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KERALA'S TOURISM-FRIENDLY BUDGET HAILED

***Rs 325cr to the tourism sector *50pc reduction in tax on all India permit tourist vehicles
*Rs 10cr for establishing a tourism start-up incubation centre *Reach Kerala initiative a big boost to medical tourism *Rs 400cr for Mission Samundra *Industry status to cinema**

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Tourism trade organisations across Kerala have welcomed the state government's revised budget, describing it as a progressive and tourism-friendly roadmap that will strengthen the state's position as one of India's leading tourism destinations.

stakeholders believe that this long-pending demand, once implemented, will improve access to finance, infrastructure support and incentives for tourism enterprises, thereby enhancing investment and employment opportunities across the sector.

A major highlight of the budget is the allocation of Rs 325 crore to the tourism sector, along with the government's announcement to grant industry status to tourism. Industry

The budget has also earmarked Rs 10 crore for establishing a Tourism Startup Incubation Centre, a move expected to encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and technology-driven solu-



Kerala Chief Minister V D Satheesan

tions within Kerala's tourism ecosystem.

One of the most appreciated announcements is the 50 pc reduction in tax on All India Permit tourist vehicles. Tourism stakeholders noted that the decision would discourage off-state vehicle registrations, encourage local registrations, reduce operating costs and improve the competitiveness of Kerala's transport

and tourism industry. The reduction in road tax for electric vehicles has also been welcomed as a significant step towards promoting sustainable and eco-friendly tourism mobility.

The budget gives special emphasis to pilgrimage and heritage tourism with plans to develop major pilgrimage centres such as Sabarimala, Guruvayur, Kottiyoor and Tiruvallam on the lines of the Tirupati Temple model. The government's commitment to preserving heritage structures and traditional architecture has been widely appreciated by the tourism fraternity.

The enhanced focus on healthcare infrastructure is expected to benefit Kerala's rapidly growing medical and

wellness tourism sector. The announcement of the "Reach Kerala" initiative aims to position Kerala as a leading global health tourism destination through co-ordinated efforts involving the Health, AYUSH, Tourism, and related departments to provide world-class healthcare services.

The budget has also announced the establishment of a Sree Narayana Guru Statue and Cultural Centre in New Delhi, a move that will showcase Kerala's cultural heritage and spiritual legacy at the national level.

Another landmark initiative is Mission Samudra, for which Rs 400 crore has been allocated. The project seeks to position Kerala prominently on the global maritime (Cont. on page - 2)

TOURISM TRADE WELCOMES KERALA BUDGET

Overall, tourism stakeholders have described the revised budget as a forward-looking and growth-oriented budget that promotes sustainable mobility, pilgrimage tourism, heritage conservation, wellness tourism, maritime development, cruise tourism, innovation and film tourism. Industry leaders believe that the measures announced will enhance Kerala's competitiveness and contribute significantly to the long-term growth of the state's tourism and hospitality sector.



Kerala Tourism Minister PC Vishnunadh

UAE schools on drive to recruit teachers

DUBAI: As the UAE's summer break approaches and schools across the country prepare for the 2026-27 academic year, leading education providers are in the thick of teacher recruitment and many have already secured the bulk of their hires. With international schools following the British, American, and IB curricula competing for top-tier talent on a global scale, the race to attract and retain skilled educators has never been

more competitive. It is not just overseas talent in demand, UAE-based teachers (Cont. on page - 2)

Saudi tourism hits new high with 123mn visitors and SR 304 bn in spending

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia recorded a historic high of nearly 123 million domestic and international tourists in 2025, thanks to the rapid transformation of the Kingdom's tourism sector into one of the country's most significant non-oil

economic engines.

According to the Ministry of Tourism's Annual Statistical Report 2025, the combined number of inbound and domestic tourists rose by around six per cent compared with the previous year, while total



MUMBAI: Air India Express is set to become the first airline to launch international passenger services from Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA), with flights to Abu Dhabi scheduled to commence on July 15.

