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OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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IPEPCIL delegation meets newly-appointed Protector General of Emigrants & Joint Secretary, MEA-OE

NEW DELHI: IPEPCIL delegation led by its President VS Abdulkareem held a meaningful and productive meeting with John Mai (IFS), the newly appointed Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) & Joint Secretary Ministry of External Affairs – Overseas Employment (MEA-OE) in New Delhi to deliberate on key issues concerning international workforce-mobility.

During the meeting, a wide range of matters relating to overseas employment, stakeholder concerns and the evolving challenges in global workforce-mobility were discussed. Abdulkareem emphasised the need to further strengthen a legal, ethical, transparent and compliance-driven migration ecosystem that safeguards the interests of Indian migrant workers while facilitating responsible overseas recruitment.

The discussion also highlighted the importance of reviewing existing operational challenges faced by the stakeholders and exploring practical measures to simplify procedures without compromising regulatory compliance. He further suggested that diplomatic engagement with destination countries would play a significant role in addressing procedural bottlenecks, harmonizing compliance requirements, and promoting smoother, safer, and more efficient workforce mobility.

The meeting concluded (Cont. on page - 2)

(From right are) Bir Kamal Singh (chapter chairman, IPEPCIL Chandigarh), John Mai (IFS) PGE, IPEPCIL president VS Abdulkareem, Vice-president Albert Joseph and executive secretary Qureshi Athar Salim

Seeks restoration of jurisdiction-based emigration clearance system

IPEPCIL urges MEA-OE to roll back randomized EC allocation system

NEW DELHI: The Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council (IPEPCIL) has urged the Ministry of External Affairs – Overseas Employment (MEA-OE) to roll back the system-based randomized allocation of Emigration Clearance (EC) applications among the various Protector of Emigrants (POE) offices and restore the earlier POE jurisdiction-based EC system, which was functioning smoothly prior to January12, 2026.

Following the implementation of the Office Memorandum dated December10, 2025, EC applications of emigrants seeking employment, particularly in the GCC and Middle East destinations, have been subjected to system-based randomized allocation among different POE offices. According to IPEPCIL, the change has resulted in delays, repeated clarifications, rejections and uncertainty in the processing of EC applications, causing considerable hardship to emigrants as well as Overseas Recruitment Agencies (RAs), foreign employers and other stakeholders.

IPEPCIL stated that overseas employment is highly time-sensitive, and delays in obtaining EC can directly affect the deployment schedules of workers. In several instances, confirmed employment opportunities may be lost when workers are unable to reach the destination country within the stipulated timeframe. Such delays also affect foreign employers, who depend on the timely mobilization of manpower for ongoing projects and contractual (Cont. on page - 2)

Take a ferry to catch a flight in Kochi

KOCHI: It's not Hong Kong, but it is our own Kochi! Step out of a boat and walk into the airport through a check-in facility and boarding a flight without ever getting caught in road traffic. That is the vision taking shape in what could become India's first airport connected by a Water Metro service.

Drawing inspiration from Hong Kong's airport ferry model, the Kochi Water Metro is developing a proposal to connect a Water Metro terminal near the Aluva Metro station with the Kochi international airport. The proposed journey would cover 7.5km in just 12 minutes using smaller, high-speed electric boats travelling at around 20 knots.

"It is technically feasible. The challenge is flooding, so we have to identify the exact location carefully," Kochi Metro Rail Limited (KMRL) managing director Loknath Behera told a TV channel. A hydrological study, which will be (Cont. on page - 2)

Saudi Arabia expands 'Golden Visa' to attract global talent, investment

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is expanding its Premium Residency programme, popularly known as the "Golden Visa", to attract international investors, entrepreneurs, skilled professionals and high-value talent as part of its Vision 2030 transformation.

The programme now offers seven pathways, including Special Talent, Gifted, Investor, Entrepreneur and Real Estate Owner categories, alongside fixed-term and unlimited-term residency options.

