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Schengen-style single GCC tourist visa soon

ABU DHABI: The long-awaited unified GCC tourist visa will "see the light soon", the Gulf bloc's secretary-general has said, indicating that the Schengen-style permit is moving closer to launch.

Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, Secretary-General of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), said the visa would make it eas-



Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi
ier for international visi-
tors to travel between all
six-member states.

His comments came during a special session at the Security and History Dialogue 2026 in Riyadh. He did not specify a launch date or give further details about the visa's cost, validity or application process.

The unified permit, also

referred to as the GCC Grand Tourist Visa, is expected to allow foreign tourists to visit the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait on a single visa, similar to how the Schengen visa facilitates travel across several European countries.

The permit had been approved, with implementation being handled

by interior ministries and other relevant authorities. The unified tourist visa proposal was unanimously approved by GCC tourism ministers in Oct 2023. The following month, GCC interior ministers approved the unified Gulf tourist visa, moving the scheme further towards implementation.

(Cont. on page - 2)

TOURISM FRATERNITY FROM ACROSS INDIA TO CONVERGE FOR THREE DAYS OF BUSINESS SESSIONS, NETWORKING, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

41st IATO annual convention set to put Visakhapatnam in the spotlight of Indian tourism

VISAKHAPATNAM: The 41st Annual Convention of the Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) is all set to commence in Visakhapatnam on September 10, 2026, bringing together the country's leading stakeholders from across the travel, tourism and hospitality ecosystem.

The three-day conven-

tion is expected to provide a vibrant platform for tour operators, travel professionals, hospitality stakeholders, Destination Management Companies, tourism service providers, government officials and industry leaders from across India to connect,



Ravi Gosain

deliberate and explore new opportunities for the growth of Indian tourism.

Senior officials from the Department of Tourism (DOT), Ministry of Tourism (MOT) and other government and regulatory institutions, along with prom-

(Cont. on page - 2)



Click & Travel 15-second immigration service launched at Dubai airport

DUBAI: Dubai has launched a new airport service that could change how passengers complete immigration procedures during busy periods and emergencies. The General Directorate of Identity and Foreigners Affairs, Dubai, or GDRFA Dubai, has introduced "Click & Travel", a mobile service that allows passport control officers to go directly to passengers and complete entry or departure procedures wherever they are inside the airport terminal.

Instead of passengers having to reach a fixed immigration counter, the service comes to them.

Passport control officers use mobile devices connected to GDRFA Dubai's systems and databases to access passenger information and complete the required procedures. The service also uses biometric verification technology to confirm a passenger's identity.

According to GDRFA Dubai, identity verification and transaction com-

pletion can take approximately 12 to 15 seconds. The mobile system allows officers to move around the airport terminal and reach passengers where they are.

GDRFA Dubai said that the service will be expanded in line with approved plans and as and when operational requirements arise. "Click & Travel" will be in action in certain situations.

The mobile service has been designed particu-

(Cont. on page - 6)

Salaries drive Oman expats' income

MUSCAT: The Household Income and Expenditure Survey, conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), shows that the average income of a non-Omani household is RO 717.15. Currently, 43.40pc of Oman's population are expatriates.

Salary is the main component of this income (RO 686.38). The average income of a non-Omani in the government sector is RO 1,667.97, compared with RO 687.58 in the private sector. As of July

2026, there are 39,627 expatriates in the government sector, compared with 1,406,283 in the private sector. The average monthly per capita income of a non-Omani is RO 172.73; of this, the urban per capita income is

(Cont. on page - 2)





India's role in BRICS

As New Delhi is all set to host the 18th BRICS Leaders' Summit on Sept 12-13, India's BRICS presidency is guided by the theme "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Co-operation and Sustainability". Addressing internal trade imbalances and China's dominance will be critical.