The launch will mark the beginning of international

passenger operations at the greenfield airport, which started domestic commercial services on

Dec 25, 2025, after being inaugurated by Prime Minister Modi in Oct last year. Air India Group's low-cost carrier will operate the Navi Mumbai-Abu Dhabi route from July 15, while other domestic and foreign airlines are also expected to start international services from the airport in the coming months. The development comes days after Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMI-AL) CEO BVJK Sharma said

tourism spending reached a record SR304 billion (\$81 billion), up seven per cent year on year. The figures highlight the growing importance of tourism to Saudi Arabia's economic diversification (Cont. on page - 2)

(Cont. on page - 2)

Most Americans disapprove of Trump's handling of Iran

WASHINGTON: Most Americans continue to disapprove of how President Trump is handling Iran, while his overall presidential approval holds steady,

Banks raise FCNR (B) deposit rates again

MUMBAI: Some banks have again raised interest rates on foreign currency non-resident (bank) [FCNR(B)] deposits to as high as 7.13pc, after RBI temporarily removed the interest-rate ceiling on select such deposits giving lenders greater flexibility to attract overseas funds.

Punjab National Bank has increased the interest rate on FCNR(B) deposits of \$1 million and above to 6.60pc for tenures of three to five years. For deposits of less than \$1 million, the public sector bank is now offering 6.50pc per annum. Earlier the bank

according to a new AP-NORC poll that was conducted as he suggested a deal with Iran had been reached.

The poll points to just how unpopular the war, which began on Feb 28, has been with Americans even as the Republican president turned abruptly from threatening Iran to reopening negotiations. Support for his handling of the war remains lopsidedly partisan. About two-thirds, 65pc, of US adults disapprove of how Trump is han-

was offering rates in the range of 6-6.10pc. South Indian Bank has also revised its rates, offering 6.50 pc on FCNR(B) deposits with maturities of three to five years. Bandhan Bank has introduced a separate rate slab for deposits of \$1 million and above, offering 7.10pc for tenures of three to five years, while deposits of up to \$1 million will continue to earn seven per cent. Equitas Small Finance Bank has created a new five-year maturity bucket offering 7.13 pc per annum.

As competition grows (Cont. on page - 6)

dling issues with Iran. But while the vast majority of Democrats and independents view Trump's actions negatively, only 28pc of Republicans are unhappy. Americans' views on how the president is handling Iran are roughly in line with his overall job approval, which stands at 37 pc, unchanged from

Air India Express set to launch...

(Cont. from page - 1) the airport was preparing to begin international passenger and cargo operations from July 15. "On July 15, we are starting with freighters and we expect the freighters to ramp up to almost 18 weekly flights. Good news is also that there is movement on the passenger side and hopefully on July 15 international passenger flights will also start," Sharma had told reporters on the sidelines of the Brihan

mumbai Customs Broker's Association-hosted Logistics Conclave in Mumbai.

Sharma made the announcement after a senior official from the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) reviewed the airport's readiness for international operations on June 16. The airport operator had initially planned to commence international services during the summer schedule period between late March and late Oct but deferred

an Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll conducted in May. The new survey was conducted June 11-17, just after Trump called off threats to escalate the war with Iran. The poll was fielded as Trump announced a deal with Iran and authorised an end to (Cont. on page - 6)

the rollout due to the conflict in West Asia. Owned by the Adani Group, with the Maharashtra government's planning agency Cidco holding a 26 per cent stake, NMA currently handles around 20,000 passengers daily and records nearly 150 arrivals and departures each day. The airport expects passenger traffic to rise to 50,000 per day by the end of the year, with daily air traffic movements projected to increase to 380.

KERALA'S TOURISM-FRIENDLY BUDGET...

(Cont. from page - 1) map within the next five years. The proposed maritime policy focusing on the state's 13 non-major ports, the establishment of an International maritime museum and the promotion of cruise tourism are expected to create new opportunities for tourism, trade, and employment.

