi Murmu at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan on August 24.

During the meeting, President Murmu and Ambassador Al Nuaimi exchanged greetings and reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the close and comprehensive strategic partnership between India and the UAE.

President Murmu wished the new envoy success in his diplomatic assignment and assured him of India’s support in carrying out his responsibilities. The two sides also discussed opportunities to further expand bilateral



cooperation across various fields. The ceremony underscored the strong and growing relationship between India and the UAE, marked by close cooperation and enduring ties.

flynas Launches Direct Riyadh-Kochi...

(Cont. from page - 1) weekly service between Dammam and Lucknow.

The new route is also aligned with flynas’ international expansion strategy, “We Connect the World to the Kingdom,” and Saudi Arabia’s broader aviation and tourism objectives under Vision 2030.

Maharashtra Labour Minister...

(Cont. from page - 1) taking forward initiatives aimed at strengthening overseas employment and workforce mobility from Maharashtra. The meeting assumes significance as India continues to emerge as an important source of skilled and semi-skilled

manpower for international labour markets. Strengthening institutional mechanisms and addressing operational challenges will be crucial to ensuring that overseas mobility remains safe, orderly and beneficial to both workers and the country.

and tourism traffic. The airline said it currently operates more than 2,000 weekly flights across over 156 routes to more than 80 destinations in 38 countries. Since beginning operations in 2007, flynas says it has carried around 110 million passengers. The Riyadh-Kochi service is expected to particularly benefit the large travel market between Saudi Arabia and Kerala, supporting business, employment, tourism and family travel while providing passengers with another direct travel option.

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Australian Dollar	67.06	68.53
Norwegian Krone	9.97	10.26
Swedish Krona	9.65	9.93
New Zealand Dollar	54.71	55.92
Hong Kong Dollar	11.81	12.18
Kuwaiti Dinar	313.433	297.6235
Singapore Dollar	73.58	75.23
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.66	25.44
U A E Dirham	25.28	26

Rs 8,707-crore Thiruvananthapuram airport expansion plan gets green clearance

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Clearing a major hurdle, the proposed Rs 8,707-crore expansion of the Adani owned Thiruvananthapuram airport has secured green clearance from the State Expert Appraisal Committee-1 (SEAC-1).

The committee recommended integrated environmental clearance (EC) along with coastal regulation zone (CRZ) clearance for the project. The clearance comes at a time when the state government is focusing on seaport and airport led development.

For travellers, the expansion brings redesigned terminals in two stories, modern digital systems for faster check-ins, upgraded aircraft parking areas (aprons), and smoother flight connecting paths (taxiways). A state-of-the-art cargo complex is also planned.

A hotel project coming up at the entrance will be integrated into the master plan. To meet safety standards set by DGCA, the airport will need an additional 6.88 hectares of land alongside its current 248.29-hectare plot.

According to a TIAL official, the first phase of the expansion includes upgrading the passenger ca-



capacity from 4.5 million to 12 million by 2032. "In the first phase, development worth Rs 3,700 crore will happen on existing land without disrupting traffic. sh investment of Rs 2,400 crore will happen from April 2027. We will require the land for further expansion after 2032," said the official.

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GULF FAQs

Do I pass credit checks before signing rental contracts?

I want to take a residential flat on lease in UAE. Some friends are saying that there will be credit checks before signing rental contracts. Is it true?

Private landlords across the UAE can now request the credit scores of prospective tenants through a new "Tenant Screening" solution launched by Etihad Credit Bureau in collaboration with UAE PASS. For UAE residents searching for homes, the move could gradually change how rental applications are assessed. For landlords, it introduces an additional tool to evaluate payment risk before signing tenancy contracts.

The system allows landlords to access a tenant's credit score only after the tenant approves the request through UAE PASS,

the country's national digital identity platform. The feature was initially previewed at GITEX 2025 by the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA) and Digital Dubai before being rolled out through the Etihad Credit Bureau mobile app in April 2026.

For tenants in the UAE, the introduction of credit screening means financial history could increasingly become part of the rental evaluation process alongside salary certificates, Emirates IDs, visa status and cheque arrangements. Under the new system, a landlord can send a request for a prospective tenant's credit score through the Etihad Credit Bureau platform. The tenant then receives a notification through UAE

PASS and decides whether to approve or reject access to the information.