The unlimited Premium Residency costs SAR 800,000 as a one-time fee, while the renewable option costs SAR 100,000 annually. The Real Estate route requires qualifying property investment of at least SAR 4 million, while the Investor route requires a minimum SAR 7 million investment in approved economic activities, subject to additional conditions. Premium Residency provides self-sponsorship, greater employment and business flexibility and various family and property benefits. Saudi Arabia has also intro- (Cont. on page - 2)

IPEPCIL urges MEA-OE to roll back randomized EC allocation system

(Cont. from page - 1)

commitments.

The Council further pointed out that repeated processing issues and uncertainties can lead to additional financial burdens on emigrants and recruitment agencies, while foreign employers may face project delays, manpower shortages and associated operational losses.

IPEPCIL Seeks Predictability, accountability and timely processing: In view of these challenges, an IPEPCIL delegation met the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) and submitted a memorandum seeking the withdrawal of the system-based randomized allocation mechanism and restoration of the earlier jurisdiction-based EC processing system.

IPEPCIL emphasized that its request is aimed not at weakening regulatory scrutiny or compliance requirements, but at ensuring that the EC process remains efficient, transparent, predictable, accountable and responsive to the legitimate needs of emigrants and the overseas employment ecosystem.

The Council believes that the jurisdiction-based system provided greater clarity to applicants and recruitment agencies by enabling them to approach the designated POE office responsible for processing their applications. Restoring such a system, with appropriate digital monitoring and safeguards, would help reduce avoidable delays and uncertainties while maintaining the necessary regulatory oversight.

"Timely EC is Critical to Protect Overseas Employment Opportunities": IPEPCIL highlighted that overseas workforce mobility involves multiple stakeholders, including emigrants, authorized recruitment agencies, foreign employers, project owners, airlines and government authorities. Any disruption at one stage can have a cascading impact across the entire mobility chain.

The Council therefore urged the MEA-OE to review the practical difficulties arising from the randomized allocation mechanism, consult the authorized recruitment agency fraternity and consider restoring the earlier jurisdiction-based system until a more effective and stakeholder-friendly mechanism is established.

IPEPCIL reiterated its commitment to working closely with MEA-OE and the PGE offices to strengthen the Emigration Clearance process through technology, transparency, compliance and stakeholder consultation, while ensuring that genuine emigrants are able to take up lawful overseas employment opportunities without avoidable hardship.

IPEPCIL believes that a predictable and time-bound EC mechanism is essential for building confidence among emigrants, recruitment agencies and foreign employers and for strengthening India's international workforce mobility in a safe, orderly, legal and ethical manner, said VS Abdulkareem, President, IPEPCIL.

Ex-Jazeera Airways veteran heads FLY91

Krishnan Balakrishnan

Jitendra Kushwah

MUMBAI: Regional airline, FLY91, has appointed aviation veterans Krishnan Balakrishnan as President and COO and Jitendra Kushwah as Chief Financial Officer. Both executives will report directly to Founder MD Manoj Chacko and will be part of the airline's core leadership team. The change in leadership at the regional airline follows changes of guard at two of India's largest airlines -- IndiGo and Air India. The two airlines recently appointed new CEOs to drive growth. FLY91 said that the appointments follow their measured expansion across southern and western India, with the airline presently operating across 12 destinations in its growing regional network.

Balakrishnan brings more than three decades of experience across the global aviation industry. He joins FLY91 from Jazeera Airways, Kuwait, where he spent eight years and most recently served as Deputy

(Cont. on page - 6)

IPEPCIL delegation meets newly...

(Cont. from page - 1)

with a shared commitment towards fostering greater co-operation between the government, industry stakeholders and destination countries to ensure that India's overseas employment framework continues to evolve in line with Global best practices, creating enhanced opportunities for Indian Workers while upholding the highest standards of fairness, transparency and emigrants welfare. Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council (IPEPCIL) delegation led by its President VSAbdulkareem held a meaningful and productive meeting with John Mai (IFS), the newly appointed Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) and MEA-OE in New Delhi.

