



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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UAE President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Prime Minister Narendra Modi inspect the UAE Armed Forces guard of honour during a reception at the Presidential Airport in Abu Dhabi. (Right) Modi addressing Indian diaspora at the “Ahlan Modi” event at Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi.

India, UAE sign economic accords

ABU DHABI: India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have signed accords aimed at promoting bilateral investment and new areas of co-operation on Tuesday as Prime Minister Narendra Modi began a visit to the Gulf nation.

The two nations signed a bilateral investment treaty and a comprehensive economic partnership agreement. They also exchanged an inter-governmental framework agreement on the India-Middle East Economic Corridor that would help boost regional connectivity.

The agreements came ahead of Modi’s address at the World Government Summit in Dubai. The two countries also exchanged agreements in the field of energy and digital infrastructure.

The development bodes well for Sui Southern Gas Company Ltd (SS-GCL) and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNG-PL), the two public sector gas utility companies, said experts.

RuPay powered card launched

ABU DHABI: A new domestic payment card has been launched in the UAE. Called Jaywan and built on India’s digital RuPay credit and debit card stack, it was introduced by President Sheikh Mohamed and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The launch follows the inking of several bilateral agreements between the two countries on Tuesday, including the interlinking of instant payment platforms.

The RuPay card is the Indian equivalent of Mastercard or Visa. Billed as a highly secure indigenous system, it is widely accepted across India

(Cont. on page-2)

NRI's through Ahlan Modi reception UAE is close to our hearts, says Modi

ABU DHABI: India and the UAE are writing a new chapter in history, making it a model for the world, visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Indian expats at “Ahlan Modi!”, a grand community reception held in Abu Dhabi. Ahlan is an Arabic phrase used to welcome guests. “UAE is always close to our hearts”, Modi declared amidst thunderous cries of “India-UAE Zindabad”.

Amidst chants of “Modi, Modi,” the prime minister was ushered in at 7pm, waving his hands to tens of thousands of

Indians of all ages at the “Ahlan Modi” event at Zayed Sports Stadium in Abu Dhabi, what has been described as the largest gathering and celebration of the Indian expats in the UAE ever since his first public address in Dubai in 2015.

Speaking in the presence of Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence, whom he addressed as India’s close friend and well-wisher, Modi struck a chord with the large Indian community by speaking for nearly 40 minutes about India’s progress in various fields,

strong India-UAE relations and praising the hard work of the 3.5 million-strong Indian expats for their contributions and thanking the UAE’s leadership for hosting and taking care of them.

Hailing the centuries-old relations between India and the UAE, he said the strong relations is a model for the world to emulate. “Both India and the UAE are working together, writing a new chapter in history and you are all with me in this,” Modi said.

“I have brought the message of 1.4 billion of Indians and the message

is that India is proud of you,” he told the audience in multiple Indian languages. “Modi, Modi” the attendees cheered. Modi also aired his message of thanks and wishes to the Emirati brothers and sisters in Arabic.

He specifically thanked the UAE Minister of Youth and Emirati astronaut Sultan Al Neyadi for greeting India from the International Space Station on International Day of Yoga and India’s Independence Day. He told the crowd in the packed stadium that they made history in Abu Dhabi by

(Cont. on page-2)

FOREX RATES		
As on 16th Feb, 2024 (In rupees)		
Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	83.86	82.81
Euro	90.29	88.86
Australian Dollar	55.35	53.65
Japanese Yen	0.61	0.53
Canadian Dollar	62.66	61.09
Singapore Dollar	62.78	61.4
Swedish krona	8.88	7.09
UAE Dirham	23.2	22.45
Swiss Franc	94.89	93.09
British Pound	105.54	104.11
New Zealand Dollar	51.74	49.5
Thai Baht	2.42	2.2
Hong Kong Dollar	11.58	10.22
Saudi Arabian Riyal	22.85	21.9
Bahraini Dinar	226.21	212.21
Chinese Yuan	12.49	10.69
Danish Krone	12.45	11.45
Kuwaiti Dinar	275.63	259.63
Malaysian Ringgit	18.38	17.03
Omani Rial	221.62	209.62
Qatari Riyal	23.81	21.31
South African Rand	4.86	3.86

