



# OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

## PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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## UAE crackdown on illegal recruitments

**ABU DHABI:** MOHRE has announced it took legal actions against 55 entities for “illegal” recruitment activities.

The crackdown was also extended to five social media accounts that were operating without the required licences. The action was taken in co-ordination with the Telecommunications and Digital Government Regulatory Authority (TDRA).

**MOHRE posted on its X account:** “Our inspection team has successfully identified 1,077 private companies that hired 1,818 UAE nationals with the attempt to circumvent Emiratisation targets and engaging in fake Emiratisation – from mid-2022 to date. Such illegal practices that aim to avoid legal commitments will

be dealt with firmly and according to the law. We encourage the public to report any practices conflicting with Emiratisation policies and decisions by reaching out to the call centre at 600590000 or using the Ministry’s smart App and website.”

As a part of the administrative actions taken, the entities were subjected to financial penalties and faced restrictions within the ministry’s records. Furthermore, legal proceedings were initiated by referring these cases to the Public Prosecution. In addition, the accounts of the violating social media platforms were also seized and subsequently blocked.

Under the UAE law regulating labour relations, the recruitment or

temporary employment of domestic workers is strictly prohibited without securing the appropriate licences from MOHRE. Violators of this law are subject to severe penalties, including imprisonment for a minimum of one year and fines ranging from Dh2 lakh to Dh1 million or either of these penalties.

Khalil Al Khouri, Undersecretary for Human Resources Affairs, clarified that the UAE laws explicitly prohibit recruitment and mediation activities without the licences issued by the ministry, as outlined in the Law Regulating Labour Relations. He emphasised that the ministry will rigorously enforce legal procedures and penalties on any entity found to be

(Cont. on page-2)

## MAJOR VICTORY FOR INDIAN DIPLOMACY Qatar frees eight ex-Indian navy men

**NEW DELHI:** In a major diplomatic triumph for India, Qatar freed navy veterans jailed on espionage charges. Of the eight former Navy officers, seven have already returned to India, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) informed.

The released were identified as Capt Navtej Singh Gill, Capt Birendra Kumar Verma, Capt Saurabh Vasisht, Com Amit Nagpal, Com Sugunakar Pakala, Com Sanjeev Gupta and Sailor Ragesh. Com Purnendu Tiwari, whose death sentence was commuted but still received the harshest punishment of a 25-year life term, hasn’t returned yet. He, too, is expected to be back in India soon.

Originally sentenced to death, seven out of the eight former Indian navy personnel were released

from Qatar’s custody and brought back to India. “The government of India welcomes the release of eight Indian nationals working for the Dahra Global company who were detained in Qatar. Seven out of the eight of them have returned to India.

We appreciate the decision by the Emir of the State of Qatar to enable the release and home-coming of these nationals”, the MEA statement said.

A family member of one of the eight ex-navy men said: “Our veterans are back. We are immensely grateful to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his personal intervention and also to the Emir of Qatar for agreeing to their release. We were told about their release and journey back home once they had boarded their flights late last night”.

## Flooding in UAE

**ABU DHABI:** Safety alerts were issued and speed limits imposed as large parts of the UAE were lashed by heavy rain, hail, thunder and lightning overnight and into Monday morning. Thunder rumbled and lightning streaked across the skies in Abu Dhabi and Dubai in the early hours.

## Overseas jobs a major source to tackle India’s unemployment

**MUMBAI:** Government-approved HR agencies play a pivotal role in facilitating the movement of expatriate population abroad. They contribute by identifying suitable candidates managing the recruitment process and ensuring a smooth transition for individuals relocating for work abroad. These agencies streamline the complex logistics involved in international placements, including visa processes, PDoT, legal compliances etc. Thus, provided on average of 20 lakh overseas employments to Indian emigrants every year over a period of three decades, pointed out VS Abdulkareem,



**VS Abdulkareem**  
IPEPCIL President

president of Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council (IPEPCIL).

By connecting skilled professionals with global opportunities, HR agencies contribute to the growth of an expatriate population. This in turn, aids in knowledge ex-

change, cultural diversity and economic collaboration between countries. The expertise of HR agencies helps match talent with specific job requirements, fostering a global workforce that can contribute effectively in various industries across borders.

Overall, international placements for Indian personnel by HRAs, play crucial role in building a skilled, globally connected workforce and contribute to India’s economy growth and global influence, Abdulkareem said.