Take a ferry to catch...

(Cont. from page - 1)

completed this week, will determine whether the ambitious project is environmentally feasible.

It will examine canal development requirements, possible changes in water flow and whether the service could affect surrounding areas. The findings, along with topographical inputs, will form the pre-feasibility report, after which traffic projection studies will be carried out before a detailed project report (DPR) is prepared.

The proposed route will begin near the Aluva Metro station, where passengers will access the Water Metro terminal through a skywalk connecting the two stations.

Boats will then travel through the Periyar river before entering Chengalthodu, which will be developed for the project and reach the rear side of the airport.

The Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) is planning to create a check-in area there for Water Metro passengers. "The plan is that passengers should be able to check in to the airport directly from the Water Metro terminal," said Water Metro chief operating officer Sajan P John.

Saudi Arabia expands...

(Cont. from page - 1)

duced new rules governing non-Saudi property ownership in designated areas. However, Premium Residency does not automatically lead to Saudi citizenship.

The expanded scheme underlines Riyadh's ambition to make the Kingdom a global destination for capital, talent and entrepreneurship, while creating new opportunities for international professionals and investors, including those from India.

'Akasa Elevate' to reward frequent flyers

MUMBAI: Akasa Air has launched Akasa Elevate, its loyalty programme designed to make every journey more rewarding. Built around what matters most to its customers, Akasa Elevate enables members to earn Elevate Points on eligible flights and ancillary products and services, unlock exclusive benefits through fast and easy tier progression and enjoy India's most rewarding way to fly.

Since taking to the skies in Aug 2022, Akasa Air has achieved several industry-defining milestones, serving nearly 30 million passengers and becoming the fastest-growing airline in Indian aviation history, as well as the first in India to induct more than 40 aircraft in such a short period. These achievements underscore the resilience of Akasa's business model and its unwavering fo-

(Cont. on page - 6)

LOOKING FOR JOBS ABROAD

Licensed agents Always contact licensed recruitment agents registered with the government. List available on www.emigrate.gov.in

Illegal Agents Avoid dealing with unregistered agents or brokers to prevent fraud.

ADVISORY TO OVERSEAS JOB ASPIRANTS FROM POEs

Legal recruiting agents follow the Emigration Act, 1983, ensuring transparency, ethics and worker protection.

Illegal agents bypass regulations, risking exploitation, fraud and unregulated practices that harm emigrants.

India's hospitality industry to grow nine per cent in FY27 despite West Asia war

MUMBAI: India's hospitality industry is expected to record nine per cent revenue growth in FY27, following an estimated 11pc expansion in FY26, driven primarily by robust domestic travel demand, according to ICRA.

The projection is based on ICRA's analysis of 15 large premium hotel companies, which account for a majority of the sector's revenues. ICRA anticipates pan-India premium hotel occupancy to remain at 72-74pc in 2026-27, similar to 2025-26 levels, while Average Room Rates (ARRs) for premium hotels are projected to increase to Rs 8,600-8,800 in 2026-27 from Rs 8,200-8,500 in 2025-26, the rating agency said.

ICRA's sample set is likely to report operating margins of 34-36pc in 2026-27, broadly similar to the 37pc reported in 2025-26. However, inflationary or operational pressure arising from the West Asia conflict, along with a potential weakening in travel sentiment if the situation persists, remain key downside risks. Foreign Tourist Arrivals (FTAs), comprising foreign nationals visiting India and excluding NRIs, have historically supported travel demand for the Indian hospitality industry.

In CY2025, FTAs declined 7.9pc, impacted by multiple headwinds, including terror attacks and the consequent retaliation, as well as broader geopolitical uncertainties. The West Asia conflict further weighed on inbound travel from March 2026, with FTAs contracting by five per cent and 14pc YoY in March 2026 and April 2026, respectively.