BRICS remains indispensable for India's strategic autonomy and Global South leadership. Nevertheless, internal economic asymmetries, structural trade deficits and China-centric dominance pose severe challenges. To counter these vulnerabilities, India's 2026 chairmanship must prioritise financial de-colonisation, digital leadership and result-oriented reforms rather than allowing the bloc to serve single-nation geopolitical interests. By fostering a cohesive, equitable framework, India can transform BRICS into an effective, balanced force capable of driving genuine global governance reform. By championing alternative financial architectures and digital public infrastructure during its presidency, India can steer the bloc toward result-oriented co-operation, ensuring it evolves into a balanced, equitable force capable of driving meaningful reform in international governance.



BRICS is an intergovernmental forum of major emerging economies and developing countries that co-ordinates positions on global economic, political, financial and developmental issues. Evolution from BRIC to BRICS+: The term "BRIC" was coined by British economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in his 2001 paper, Building Better Global Economic BRICs. The acronym originally represented Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa joined to add S (BRICS). BRICS is generally identified with South-South Co-operation, emerging-market co-ordination, multilateralism and the Global BRICS expanded to BRICS+ with the admission of Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE as new members in January 2024, followed by Indonesia in January 2025. However, while Saudi Arabia is listed as a member on the official BRICS website, it has not yet formally confirmed or finalised its membership. BRICS is an informal, consensus-based intergovernmental grouping, rather than a treaty-based international organisation. It does not have a founding charter, permanent secretariat or supranational authority comparable to the UN or European Union. BRICS decisions are taken through consultation and consensus, and are expressed primarily through summit declarations, ministerial statements, action plans and memoranda of understanding.

India can simultaneously participate in BRICS and SCO, maintain its partnership with Russia and deepen co-operation with the Quad, G20, European Union and the United States. BRICS therefore complements India's policy of multi-alignment, under which engagement is determined by specific national interests rather than permanent bloc politics.

It may be recalled that India was one of the four countries that initiated formal BRIC political co-operation and participated in the first summit in 2009. India has hosted BRICS summits in New Delhi in 2012, Goa in 2016 and virtually in 2021. In 2012, at the Fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi, India proposed the creation of a new multilateral development bank to mobilise resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects. The first President of the NDB was an Indian banker K V Kamath.

BRICS activities are organised broadly around three principal pillars. Meetings are held among foreign ministers, national security advisers and other senior officials. Co-ordination also takes place in multilateral forums such as the UN, G20, World Trade Organisation, IMF and World Bank.

India can propose an Implementation Index containing project deadlines, financial commitments, responsible agencies and measurable outcomes to address the persistent gap between summit declarations and implementation.

LIPSYNCH

"It is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation."
— Herman Melville

41st IATO annual convention...

(Cont. from page - 1)
inent professionals from the hospitality and travel trade, will participate in the convention. The programme features a series of business sessions, panel discussions, keynote addresses and interactive deliberations focusing on emerging trends, challenges and opportunities shaping the future of Indian tourism.

The convention will also provide valuable opportunities for B2B networking, destination promotion and trade engagement, with an exhibition showcasing tourism products and services.

The participation of stakeholders from different segments of the industry is expected to facilitate new business partnerships and strengthen collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Another highlight of the convention will be the IATO Run, organised with

the message of responsible and sustainable tourism. The initiative seeks to underline the industry's collective responsibility towards protecting destinations, promoting sustainable tourism practices and creating a more responsible tourism ecosystem for future generations.

With a carefully structured three-day programme and a blend of business, knowledge, networking, destination experiences and responsible tourism initiatives, the 41st IATO Annual Convention is poised to become an important industry platform for discussing the road ahead for Indian tourism.

The convention comes at

a significant time when India is witnessing renewed momentum in domestic and international tourism, with growing emphasis on destination development, sustainable tourism, experiential travel, technology, infrastructure and stronger industry-government collaboration.

The gathering in Visakhapatnam is therefore expected to go beyond being an annual industry convention, serving as a catalyst for new ideas, partnerships and business opportunities, while reinforcing the tourism industry's collective commitment to positioning India as a leading global tourism destination.

