



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT



PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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IndiGo to hire over 1,000 pilots

MUMBAI: India's largest airline IndiGo is planning to hire more than 1,000 pilots in one of the largest recruitment drives undertaken by an Indian carrier.

The move comes in the aftermath of widespread flight disruptions in Dec last when the airline was forced to cancel over 5,000 flights in seven

days after facing an acute shortage of crew. The crisis followed the implementation of revised pilot duty and rest norms by the civil aviation regulator.

The fresh recruitment will include trainee first officers, senior first of-

ficers and captains, according to the notice on the company's website. One of the hiring notices also states that the airline is open to recruiting pilots without prior experience on the Airbus A320 aircraft, the primary aircraft type in its fleet.

The disruption stemmed from new rest regulations introduced by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The rules capped the number of landings a pilot can perform between midnight and 6am and increased weekly rest re-

quirements. An investigation by the regulator found that IndiGo had not adequately scaled up hiring or accelerated training to align with the new norms. As a result, pilots were stretched thin, with frequent reassignments, longer duty hours and extended "dead-heading",
(Cont. on page - 2)

TAFI holds well-attended (WI) Chapter Meeting

MUMBAI: Travel Agents Federation of India (Western India) successfully conducted its Chapter Meeting

on Feb 12 at NSCI, Worli, with an impressive attendance of over 110 members, once again reflecting

the strength, unity and engagement of the fraternity. Chairman Jay Kantawala warmly welcomed the

gathering, setting the tone for an insightful and interactive evening. Secretary Arun Iyer addressed key challenges impacting the current travel ecosystem and emphasised

especially in today's uncertain and evolving geopolitical environment. Treasurer Satbir Narula shared information on visa and airline matters.



TAFI WI's Chapter Meeting was held in Mumbai. Chairman Jay Kantawala, Secretary Arun Iyer, Treasurer Satbir Narula, President Abbas Moiz etc were present.

Chairman Jay Kantawala warmly welcomed the gathering, setting the tone for an insightful and interactive evening.

Secretary Arun Iyer addressed key challenges impacting the current travel ecosystem and emphasised how members can leverage specially curated TAFI WI videos that reinforce the relevance of travel agents,

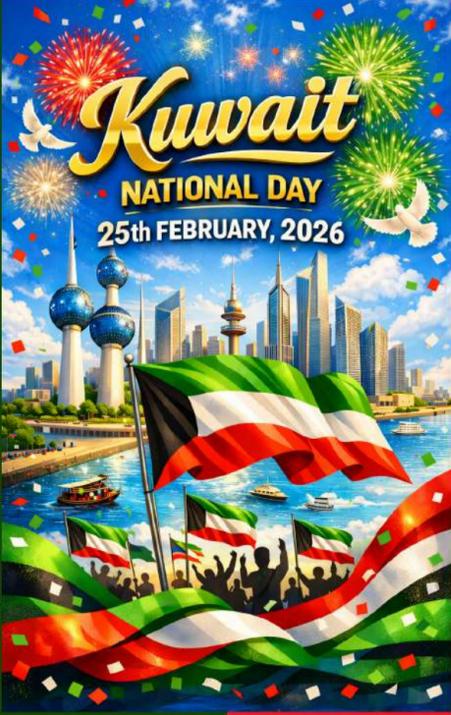
President Abbas Moiz apprised members of the forthcoming revisions in
(Cont. on page - 7)

Glimpses on page - 7)

Indian embassy organises Bharat Mela 2026 in Kuwait



KUWAIT CITY: The embassy of India in Kuwait, in association with the Touristic Enterprise Company (TEC) of Kuwait, organised Bharat Mela, a vibrant celebration of India's rich cultural diversity, culinary traditions and artistic heritage on
(Cont. on page - 2)



We are very pleased to announce that, **one** is coming out with a special Kuwait National Day supplement on 24th February, 2026.

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LuLu Retail hits record \$7.9b revenue in 2025, to open 50 GCC stores

ABU DHABI:

Lulu Retail Holdings, the largest pan-GCC full-line retailer, posted record revenue of \$7.9 billion for 2025, up 4.1pc year-on-year, driven by store expansion and strong e-commerce growth. Net profit reached \$205 million, slightly exceeding guidance from last year's third quarter.

