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## Veteran diplomat Vipul India's next ambassador to Saudi Arabia

**NEW DELHI:** Veteran diplomat Vipul has been appointed as India's next ambassador to Saudi Arabia, an assignment widely regarded as a critical deployment in light of the Gulf country's expanding regional influence and the highly volatile geopolitical crisis in West Asia.

The 1998-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) of-

ficer is currently serving as New Delhi's envoy to Qatar, bringing extensive regional experience to his upcoming assignment.

Announcing the diplomatic transition, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated: "He is expected to take up the assignment shortly."

This vital appointment aligns with his distinguished diplomatic ten-

ure, during which the incoming envoy has been posted to various Indian diplomatic missions worldwide, including critical assignments in Cairo, Colombo, Geneva and Dubai. Throughout these international postings, his extensive career in the foreign service has seen him manage diverse portfolios encompassing political and commercial

relations, development co-operation, disarmament, international security and media affairs.

In addition to his field experience, Vipul has contributed significantly to policymaking from within the capital, having completed a tenure as a Joint Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs between 2014 and 2017. He subsequent-



ly assumed the role of Consul General of India in Dubai from 2017 to ( **Cont. on page - 2** )

## Saudi opens visa applications for new Umrah season

**RIYADH:** International pilgrims can now enter the Kingdom for performing Umrah until March 23, 2027. General Authority for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques

Saudi Arabia has started issuing Umrah visas for the new Umrah season, marking the start of preparations for the 1448 AH season following the conclusion of this year's Haj.

Pilgrims will now be permitted to enter Mecca and obtain Umrah permits through the government's Nusuk application.

The platform serves as the Kingdom's unified digital gateway for permits, bookings and pilgrimage services.

The ministry said March 9, 2027, corresponding to Shawwal 1, 1448 AH, would be the final date for issuing Umrah visas. The last date for pilgrims to enter Saudi Arabia will be March 23, 2027, while all Umrah pilgrims must depart the Kingdom by April 7, 2027.

The Kingdom has accelerated the digital transformation of Umrah services

in recent years through the Nusuk platform, introducing electronic permits, automated contracting procedures and QR code verification systems. Saudi Arabia is also expanding transport and hospitality infrastructure as part of efforts to accommodate growing numbers of pilgrims under Vision 2030.

## Abu Dhabi freezes rent hikes

**ABU DHABI:** Abu Dhabi Real Estate Centre has announced that rents for residential, commercial and industrial properties will not increase until further notice. The temporary measure was announced by the property centre on its social media channels. "Your rent stays the same. A temporary measure is in effect across Abu Dhabi," the centre posted on X.

"All residential, commercial and industrial tenancy contract renewals will be processed at a zero per cent increase for the duration of the measure. Any new tenancy contract on a previously rented unit will be offered at the same rental value as the preceding contract."



## Kuwait Airways back in the air after major damage to Terminal-1

**KUWAIT CITY:** Kuwait Airways resumed limited flight operations on Wednesday from Terminal-4 after an Iranian drone and missile attack caused severe damage to

Terminal-1 (T1) at Kuwait International Airport.

The strike forced a temporary suspension of commercial air traffic and prompted emergency safety assessments by aviation authorities. Following technical inspections and the implementation of safety measures, limited services were restored, while authorities continue to assess the full extent of the damage and disruption caused by the attack.

Authorities said passenger safety remains the top priority as recovery efforts continue and investigations into the attack proceed.

## No transit visa required for Indians at German airports

**NEW DELHI:** Germany has decided that Indian nationals will no longer require a transit visa when travelling to another country with a layover at a German airport. The new rule come into effect on June 3. "This implements a result if Federal Chancellor Friedrich Merz's trip to India in January this year. It underlines the Federal Government's commitment to deepening German Indian relations, facilitating the movement of people,

and further strengthening economic ties," the German embassy said in a statement.

What is a transit visa? What does this mean for Indian travellers? When you travel from country-A to country-B and have a layover at country-C in between, you may need a visa only for touching down at country-C for the layover. This is called a transit visa. If one has a valid US, Canada, Schengen, EU, Ice- ( **Cont. on page - 2** )

## LuLu launches 'SWFT' stores in Saudi Arabia

**RIYADH:** Expanding convenient retail across Saudi Arabia, SWFT by LuLu has been launched in the Kingdom, delivering fast, seamless and modern shopping experiences for consumers.