PROMOTE SAFE, LEGAL MIGRATION OF INDIAN WORKERS: IPEPCIL

To ensure the regulated and monitored migration of Indian workers with Emigration Check Not Required (ECNR) status, all global employment opportunities should be channeled exclusively through licensed recruitment agencies. The growing demand for employment in ECNR countries such as Europe, the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, etc., necessitates vigilant monitoring and streamlined processes, overseen

and facilitated by Government of India authorized Human Resource Agents (HRAs). This approach aims to prevent fraudulent activities and ensure adherence to legal requirements.

Under the aegis of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Office of Emigration (OE), and Protector General of Emigrants (PGE), Government-approved HRAs form an essential part of the mechanism to facilitate the movement of workers to ECNR countries.

With a legacy of expertise spanning over four decades, IPEPCIL members have cultivated enduring relationships within the global business landscape. We prioritize the trust of our job seekers and clients, adeptly managing crises and professionally resolving conflicts. The creation of an expatriate population across the world contributes to the glory of our nation, as emphasized by VS Abdulkareem, President - IPEPCIL

(Cont. on page-2)



Bridging the Gulf

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the UAE in particular and the Arab world in general has always been a huge success. Apart from official engagement with the royal family, his interaction with the very large and diverse Indian diaspora in the UAE has always been marked with lot of glitter, show and serious talks. The just concluded visit of Modi to the UAE is his seventh successful visit to the desert nation. It may be recalled that his first visit to the UAE in 2015 was the first by any Indian prime minister in three decades. This historic visit helped to bridge the gulf between the two nations. True, Modi also visited Qatar, probably to thank the Emir of that country for his magnanimous decision to release all the eight Indian navy veterans sentenced to death. This is the height of Modi's successful diplomacy.



During the visit, the prime minister held bilateral meetings with His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE. The two leaders discussed ways to further deepen, expand and strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries and exchanged views on regional and international issues of mutual interest. Modi also had official level talks with the Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who is also the Vice President, Prime Minister and Defence Minister of the UAE. At his invitation, Modi will participate in the World Government Summit 2024 to be held in Dubai later as Guest of Honour and deliver a special keynote address at the summit. He also inaugurated BAPS temple, the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi and the largest temple outside India. He addressed the Indian community in the UAE at an event in Zayed Sports city in Abu Dhabi. Modi promised that he would make India the world's third largest economy in his third tenure, thus forecasting his victory in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections.

India and UAE enjoy warm, close and multi-faceted relations underpinned by strong political, cultural and economic linkages. Both countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in Feb 2022 and a Local Currency Settlement (LCS) System in July 2023 to promote the use of Indian rupee and dhiram for cross-border transactions. The two countries are among each other's top trading partners with a bilateral trade of about US\$ 85 billion in 2022-23. UAE is also among the top four investors in India in terms of foreign direct investments. Around 3.5 million strong and vibrant Indian community forms the largest expatriate group in the UAE. Their positive and well-appreciated contribution in the development of their host country has been an important anchor of our excellent bilateral engagement with the UAE.

LIPSYNCH

"Too much of something is just as bad as too little of it".

— An Arab proverb

Modi calls for reform of multilateral institutions at World Govt Summit

DUBAI: Calling for the reform of multilateral institutions, Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushed for a greater voice for the Global South in its decision-making. Addressing the annual World Government Summit in Dubai as a Guest of Honour, he stressed that India will continue to contribute to global progress based on its role as a "Vishwa Bandhu".

Addressing a large collection of world leaders, Modi elaborated on the leadership role played by India as the chair of G20 last year,

on a wide range of issues and challenges facing the world. He highlighted the efforts made by India to bring development concerns facing the Global South to the centre-stage of global discourse.

Modi said India has brought in its own reforms based on the mantra of "Minimum Government, Maximum Governance" and that governments should interfere as little as possible in the lives of people. "I believe that people should neither feel the absence of a government, but at the same time, nor should there be pressure

from the government," he stressed.