LuLu Group launched Digital and Omnichannel Transformation Office in Dubai, marking next phase of tech-led expansion. The company proposed a second-half dividend of 3.5 fils per share, bringing total 2025 payouts to seven fils per share (\$197 million), reflecting confidence in its cash generation and long-term growth prospects. Lulu added 20 stores in 2025, raising its total network to 267 outlets across the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain. The retailer plans to open 50 more stores between 2026 and 2028 as part of its disciplined GCC growth strategy. "Our existing portfolio and growing e-commerce presence positions us to continue our disciplined expansion strategy cross the GCC,"

IndiGo to hire over 1,000 pilots

(Cont. from page - 1) where crew travel as passengers to operate flights from another location.

The DGCA's probe highlighted what it described as an overriding focus on "maximising utilisation of crew, aircraft and network resources", which significantly reduced roster buffer margins. Crew rosters were structured to maximise duty periods, relying heavily on tail swaps, extended duty patterns and minimal recovery time. This, the regulator said, compromised roster integrity and weakened operational resilience.



Saifee Rupawala, CEO of Lulu Retail, said. Online sales jumped 38.6pc year-on-year, accelerating to 51.8pc growth in Q4. Online penetration reached

7.3pc of total retail sales, driven by Lulu's proprietary digital platform, which is growing nearly twice as fast as aggregator channels.

(Cont. on page - 6)

Sikkim-Guwahati flights to be resumed

NEW DELHI: The Union civil aviation ministry is planning to connect Gangtok, Sikkim's capital, with Guwahati via a nine-seater aircraft, almost two years after flight services from the mountain state's Pakyong airport were halted.

K Rammohan Naidu, the Union minister of civil aviation, wrote to Indra Hang Subba — the sole Lok Sabha member from Sikkim giving this information. The letter said that the ministry has issued a letter of intent to Jet Wings, a private airline company,

for the nine-seater aircraft on the Pakyong-Guwahati route.

The proposal was initiated under the UDAN 5.3 scheme, which was a specialised bidding round of the regional connectivity scheme to revive and resume flight operations in discontinued, neglected and underserved routes of India," said a source. Prime Minister Modi had inaugurated the Pakyong airport in Sept 2018, making it the country's 100th operational airport.

Flights to Kolkata, Gu-

(Cont. on page - 6)

Indian embassy organises Bharat Mela...

(Cont. from page - 1)

Friday, Feb 13, at the scenic beachfront of Green Island on Arabian Gulf Road, Kuwait.

More than 2.5 lakh people attended the Bharat Mela, including members of the Indian community, the diplomatic community, and nationals of diverse countries, including Kuwait.

The day-long, family-friendly festival transformed the venue into a lively showcase of India's unity in diversity. The Bharat Mela was inaugurated by Her Excellency Paramita Tripathi, ambassador designate of India to Kuwait,

The report cited a senior official as saying that the airline is now proactively building a reserve of pilots to match its rapid aircraft induction plan. IndiGo inducts around four new aircraft every month and requires a steady expansion of crew to sustain high utilisation levels.

The airline upgrades about 20 to 25 first officers to captains each month through its internal training pipeline. However, trainee first officers require about six months of training before they can operate as full-fledged first officers.



India's Ambassador in Kuwait Her Excellency Paramita Tripathi at the Viksit Bharat --- India-Kuwait dialogues : India's sustained growth: Challenging global Environment talk in Kuwait.

with the festive beats of Kerala's traditional "Panchavadyam" and the lighting of the traditional lamp.

In her welcome address, Ambassador Tripathi underscored the importance of cultural engagement in fostering mutual understanding and further strengthening the longstanding friendly relations between India and Kuwait. She highlighted the constructive role of the Indian community in Kuwait in deepening bilateral ties and appreciated their continued efforts in promoting people-to-people connections between the two countries.