Srikumar Krishnamurthy, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head - Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said: "The West Asia conflict resulted in airspace closures and some moderation in discretionary travel, weighing on FTAs to India. FTAs contracted by 9.1pc YoY during March-April 2026 and by 2.4pc YoY in 4M CY2026 (Jan-April). However, the impact on the Indian hospitality industry remained contained as demand is largely driven by domestic travellers.

FOREX RATES

As on 10th August 2026 (In rupees)

Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	94.68	95.92
British Pound	127.33	129.18
Euro	108.75	111.06
Japanese Yen	59.76	60.72
Swiss Franc (CHF)	116.02	118.57
Canadian Dollar	67.23	68.75
Australian Dollar	66.28	67.75
Norwegian Krone	9.81	10.09
Swedish Krona	9.84	10.12
New Zealand Dollar	55.23	56.45
Hong Kong Dollar	11.91	12.28
Kuwaiti Dinar	317.0534	295.8843
Singapore Dollar	73.51	75.18
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.89	25.68
U A E Dirham	25.51	26.24

Can NRIs invest in RBI Floating Rate Savings Bonds?

MUMBAI: NRIs are prohibited from making new investments in RBI Floating Rate Savings Bonds; however, those who are existing holders may maintain their investments. The bonds offer an attractive interest rate of 8.05pc, bolstered by government guarantees. RBI Floating Rate Savings Bonds 2020 (Taxable) are among one of the lowest risk investment options as they are backed by the government of India.

The bond offers an 8.05pc interest rate at present and the rate is determined by the National Savings.

At certificate interest rate + 35 bps. Investors in India find it as an attractive investment option where they can get a high interest rate at a low risk.


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GULF FAQs

Difference between fraud and business dispute

Recently, a Dubai court acquitted a man in Dh1.6-million business dispute and distinguished fraud from loss. The judgment is significant for investors and NRIs involved in informal investment arrangements in the UAE. Can you please explain the case and its implications?

A Dubai criminal court has acquitted a man accused of misappropriating Dh1.6 million in an investment-related dispute, reinforcing the principle that failed business deals do not automatically amount to criminal offences. According to court records, the complainant had transferred money to the accused as part of a business investment arrangement that promised monthly returns. While some profits were initially paid, a significant amount remained unpaid after the business stopped operating and its owner reportedly left the country.

Prosecutors accused the defendant of breach of trust and misappropriation, arguing that the funds had been entrusted for a specific purpose and were unlawfully retained. However, the court ruled that the prosecution failed to provide sufficient evidence to prove criminal intent or dishonest appropriation of funds.

In its judgment, the court said the money was provided as part of an investment arrangement rather than a custodial trust, where funds are temporarily held on behalf of another party. The court also noted that profits had previously been paid, indicating that the parties were involved in an active commercial relationship. The ruling further stated that the evidence did not prove fraud, deliberate misuse of funds or intentional conversion of money for personal gain.

The court concluded that the dispute was, at most, a failed or disputed investment that could create civil or commercial liability rather than criminal liability. It stressed that criminal guilt must be established with certainty and not based on suspicion or incomplete evidence. Legal experts said the judgment is significant for investors, business partners and expatriates involved in informal investment arrangements in the UAE. Commenting on the case, Vishal Tinani, legal advisor on the case, said the decision makes clear that criminal courts should not be used as a tool for commercial recovery.

"For conviction in breach of trust or misappropriation cases, there must be proof of entrustment, dishonest conversion and criminal intent beyond a reasonable doubt," he said. He added that where funds are invested voluntarily and profits are shared, disputes are generally considered civil matters linked to investment risks rather than criminal appropriation. Tinani also warned investors and businesses to formalize transactions through written agreements and proper documentation, including banking records and clearly defined risk structures.

The case highlighted several common issues in private investment arrangements, including the absence of written agreements, informal promises of fixed monthly returns, poor documentation of transactions and reliance on personal trust instead of regulated financial structures. The defendant was acquitted due to insufficient evidence of criminal wrongdoing. However, the complainant still has the option to pursue civil remedies through the courts.