Arguing for a human-centric approach to governance, the PM held up India's experience with leveraging digital technology to further welfare, inclusivity and sustainability. He also underlined India's focus on people's participation, last-mile-delivery and women-led development to achieve an inclusive society.

Given the interconnected nature of the world, governments must collaborate and learn from each other to address future challenges, Modi said. He highlighted that it was the need of the hour for governance to be inclusive, tech-smart, clean and transparent and green.

In this context, he said governments must prioritise – Ease of Living, Ease of Justice, Ease of Mobility, Ease of Innovation and Ease of Doing Business in their approach to public service. He also pitched the Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) which aims to create a sustainable world, to the global community.

The Summit brings together leaders in government for a global dialogue about governmental process and policies with a focus on the issues of futurism, technology innovation.

RuPay powered card....

(Cont. from page-1)

with more than 750 million cards reportedly in circulation.

Explaining the benefits of the partnership last year, India's Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal spoke of how the interlinked domestic card system would reduce exchange risks and boost travel between the two countries. UAE cards can be used in India, while RuPay cards issued in India can be used in the Emirates. What's more, all transactions will be carried out in local currencies.

Other deals inked

Some of the other bi-

lateral agreements announced include the interlinking of India's UPI and UAE's "Aani" payment systems to facilitate seamless cross-border transactions between the two countries. Aani includes a convenient feature that allows users to transfer money immediately using only the recipient's phone number. The leaders also discussed the strengthening of energy partnerships. They appreciated that, in addition to the UAE being among the largest sources of crude and LPG, India is now entering into long-term contracts for LNG.

UAE is close to our hearts...

(Cont. from page-1)

coming from across the emirates, representing all corners of India. However, every heartbeat, every breath and every voice says long live India-UAE friendship, he said, eliciting huge applause.

Modi urged the audience to live the moment to their hearts' content because these memories will remain forever in his heart and theirs.

Modi recalled his first visit to the UAE in 2015, first by any Indian Prime Minister in three decades. Recalling how he was welcomed by the UAE President His High-

ness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, when he was then Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, he said he was made to feel special once again when Sheikh Mohamed received him on Tuesday.

Temple land

Recollecting the generosity of Sheikh Mohamed when he made the announcement of gifting land for building a temple at that time, Modi said the historic moment of inaugurating the temple happened now. He also recalled about welcoming Sheikh Mohamed four times to India and how hundreds of thou-

sands of Indians queued up to meet him during his last visit last month, terming it an expression of Indians' gratitude towards the UAE leader.

Modi highlighted the launch of the RuPay domestic payment card in the UAE and said both the countries are now working on ensuring seamless payment options for the Indian expats. He said efforts are also on to ensure best education for the Indian students in the UAE, citing the examples of the recently opened IIT Abu Dhabi and the upcoming CBSE office in Dubai.

Japan slips to fourth largest economy

TOKYO: Japan has slipped to the world's fourth-largest economy as government data showed it fell behind the size of Germany's in 2023. The numbers highlight how the Japanese economy has gradually lost its competitiveness and productivity while the population shrinks as Japanese people age and have fewer children, analysts say.

Japan fell from the second-ranked economy behind the US to the third-largest in 2010 as China's economy grew. The International Monetary Fund had forecast Japan's fall to fourth.

The comparisons among nations' economies look at nominal GDP, which doesn't reflect some different national conditions, and is in dollar terms. Japan's nominal GDP totaled \$4.2 trillion last year or about 591 trillion yen. Germany's, announced last month, was \$4.4 trillion or \$4.5 trillion,

depending on the currency conversion.

For the latest October-December quarter, the Japanese economy shrank at an annual rate of 0.4pc and minus 0.1pc from the previous quarter, according to Cabinet Office data on real GDP. For the year, real GDP grew 1.9pc from the previous year. Real gross domestic product is a measure of the value of a nation's products and services. The annual rate measures what would have happened if the quarterly rate lasted a year.