Spread over the picturesque beachfront of the Green Island in Kuwait, Bharat Mela offered visitors an immersive cultural experience through a wide range of attractions:

i. CULINARY DELIGHTS: Visitors enjoyed a rich spread of Indian re-

gional cuisines, featuring aromatic northern dishes, distinctive southern flavours, popular street food, traditional meals and festive sweets, offering a flavourful journey through India's diverse culinary landscape.

ii. LIVE PERFORMANC-

identities. Performances by the Dawoodi Bohra community's "Burhani Band" and the traditional "Panchvadyam" ensemble were widely appreciated by the audience. Energetic flashmob performances and the rhythmic beats of Punjabi dhols further elevated the festive atmosphere, adding to the enthusiasm and celebratory spirit.

iii. CULTURAL EXHIBITS: Displays of textiles, handicrafts, artistic traditions, tourism destinations, and cultural showcases highlighted India's centuries-old craftsmanship and living traditions. Interactive segments included pre-



Indian embassy in Kuwait organised Bharat Mela-2026 a vibrant celebration of India's rich cultural diversity, culinary traditions, and artistic heritage.

ES: A spectacular line-up of 57 performances, featuring classical and folk dances, traditional music, performance yoga, traditional martial arts and contemporary cultural presentations by more than 700 artists in vibrant traditional attire, showcased the richness and diversity of India's regional

presentations of Indian attire, henna art, bangle and bindi wearing experience and the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam initiative. More than a cultural festival, Bharat Mela served as a meaningful bridge between communities, offering Kuwaiti society a glimpse into India's spirit of unity in diversity.

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TAP ON THE YELLOW BANNER BELOW THE REQUIREMENT ADVT TO CONNECT WITH THE RECRUITMENT AGENCY

FOREX RATES

As on 16th February 2026 (In rupees)

Currency	BillBuy	BillSell
US Dollar	90.09	91.26
British Pound	122.88	124.6
Euro	106.56	108.83
Japanese Yen	58.84	59.79
Swiss Franc (CHF)	116.78	119.31
Canadian Dollar	65.87	67.37
Australian Dollar	63.62	65
Norwegian Krone	9.38	9.65
Swedish Krona	9.98	10.28
New Zealand Dollar	54.04	55.22
Hong Kong Dollar	11.38	11.73
Kuwaiti Dinar	285.18	301.4076
Singapore Dollar	71.1	72.71
Saudi Arabian Riyal	23.71	24.46
U A E Dirham	24.27	24.97

Passenger traffic in Oman airports rises

RIYADH: Passenger traffic through airports in Oman increased by 2.8 pc in 2025, reaching 14.9 million travellers by the end of Dec, up from 14.5 million passengers a year earlier, according to data released by the National Centre for Statistics and

Information and reported by Oman News Agency. Despite the rise in passenger volumes, total flight movements across the country's airports declined by 2.8pc to 104,510 flights in 2025, compared with 107,546 flights during the same period in 2024, indi-

cating higher load factors and network optimisation by airlines.

At Muscat International Airport, international flights fell by 4.5pc to 82,913 in 2025 from 86,797 a year earlier. Nevertheless, international passenger numbers rose by 1.3pc to 11.8 million, compared with 11.6 million in 2024. Domestic activity at Muscat showed stronger momentum, with flights increasing 6.6pc to 9,606 from 9,009, while domestic passenger numbers climbed 12pc to 1.3 million, up from 1.1 million.

At Salalah Airport, international flights declined 2.4pc to 4,886 in 2025, compared with 5,008 in 2024. International passenger numbers remained broadly stable at



678,591, slightly higher than 678,402 a year earlier. Domestic operations recorded robust growth, with flights rising 14.3 percent to 6,227 from 5,450 and passenger numbers increasing 17.7 percent to 1,023,529, up from 869,954.

Sohar Airport saw a sharp contraction in international traffic, as flights dropped 77.8pc to 110 in 2025 from 495 in 2024. International passenger numbers plunged 99.1 percent to 390 travellers, compared with 44,897 a year earlier. Domestic

flights at Sohar declined 9.1pc to 150 from 165, while passenger numbers fell 21.8 pc to 18,247, down from 23,331. At Duqm Airport, domestic flights edged down 0.6pc to 618 in 2025 from 622 in 2024. Passenger numbers slipped marginally by 0.4pc to 60,893, compared with 61,137 the previous year. Overall, the figures reflect steady growth in passenger demand across Oman's main airports, driven largely by domestic travel, even as airlines reduced flight frequencies during the year.