SWFT stores are strategically located at metro stations, fuel stations, airports and other high-traffic destinations across the Kingdom. The first four SWFT stores were inaugurated virtually by Yusuffali MA. The launch includes two metro station outlets at Al Rabi and Al Khurais in Riyadh, a ( **Cont. on page - 2** )



## Unfair duty on India

The US 12.5pc additional duty on India comes at a time when India is holding extensive negotiations for a trade deal with the American delegation in New Delhi to iron out the “commas and full stops” and the Section 301 probe remains in focus. This higher tariff comes at a time when Indian economy is already facing crisis from the Western Asian war and the likely delay/failure of monsoon.

The US government has proposed a higher tariff of 12.5pc for India amid a Section 301 probe into “unfair” trade practices. The recommendation came from the Office of the US Trade Representative following an investigation into “forced labour” practices in various countries. Most US trading partners would face a 10pc levy under the proposal, while India and 53 other nations (including China, Japan, South Korea, Brazil and Switzerland) face a higher tariff rate.



“For economies that impose a forced labour import prohibition, that have committed to impose and enforce such a prohibition through an Agreement on Reciprocal Trade or economies that have imposed a partial regime with the effect of preventing the importation of certain forced labour goods, the US Trade Representative proposes 10pc as the rate of additional duties. For all other economies, the US Trade Representative proposes 12.5 pc as the rate of additional duty,” USTR wrote in a statement.

US President Trump had announced a baseline 10pc levy for all countries after the Supreme Court struck down his sweeping “reciprocal tariffs” earlier this year. The figure was changed to a negotiated cumulative rate of 18pc for India under the Febr 2026 interim framework.

The Trump administration had launched investigations under Section 301 of the Trade Act of 1974 after the court order — probing “unfair” trade practices against several trading partners, including India, while imposing a blanket 10 pc tariff. There is growing apprehension that the ongoing probe could lead to additional tariffs that would stack on top of the global rates.

The proposal has not been implemented, and there has been no official change at this time. USTR has invited public comments and outlined plans to hold hearings later this month — with a formal decision likely in the coming weeks. As such, there is no direct or immediate impact from this 12.5pc additional tariff.

USTR’s appendices map where investigated economies imported certain inputs that the agency treated as linked to forced labour concerns and also traded in similar or downstream products with the US.

Union Minister Piyush Goyal indicated that “all the major points have been settled” with the US following the interim announcement in early Feb. According to a Reuters report, New Delhi is likely to discuss the ongoing Section 301 investigation and potential tariff measures with US trade officials.

“While finalising, how will the legal changes that have taken place in the US be reflected in the final agreement and what kind of changes will be made accordingly. After finalising that, I am fully confident that, with the US, we will conclude the first tranche of the BTA as soon as possible, sign it and start further discussions on how to have a more comprehensive BTA,” Goyal added.

### LIPSYNCH

“The price of greatness is responsibility.”  
---Winston Churchill

# Coimbatore hosts curtain raiser for Skål congress

**COIMBATORE:** Skål International Coimbatore officially unveiled the countdown to the much-anticipated Skål India National Congress (SINC) 2026, scheduled to take place from August 12–14, 2026 at Le Méridien, Coimbatore. The curtain raising ceremony was hosted on May 30 at The Residency Towers, Coimbatore, bringing together distinguished leaders from the travel, tourism and hospitality fraternity.

For the first time, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu’s dynamic industrial and cultural hub better known as the Manchester of South

## LuLu launches ‘SWFT’...

( Cont. from page - 1 )  
flagship store at Aramco Al Ruwaid and another outlet at the ADNOC fuel station in Al Ahsa, Eastern Province.

“Our new format is designed to bring speed, convenience and quality closer to customers. This is a new concept that we first launched in Saudi Arabia, and very soon we will roll it out across GCC countries,” said Yusuffali. SWFT by Lulu offers a curated selection of daily essentials, fresh food, ready-to-eat meals, snacks, bakery items and beverages, catering to the needs of busy commuters and modern

## Veteran diplomat Vipul India’s next ambassador...

( Cont. from page - 1 )  
2020.

Building further on his regional specialisation, he brought his West Asian expertise back to headquarters upon his return from the UAE, serving as Joint Secretary (Gulf) in the MEA from 2020 to 2023, before being deployed as India’s Ambassador to Qatar, where he has been serving since August 2023.