India has the

demographic advantage of a large, young, working-age population and in combination with skills and language training, Indians can be the best resource for new emerging

(Cont. on page-2)

## FOREX RATES

As on 13th Feb, 2024 (In rupees)

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	83.85	82.80
Euro	90.59	89.39
Australian Dollar	55.62	53.92
Japanese Yen	0.62	0.54
Canadian Dollar	62.67	61.47
Singapore Dollar	62.71	61.51
Swedish krona	8.93	7.14
UAE Dirham	23.20	22.45
Swiss Franc	95.92	94.22
British Pound	105.85	104.65
New Zealand Dollar	51.89	49.89
Thai Baht	2.42	2.21
Hong Kong Dollar	11.57	10.21
Saudi Arabian Riyal	22.84	21.89
Bahraini Dinar	226.17	212.17
Chinese Yuan	12.44	10.64
Danish Krone	12.52	11.52
Kuwaiti Dinar	275.46	259.46
Malaysian Ringgit	18.42	17.07
Omani Rial	221.63	209.63
Qatari Riyal	23.80	21.30
South African Rand	4.86	3.86

## GOODWILL MESSAGE

**Bramha Kumar**  
Indian Foreign Service (IFS)  
Joint Secretary (G) and  
Protector General of Emigrants  
Tel: 611-2602026  
E-mail: pge@mea.gov.in



Message

It gives me great pleasure to note the launch of e-Newspaper, 'One, Overseas News and Employment', a Unit of FlyCreative Online Pvt. Ltd, that would widen the visibility of overseas news and employment opportunities for Indian job seekers. I congratulate them for this endeavour.

In today's interconnected world, staying informed about global events and accessing international job opportunities is more critical than ever. I believe that the e-newspaper would serve as a trusted source for timely and relevant information, empowering the migrant workers to make informed decisions and stay abreast of trends of job opportunities around the world.

I also believe this digital platform would offer a dedicated section for overseas job opportunities, focusing on sectors where migrant workers commonly find employment. Include details about work and job-related resources to help them navigate the job market successfully. Also, would create forums or community spaces where migrant workers can connect, share experiences, and offer support to one another. Building a sense of community can help alleviate feelings of isolation and provide a valuable network for individuals in a new environment.

I again congratulate all the members associated with this initiative. I hope the e-newspaper would contribute immensely with wider accessibility and reliability among Indian migrant workers. Wish you all success.

Dated: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024

*Bramha Kumar*  
Joint Secretary (Overseas Employment) &  
Protector General of Emigrants

# Indian business elite fears UAE curbs on private tuition being mugged in London

**LONDON:** Business executives from India are voicing their concerns about visiting even the most high-end parts of London due to the fear of having their expensive watches and handbags stolen.

Devin Narang, the founder and partner at Sundev Renewables and an executive member of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, told channel that a lot of senior executives of Indian companies had been “mugged right in the heart of [London’s up-market district of] Mayfair” creating a fear of the so-called Rolex Ripper crime wave.

“These are issues which need to be addressed,” he said.

“People will travel – and people are travelling – but you need to look over your shoulder, you need to be careful what you’re wearing.” Narang raised the issue of crime in London during a meeting in Delhi with the UK’s shadow foreign minister David Lammy.

Police recently released dramatic footage of undercover officers acting as bait to arrest gangs of thieves responsible for some of the millions of pounds’ worth of luxury watch robberies in central London. The officers posed as members of the public wearing luxury watches and were targeted by gang members, who engaged them in conversation and then attempted to rip the timepieces from their wrists, before police moved in swiftly to arrest the thieves. CCTV footage of four robberies were released by the Met Police at a time when the theft of luxury watches has been grabbing the headlines in the UK, with research showing the total value of the stolen items passing J1 billion in a year for the first time. According to figures from the Metropolitan Police (the Met), there were 72,756 incidents of what is called “theft from a person” – which refers to watch, mobile phone and handbag snatching – in Lon-

don last year, a 27pc rise on 2022. However, within the district of Westminster, which contains areas such as Mayfair, such offences rose by 40pc in 2023, compared to the previous year. Narang said while Indian executives are still coming to London, they are being very careful.