Both Japan and Germany built their economies through strong small and medium-size businesses with solid productivity. In contrast to Japan, Germany has shown a solid economic foundation on the back of a strong euro and inflation. The weak yen also works as a minus for Japan. The latest data reflect the realities of a weakening Japan and will

likely result in Japan's commanding a lesser presence in the world, said Tetsuji Okazaki, professor of economics at the University of Tokyo.

"Several years ago, Japan boasted a powerful auto sector, for instance. But with the advent of electric vehicles, even that advantage is shaken," he said. The gap between developed countries and emerging nations is shrinking, with India certain to overtake Japan in nominal GDP in a few years, Okazaki said.

To solve the country's labour shortage problem, immigration is one option. But Japan has been relatively unaccepting foreign labour, except as temporary guests, prompting criticism about the lack of diversity and discrimination. Another option is robotics, which has been playing out gradually but not enough to the nation's chronic labor shortage. Japan was historically touted as "an econom-

Stone laid for Bharat Mart in Dubai

DUBAI: Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum and Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for Bharat Mart, a market and trading platform for Indian businesses in Dubai, during a ceremony held at the World Governments Summit 2024. The plans for a new marketplace were unveiled by DP World. Expected to open in 2026, Bharat Mart will offer a trading platform for Indian manufacturers and exporters to access global markets.

Envisaged over an area of 2.7 million square feet, with the first phase encompassing 1.3 million square feet, Bharat Mart is set to become a mega dis-

tribution hub for Indian businesses to trade domestically in the UAE and re-export to regional and global markets. The market will be situated in the Jebel Ali Free Zone (Jafza) and will be part of a wider trade ecosystem that DP World is developing through the Dubai Traders Market, a hybrid retail and wholesale marketplace that will host traders from around the world.

Dubai plays a significant role in the trade relationship between the UAE and India, with 87pc or \$44.9 billion of the total non-oil trade value of \$51.4 billion flowing through the emirate in 2022. Close to 1,500 Indian businesses have made Jafza their home in the UAE, trading more than five

million metric tonnes of cargo valued at \$8.6 billion.

Bharat Mart is projected to house 1,500 showrooms catering to retail and wholesale customers and over seven lakh square feet of Grade-A warehousing space, providing tenants with combined free zone and onshore benefits. The facility will also offer light industrial units, office spaces and meeting facilities.

Bharat Mart will be located 11 km from Jebel Ali Port, the largest seaport in the Middle East, and 15 km from Al Maktoum International Airport, providing multimodal logistics solutions for Indian exporters. Through the Jebel Ali ecosystem, traders will have direct connectivity to more than 150

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ic miracle," rising from the ashes of World War II to become the second largest economy, only after the US and kept that going through the 1970s and 1980s.

The entrepreneurs be-

hind companies that rose from humble beginnings, like Soichiro Honda of Honda Motor Co. and Konosuke Matsushita of Panasonic Corp., personified the hard work behind Japan Inc.

maritime destinations and air links to over 300 cities.

Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Chairman and CEO of DP World Group, said: "By laying the foundations for Bharat Mart, we are paving the way for stronger trade ties between the UAE and India. Our nations have set themselves the target of reaching \$100 billion in non-oil bilateral trade by 2030 and Bharat Mart will support this goal, creating more opportunities for Indian manufacturers and contributing to government initiatives like Make in India and D33. "With our world-class infrastructure, logistics capabilities and business-friendly ecosystem in Jafza, Bharat Mart will be the ideal gateway for Indi-

an goods to efficiently reach the UAE and other high-growth markets in the Middle East, Europe and Africa."

Abdulla Bin Damithan, CEO, DP World GCC, said: "India is among the UAE's top five trade partners, a relationship that has been significantly accelerated by a post-pandemic economic surge. This has created a dynamic trade landscape, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering continued growth. Bharat Mart is designed to complement Jafza's existing offerings, providing Indian SMEs with a seamless platform to export their cargo to new markets and strengthening our position as a key trade gateway between the two nations."