Alongside his extensive diplomatic credentials, the envoy possesses a strong academic background.



The curtain raiser was organised under the leadership of Ramesh Chandrakumar, President, Skål International Coimbatore and PK Ganesh, SINC 2026 Chairman along with the entire Skål International Coimbatore team

India, will host the prestigious national congress of Skål International India. The congress is expected to welcome tourism leaders, hoteliers, travel professionals, media and stakeholders from across the country and around the world for meaningful dialogue centred around doing business among friends, sustainability, heritage and the future of tourism.

Lulu Group plans to expand SWFT aggressively, with a target of opening 100 stores across Saudi Arabia by 2030, further strengthening its presence in the Kingdom’s growing convenience retail sector.

## No transit visa required...

( Cont. from page - 1 )  
land, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, Andorra, Japan or San Marino visa, they were exempt earlier also.

Before Germany, France removed the transit visa requirement for India. It came into effect on April 10, 2026. France became

Prior to entering the diplomatic corps, Vipul graduated from IIT, Delhi, in 1994 and also holds an MBA degree from the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad.

Vipul’s deep knowledge of Gulf affairs is expected to play a central role in managing New Delhi and Riyadh’s robust, comprehensive strategic partnership, which remains underscored by profound economic integration, energy security and mutual defence co-operation.

The evening reflected the warmth and traditions of Tamil Nadu with a graceful local touch in hospitality and presentation, while guests embraced elegant ethnic and regional attire

The first Schengen country to fully eliminate the transit visa for Indian nationals, though Germany was the first to announce this in January.

France announced the decision after President Emmanuel Macron’s state visit to India in Feb. During Macron’s visit, France announced a six-month pilot scheme allowing Indian passport holders to transit through French airports without an ATV. The pilot was effective immediately. The pilot ran successfully. Airlines updated boarding systems, Paris CDG reported no compliance issues, and transit bookings by Indian passengers through French airports increased significantly. In April, France lifted the transit visa requirement.

Lifting of transit visa does not mean travellers can enter the country. They are only allowed to remain in the transit zone. They cannot leave the airport.

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British Pound	128.07	129.85
Euro	110.26	112.61
Japanese Yen	59.52	60.45
Swiss Franc (CHF)	120.15	122.8
Canadian Dollar	68.41	69.95
Australian Dollar	68	69.46
Norwegian Krone	10.12	10.42
Swedish Krona	10.09	10.38
New Zealand Dollar	55.99	57.21
Hong Kong Dollar	11.98	12.35
Kuwaiti Dinar	317.62	307.55
Singapore Dollar	74.03	75.67
Saudi Arabian Riyal	25.02	25.81
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03	Shift Supervisor	SIMOPS	Onplot	08 Years
04	Panel Operator	IR	Onplot	06 Years
05	Panel Operator	UTL	Onplot	06 Years
06	Panel Operator	LNG	Onplot	06 Years
07	Panel Operator	Helium	Onplot	06 Years
08	Senior Operator	LNG S & L	Offplot	05 Years
09	Senior Operator	NLNG S & L	Offplot	05 Years
10	Senior Operator	IR	Offplot	05 Years
11	Senior Operator	SIMOPS	Offplot	05 Years
12	Senior Operator	UTL	Offplot	05 Years
13	Rover Operator	SRU	Onplot	03 Years
14	Rover Operator	LNG	Onplot	03 Years
15	Rover Operator	IR	Onplot	03 Years
16	Rover Operator	LNG S & L	Onplot	03 Years
17	Rover Operator	SIMOPS	Onplot	03 Years
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**Rs 10,000cr aviation turbine fuel Stabilisation scheme okayed**

**NEW DELHI:** The Union cabinet has approved a Rs 10,000 crore aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price stabilization programme to cushion airlines from soaring fuel costs triggered by the ongoing West Asia crisis, a move aimed at protecting air connectivity and limiting fare volatility. The scheme will provide interest-free advances of up to Rs 10,000 crore to state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs), enabling them to supply ATF to scheduled Indian airlines

at a stabilised price for domestic and international operations, according to a government statement. The support mechanism comes as international ATF prices have surged to about Rs 142 per litre in May from Rs 60.50 per litre in March, increasing financial pressure on airlines at a time when fuel accounts for nearly 40pc of operating costs and, in some cases, as much as 60pc during periods of extreme volatility. Under the arrangement,

OMCs will be compensated whenever international import parity prices exceed a benchmark level set under the approved mechanism. Any support extended to OMCs will be recovered once global fuel prices moderate, with proceeds returned to the Consolidated Fund of India through a defined true-up process. Announcing the decision, I&B Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the budgetary support will help airlines.