Civil flight operations end at Vizag airport

VISAKHAPATNAM:

At 10.45 pm on Sunday (August 16), IndiGo flight 6E2018 to Delhi took

off from the Visakhapatnam International Airport, bringing an end to more than four decades of scheduled commercial aviation from the city. From 12.01 am on Monday, the VTZ code and scheduled airline operations moved

(Cont. on page - 6)

Salaries drive Oman expats...

(Cont. from page - 1)

RO 171.32 and the rural per capita income is RO 126.72.

The monthly expenditure of a non-Omani household is RO 402.48. This spending is divided among housing, water, electricity, gas, and other fuels (48pc), food and beverages (16.5pc), transport (6.6pc), education services (5.2pc) and restaurants and accommodation (5.25pc), among others.

According to NCSI data, there are 94,103 expatriates employed as administrators, directors, or managers; 118,968 in sales occupations; 617,202 in service sectors; 100,894 in industrial, chemical and food industries and 700,039 in principal, luxury and engineering occupations.

Indians can visit Uzbekistan visa-free

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan has announced a 30-day visa-free entry regime for Indian citizens, opening up one of Central Asia's most fascinating destinations to easier travel from India. The announcement was made by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during his delegation-level talks with Prime Minister Modi in Tashkent during Modi's two-day state visit to Uzbekistan.

The goal of this new policy is to boost travel, trade and cultural ties between the two nations.

Bilateral trade between India and Uzbekistan has crossed \$1 billion for the first time, with joint ventures rising seven-fold and 14 weekly direct flights operating

Schengen-style single...

(Cont. from page - 1)

In June 2025, UAE Minister of Economy Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri had said that the single GCC tourist visa had been approved and was awaiting implementation.

At the time, an exact launch date had not been announced, while the cost and duration of the visa also remained undisclosed.

Al Marri described the unified permit as a step towards deeper regional integration and strengthening the Gulf's appeal as a

single tourism destination. Albudaiwi referred to the visa while listing a series of projects aimed at deepening integration and making movement between GCC countries easier.

He pointed to the UAE-Bahrain single-point air travel project as one example. "You complete passport procedures in Bahrain and when you arrive in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah or any city, you enter without stopping at an immigration officer," Albudaiwi said during the Riyadh dialogue.

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FOREX RATES
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Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	94.7	95.95
British Pound	128.32	130.2
Euro	109.88	112.22
Japanese Yen	61.74	62.73
Swiss Franc (CHF)	116.51	119.15
Canadian Dollar	68.29	69.83
Australian Dollar	68.14	69.66
Norwegian Krone	10.18	10.48
Swedish Krona	9.77	10.06
New Zealand Dollar	55.12	56.34
Hong Kong Dollar	11.92	12.29
Kuwaiti Dinar	316.37	305.08
Singapore Dollar	74.6	76.27
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.89	25.69
U A E Dirham	25.51	26.25

Amazon creates 1.6 lakh seasonal jobs; Meesho to add 10 lakh staff ahead of festive season

MUMBAI: With India's festive season already in, consumers are gearing up to make the most of a wave of discounts on everything from electronics and fashion to groceries and gifts, e-commerce giants are stepping up hiring to meet the anticipated surge in demand. From warehouses and fulfilment centres to last-mile delivery, companies are expanding their workforce to handle the festive rush. Amazon India said it is offering more than 1.6 lakh temporary positions across its operations network, which supports both its e-commerce and quick-commerce businesses.

The company said: "These include direct and indirect work opportunities across 400 cities in India, spanning large metros as well as tier 2 and 3 cities like Varanasi, Kochi, Jalandhar, Ghaziabad, Ranchi, Salem, Gorakhpur, and others.

Amazon has created opportunities for thousands of women and associates with disabilities in its network. The new associates will join Amazon's existing

pan-India operations network, helping pick, pack, ship and deliver customer orders safely and reliably while supporting the growing demand during the festive period."