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GULF FAQs

Can debtor refuse to repay loan due to missing date

Three years ago, I gave someone a sum of money as a loan, signed by me and the debtor, but the date of repayment of the debt was not mentioned. Orally, we agreed that the debt would be repaid within six months. Currently, the debtor refuses to repay the debt and is relying on the pretext that the date of repayment of the debt is not mentioned in the debt agreement. My question: What is the appropriate action to take against the debtor in this case?

According to Article 718 of the Civil Transactions Law: “(1) if the loan has a fixed or usual term, the borrower must return the property to the lender upon the expiry of that period, even if no benefit would accrue to him thereby. (2) If there is no term for the loan, the borrower will only be obliged to return the property upon the expiry of such period as enables him to have the usual benefit of such property.”

This Article indicates that the borrower is obligated to return the loan amount within the period specified for it. If no period is specified for it, he is also obligated to return it after a sufficient period during which he can ben-

efit from it. In accordance with Article 359 of the Civil Transactions Law, the judge may, in exceptional cases, grant the debtor a deadline to fulfil his obligation if his condition so requires and the creditor does not suffer serious harm. It is established in Dubai Court of Cassation no. 335/2001 (Rights Cassation) that the trial court has the discretion to determine the appropriate deadline for repaying the loan that the two parties did not agree to determine. Estimating the cases that require granting the debtor a deadline to fulfil his obligation, the court bases its ruling on justifiable reasons that have proven basis in the papers. You have to notify the borrower to return the loan within a specific date, in case he refuses, then you have to file a civil case since a period of three years had passed which seems to be sufficient for the borrower to benefit from the loan. You may use any means of proof like witnesses to prove the oral agreement of six months, messages and emails for any conversation that took place between you. But after all, the court will decide about the matter taking into consideration the circumstances and the documents of the case.

Job loss and unused leave

My employer terminated my contract of employment after a service period of four years and nine months, with a one month notice period. My gratuity has been paid for the term, as per the regulations, of 20 days per year (for the period of five years). My employer started paying my first annual leave salary after two years of work. So, I have only been paid three annual leave salaries. Please suggest whether I can ask for the fourth and final leave salary, which they have not paid. My visa with the company is already cancelled.

As per Article 29, the reader is entitled to an annual leave that is fully paid. This entitlement includes:

- Thirty days for each year of extended service.
- Pro-rata leaves for the last year of work, in case the service ends before availing the full annual leave balance.
- Payment for unused annual leave days upon leaving work, regardless of the number of those days, calculated based on the basic wage.

Article 19 of the implementing regulations stipulates that at the end of the service, he (employee) should receive a cash allowance for the balance of his legally due annual leaves, calcu-

lated on his basic wage. This means if he has not availed or been compensated for annual leave for the last part of his employment, he should receive a cash allowance for it.

Considering his employment term is that of four years and nine months, he is entitled to an annual leave for each full year worked, as well as a pro-rata portion of leave for the final partial year. Since he mentioned having received only three annual leave salaries, it appears he may be owed leave salary for the part of the fourth year worked. Furthermore, Article 19 of the implementing regulations stipulates that at the end of the service, he should receive a cash allowance for the balance of his legally due annual leaves, calculated on his basic wage. This means if he has not availed or been compensated for annual leave for the last part of his employment, he should receive a cash allowance for it. However, any claims should be filed within a year from the date that you become entitled to it.

“It is vital to remember that under Article 54(7), any legal claim regarding any employment rights must be made within one year from the date of entitlement. Therefore, timely action is essential.

Family visit: fly only by Kuwait Airways or Al Jazeera Airways

KUWAIT CITY: Foreigners holding a family visit visa to Kuwait will have to use specific airlines to fly to and leave the country under rules set by the Kuwaiti civil aviation authorities.

The Kuwaiti Directorate General for Civil Aviation (DGCA) has made it obligatory for holders of the family visas to board the Kuwaiti carriers Kuwait Airways and Al Jazeera Airways for arrival and departure from Kuwait.

Earlier this month, Kuwait had said it would resume the issuance of visit visas for family, commercial and tourism purposes under new regulations. DGA has stressed that a family visit visa holder who uses other airlines than the two designated carriers will be sent back to the departure destination, sources added.