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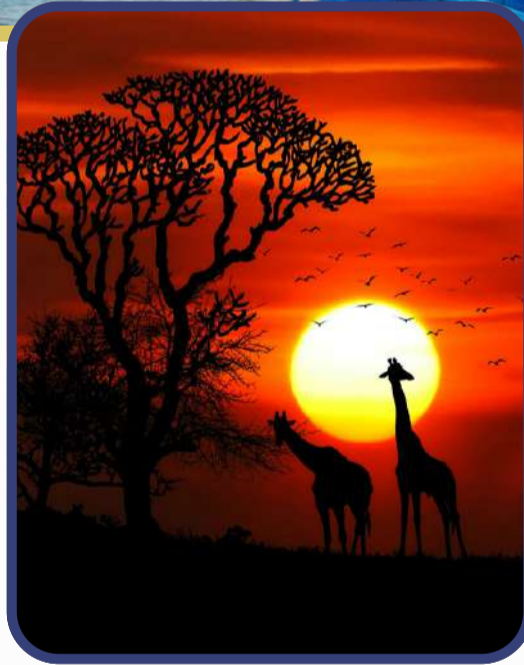
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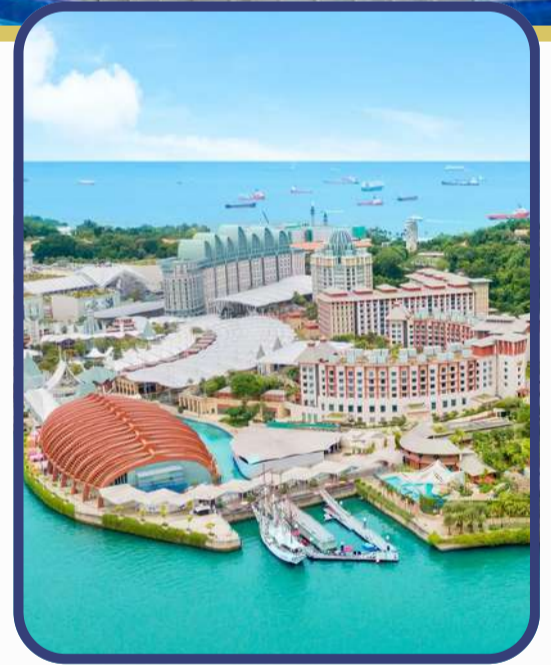
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# GULF FAQs

## How to share rented flat without breaking law?

I am a single mother working in Dubai and cannot afford to rent an apartment on my own. I've come across advertisements for flat sharing and am considering this as an option. However, I want to ensure I don't break any laws. Is flat sharing legally allowed in Dubai? If so, what is the proper legal way to go about it?

In Dubai, a tenant is not allowed to sublet a rented premise without the written consent of the landlord. This is under Article 24 of the Dubai Tenancy Law, which states: "Unless otherwise agreed by the parties to a lease contract, the tenant may not sub-lease or assign the use of the real property to third parties unless the relevant written consent of the landlord is obtained."

Furthermore, a landlord may evict a tenant if he/she has sublet the rented premises to a third party without the written con-

sent of the landlord and if the same is used by third parties for purposes which are against public order or morals. This is in accordance with Article 25 (1) (b) & (c) of the Amended Dubai Tenancy Law, which states: "A landlord may request eviction of the tenant from the real property before expiry of the lease contract only in the following cases:

\*Where the tenant sublets the real property or any part thereof without obtaining the landlord's written approval, in which case the eviction shall apply to the tenant and to the subtenant, who shall reserve the right to claim compensation from the tenant;

\* Where the tenant uses the real property or allows others to use it for any illegal purpose or for a purpose which conflicts with



public order or morals."

Recently, Dubai Municipality, in co-ordination with the Dubai Land Department and the General Directorate of Civil Defence, Dubai, have intensified efforts to curb the use of par-

tioned rooms, which are commonly used to create shared living spaces.