“Latest figures show that on average you’re less likely to be a victim of violent crime in London than the rest of the country.” Meanwhile, research from the national tourism agency VisitBritain found in 2022, a total of 516,484 people visited the UK from India, and 86pc of departing Indians (excluding British expats) said they were “extremely likely” to recommend Britain for a visit, which beat the 82pc across all markets. But while London’s authorities use statistics to paint a picture of the UK capital as one of the world’s safest cities, the fear of crime seems to be having a bigger effect on would-be business visitors from India.

## After France, UPI services now in Lanka, Mauritius

**NEW DELHI:** India’s Unified Payments Interface (UPI) services were officially launched in Sri Lanka and Mauritius, following a week’s roll-out in France. The launch event was attended virtually by Prime Minister

Modi, alongside his Mauritian counterpart Pravind Jugnauth and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe.

The introduction of UPI services in these countries will facilitate easier and faster digital transactions for Indian nationals trav-

elling to Sri Lanka and Mauritius. Additionally, Mauritians visiting India will also be able to utilise UPI for their payments. In conjunction with UPI, RuPay card services were also introduced in Mauritius, enabling Mauri-

(Cont. on page-6)

## UAE crackdown on illegal....

(Cont. from page-1)

engaging in such activities without the requisite licence.

**Al Khouri stated:** “Our system actively monitors promotional and advertising campaigns across social media and other platforms to detect potential labour market violations.”

He urged community members to verify that any entity offering employment or mediation services holds a valid licence from the ministry before engaging

with them, to protect their rights and avoid scams. Al Khouri also encouraged public to report any illegal employment practices to the ministry through the call Centre at 600590000 or via the ministry’s smart application.

**Meanwhile, Engineer Majid Sultan Al Mesmar, Director General of TDRA, said:** “At TDRA, our core mission is to regulate the telecommunications sector and facilitate digital transformation, ensuring we are fully prepared to undertake roles

that align with the “We the UAE2031” vision and its goals for establishing a thriving society.”

**He added:** “Within this framework, we are committed to supporting national objectives and assisting requests from various sectors, including our collaboration with the ministry of HR and Emiratisation. Our joint efforts are crucial for sustaining labour market stability and fostering an environment conducive to economic growth.”

## UAE curbs on private tuition

**DUBAI:** Teachers cannot offer private tuitions to students from their own schools. A “code of conduct” that teachers must sign to get a private tuition work permit categorically states that it is “prohibited” for them to “provide services directly to students affiliated with their schools”.

Disclosure of any conflict of interest is necessary, the seven-point document states.

In Dec last, the UAE legalised private tuitions as it announced a new permit to announce, educators had said they would discourage teachers from coaching their own students privately as this could lead to a potential clash of interest. They had raised concerns about the teachers’ ability to maintaining objectivity or fairness, especially in evaluative situations.

The Ministry of HR and Emiratisation has

defined private tuitions as the “practice of providing educational lessons outside of school hours by qualified educators”.

Among the documents that applicants must submit to get the two-year permit is the signed code of conduct. Teachers are required to be professional with their students and refrain from “inappropriate activities such as sending them emails or images”. They must also avoid physical contact with their wards.

In addition to these, the document states:

- Confidentiality of information relating to students and parents must be maintained.
- In no case may students be subjected to violence, either verbally or physically.
- Do not engage in topics containing abnormal or extremist concepts or ideas that are inconsistent with the state’s national identity.

## Expats, residents happy over Kuwait’s visa resumption

**KUWAIT CITY:** The recent decision by Kuwait to reopen visit visas for expatriates has brought a wave of joy and relief and has sparked optimism and happiness among expats and residents, where this move signifies a positive step towards reuniting families.

Muhammad Adel highlighted the imposition of new requirements in the visa application process, emphasising the additional documentation now necessary. “We are now required to provide a birth certificate obtained from the embassy,

which adds considerable time to the completion of the application,” he explained. Additionally, he noted that one of the prerequisites is evidence proving the familial relationship, specifically requiring verification of maternal lineage from the embassy.

Samira Hussein voiced concerns regarding the complications arising from submitting applications for a visit visa, citing a recent change where the duration of visits has been reduced to just one month, down from the previous three.

## Overseas jobs a....

(Cont. from page-1)

destination countries, making it a prominent source country.

The skilling and upskilling initiative of HR reservoir of India by Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi is making a momentum to tap the emerging opportunities across the world.