Tourism stakeholders have also welcomed the government's support for the film and entertainment sector. The proposal to grant industry sta-

UAE schools on drive...

(Cont. from page - 1) ers are increasingly valued too. For Taaleem, one of the UAE's largest education providers managing more than 30 schools, recruitment for the coming academic year began well before the current one drew to a close. "Any further recruitment is largely driven by enrolment growth and strong demand for places across our schools," Director of Education Nicki Wil-

tus to cinema, establish a permanent venue for the International Film Festival, strengthen anti-piracy measures, and attract national and international film productions is expected to boost Kerala's profile as a preferred destination for film tourism.

VISIONARY BUDGET, says Jose Pradeep

Welcoming the budget, Jose Pradeep, President of Kerala Travel Mart Society, described it as a visionary document that would positively impact Kerala's tour-

ism and hospitality sectors.

"The government's focus on pilgrimage tourism, heritage conservation, maritime development and tourism infrastructure will significantly benefit Kerala's tourism fraternity. These initiatives will strengthen the state's position as a leading tourism destination and enrich the hospitality sector," he said.

Sajeev Kurup, President of the Ayurveda Promotion Society (APS), welcomed the government's decision to launch the "Reach Kerala" initiative and its focus on health tourism. "The coordinated approach involving Health, AYUSH, Tourism, and allied departments is a positive step towards positioning Kerala as a leading health and wellness destination. APS had proposed a dedicated global Ayurveda promotion campaign under the banner "Kerala Calling", and we hope such initiatives will also be considered in the future to further strengthen Kera-

la's leadership in Ayurveda and wellness tourism. The announcement on industry status for tourism is another encouraging development for the sector," he said.

Prasad Manjali, Secretary General of South Kerala Hoteliers Forum (SKHF), welcomed the emphasis on pilgrimage and heritage tourism and termed it a positive step for the hospitality industry.

"The proposal to develop major pilgrimage centres such as Sabarimala, Guruvayur, Kottiyoor, and Tiruvallam on the lines of the Tirupati model is a welcome move. Pilgrimage tourism has immense

potential to generate year-round visitor traffic and support the hospitality sector across Kerala.

At the same time, the development and promotion of the world-renowned Sree Padmanabha swamy Temple should also be considered as part of the state's long-term pilgrimage tourism strategy," he said.

Siji Nair, CEO, Global Travel Market (GTM), welcomed the tourism-related announcements and noted that several commitments made by the tourism minister during the inaugural session of GTM 2026 have been reflected in the revised budget proposals.

and the broader impact of investments made over the past decade.

"The 2025 results signal more than growth; they reflect the structural transformation of tourism into a high-impact economic engine for the Kingdom," Al Khateeb said.

Saudi tourism hits new...

(Cont. from page - 1) strategy under Vision 2030, which seeks to reduce the Kingdom's dependence on oil revenues and develop new sources of growth. Tourism Minister Ahmed Al Khateeb said the results reflected both the scale of the sector's transformation

and the broader impact of investments made over the past decade.

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Gujarat cyber cops bust forex racket

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat's Cyber Crime Police have cracked down on an interstate cyber fraud racket that allegedly duped investors over a fake forex and cryptocurrency trading platform, promising extraordinary returns.

The racket that targeted investors across multiple countries came to light after a Gujarat-based complainant reportedly lost more than Rs 19 lakh.

Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Deputy Commissioner DrLavina Sinha, Assistant Commissioner of Police HardikMakadiya and the Cyber Crime Police Station launched

an extensive investigation into the complaint. The investigation revealed a larger organised cyber-crime network operating across the state and international boundaries.

According to investigators, the complainant was drawn into the scheme after watching forex trading promotional videos circulating on various online platforms.

The videos projected forex trading as a highly profitable investment opportunity and directed potential investors toward a trading platform known as WinProFX. Believing the claims, the complainant began investing funds through the platform by transferring cryptocurrency in the form of USDT.