This practice has been identified as a safety hazard, deemed unsafe and is being actively removed. Inspection campaigns are be-

ing conducted across several multi-storey residential buildings, especially in densely populated areas. You should always be compliant with the Dubai regulations relating to sharing accommodation. Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, you must ensure that it is not in a partitioned unit and should obtain a written confirmation from the landlord or the management company of the building allowing you to share the rented apartment with other individuals.

However, the aforementioned options of allowing you to reside in a rented apartment on sharing basis are at the sole discretion of the landlord or the management company of the building.

## What are your rights when a client refuses to pay for completed work?

My company completed contracting work for another company, which has refused to pay the due amounts without any reason. Do we have the right to claim compensation for our losses due to their delay, even though we do not have written evidence of such losses?

You have the right to claim such compensation even if you do not have written evidence, because, as a general rule, anyone harmed by an unlawful act has the right to claim compensation for the resulting damage, whether existing or subsequent, provided that the three elements are present: fault, harm and a causal link between them.

Compensation is usually

estimated and decided by the court, taking into consideration several circumstances, including whether you breached your obligations in carrying out the assigned work or not. It is established by Cassation Court No. 991/2025 (Commercial) that "a debtor's delay in paying what is due without a valid excuse constitutes harm to the creditor.

This harm, resulting from the debtor's procrastination in payment, entitles the creditor to compensation, in accordance with the law. The debtor's deprivation of the creditor's right to benefit from their dues necessitates compensation, even if the debtor did not use the money for their own benefit."

## Can a tenant sub-lease property without the landlord's permission?

I have rented an apartment from my cousin who rented it from its owner. Two days ago, we received an evacuation notice for non-payment even though we pay the rental monthly to our cousin who is paying to the owner as per his allegations? does the owner have the right to evacuate us?

As a general rule, and according to Article 24 of Law No. (26) of 2007 Regulating the Relationship between Landlords and Tenants in the Emirate of Dubai, the Tenant may not assign the use of or sub-lease the real property to third parties unless written consent of the landlord is obtained unless otherwise agreed

by the parties to the lease contract.

A Landlord, pursuant to Article (25) of the same law, may request eviction of the tenant from the real property before expiry of the lease contract only in the following cases: (a) unless otherwise agreed by the parties, where the tenant fails to pay the rent or any part thereof within 30 days from the date of service of a notice on the tenant by the landlord requesting the payment; (b) where the tenant sublets the real property or any part thereof without obtaining the landlord's written approval, in which case the eviction will apply to the tenant and to the subtenant, who will reserve the right to claim compensation from the

tenant.

You have to check if your cousin is really paying to the owner and to check whether he sub-leased the property with or without the acceptance of the owner. In case he sub-leased it with the acceptance of the owner, then you have to manage the payment to the owner before the lapse of 30 days from the date of the service of notice, otherwise the landlord will have the right to evacuate you after those 30 days.

In case he subleased it without the acceptance of the owner, then the owner shall have the right to evict you when he discovers this matter, even if you are paying on time, unless the owner expressly approves your existence.

# Global tourism 2030: the resplendent renaissance of civilisations, connectivity and conscious exploration



**By NSN Mohan**  
(Vice President 2026 & President Elect 2027, Skål International)

sector, it has become one of humanity's most influential bridges connecting cultures, economies and civilisations. In an increasingly interconnected world, travel is redefining how nations engage, how societies understand one another and how global prosperity is shared.

Few industries have demonstrated resilience as impressively as tourism. Following the unprecedented disruptions of the pandemic years, the sector has staged one of the greatest recoveries in modern economic history. Today, international travel once again thrives across continents. Airports are bustling, hotels are flourishing and destinations are welcoming visitors with renewed optimism. Yet the true significance of this resurgence extends beyond economic indicators and visitor statistics.

Tourism has become the human face of globalisation. Every right boarded, every hotel stay, every local experience and every conversation between host and guest contribute to a larger narrative of understanding and co-operation. Tourism creates

Restaurants Association); NSN Mohan, Vice President, Skål International and Sanjeev Mehra, President, Skål International India.

INC is India's premier annual gathering for travel, tourism and hospitality professionals, fostering networking, knowledge-sharing and industry partnerships while shaping the future direction of tourism in the country. This year's congress places sustainability and heritage at its core, blending future-focused tourism dialogue with the timeless richness of India's heritage and cultural identity.

opportunities not only for economic growth but also for cultural dialogue, social harmony and peaceful coexistence.