The traditionally acclaimed HR agencies are in place with the infra-facilities under the regulatory umbrella of me – pge, to take up the task and tap the opportunities, HRA fraternity is seeking govt support to explore the emerging scenario, remarked Abdulkareem.



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- SAFETY MANAGER

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**FOR-QATAR ONLINE INTERVIEW**

**FOR FOOD INDUSTRY**

- SALES EXECUTIVE - FMCG EXPERIENCE
- SALARY: 3000 QAR+ ACCOMMODATION
- VALID OR EXPIRED QATAR LICENSE

**ENGINEER-ROTARY EQUIPMENTS**

- SALARY: GROSS QR 7000 + ACCOMMODATION + MESS FACILITY
- +1 MONTH PAID LEAVE AFTER 1 YEAR
- DEGREE / DIPLOMA MECH ENGG/ SCIENCE GRADUATES
- SENIOR SUPERVISOR - ROTARY EQUIPMENTS
- DIPLOMA IN MECH ENGINEERING/SCIENCE GRADUATES
- GROSS: QR 6000 ACCOMMODATION+ MESS FACILITY +1 MONTH PAID LEAVE AFTER 1
- ABOVE POSITIONS AGE SHOULD BE 35-40 YRS MUST HAVE ERECTION EXPERIENCE IN MILLWRIGHT MINIMUM 01YRS (1+3) YRS GULF EXPERIENCE IS MUST

**LADY LIGHT DRIVING INSTRUCTOR**

- SALARY : QR 2500, ACCOMMODATION + TRANSPORTATION + OT + BONUS

**FOR A HEAVY EQUIPMENT COMPANY**

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- SALARY : QR 2200 - 2400 + 300 FOOD ALLOWANCE

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**FOR A GYM (KUWAIT)**

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- SALARY: KD- 90 + 20 (FOOD ALLOWANCE) + ACCOMMODATION + PLUS JOINING TICKET

**FOR A CATERING COMPANY (KUWAIT)**

- WAITRESS/ FEMALE CLEANERS/ HELPERS
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- HEAVY DRIVER (Valid Qatar License) 2350/-QR,AGE UPTO 40

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- NETWORK ENGINEER (Maintaining & Expanding network infrastructure, Troubleshoot network, knowledge of Cisco IOS,JunOS,Bachelor's degree in information system)
- CENTRAL AC MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN
- IT OPERATIONS (Server operating system, Troubleshooting server hardware and basic network operations)
- CHILLER MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN
- CABLING INFRASTRUCTURE TECHNICIAN (Install,Maintain and repair cabling, work on complex projects, Dip. in Information system)
- CUTTING MASTER(TOB)-GULF EXPERIENCE
- VRF TECHNICIAN
- LAUNDRY MAN
- CATERING COOK
- SWIMMING COACHES

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**URGENT GCC REQUIREMENT FOR**

Online Interview: February 2024

**DUBAI**

- DOCUMENT CONTROLLER CUM SECRETARY (MALE / FEMALE)
- DRAUGHTSMAN/AS-BUILT COORDINATOR
- QUANTITY SURVEYOR

**EXPERIENCE:**

DOCUMENT CONTROLLER CUM SECRETARY - GRADUATE IN ANY DISCIPLINE WITH 3-5 YEARS EXPERIENCE AS DOCUMENT CONTROLLER CUM SECRETARY IN A CONSTRUCTION COMPANY

DRAUGHTSMAN/AS-BUILT COORDINATOR - EDUCATION QUALIFICATION SHALL BE ITI / DIPLOMA. EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING THE FLOW LINE / PIPELINE ROUTE SKETCH BASED ON THE SURVEY INPUTS. KNOWLEDGE IN PREPARING PIPING LAYOUTS / CIVIL LAYOUT, FABRICATION DRAWINGS, PIPING ISOMETRIC DRAWINGS ETC.

QUANTITY SURVEYOR - B TECH WITH 7 YEARS' EXPERIENCE OR DIPLOMA WITH 10 YEARS' EXPERIENCE EITHER IN MECHANICAL OR CIVIL DISCIPLINE.