“These instructions have come upon correspondence from the Interior Ministry specifying the arrival and departure mechanism for the hold-

ers of family visit visas to the country,” the sources said. Under Kuwait’s new regulations pertaining to the family visa issuance, the applicant must earn a minimum of KD400 for sponsoring first-degree relatives such as parents, spouses and children and KD800 for other relatives. Moreover, the duration of stay for a family visit visa holder is set at a maximum of one month issued after a written pledge that the visa will not be converted into residence permits.

Medical treatment will be provided at private and government health facilities for the visitors adhering to their visa stay duration. In 2022, Kuwait, a country of around 4.6 million mostly foreigners, halted family visit visas pending setting strict rules to ensure visitors will leave upon the expiry of their visas. The system was partially revived later allowing reissuance of dependency visas for children aged five years and below.

Indian origin sues SIA for S\$1.78m

SINGAPORE: A Malaysian-Indian former flight steward is suing Singapore Airlines (SIA) for S\$1.78 million after he slipped and fell on board a plane in 2019 resulting in spinal injuries. Durairaj Santiran, who was employed by SIA from April 2016 to April 2021, alleged that his former employer was negligent in allowing the workplace to be unsafe.

The 35-year-old was in the economy-class galley of a flight from San Francisco which was scheduled to land in Singapore on the evening of September 6, 2019. He said about two hours before landing he slipped on a patch of grease on the floor and fell on his back, hitting his head on the floor. Santiran, who wore a neck brace when he attended court on Feb 13, claimed that as a result of his spinal injuries, he is medically unfit to continue working as a flight steward.

He is seeking S\$1.29 million for loss of future earnings, S\$30,000 for loss of earning capacity and S\$150,000 for future medical and transport expenses. According to the lawsuit, the international carrier failed to ensure that the floor of the aircraft was free of any substance that might cause Santiran to slip, and failed to ensure that there was a system of cleaning to keep the floors safe.

His lawyers, Ramasamy Chettiar and Kasturibai Manickam said that the fact that SIA did not take any preventive measures showed that the work system was inadequate, and the workplace was allowed to be unsafe. SIA denied Santiran’s claims saying that SIA pays all valid and legitimate claims made by employees, but responds “firmly” to invalid, illegitimate, and false claims.

UAE students worried as India closes medical exam centres

DUBAI: For the last two years, Sherin Shafeeq's daughter has been preparing for a medical entrance exam in India by attending coaching classes, writing papers, and reviewing hours of material. As she readies to write the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test

Undergraduate (NEET-UG) this year, she has something else to worry about--- she has to fly to India to write the exam.

This year, all international students writing the NEET-UG test in May must travel to India to do so. Sherin is one of the thousands of expats disturbed by the

decisions of India's Ministry of Education (MoE) not to provide any international centres for their entrance exams for medical education.

"This is going to add unnecessary pressure on all the students," said Sherin Shafeeq, whose daughter Riya has been preparing for the exam

for two years. "My daughter has been preparing for two years and is already under immense stress. She is now worried about writing the exam in an unfamiliar setting."

In 2021, India first opened international centres for the NEET-UG exams--- a prereq-

uisite for all students to study medicine in India and some international countries. The move came after thousands of students could not travel to write the test during the Covid pandemic. It relieved parents who had been petitioning for centres outside India for years.

Modi opens Abu Dhabi temple

ABU DHABI: Narendra Modi inaugurated the BAPS Swaminarayan temple in Abu Dhabi, the first Hindu temple in the Gulf nation.

The inauguration of the 108-ft high temple marks a significant moment for the Hindu community in UAE, as well as for the two countries' bilateral ties. The temple was built by the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS), a denomination of the Swaminarayan Sampra-

daya, a Vaishnav sect of Hinduism.