In a statement, Abhinav Singh, Vice President of Operations, Amazon India, APAC, Middle East, Africa and Turkiye, said: "This expanded workforce will help us strengthen our fulfillment and logistics capabilities and ensure we can handle the festive season seamlessly. g time and gift delivery is a good

business.

The e-commerce marketplace termed the festive season an important period for businesses across the ecosystem. Meesho said: "This year, we expect to enable over 10 lakh seasonal job opportunities... Nearly 1.3 lakh sellers are expected to hire seasonal workers across packaging, manufacturing, production, warehousing and inventory management, as they build inventory, launch new products and expand their festive collections."

We are very pleased to announce that, **one** is coming out with a special Saudi National Day e-supplement on 22nd September, 2026 along with the regular issue.

This special e-supplement will carry highly researched and informative features, articles and photographs — all exclusively on the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This edition will be e-presented to the heads of several missions in India and to our embassies abroad, apart from corporate houses and top political leaders.

Saudi Arabia is a major trade partner of India and to further strengthen the friendship and trade relations between Saudi Arabia and India, our special edition will be communicating goodwill messages to His Highness King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the people of the Royal Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

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GULF FAQs

Can I hire a maid from India?

I understand there are several laws regarding hiring live-in maids. I plan to bring one from India. Could you explain the rules?

Pursuant to your query, as you intend to recruit the domestic worker from India, it is required that the proposed domestic worker should have an ECR (Emigration Check Required) on its passport. The provisions of Federal Decree Law No. 9 of 2022 Concerning Domestic Workers (the "UAE Domestic Workers Law") are applicable with regards to employment of domestic workers in the UAE.

The Article 11 of the UAE Domestic Workers Law states the obligations of an employer include providing appropriate accommodation, facilities to perform work, meals and clothing necessary to perform the duties, timely payment of salary, provide medical care, respect and be cour-

teous to the worker, incur costs of repatriation etc.

Further, the obligations of the domestic workers are stated in Article 12 of the UAE Domestic Workers Law and the said law also states obligations of a recruitment agencies Article 5, employment contract of the domestic workers in Article 6 & 7, with regards to working hours Article 9 and Article 22 on the payment of gratuity to the domestic workers. As you intend to hire a domestic worker from India, you need to initially register with the e-Migrant web portal (www.emigrate.gov.in) of Government of India (e-Migrant).

Once you fill in the relevant information and submit the documents of the employer and proposed domestic worker and submit a request letter to the Consulate General of India, Dubai, in the aforesaid e-Migrant you will receive login credentials at your registered email address with e-Migrant.

Thereafter, once your e-Migrant portal is registered you may have to approach Consulate General

test the documents of the maid who is a resident in the UAE. As a sponsor of proposed domestic worker's employment visa you may have to sign an affidavit confirming that you are not related to the said proposed domestic worker and the same affidavit will

tificate duly attested in India as well as in UAE, tenancy contract and ejari of the rented apartment (at least two bed room) or a copy title deed of your residential property which is owned by you (at least two bed room), utility bill issued by DEWA, copy of your bank statement, copy of your employment contract and salary certificate issued by your employer. If you are self-employed or a business owner, you may have to submit copy of your entity/firm's licence copy along with the aforesaid listed documents, except employment contract. Further, you need to have a minimum salary criterion on which makes you eligible to



Can your employer force you out of staff housing after terminating your contract?

I have been terminated from my job and my employer has asked me to vacate the accommodation he provided to me during my employment. He has also refused to reimburse me for the furniture delivery costs that he had agreed to pay under the employment contract. Am I entitled to remain in the accommodation until he pays these costs?

As a general rule, the employer may provide the worker with proper accommodation or may pay to him an accommodation allowance in cash or including it in the wage. However, the employee does not have an

indefinite right to remain in accommodation provided by the employer after the termination of the employment relationship, as the accommodation is generally provided in connection with the employment and thus the employee is required to vacate within 30 days from the end of service unless otherwise agreed with the employer.