"The information is only shared once tenants accept through their UAE PASS," Etihad Credit Bureau said. If the tenant declines the request, the landlord cannot access the credit score.

For many UAE residents, particularly those applying for high-demand or high-value properties in areas of Dubai and Abu Dhabi, the system could become another factor considered during rental applications. The platform could also give landlords additional visibility into a tenant's repayment history when assessing financial reliability linked to rent payments or post-dated cheques. While the system remains consent-based rather than mandatory, landlords may seek addi-

tional financial assurances in some cases where tenants choose to share lower credit profiles, particularly in situations involving: Etihad Credit Bureau has not announced any minimum score requirements for tenancy approvals, and the system is not currently mandatory for rental contracts. For landlords, the platform offers a formal financial screening mechanism before entering into tenancy agreements. Until now, many landlords relied primarily on: employment status, monthly salary, employer reputation, post-dated cheques and previous tenancy records.

The Tenant Screening system adds verified credit information into that process. Still, landlords are likely to assess broader indicators tied to a tenant's financial behaviour, in-

cluding repayment consistency and overall credit exposure. The service may become particularly relevant for landlords leasing: luxury villas, premium apartments, high-rent properties and homes requiring multiple post-dated cheques. In those segments, landlords often face larger financial exposure if tenants default or delay payments.

A key part of the initiative is the use of UAE PASS as the approval gateway for sharing financial data. Officials described the platform as part of the UAE's expanding "digital trust infrastructure" that supports secure consent management and trusted data exchange.

Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, Director General of Digital Dubai, said: "UAE PASS has evolved into a cornerstone of the UAE's digital trust infrastructure, extending beyond digital identity to enable secure consent management and trusted data exchange."

What action is taken for insulting women in UAE?

Can you please give details of a recent case regarding insulting women?

The UAE's National Media Authority has taken legal action against a resident after content published through her account on a social media platform insulted Emirati women. The authority also suspended her active advertising permit for three months.

In a statement, the authority said the material contravened the standards governing media content under the country's media law and its executive regulations. It stressed that it would not tolerate content that offends Emirati women or undermines their standing and contributions to the nation. It also urged social media users to act

responsibly when publishing content and to uphold community values and the UAE's national identity. Separately, the Dubai women establishment denied online claims that the content was part of a project affiliated with the organisation.

In a statement, the establishment said it had no relationship or co-operation with the woman who published the offending content and was co-ordinating with the relevant authorities to take the necessary action against the claims and limit their circulation on social media.

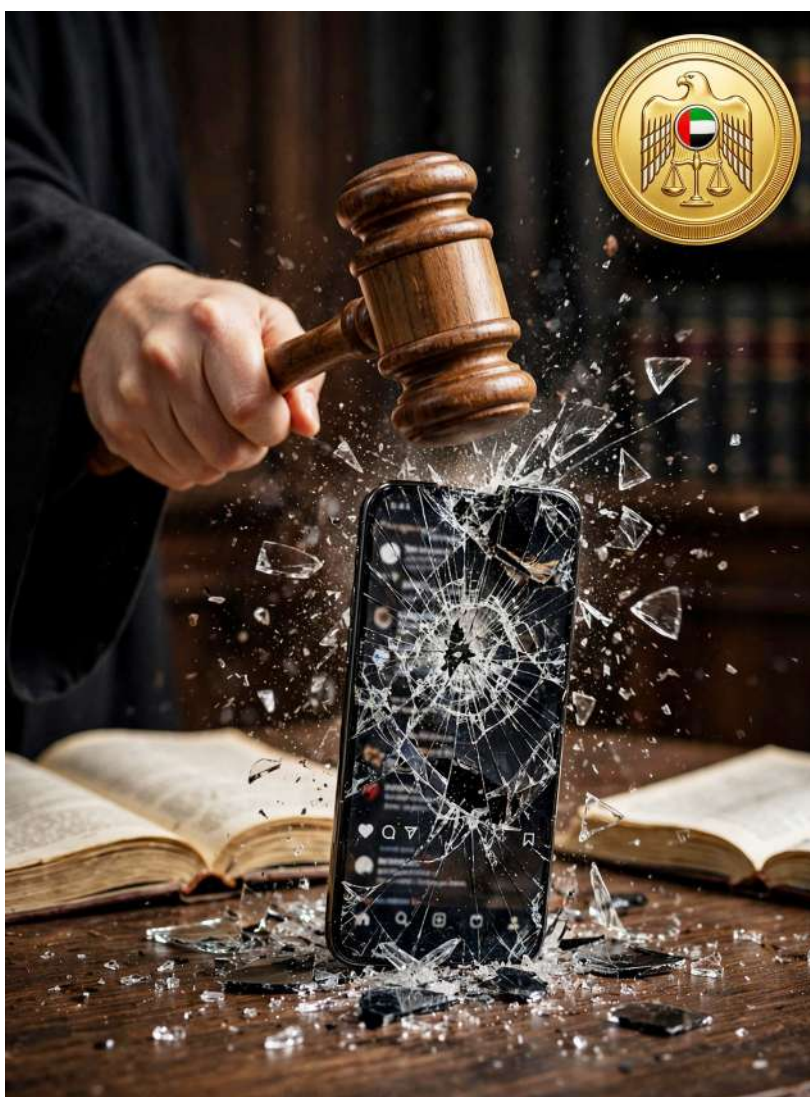
Why the permit suspension matters? The Mu'lin Permit is a licence for in-