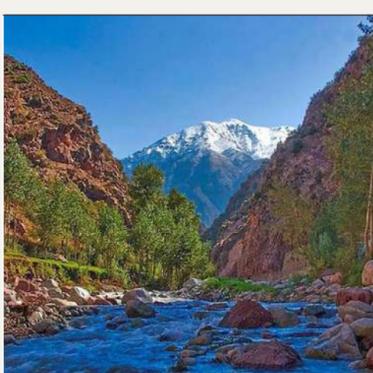
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GULF FAQs

Can employers reduce the standard six-month probation period?

In the UAE, a probationary period of an employee during an employment period with an employer is defined under Article-1 of the Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulation of Employment Relations, which states as, "Probationary Period: The period that may be required by the employer, which enables the latter to evaluate the performance of the employee and allows the employee to become familiar with his job duties and the work environment, according to which the employment contract is either continued or terminated as per the provisions hereof."

An employer may place a new employee under a probationary period of up to six months; as stated in Article 9(1) of the UAE Employment Law: "An employer may appoint the employee under a proba-

tionary period not exceeding six months from the date of commencement of work."

An employee who intends to resign during the probation period and join a new employer, thereafter, should serve one month's

notice to his or her current employer in writing at least one month before the date on which he intends to terminate the contract,



notice to his or her current employer.

A new employer shall compensate the current

employer in writing at least one month before the date on which he intends to terminate the contract,

and unless agreed otherwise, the new employer shall compensate the first employer for recruitment or contract costs."

If either an employee or an employer terminates an employment contract without following the rules set

out in this article, the party who terminates must pay compensation to the other party. This is under Article 9(5) of the UAE Employment Law: "If either party terminates the employment contract without taking into consideration the provisions of this Article, it shall pay to the other party

compensation equal to the employee's wages for the notice period or the remaining period of the no-

tice period."

Furthermore, the applicable probationary period must be expressly stated in the employment contract. This is in accordance with the Article (10) of Cabinet Resolution No.1 of 2022 on the Implementation of Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 Regarding the Regulation of Employment Relations, "Subject to the provisions of Article (8) of the Decree-Law: The employment contract should include the name and address of the employer, the name, nationality and date of birth of the employee, proof of his identity, his qualification, the job or occupation, the date of work commencement, the workplace, the working hours, the rest days, the probationary period, if any, the term of the contract, the wage agreed upon including the benefits and allowances, the annual leave entitlements, the notice period, the procedures for terminating the employment contract and any other data determined by the ministry in order to regulate the relationship between both parties."

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, a probation period is a maximum of six months. However, the applicable probation period is mentioned in the employment contract, and you are expected to adhere to the same.

If you intend to reduce your probation period or if you intend to resign without serving the stipulated notice period, then you may have to compensate your employer monetarily, or you may consider mutually agreeing with your employer to terminate your employment contract by waiving off the notice period.

Does notice period change based on reason for termination?

I was terminated from my job in the UAE due to performance issues, not misconduct. What notice period am I entitled to and how is my end-of-service calculated?

In the UAE, an employer or an employee may terminate the employment contract for a valid reason, if written notice is given. The notice period must be observed, with work performed during that time, and must be between 30 and 90 days. This is in accordance with the Article-43 (1) of the Federal Decree-Law No. 33 of 2021 Regarding the Regulation of Employment Relationships (the "Employment Law").

"Either party to the em-

ployment contract may terminate the contract for any legitimate reason, provided that the other party is notified in writing and work shall be performed during the notice period agreed upon in the contract, provided that such period is not less than 30 days and not more than 90 days."

Further, end-of-service benefits (gratuity) are payable only after completing at least one year of continuous service. This is in accordance with Article 51(2) of the Employment Law, which states: "The full-time foreign worker, who completed a year or more in continuous service, shall be entitled to end of service benefits at the end of his service, calculated ac-

cording to the basic wage as per the following:

- A wage of 21 days for each year of the first five years of service;
- A wage of 30 days for each year exceeding such period."