**QATAR**

- SALES MANAGER
- NET DEVELOPER

**EXPERIENCE:**

MIN 2 , 3 YRS OF EXPERIENCE IN SAME FIELD

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SITE ENGINEERS	8,000 to 10,000
DOCUMENT CONTROLLERS	4,000 to 6,000
SHOP DRAWING DRAFTSMEN	4,000 to 6,000
MECHANICAL ENGINEERS	8,000 to 10,000
QAQC	5,000 to 6,000
HSE - Exp. at least 6 years in Fit-out.	4,000 to 6,000

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**ZOOM INTERVIEW NEXT WEEK**

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# GULF FAQs

## Can your employer reduce your salary?

**A** group of us work for a mainland company in Dubai. We have been asked to sign new contracts, which is not the same as we accepted our current jobs for. The basic salary in the new contract is significantly lower than the original one we signed. Is this legal? If we refuse to sign the contract and lose our jobs, can the dismissal be considered arbitrary?

Pursuant to your queries, it is assumed that your employment is under a limited duration contract. Therefore, the provisions of Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulations of Employment Relations, Ministry Resolution No. 27 of 2023 Regarding the Extension of the Deadline for the Conversion of Employment Contract and Administrative Resolution No. 38 of 2022 Concerning the Guidelines for Implementing Ministerial Resolution No. 46 of 2022 Regarding Work Permits, Offer Letters and Employment Contract Forms are applicable.

In the UAE, the Current Employment Law came into force on Feb 2, 2022, and the Federal Law No. 8 of 1980 which was in existence till then was repealed. However, certain adjustments were made related to the conversion of the employment contract of employees to adapt to the Current Employment Law. A unlimited period employment contract which was registered during the regime of the Previous Employment Law had to be converted to a limited period of employment contract to suit the provisions of the Current Employment Law and the said adjustments had to be completed by all employers.

This is in accordance with Article 68(2) of the Current Employment Law, which states “Employers shall within one year from the date of entry into force of this Decree-Law, adjust their respective positions and change the unlimited term of employment contract to limited-term employment contracts, in accordance with the conditions, controls and procedures set forth herein. Such period may be extended by the minister for other periods as dictated by the public interest.”

However, the aforementioned period to convert an unlimited period of employment contract to a limited period of employment contract was extended up to December 31, 2023. This is in accordance with Article -1 of the Ministerial Resolution No. 27 of 2023, which states, “Pursuant to

the provision of Article 68 of Federal Decree Law No.33 of 2021 referred to above, we have extended the deadline for employers to rectify their current status regarding the conversion of their employees’ employment contract from unlimited to limited employment contracts until December 31, 2023.”

Moreover, an employer while converting an unlimited period of employment contract to a limited period of employment contract may not change the existing terms and conditions of the employment unless it is more advantageous to its employees. This is under Article 65 (5) of the Current Employment Law, which states, “The employer may not review the terms and conditions of a valid employment contract concluded with the employee prior to the promulgation of this Decree-Law, with the intent to apply the provisions hereof, unless such amendments are for the greater good and benefits of the employee. The employment contract may be updated after its expiration in accordance with the provisions of this Decree-Law.”

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, if you and your colleagues’ employment contracts are converted from unlimited period of employment contracts to limited period of employment contracts, your employer may not change the terms of employment unless the changes are more advantageous to you and your colleagues.

Furthermore, your employer may not force you and your colleagues to sign the revised employment contracts. This is under Article 14(1) of the Current Employment Law. In the event, that your employer terminates you and your colleagues for not signing the revised employment contract due to changes in terms and conditions, you and your colleagues may file a complaint with the Ministry of HR & Emiratisation and if the employer does not agree to settle the said matter amicably, you and your colleagues may file an employment case in the court which has jurisdiction in the emirate of Dubai.

In addition, you and your colleagues may claim all your employment entitlements including compensation for arbitrary termination of employment by your employer as mentioned in Article 47 of the Current Employment Law.

## Saudi rules out ties with Israel till Palestine is recognised

**RIYADH:** Saudi Arabia clapped back at the US claims that discussions on a Saudi-Israeli normalisation deal were moving forward separately from talks on a Gaza ceasefire.

In a statement, the Saudi foreign ministry said the kingdom has informed Washington that it would have no diplomatic relations with Israel until an independent Palestinian state is established on the 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as its capital and Israel ends its offensive on the Gaza Strip and withdraws its troops from the enclave.

The Saudi statement came hours after White House National Security Council co-ordinator John Kirby claimed that the US administration had received “positive feedback” that Saudi Arabia and Israel are willing to continue normalisation discussions.