According to Article (16 /10) of the labour law, the employee must " Evacuate the accommodation provided by the employer, within a period not exceeding 30 days from the date of end of his service. However, the worker may stay in the accommodation after the end of the

said period, in case of the employer's approval, and the worker shall bear the cost of stay or as agreed upon in writing with the employer; "On the other hand, the employer must pay to you all the amounts agreed upon in the contract including the furniture delivery costs. In case he refused to pay, the employee may file a complaint before the Labour Office to claim such costs on the grounds that the labour contract constitutes the law governing the contracting parties and shall be performed in accordance with its contents and in a manner consistent with the requirements of good faith.

be attested by the Consulate General of India, Dubai. While approaching the third-party service provider centre you must carry with you the relevant documents related to applying for domestic worker employment visa.

Once the above procedures are completed, you may apply for the employment visa (entry permit) of the proposed domestic worker through Ministry of Human Resources & Emiratization (the MOHRE) approved third party service providers in the emirate of Dubai.

You as an individual who wish to recruit a domestic worker in the UAE, may have to fulfil requirements such as providing copy of the your passport, visa page, original emirates ID, copy of passport for the proposed domestic employee, passport size photo (with white back ground) of the proposed domestic employee., copy of passport, visa page and emirates ID of your spouse, copy of your marriage cer-

employ a domestic worker in the UAE. The above documents need to be submitted to the approved third-party service provider/s in Dubai and pay the fee to MOHRE.

Further, once you receive the offer letter issued in MOHRE approved format and the entry permit issued by General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs, Dubai (the 'GDRFA'), you may submit the said documents and all the aforementioned documents to the third-party service provider centre. Once the entry permit of the domestic worker is attested by the third-party service provider centre, an agreement will be generated through e-Migrant and the said agreement will be sent to the proposed domestic worker.

Thereafter, the agreement with attested entry permit will be sent to the Protector of Emigrants (PoE), India to get emigration clearances for the proposed domestic worker to travel to UAE.

Oil prices flare up as Iran tightens grip on Hormuz

LONDON: Oil prices hovered above \$100 a barrel on Thursday, a day after Iran said it attacked more than a dozen vessels trying to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Tehran tightened its grip on the vital oil and gas shipping route, expanding a no-go zone outside the waterway where it has restricted traffic since the

war with the US began on Feb 28.

The price of Brent crude, the benchmark international contract, was \$101.28 per barrel in early Asian trade on Thursday, after spiking above \$100 the day before for the first time since July. The jump in crude prices came after Iranian state media reported that Tehran's

Revolutionary Guards attacked two US vessels, eight oil tankers and 10 "non-compliant vessels" trying to pass through the strait, which normally carries around a fifth of the world's oil.

British maritime monitor UKMTO said "several merchant vessels in the Northern Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman" -- which surround the strait -- were "subject to disabling fire as part of ongoing military activity in the region".

President Trump pledged that oil prices would come down "as soon as" the US wins the war, which has



added parts of the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea to a new "prohibited zone" on Wednesday, saying exact co-ordinates will be announced later.

"If a vessel enters that area without coordination, it will be subject to our sanctions," Guards spokesman Hossein Mohebi told state television.

Iran has asserted control of the Hormuz strait since the war broke out in February, with traffic through the waterway virtually paralysed. Tehran requires vessels to obtain permission and pay transit fees before using the strait. Trump said Wednesday the war would conclude right after the mid-term elections in November because Iran "can't hold out any longer"

hit an impasse more than six months after US-Israeli strikes on Tehran triggered the conflict.