Police said the platform initially displayed substantial profits on the investor's trading dashboard, creating an illusion of successful trading activity, encouraging further investments.

However, when the complainant attempted to withdraw the profits and the original investment amount, no money was returned for real.Com-

munication from the platform operators gradually ceased, leaving the investor unable to recover his funds. Investigators allege that the accused persons, acting as part of a pre-planned criminal conspiracy, deliberately gained the trust of investors and induced them to invest larger sums through false representations.

Cyber experts conducted an extensive forensic analysis of digital footprints, call detail records, cryptocurrency wallet addresses, bank account transactions and money trails.

Using advanced analytical tools and technical surveillance, investigators pieced together the operational structure of the alleged fraud network.

Intelligence inputs further strengthened the probe, eventually leading the police to Bihar. Based on the evidence collected, police arrested Kumar Mangalam, a 26-year-old BTech graduate in Computer Science from Begusarai, Bihar. Authorities believe he played a significant role in the functioning and promotion of the WinProFX platform.

FOREX RATES		
As on 22nd June 2026 (In rupees)		
Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	93.73	94.98
British Pound	123.59	125.39
Euro	106.94	109.24
Japanese Yen	58.12	59.07
Swiss Franc (CHF)	115.72	118.26
Canadian Dollar	65.96	67.46
Australian Dollar	65.41	66.85
Norwegian Krone	9.5	9.78
Swedish Krona	9.66	9.94
New Zealand Dollar	53.52	54.73
Hong Kong Dollar	11.81	12.17
Kuwaiti Dinar	313.7881	294.98
Singapore Dollar	72.24	73.87
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.65	25.43
U A E Dirham	25.25	25.98

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All passengers must exit the UAE before 9 July 2026 to benefit from the ICP Fine Waiver.

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GULF FAQs

What is a non-compete clause?

Can you please explain to me what is a non-compete clause in an employment contract?

Signing an employment contract in the UAE often means agreeing to more than just a salary and a job title. Buried in the fine print may be a non-compete clause, a legal restriction that could affect where you work, and for whom, long after you've left.

While non-compete clauses are legally recognised in the UAE, they are not automatically enforceable in all situations. The clause must be reasonable, specific and directly linked to protecting legitimate business interests.

What is a non-compete

clause? Under UAE Labour Law, a non-compete clause is a contractual provision that restricts an employee from working for a competitor or starting a competing business, after their employment ends. These clauses are legally enforceable in the UAE, but only under specific conditions.

The clause is designed to protect legitimate business interests, such as trade secrets or established client relationships, where an employee's departure could cause genuine commercial harm to their former employer.

To be legally enforceable, a non-compete clause must define three essential elements:

1. Geographic scope:



The clause must clearly specify where it applies. This could be a specific emirate, city, or country. Broad or vague geographic restrictions may not be upheld.

2. Duration: The time period must be clearly stated and cannot exceed

two years from the date the contract ends. Shorter durations are also permitted, provided they are reasonable.

3. Nature of work and potential harm: The restriction must relate to work that could cause genuine harm to the employer's le-

gitimate business interests.

When can a non-compete clause be added?: Employers can include a non-compete clause when the employee's role involves access to sensitive company information or client networks. This typically applies to positions

where the risk of competitive harm is higher, such as managerial, sales, or strategic roles. When is a non-compete clause not applicable? The law also includes safeguards to protect employees from unfair restrictions. In certain situations, a non-compete clause may be considered void or unenforceable.

These include: Unlawful termination by the employer--If the employer terminates the contract in violation of the Labour Law, such as in cases of arbitrary dismissal, the non-compete clause becomes void.

Termination during probation: If the employment contract ends during the probation period, the clause does not apply. Time limit for legal action: Employers cannot file a case after one year from the date they discover the alleged violation.

Compensation agreement: The clause may be waived if the employee or new employer pays compensation to the previous employer, capped at three months' wages, provided there is written agreement.

In-demand professions: Certain professional categories identified by the ministry may be exempt, particularly if they are considered essential to the national labour market.