Therefore, if your employment was terminated before completing one year of continuous service, you are not entitled to an end-of-service gratuity. An employer is required to pay all outstanding wages and entitlements, as specified in the contract, company policies or applicable resolutions, within 14 days after the contract ends. This is in accordance with the Article-53 of the Employment Law. "The employer shall pay to the worker,

within 14 days from the end date of the contract term, his wages and all his other entitlements stipulated herein and resolutions issued for its implementation, the contract or the establishment's by-laws."

In accordance with the aforementioned provision of the law, the notice period is governed by the terms of the employment contract. End-of-service gratuity is applicable only if the employee has completed at least one year of continuous service. Any outstanding dues may be raised with the employer, and if not resolved within the stipulated timeframe, the matter may be escalated to the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization.

Indians can visit 56 countries visa-free or with visa-on-arrival

NEW DELHI: With Eid and the holiday season approaching, Indian travellers have more options than ever: India's passport has climbed to 75th place in the February 2026 Henley Passport Index, up from 85th last year and 80th at the start of 2026.

Indian passport holders

can now visit 56 countries without a prior visa, either visa-free or with visa-on-arrival—one more than in Jan. The rise comes after a brief Jan dip to 55 countries, following visa rule changes in Iran and

Bolivia. India regained access to The Gambia, boosting the tally to 56. The ranking highlights relative performance, as other nations saw larger declines over the same period.

Destinations that are vi-

sa-free, offer visa-on-arrival or allow entry via an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) score-1 point, while those requiring prior approval score 0. A higher rank indicates greater international travel freedom.

Singapore tops the index with access to 192 countries, followed by Japan and South Korea (187) and Sweden and the UAE (186).

Developed nations such as France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the US continue to dominate global mobility rankings.

Indian passport holders can enter these countries without prior approval, making them ideal for spontaneous trips, family holidays or business travel.

Popular destinations span Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Oceania, offering stays from two weeks to several months for travellers to immerse themselves in local culture.

Visa-free countries include: Asia: Bhutan, Nepal, Malaysia, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Macao (SAR China), Kazakhstan, Myanmar and Kenya.

Africa: Angola, Mauritius, Rwanda, Senegal, Seychelles, The Gambia, Comoro Islands, Cape Verde.

Oceania: Fiji, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Micronesia, Niue, Palau Islands, Vanuatu.

Caribbean & Americas: Barbados, British Virgin Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago.

Reliance bags US permit to buy Venezuelan oil

MUMBAI: Reliance Industries has received a general licence from the US government allowing the Mukesh Ambani-led behemoth to directly purchase Venezuelan oil.

The company, which operates the world's largest single-site refinery in Gujarat's Jamnagar, applied for the permit last month and received the green signal from the US Treasury Department. RIL did not comment on the development.

The move comes days after India and the US reached a trade deal whereby the US lifted a 25pc tariff on Indian merchandise export on the condition that New Delhi stops buying Russian oil. While announcing the deal on social media on Feb 2, President Trump had announced India would buy oil from the US and "potentially Venezuela".

The US — which has stepped up involvement in Venezuela's oil sector after capturing the country's president Nicolas Maduro last month — has been considering general licenc-

es to permit purchases, trading and investment. Reliance is the first Indian refiner to receive clearance in the current push.

The Trump administration has exhorted US petroleum giants to expand their presence in the Latin American country. While RIL has received a licence to purchase directly, the Union government has also asked public sector oil refiners to consider buying more US and Venezuelan crude. Refiners have been urged to prioritise US grades when they seek oil from the spot market via tenders, refinery executives told Bloomberg. Venezuela is unlikely to produce large volumes of crude anytime soon, but even limited supplies provide a fallback option for India's largest refiner. India has historically processed a significant volume of Venezuelan crude, which is heavy in nature. Major domestic refiners such as Vadinar (Nayara), IOC, HEML and MRPL, apart from RIL, have the capacity to process the high-viscosity, sour oil, which is difficult to extract

and refine without diluent. Reliance has historically been an important consumer of Venezuela's crude, having struck a term deal to secure as much as four-lakh barrels a day from Petroleos de Venezuela SA in 2012.