Legal experts said the ruling reflects the UAE judiciary's continued approach of separating genuine fraud cases from ordinary commercial disputes and directing business-related claims towards civil remedies such as damages, debt recovery and contract enforcement.

Do UAE labour laws limit working hours for maritime ship crew?

I am a crew of maritime ship. I work usually more than 48 hours per week and the company is confirming that my work type is exempted from the provisions relating to the maximum limit of working hours. Is it true?

It's true that your work as a crew of maritime ship is exempted from the provisions relating to the maximum limit of working hours, according to Article 15 of the Cabinet Resolution No. (1) Of 2022 Concerning the Executive Regulations of Federal Decree-Law No. (33) Of 2021 Regulating Labor Relations, (The following categories shall be exempted from the provisions relating to the maximum limit of working hours:

a. Chairmen and members of board of directors.

b. Persons occupying supervisory positions if the occupants of such positions enjoy the capacities of an employer.

c. Workers comprising the crew of maritime ships and workers employed at sea and enjoy special service conditions due to the nature of their work.

d. Activities whose technical nature require its performance in successive shifts or rounds provided that the average of working hours does not exceed 56 hours per week.

e. Preparatory or supplementary activities which are required to be performed outside the general time zones determined for work at the establishment.

Can an employer refuse compassionate leave?

My friend travelled in an unpaid leave to his country following the death of his step-son. He requested an additional five days of compassionate leave. Is he legally entitled to compassionate leave in these circumstances or can the company refuse the request? Is the unpaid leave counted in the worker's end of service dues?

The employer may refuse the employee's request for compassionate leave. Under Article 32 of the UAE Labour Law, bereavement leave is granted only in the event of the death of specific family members. A step-son is not among the relatives listed in the law. Furthermore, bereavement leave must commence from the date of death and cannot be claimed months after the event and just for three days in case of death of the son.

Article 32 of the labour law provides that (The worker shall be entitled to a paid leave in the following cases: a. A bereavement leave of five days, in case of death of the husband or wife and three days in case of death of the mother, father, son, brother, sister, grandson, grandfather or grandmother, starting from the date of death.)

The same Article also requires the employee to provide proof of the death issued by the relevant authorities in order to obtain the bereavement leave. Regarding the unpaid leave, the worker may, after obtaining the approval of the employer, have an unpaid leave.

The unpaid leave in accordance to Article 33 of the law, (shall not be included in the worker's service term at the employer or in the period of the contribution in the retirement scheme in accordance with the legislation in force in this regard.

Air India, Azerbaijan Airlines Join hands to boost India-Baku connectivity

NEW DELHI: Air India and Azerbaijan Airlines (AZAL) are set to strengthen air connectivity between India and Azerbaijan through a strategic codeshare partnership, offering travellers greater choice and more convenient connections to Baku, the Azerbaijani capital.

The partnership is expected to make travel between the two countries more seamless by allowing passengers to access connecting flights under a common booking arrangement. It will also expand the reach of both airlines beyond their respective networks. For Indian travellers, the co-operation is particularly significant for tourism, business and cultural travel to Azerbaijan, while providing AZAL with stronger access to India's growing international aviation market. The agreement comes as Air India continues to expand its global partnership network through codeshares and interline arrangements. In March, the airline launched a similar partnership with Uzbekistan Airways to improve connectivity between India and Central Asia.

Baku, meanwhile, is rapidly strengthening its position as a regional aviation hub, with Heydar Aliyev International Airport continuing to add international routes and airline partnerships. The Air India - AZAL co-operation could therefore give a further boost to India - Azerbaijan tourism, trade and people-to-people links, while offering passengers more flexible travel.

Vizag to become major digital hub, to provide 52,000 jobs

AMARAVATI (Andhra): Visakhapatnam is set to become one of India's largest digital infrastructure hubs and its growing data centre ecosystem is expected to create nearly 52,000 jobs and fuel demand for 2.33 crore sq ft of residential real estate, the government said, citing a private Research report.