The traveller of 2030 bears little resemblance to the tourist of previous decades. Modern travellers increasingly seek experiences that enrich their lives rather than simply fill their itineraries. They are drawn toward immersive cultural encounters, wellness retreats, culinary discoveries, authentic local interactions and meaningful personal growth.

Luxury itself is being redefined. No longer measured solely by opulence, luxury today is found in exclusivity, personalisation, privacy and authenticity. A meditation session in the Himalayas, a traditional culinary experience in Tuscany or a community-based conservation safari in Africa may offer greater value than conventional extravagance.

Hotels are evolving into holistic wellness sanctuaries. Airlines are becoming sophisticated mobility ecosystems. Destinations are differentiating themselves through stories, culture and emotional engagement. Travellers are no longer buying vacations. They are investing in memories,

purpose and transformation.

As tourism evolves, technology is emerging as one of its most powerful architects. Artificial Intelligence, predictive analytics, biometric systems, immersive reality platforms and intelligent hospitality solutions are fundamentally transforming the travel experience.

The airport of the future may recognise a passenger instantly through biometric verification. Hotels may anticipate guest preferences before arrival through predictive intelligence. Destinations may use real-time analytics to manage visitor flows while protecting fragile ecosystems.

Technology is no longer operating behind the scenes. It is actively shaping every stage of the traveller's journey, creating experiences that are more seamless, personalized and sustainable than ever before.

Among the world's emerging tourism giants, India occupies a uniquely powerful position. Few nations possess such an extraordinary diversity of experiences within a single geographical boundary. Ancient civilisations, spiritual traditions, royal

heritage, vibrant cultures, breathtaking landscapes and modern infrastructure combine to create a tourism offering unlike any other.

A traveller may begin the morning witnessing the sacred rituals of Varanasi, spend the afternoon exploring the palaces of Rajasthan and conclude the journey amid the tranquil backwaters of Kerala or the sun-kissed beaches of Goa.

As airports expand, highways improve and digital infrastructure accelerates, India is steadily emerging as one of the most compelling tourism destinations of the twenty-first century. The world is no longer merely curious about India. It is increasingly eager to experience India.

As visitor numbers grow, so too does the responsibility to protect the world's natural and cultural treasures. The traveller of tomorrow expects destinations to demonstrate environmental stewardship, community engagement and cultural preservation. Sustainability is no longer viewed as a desirable addition; it has become a fundamental expectation.

Forward-thinking des-  
( To be continued )

## Coimbatore hosts curtain...

( Cont. from page - 2 ) in celebration of the destination's rich cultural identity. The curtain raiser was organised under the leadership of Ramesh Chandrakumar, President, Skål International Coimbatore and PK Ganesh, SINC 2026 Chairman along with the entire Skål International Coimbatore team.

The event was attended by dignitaries including D Srinivasan, MD of Annapoorna Hotels, Sathish KS (IFS), Regional Passport Officer, T Jegatheswari, District Tourist Officer, Sundar Singaram, Director - Operations, SIHRA (South India Hotels and

## Abu Dhabi freezes rent hikes

( Cont. from page - 1 )

The rent freeze comes as many people in the UAE grapple with rising prices, with some losing their jobs or facing salary reductions, linked to the impact of the Iran war. Last year, Abu Dhabi's rental market remained very tight, driven by strong population growth and limited available homes.

One market report estimated that average residential rents rose 11 per cent last year. Tuesday's announcement is "very

good" for renters whose tenancies are up for renewal now, Ben Crompton, managing partner of Crompton Partners, said.

"Realistically there was only a five per cent increase in place before, so it's not a huge bonus but it's something," he added. "It shouldn't impact landlords too much ... they've just lost that five per cent uplift." The freeze also puts tenants in a strong position to negotiate better deals, said another property expert.

"This is giving more muscle to the tenants to dictate a better price for themselves," said Mario Volpi, senior manager at Eva Real Estate.

"Whilst it says there is no increases, it does not specifically mention that a tenant cannot negotiate further. "It's great news for tenants ... because it means that they can budget going forward without the threat of potentially having to pay more." However, Volpi said, the move appears to be "one-sided".