“Saudi Arabia has always been steadfast on the Palestinian issue and the necessity that the brotherly Palestinian people obtain their legitimate rights,” the statement added. The statement further called on the UN Security Council to expedite the recognition of the Palestinian state “so that the Palestinian people can obtain their legitimate rights and so that a comprehensive and just peace is achieved for all.”

Kirby was speaking at a press briefing. When asked whether securing

a hostage deal between Hamas and Israel and a normalisation agreement between Saudi Arabia and Israel are part of the same US efforts, the US official said the two issues were separate things. “We’re working very hard ... to try to come to closure on another hostage deal and an extended pause that will allow us to get the remaining hostages home with their families, to get more assistance in [Gaza] and certainly to reduce harm to civilians,” Kirby said.

“At the same time, we were before the Oct 7 situation and are still now having discussions with our counterparts in the region, Israel and Saudi Arabia — obviously, the two key ones — about trying to move forward with a normalisation arrangement between Israel and Saudi Arabia,” he added.

Before the Israel-Hamas war erupted on Oct 7, Washington had been pushing to bring Saudi Arabia into the 2020 Abraham Accords, under which the UAE and Bahrain normalised relations with Israel. Last Sept, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said that his country and Israel were getting closer to normalisation. But after Hamas launched its cross-border assault on southern Israel, prompting a brutal Israeli military response in the Gaza Strip, Saudi Arabia reportedly paused discussions on a deal with Israel.

## Dubai hits Dh 5.8b in weekly property deals

**DUBAI:** A total of 1,721 real estate and properties transactions valued at Dh 5.8 billion were conducted during the week ending January 5, according to the Dubai Land Department (DLD).

The DLD weekly report said that 114 plots were sold for Dh 1.36 billion, 1,183 apartments and villas were sold for Dh 3.13 billion. The top three transactions were a land in Al Thanyah Fifth sold for Dh 268.33 million, followed by

a land that was sold for Dh 113.9 million in Warsan Fourth, and a land sold for Dh 65.26 million in Palm Jabal Ali in third place.

Madinat Hind 4 recorded the most transactions for this week with 18 sales transactions worth Dh 20.57 million, followed by Palm Jabal Ali with 11 sales transactions worth Dh 311.64 million and Saih Shuaib 1 with eight sales transactions worth Dh 15.95 million in third place.

# Umrah packages may soar during Ramadan up to Dh40,000

**D**UBAI: With less than two months remaining for Ramadan, there is a significant increase in demand for Umrah pilgrimage during the Islamic holy month. Travel operators are witnessing a surge in inquiries. According to tour operators, there has been a 200pc increase in the number of UAE residents travelling for pilgrimage compared to other months.

However, Umrah operators are optimistic about an even bigger number of residents undertaking pilgrimage as the holy month falls during winter. The cooler weather

is expected to attract more faithful to embark on their spiritual journey during this convenient time.

Qaiser Mahmood from ASAA Tourism in Abu Hail, said: "We receive over a hundred calls daily from residents seeking to fulfil their religious duties during the holy month."

Usually, Umrah packages start at Dh3,000, but during the first 20 days of Ramadan, costs surge by nearly 25pc. "The package cost during the first 20 days of Ramadan starts at Dh3,700. If pilgrims prefer a single room, the cost may increase depend-

ing on the hotel and its location."

In the first 20 days of Ramadan, hotels in the holy cities of Makkah and Madina offer five nights of accommodation. However, during the last 10 days, hotels provide accommodation for the full duration, as shorter stays are mostly unavailable.

As the month progresses, particularly during the last 10 days of the holy month, package costs increase by nearly 100pc. Aggregators recommend that residents book early to save money on accommodation. "The package cost can reach up to Dh40,000 for the last 10

days of Ramadan. Pilgrims can save significantly if they book in advance," said Mahmood, adding that the package includes a visa, flight tickets and accommodation.

Umrah by bus is gaining popularity in the UAE, with packages starting at Dh2,500. Imran Mohammed from Al Tarwiyah Haj and Umrah service in Sharjah said that people willing to take the Umrah during the holy month are often bachelors and businessmen. "A bus journey is convenient for them, while families prefer the visit during school breaks," said Imran.

## Intercontinental to bring in new hotel brands

**M**UMBAI: Hospitality major Intercontinental Hotels Group (IHG) is exploring opportunities to bring global brands such as Regent and Kimpton to India as it looks to double its presence over the next two to three years.