accounts, the internet and other modern technical means, whether for payment or without payment. The authority's published Media Content Standards require media content to respect the UAE's cultural and civilisational heritage and national identity, avoid offending prevailing values in society, and ensure advertising content respects the country's culture, identity and values.

Last August, the authority had taken legal action against two individuals after a live

broadcast on social media promoted offensive content that breached standards relating to the UAE's cultural and civilisational heritage, national identity and prevailing societal values.

The authority suspended the Mu'lin Permit issued to one of the individuals for three months. Separately, the UAE's Federal Decree-Law on Countering Rumours and Cybercrimes covers the use of an information network, information-technology equipment or an information system to insult another person, or make an attribution that could expose that person to punishment or contempt by others.. The article provides for imprisonment and/or a fine ranging from Dh250,000 to Dh500,000.



Industry status to tourism in Keralam by October...

(Cont. from page - 1)

such as bank subsidies and single-window clearance, while helping attract major investments from India and abroad," he added.

Vishnunadh also disclosed a raft of measures to give a fillip to tourism in the state, including developing lesser-known destinations and expanding cultural tourism, which would showcase Keralam's cultural diversity to the

LuLu Expands Footprint...

(Cont. from page - 2)

and dignitaries.

Yusuffali said the expansion reflects LuLu's commitment to providing convenient shopping facilities for pilgrims, residents and visitors. He added that the group's continued expansion in Saudi Arabia would contribute to employment

global tourism market. The government is also looking beyond Keralam's established tourism centres as several popular destinations approach their carrying capacity.

"Tourists don't wish to go to overcrowded destinations. So we have decided to develop new destinations," he said. Akalapuzha in Kozhikode, where around 40 houseboats already operate, is set to

generation and local economic development, while supporting the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

The latest opening underlines LuLu's growing focus on the Kingdom's holy cities and its long-term strategy to expand its retail network across Saudi Arabia.

Keralam to become global hub...

(Cont. from page - 1)

relationship. The government's main objective is to attract more tourists and investors from the Arab world to Keralam," the CM said. Under Mission Samudra, the government aims to connect Keralam's coastline and ports and transform the state into a comprehensive port city, Satheesan said.

The project will integrate the state's international ports, container terminal and mini ports, while 44 rivers and major backwaters will be brought under the project in its second phase. Cruise services will be launched from Kochi to Gulf countries and Goa and from Kasaragod to Thiruvananthapuram, Satheesan said. He said the government also planned to shift 50 to 60pc of freight movement to waterways to reduce traffic congestion on roads.

The state would also be developed as an aviation hub by making use of the potential of its international airports, he said. Pilot training institutes and

maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities would be established as part of the initiative. An international global convention centre with modern facilities would also be set up near Kochi airport, Satheesan said.