How to verify job offers in the UAE?

I have received a job offer from Dubai which looks very attractive. How can I verify the genuineness of this offer?

Receiving a job offer to work in the UAE is an exciting milestone, but it is essential to ensure that the offer is genuine and officially recognised. In the UAE, all legitimate job offers must be issued through the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization (MOHRE).

Employers are legally required to use a contract form approved by MOHRE when applying for your work permit. These official job offer forms include a unique serial number or barcode, allowing you to easily verify their authenticity online. While your final employment contract may include additional benefits beyond those listed in the initial offer, the offer letter re-

mains the legal basis for the contract. The terms and conditions in both documents must match.

What should a UAE job offer letter include? According to MOHRE, every valid offer letter issued by the ministry must explicitly include the following details: Job title or role, company number, type of contract, salary details (whether monthly, daily or commission-based), starting date of employment, weekly leave entitlement, notice period and other relevant conditions

How to confirm your job offer is valid? If you are currently outside the UAE and have received a job offer, you can take the following steps to protect yourself and ensure the offer is legitimate.

1. Check with the UAE embassy: Your first step should be to contact the UAE embassy or consulate in your home coun-

try. Embassy officials can assist you in verifying whether the employing company and the offer itself are genuine.

2. Use MOHRE's Online Enquiry Service: You can independently verify your job offer directly through the official MOHRE portal. Follow these steps: Visit the official MOHRE website. Navigate to the Services section, choose employee services and select the Transactions Inquiry Service.

Select the option to Enquiry for Job Offer. Enter the following required details: Transaction Number (found on your offer letter), company number, from date and to date, permit type (as an employee verifying a job offer, select "All Work Permits").

What the results mean? After submitting the information, the system will display the offer letter if it is officially registered

with the ministry. If the letter does not appear in the system, the offer may be fraudulent or the employer has not submitted it properly.

Essential checklist before you accept: Before signing or accepting any employment offer, ensure you have ticked boxes on the following safety measures: Match the details: Double-check that the salary, job title and benefits shown on the MOHRE system exactly match what the employer promised you during interviews. Watch for fees: ensure the employer does not ask you to pay for recruitment, visa or processing fees. Under UAE labour law, all of these costs must be borne entirely by the employer.

Look for the barcode: Verify that the offer is issued on the official MOHRE template and clearly displays a barcode or transaction number.

IATO (Western India Chapter) meet held in Mumbai

MUMBAI: A meeting of the Western India Chapter of Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) was held in Mumbai.

In his welcome address, Pravin Shah, chapter chairman, held discussions on future meetings, training programmes and educational trips outside Mumbai, including Pune, Nagpur, Nasik, Aurangabad and other tourist destinations.

Wasim Shaikh, executive committee member, gave updates on



At the IATO meeting from left are by Himanshu Agashiwala, Wasim Shaikh and Pravin Shah

IATO pre-conventions in Viskhapatanam.

Other presentation were given by Chandan

Bhadsalve (Matheran), Rashi Prajapati (SJ Studio, Bollywood Tour) and by Nishat Gandhi (Tathastu Resorts).

Vote thanks was proposed by Himanshu Agashiwala.

(Glimpses on page-7)

Tariffs for Bhogapuram airport okayed; Vizag flight operations to end soon

VISAKHAPATNAM: Commercial flight operations currently being handled at the Visakhapatnam Airport within the Naval Airfield will cease once the upcoming Bhogapuram International Airport becomes operational, with all civilian air traffic proposed to be shifted to the new facility, according to the latest tariff order issued by the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA).

The tariff framework provides details of charges that will be levied on both passengers and airlines using airport. Domestic passengers departing from Bhogapuram will pay a User Development Fee (UDF) of Rs 835, while arriving passengers will be

charged Rs 355.

For international passengers, the UDF has been fixed at Rs 1,255 for departure and Rs 545 for arrival. AERA noted that the Bhogapuram International Airport is being developed as a greenfield airport with an initial passenger handling capacity of six million passengers per annum.