As Modi inaugurated the BAPS temple in UAE, it was a moment of pride for a family in Kerala, which made the idol of Lord Ayyappa that was placed at the first Hindu temple in the Gulf country. The panchaloha idol of Ayyappa was manufactured by a group of companies run by traditional artisans Ananthan Achari and his son Anu Ananthan at Parumala in Pathanamthitta district. "We are very proud of being

associated with the temple. We have made idols and dhwaja stambha (flag pole) for hundreds of temples. But the opportunity to make the idol for BAPS temple is really a blessing of Ayyappa," said Anu.

He said the Ayyappa idol would be the largest panchaloha (an alloy of five metals: gold, silver, copper, zinc, and iron) in the world. "The height, including the pedestal, is four feet. We have not come across a panchaloha idol of that size," he said.

Etihad Airways carried 1.4m passengers in Jan

ABU DHABI: Etihad Airways welcomed more than 1.4 million guests onboard in January and saw its load factor average out at 86.04PC across the month, the carrier announced.

"In January 2024 we saw a 35pc year-on-year growth in customer numbers and were flying to five more destinations than the same period in 2023, making us one of the fastest growing airlines in the world," said Antonoaldo Neves, CEO of Etihad Airways.

"We are meeting customer demand by adding more flights to key destinations and Etihad is now offering almost 27pc more weekly

departures for Summer 24 compared with last summer. We began the year by launching daily flights from Abu Dhabi (AUH) to Kozhikode (CCJ) and Thiruvananthapuram (TRV) in the Kerala region of India taking our total number of Indian gateways to 10.

"We are proud to have welcomed 1.4 million guests to our new home, Abu Dhabi's Zayed International Airport, and we eagerly anticipate introducing more of the world to both the new airport and the onboard Etihad experience throughout 2024, as our network and frequencies continue to expand."

Stuck outside Dubai for over six months? Return permit lets you re-enter

DUBAI: If you are a Dubai resident and have spent more than six months outside the UAE because you were studying abroad, undergoing treatment or for other unforeseen circumstances, you can re-enter the UAE with a return permit issued by the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs - Dubai (GDRFAD).

Normally, a UAE residence visa does not stay valid if you stay outside the UAE for over six months, unless you have a Golden Visa. If you do find yourself in such a situation, instead of applying for a new residence visa, you can submit an application - "Return permit for resident out-

side UAE more than six months", through the official GDRFAD website - gdrfad.gov.ae, and provide a valid reason along with supporting documents for your prolonged stay abroad.

Eligibility: Open to Dubai residents who have stayed outside the UAE for over 180 days for a valid reason.

Application: Submit online via the GDRFAD website (gdrfad.gov.ae) with supporting documents.

Processing: Typically two working days, but may vary based on application details.

Validity: "The return permit validity is one month from the approval date provided that it does not exceed the residence

expiry date," the website states.

How to apply?: If you want to apply for the application faster, you can create an account with UAE Pass, which is the national digital identity for citizens, residents and visitors to the UAE. Learn how to create an account, by clicking here.

With the UAE Pass you can log into any UAE-based government platform without creating multiple accounts or passwords. Also, when you fill out the application for the re-entry permit, all your basic information, like your passport, visa, sponsor and Emirates ID details will be automatically filled in by UAE Pass.

Once you have created an account, follow the steps below:

1. Visit the official GDRFAD website - <https://gdrfad.gov.ae/> and click on the login icon at the top right corner of the page.
2. Next, click on "Individuals" and select "login with UAE Pass". You will need to verify your identity through the UAE Pass app on your phone.
3. You will then be transferred to a personal dashboard. Click on "Create New Application".
4. Next, select the "Return Permit for Resident outside UAE More than six months" service.
5. Then start filling out

the application form. If you used your UAE Pass account to log in, you won't have to manually fill in any of the details, except for the "Reason" and contact details. If you logged in with a GDRFA online account, you will need to enter the following information:

- a. **Sponsor details**
 - Sponsor name
 - b. **Passport details**
 - Passport number
 - Passport issue date
 - Passport expiry date
 - c. **Applicant details**
 - Current nationality
 - Profession
 - Mother name in English
 - Mother's name in Arabic
6. Next, enter the reason you stay