The Indian refining giant took about 25pc of Venezuela's exports in 2019, before its term deal got suspended in 2019 due to US sanctions. It last received a general licence in 2024 and took crude until it expired last year, and was not renewed. Buying Venezuelan oil will allow Reliance to optimise its refining margins because these barrels can be upgraded into higher-value products like diesel, kerosene and LPG that fetch strong demand in India and export markets, industry experts said.

Sikkim-Guwahati flights to...

(Cont. from page - 2) wahati and Delhi were introduced. However, operations were suspended in June 2024 because of adverse monsoon conditions. "Since then, flights have stopped operating from Pakyong and the residents of Sikkim, tourists and others visiting the Himalayan state have had to depend on Bagdogra again, which is around 130km away. The state and lawmakers have been insisting on the resumption of flights from Sikkim," said a hotelier based in Gangtok. "It is

good even if a nine-seater flight is introduced for the Guwahati route. Many people from Sikkim travel to the Northeast regularly," he added. The Union minister, in his letter to Subba, has mentioned that the proposition to resume flights has been forwarded to all domestic airlines to explore the feasibility of operating the airport.

"The Airports Authority of India is fully prepared to facilitate flight operations, subject to airlines opting to operate from the airport," reads the letter.

month-long training had been cut short to 15 days. Sahil feared that he would be deployed on the war front though he was promised a helper's job.

She said Sahil had confirmed that he received Rs 10 lakh against the promise of Rs 15 lakh upon joining the army. Sahil also told her that his original phone was taken away during training and he clandestinely procured an alternative mobile phone and SIM after paying four times the cost. He also gave her the mobile phone numbers of two of his roommates.

Alleging that his son became a victim of a human trafficking racket, Anita said the travel agent pocketed Rs 5 lakh and lured him to join the force at a monthly salary of Rs 2 lakh.

She said despite assurance of granting him a work visa, representatives of the travel agent did not extend any help at all after they met him at Moscow.

LuLu Retail hits record \$7.9b...

(Cont. from page - 2) Private label products now make up 29.8pc of total sales, supporting margins. The Happiness loyalty programme expanded to 8.4 million members, with over two-thirds of sales linked to loyalty customers.

Net debt eased slightly

to \$2.5 billion, leaving Lulu well-positioned for future expansion and shareholder returns. "Our high cash generation and confidence in the outlook allows us to propose a H2 dividend of 3.5 fils per share, taking the total to seven fils per share.

GLIMPSES OF TAFI (WI) MEET

(Cont. from page - 1)
 BSP settlement mechanisms and highlighted the anticipated implementation timeline of March 26.
 The evening featured insightful presentations from:
 * SOPA Lodges – Presented by Rosemay Muthoni, Director of Sales.
 * Destination Greece by WOTF Group (India rep-

resented by Global Destinations) – Presented by Nicholas
 * “NDC: Features, Future & Opportunities” – Presented by Manoj Samuel, CEO & Director, Riya Travel
 TAFI also welcomed new members:
 * DilshadBhuariwala – DMC Bazaar
 * Neville Gheewala –

Navigation Global Travels
 * Satish Venkatraman – Divyadesh Travels
 The meeting was honoured by the presence of distinguished guests including Sanya Hamilton, VP Sales – Allied T-Pro, US and representatives from the Sri Lankan Consulate.
 The evening concluded with networking camaraderie and an excit-

ing Lucky Draw featuring exclusive hospitality stays in Greece sponsored by WOTF Group.
 As discussed during the meeting, TAFI strongly recommends members to use the below video link in your email signature or share with clients. It subtly educates travellers about the importance of booking through professional

travel agents, particularly during challenging global situations.
 * Importance of Travel Agents Video:
<https://youtu.be/n308JYmQs4Y?si=JcfVKVofyHxtilc4>
 Members who attended gained valuable industry insights, networking opportunities and future-ready knowledge.