The airport is expected to serve as the primary commercial aviation gateway for North Coastal Andhra Pradesh after the transition of civilian flight operations from Visakhapatnam.

The order also specifies charges payable by airlines for using airport infrastructure. Domestic carriers will be charged landing fees of Rs 1,400 per metric tonne

(MT) of an aircraft's maximum take-off weight, while international airlines will pay Rs 1,975 per MT.

flydubai wins best connectivity award as it expands global network

DUBAI: flydubai has been named the "Airline with the Best Connectivity in the Middle East" for the third time at the Business Traveller Middle East Awards 2026. The Dubai-based airline received the award at the 25th edition of the event, with the recognition based on votes from the public and readers of the magazine.

The award comes as flydubai continues to expand its network from Dubai, adding new routes and increasing travel options for passengers.

The airline recently launched three weekly flights to Benghazi in Libya from June 17 and is preparing to start daily services to Bangkok, Thailand from July 1 and flights to Pokhara, Nepal from Sept 23. During the summer travel period between June and September, flydubai is also operating seasonal flights to destinations

Japan hikes visa fees

NEW DELHI: Japan will sharply increase visa application fees from July 1, 2026, marking its first revision in nearly five decades.

The move will see the cost of both single-entry and multiple-entry visas rise five-fold, significantly increasing upfront expenses for tourists, business travellers and professionals visiting the country.

The Japanese government says the fee revision is aimed at reflecting inflation and exchange-rate movements that have accumulated since the current visa charges were introduced in 1978.

First visa fee revision in nearly 50 years: According to an announcement by Japan's government and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the fee for a single-entry visa will rise to ¥15,000, while the fee for a multiple-entry visa will increase

to ¥30,000 from July 1.

The changes were approved through a cabinet decision and announced by Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi during a press conference.

Explaining the decision, Motegi said the existing visa fee structure had remained unchanged since 1978 and no longer reflected current economic conditions. He stated that the revision takes into account inflation and fluctuations in currency exchange rates over the past several decades.

According to reports by BBC, this is the first increase in Japanese visa fees in almost 50 years.

What will the new fees be?

Based on current exchange rates, the revised fees are roughly equivalent to: • Around Rs8,500 for a single-entry visa.



including Al Alamein, Antalya, Batumi, Dubrovnik, Mykonos, Olbia, Santorini and Trabzon.

Mohammed Hareb Al Mheiri, Chief Procurement & Technology Officer at flydubai, said: "We are pleased to have received the 'Airline with the Best Connectivity in the Middle East' award for the third time." "Since 2009, we have remained committed

to opening up underserved markets, enhancing connectivity and creating more free flows of trade and tourism across our network from our home in Dubai." He added: "As we continue to grow our operations, we remain focused on providing our customers with greater travel options, while supporting Dubai's position as a world-class aviation hub."

Banks raise FCNR (B)...

(Cont. from page - 2) among banks to attract foreign deposits, other banks are likely to enhance their interest rates too. Ujjivan Small Finance Bank is preparing to revise its rates upwards from the current 7.13pc. "Now that the cap has gone, we are internally deliberating on the extent of the increase. We are yet to finalise it, but

we will revise the rate upwards," said Hitendra Jha, head of retail liabilities of the bank.

On Wednesday, RBI temporarily withdrew the interest rate ceiling on fresh three-year and five-year FCNR(B) deposits until Sept 30, 2026, as part of changes announced under its revised deposit interest rate framework.

Most Americans disapprove...

(Cont. from page - 2) the US naval blockade in the Strait of Hormuz, concluding just before the deal was signed.

But in interviews, some Republicans also weren't pleased with the outcome of this week's agreement, which gives Iran an imme-

diate benefit, allowing it to sell its oil freely again. The deal also reopens the strait without tolls for two months, restarts talks between the US and Iran over Tehran's nuclear program and calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium.

IATO WESTERN INDIA CHAPTER MEET IN MUMBAI