Sudeep Jain, MD South West Asia, IHG Hotels and Resorts, said they have worked out an asset-light expansion plan. "The next two-three years will see us double our portfolio, adding 45 hotels with close to 7,000 keys in India," Jain said.

IHG at present has 45 hotels in India with over 7,600 keys, across five brands — in the luxury and lifestyle segment.

## After France, UPI services... (Cont. from page-2)

tian banks to issue RuPay cards that can be used for settlements in both India and Mauritius.

"Given India's robust cultural and people-to-people linkages with Sri Lanka and Mauritius, the launch will benefit a wide cross-section of people through a faster and seamless digital transaction experience and enhance digital connectivity between the countries," the government said.

This expansion marks a significant milestone for the Indian digital payment system, which is developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

## H-1B: New registration dates announced

**N**EW DELHI: US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced a final rule to strengthen the integrity of and reduce the potential for fraud in the H-1B registration process, including by reducing the potential for gaming the registration system and ensuring each beneficiary would have the same chance of being selected, regardless of the number of registrations submitted on their behalf.

USCIS is also announcing the initial registration period dates for the fiscal year (FY) 2025 H-1B cap, and the launch

of an online filing option for Forms I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker and Form I-907, Request for Premium Processing Service, for H-1B petitioners.

"We're always looking for ways to bolster integrity and curtail the potential for fraud while improving and streamlining our application processes," said USCIS Director Ur M Jaddou. "The improvements in these areas should make H-1B selections more equitable for petitioners and beneficiaries and will allow for the H-1B process to be fully electronic from registration, if ap-

plicable, until final decision and transmission of approved petitions to the Department of State."

This final rule contains provisions that will create a beneficiary-centric selection process for registrations by employers, codify start date flexibility for certain petitions subject to the congressionally mandated H-1B cap, and add more integrity measures related to the registration process. Under the beneficiary-centric process, registrations will be selected by unique beneficiaries rather than by registration. This new process is designed to reduce the potential for

fraud and ensure each beneficiary would have the same chance of being selected, regardless of the number of registrations submitted on their behalf by an employer.

Starting with the FY 2025 initial registration period, USCIS will require registrants to provide valid passport or travel document information for each beneficiary. The passport or travel document provided must be the one the beneficiary, if or when abroad, intends to use to enter the US if issued an H-1B visa. Each beneficiary must only be registered under one passport or travel document.

## Abu Dhabi airport renamed Zayed International Airport

**ABU DHABI:** Abu Dhabi's international Airport is now officially named as Zayed International Airport.

Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad bin Tahnoon Al Nahyan, Advisor of Special Affairs at the Presidential Court and Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Airports' Board of Directors, attended a ceremony to rename Abu Dhabi International Airport as Zayed International

Airport, in honour of the UAE's Founding Father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The name change is a directive of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the UAE, in honour of his father — the late Sheikh Zayed. The new name took effect from Feb 9, coinciding with the official opening of the airport's new Terminal -A. Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad said:

"We are immensely proud to rename Abu Dhabi's largest airport in honour of the Founding Father of the UAE. The unsurpassed achievements of the late Sheikh Zayed in connecting our country to nations around the world have inspired our commitment to ensuring that Abu Dhabi further strengthens its position as a world-leading hub for travel, trade, and commerce.

## Tax collection up 20pc

**N**EW DELHI: The government's direct tax collection, net of refunds, during Apr 1-Feb 10 was Rs 15.60 trillion, up 20.25pc from the year-ago period, the finance ministry said. The net direct tax collection during April 1-Feb 10 was 80.23pc of the revised estimate for direct tax collections for 2023-24 (Apr-Mar), provisional data showed. The interim budget for 2024-25 revised the total tax collections for the current financial year to Rs 34.37 trillion, Rs 763.53 billion higher than

the budget estimate of Rs 33.61 trillion.

This is mainly on account of higher direct tax collections in the current financial year. Of the target, the government aims to collect Rs 19.45 trillion as direct taxes, which includes corporate and personal income tax. Post-refunds, corporate tax collections so far in the financial year grew 13.57pc and personal income tax collections rose 26.91pc. In the April 1 to Feb 10 period, the tax department processed refunds worth Rs 2.77 trillion.