The report estimates that the proposed data centre projects in Visakhapatnam will generate 51,840 jobs, including 3,240 direct jobs and 48,600 jobs across allied sectors such as construction, electrical works, logistics, warehousing, transport, hospitality, retail, maintenance and other support services.

According to the report, the biggest impact of data centres will not be limited to the campuses themselves, instead, they will create an entire ecosystem of businesses and services around them, attracting investments in power, fibre connectivity, utilities, logistics and commercial infrastructure. This, in turn, is expected to create new employment opportunities and accelerate economic activity across the region.

Further, it is projected that this growth will drive demand for 2.33 crore sq ft of residential real estate in and around Visakhapatnam as more people move to the city for jobs and businesses expand to support the growing digital economy.

Commercial spaces, warehouses, retail centres and civic infrastructure are also expected to see significant growth. Data centres are emerging as the next big driver of urban growth in India by attracting large-scale investments and creating a strong ecosystem of ancillary industries.

'Akasa Elevate'...

(Cont. from page - 2)

cus on customer-led innovation and sustainable growth.

At the core of Akasa Air's growth journey is a rapidly expanding base of loyal and repeat customers whose trust, feedback and evolving travel preferences have helped shape the Akasa Experience. Akasa Elevate is designed to reward customer loyalty with greater value, personalised recognition and enhanced travel benefits, while building on the warm and dependable service that customers have come to expect from Akasa Air.

New reservation system to roll o ut 1.5 lakh tickets per minute

NEW DELHI: Indian Railways is set to roll out a vastly upgraded Passenger Reservation System (PRS) that can process over 1.5 lakh ticket bookings per minute, a quantum leap from the current capacity of about 32,000 bookings aminute, as the national transporter moves to a cloud-enabled, next-generationplatform to cope with surging digital demand. The new system, which will replace the existing PRS deployed in 2010 on Itanium servers and the Open VMS platform, is designed to handle over 40 lakh enquiries per minute, up from around four lakh at present, while offering amultilingual, user-friendly interface for both booking and enquiries. Railway officials say the upgrade will deliver greater scalability, flexibility and reliability to support passengers.

Air India to restore flights from Sept 1

MUMBAI: Air India is set to restore most of the flight services it had curtailed during July and August, beginning Sept 1, as the airline prepares to expand operations during the upcoming winter schedule.

According to an internal company memo, the airline will bring back several suspended and reduced services while also increasing flight frequencies on important international routes. The move comes after Air India temporarily reduced its operations due to rising fuel prices and other operational pressures that affected its network planning.

The airline is expected to add additional frequencies on routes connecting India with major global destinations, including Milan, Frankfurt, Zurich, Vienna, Melbourne, Tokyo and New York. Air India had announced a temporary reduction in its international operations earlier this year after facing increased fuel expenses. The airline had cut nearly 100 international flights between June and August, reducing its international capacity by up to 27pc. During the same period, the carrier suspended services on several routes, including Delhi-Chicago, Delhi-Newark, Mumbai-New York, Delhi-Shanghai, Chennai-Singapore, Mumbai-Dhaka and Delhi-Male.

However, the carrier continues to face financial pressure due to high operating costs. According to figures released by Singapore Airlines Group in its annual financial report, Air India recorded a loss of more than SG$3.56 billion, equivalent to over Rs 26,700 crore, during the financial year ended March 2026.

The airline later implemented reductions in domestic operations as well. Sources indicated that domestic services were reduced by around 20-22pc during July and August. With Air India operating nearly 3,600 domestic flights every week, the cut resulted in the suspension of more than 790 weekly flights at the higher end of the reduction range.

Ex-Jazeera Airways...

(Cont. from page - 2)

CEO. Prior to that, he was Chief Financial Officer at GoAir and also held several senior leadership positions at Jet Airways and Transwest Helicopters in Canada.

At FLY91, he will lead the airline's day-to-day operations, drive operational excellence across the organisation and work closely with aircraft manufacturers and strategic partners to support the airline's continued expansion.