The government was ready to provide 30 acres of land in Kochi for constructing India's first oceanarium, he said. An international maritime museum showcasing Keralam's more than 2,000-year-old maritime trade heritage would also be established.

Archaeological excavations at Muziris have uncovered evidence of ancient trade relations between Keralam and 31 countries, he said, adding that the government would preserve this heritage while expanding tourism. A modern cultural park named after writer MT Vasudevan Nair would be established in Kozhikode, while new tourism destinations would also be developed in Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and other cities.

Satheesan said the gov-

be developed and formally promoted as a tourism destination, although it is not currently officially recognised as one, he pointed out.

Munroe Island in Kollam is also being positioned as a major tourism attraction, with Vishnunadh saying it deserves stronger marketing and has appeal comparable to the Maldives. He said every district in Keralam has lesser-known destinations that could be developed and promoted to spread tourism activity beyond established centres. "We will include all cultural events in the tourism annual calendar so that world tourists can enjoy Kerala's unique, rich culture.

He cited Theyyam in Kannur, traditionally performed during the No-

ernment would implement the "Knowledge Valley" project to develop Keralam as a global knowledge and healthcare centre. "Prominent international universities will be invited to Keralam," he said. Integrated rehabilitation centres combining Ayurveda and allopathy on the European model would also be established, while caregiver courses modelled on the curricula of the UK, Germany and Australia would be introduced at medical and nursing colleges.

vember-April season and Padayani performances in different parts of the state. The aim is to make such events more visible to travellers planning their visits to Keralam.

"Keralam is not a place just to visit; it is a place one should experience and relish," the minister said, highlighting the Tourism Department's new "Be a Malayali for a Day" campaign aimed at attracting international travellers seeking experiential tourism. The state is also looking to leverage Onam as a major tourism product.

The minister also stressed the need to position Keralam as the authentic home of Ayurveda, amid growing efforts by other destinations, including Sri Lanka, to promote Ayurveda as part of their tourism offerings. "Nobody can beat us in our

natural beauty," he said, emphasising its potential to strengthen Keralam's medical and wellness tourism appeal. The state is also planning a tourism campaign focused on Wayanad, which Vishnunadh described it as "an exceptionally beautiful destination". Further, efforts will be made to address travellers' negative perceptions of the district following recent natural disasters. The minister pointed out that the impact was limited to only two wards of a panchayat area.

The government is also planning to simplify the process of starting homestays through a single window clearance mechanism. He said that homestay owners will be divided into three clusters (Malabar, central Keralam and south Keralam) for training purposes.

Indians get visa-free Thailand entry, But stay cut to 30 days from Sept 15

BANGKOK: Thailand is tightening its visa-free entry rules from Sept 15, 2026, cutting the maximum visa-exempt stay for Indian tourists from 60 days to 30 days. However, Indian passport holders will continue to enjoy visa-free entry for tourism, unlike an earlier proposal that would have moved Indians to a paid Visa on Arrival arrangement.

The revised rules were published in Thailand's Royal Gazette and will take effect 15 days later, on Sept 15. The new framework replaces the 60-day visa-exemption scheme that had covered 93 countries and territories since 2024. For the typical Indian tourist taking a one- or two-week holiday, the change is unlikely to make much practical difference. But travellers planning longer stays or frequent border crossings will need to pay closer attention to the new rules.

What is changing from Sept 15?

Under the new framework, 60 countries and territories, including India, will qualify for visa-exempt tourist entry for up to 30 days. Mauritius and Seychelles nationals will receive visa-free stays of up to 15 days, while nationals of Azerbaijan, Belarus and Serbia will become eligible for Visa on Arrival at authorised checkpoints.

NRIs in UAE warned of scammers

DUBAI: The Consulate General of India in Dubai has warned NRIs in the UAE against falling prey to unauthorised agents promising visa regularisation, emergency certificates, exit permits, Emirates IDs and jobs.

In an advisory, the consulate said it had received information that several Indian nationals,

particularly blue-collar workers, were being targeted by individuals falsely claiming to offer assistance with immigration and documentation services.

The fraudsters allegedly ask victims to provide their passport, Emirates ID and biometric information, including face, eye and fingerprint scans.