"Oil will be going down as soon as we win the war with Iran," Trump told Republicans in Texas, as the party struggles in polls against the Democrats. "We're winning it. We control the Hormuz Strait," he said, repeating his suggestion of renaming the waterway as "Trump Strait". Trump's optimism came despite Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guards

Mauritius records 14.5pc rise in Indian tourist arrivals

MUMBAI: Mauritius recorded a 14.5pc rise in Indian tourist arrivals during the first seven months of 2026, with more than 51,000 Indian visitors travelling to the island between January and July.

The Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority recently engaged travel professionals across four Indian cities to promote the destination beyond its popular beaches and honeymoon experiences. Mauritius is highlighting its visa-free access for Indian travellers, direct air connectivity and diverse offerings, including luxury holidays, family vacations, adventure, wellness, golf, MICE and destination weddings. With its

natural beauty, rich culture and year-round attractions, Mauritius is seeking to strengthen its position as a preferred destination for Indian travellers.

Diwali airfares soar, regional routes see up to 340pc rise

NEW DELHI: Airfares on several domestic routes have surged sharply ahead of the Diwali and festive travel season, with prices on some regional sectors rising by as much as 340pc amid strong demand and limited seat availability. Fares on routes such as Kolkata-Deoghar, Bengaluru-Jharsuguda and Delhi-Patna have recorded particularly steep increases, with some one-way economy tickets now costing two to three times their usual levels.

The sharp rise is being attributed to high festive demand, limited flight options, fleet constraints and higher aviation fuel costs.

Civil flight operations end at Vizag airport

(Cont. from page - 2) about 50 km north to the new Alluri Sitarama Raju (ASR) International Airport at Bhogapuram in Vizianagaram district.

The shift marks more than a change of airport. For generations, the Visakhapatnam airport was part of the city's growth and everyday life. It was where journeys began, families reunited and many took their first flight.

As per the Ministry of Civil Aviation's Gazette notification issued on July 28, the VTZ code was transferred to the Bhogapuram airport from August 17. The Civil Enclave at INS Dega, however, will continue to handle non-scheduled

commercial operations, including charter and private flights. A General Aviation Terminal is placed for such operations.

Airport Director N Purushottam while announcing the conclusion of commercial services, thanked the Indian Navy, CISF, airlines, ground-handling agencies, regulatory authorities, concessionaires and employees for their contribution to the airport's operations over the years.

The airport began as a Royal Air Force airfield during World War II. Civilian operations followed, while the Indian Navy later developed the facility into INS Dega. Over the years, it expanded its domestic

network and introduced international services to destinations such as Dubai, Singapore and Bangkok. Connections to Colombo and Kuala Lumpur were also facilitated. The airport also played a role in cargo movement, including seafood and shrimp exports.

The transition has, however, raised concerns among nearly 800 outsourced employees, including porters, ground staff and housekeeping workers. "We were like a family here. Four out of our 24 porters have found jobs at the new airport, while the rest of us are uncertain. Travelling to Bhogapuram every day will be difficult," porters at the airport said.

Canada deports Indian family after eight years amid rejected asylum

CHANDIGARH: A Punjabi family that arrived in Canada in 2018 has been deported to India after Canadian authorities rejected its asylum claim and subsequent request to remain in the country on humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

The family, originally from Punjab's Jalandhar and residing in Quebec, had spent nearly eight years in Canada, where

the parents worked, paid taxes and raised their two children.

The family's deportation came after their asylum application was rejected on the grounds that Canadian authorities did not accept their claim that they faced a threat to their lives in India. Their humanitarian and compassionate application was also rejected before they were put on a flight to India.

Click & Travel 15-second...

(Cont. from page - 1) ing points but will also improve passenger flow. Usually, the passenger goes to the immigration service. With "Click & Travel," the immigration service can go to the passenger. Lt-Gen Mohammed Ahmed Al Marri, Director General of Identity and Foreigners Affairs, Dubai, said the initiative reflects a move beyond simply improving procedures towards redesigning the passenger experience.

Instead of relying on fixed service points, airport teams will be able to send passport control officers directly to where the passengers are. This will not only cut down on wait-