



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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IPEPCIL urges govt to abolish Country Specific Order in recruiting nurses

MUMBAI :In a pressing appeal, the Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council (IPEPCIL), led by its president Abdulkareem, has urged the Government of India and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to reassess and roll back the Country Specific Order (CSO) mechanism imposed since 2016. The additional norms imposed on nurses' recruitment have escalated compliance costs, creating bu-

reaucratic hurdles that impede efficiency and innovation, particularly affecting small businesses in the overseas recruitment sector.

Abdulkareem highlighted the rigidity of the regulatory process, causing a stifling environment for Human Resource Administrators (HRAs) and prompting foreign employers to shift their demands to alternative markets. The CSO, instituted under the guise of protecting

women, subjects nurses to a circuitous route, unfairly categorising them for "Emigration Clearance" despite their qualifications exceeding the ECNR passport criteria.

This discriminatory practice not only hampers the efficiency of the recruitment process but also inhibits the free movement of well-qualified Indian nurses seeking opportunities abroad. IPEPCIL emphasises the need to review and dismantle the CSO,

pointing out its irrelevance in the current scenario and advocating for a fair and streamlined recruitment process for both male and female nurses.

The plea aims at addressing disparities within the sector, fostering a more inclusive and efficient environment for overseas recruitment while ensuring that Indian nurses can pursue international employment without unnecessary obstacles.

Modi to visit UAE

ABU DHABI: More than 60,000 people have registered to attend "Ahlan Modi", a community event that will be graced by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Abu Dhabi on Feb 13.

Organisers said they are doing "meticulous co-ordination with Abu Dhabi authorities to guarantee an event marked by grandeur and seamless execution." This will be the Indian Prime Minister's seventh visit to the UAE. The mega community event at Zayed Sports City Stadium will be held a day before he is set to inaugurate the region's first traditional Hindu stone temple in Abu Dhabi.

Key highlights of Ahlan Modi include performances by more than 700 cultural artists who will showcase the diversity of Indian arts.

It will also see participation of more than 150 Indian community groups and thousands of blue-collar workers from across the UAE, who, according to the organisers, will "weave a rich tapestry of diversity and unity into the fabric of the event." "Ahlan Modi is not just an event, it is a celebration of unity in diversity, resonating across borders," noted PNC Menon, chairman of Sobha Realty.

Kuwait eases family visa rules in certain cases

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait has announced key changes to the regulations governing the acquisition of regular residency for family members.

The revisions, issued by Deputy Prime Minister Fahd Al Yousef modify specific provisions within the executive regulations of the Expats' Residence Law.

Under revised Article 29, applying for a dependent or family visa (for newcomers) requires

a monthly salary of not less than KD800, a university degree and a relevant profession. However, certain professions are now exempt from the degree requirement.

The professions exempted from the university degree requirement, as detailed in Article 30 of Ministerial Resolution No. 957/2019, include:

1. Advisors, judges, prosecutors, experts and legal researchers in the government sector.

2. Medical professionals, including doctors and pharmacists.

3. University, college and higher institute professors.

4. School administrators, vice principals, education mentors, teachers, social workers and laboratory attendants in the government sector.

5. Financial and economic advisors in universities.

6. Engineers.

7. Imams, preachers and muezzins in mosques.

8. Librarians in government agencies and private universities.

9. Ministry of Health staff, including nurses, paramedics, medical technicians and social service workers.

10. Social workers and psychologists in the government sector.

11. Journalism, media professionals and correspondents.

FOREX RATES

As on 6th Feb, 2024 (In rupees)

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	83.89	82.84
Euro	90.68	89.30
Australian Dollar	55.21	53.85
Japanese Yen	0.62	0.54
Canadian Dollar	62.74	61.43
Singapore Dollar	62.80	61.57
Swedish krona	8.89	7.10
UAE Dirham	23.21	22.46
Swiss Franc	96.76	94.96
British Pound	105.91	104.52
New Zealand Dollar	51.56	49.43
Hong Kong Dollar	11.57	10.21
Saudi Arabian Riyal	22.86	21.91
Bahraini Dinar	226.31	212.31
Chinese Yuan	12.44	10.64
Danish Krone	12.51	11.51
Kuwaiti Dinar	276.37	260.37
Malaysian Ringgit	18.42	17.12
Omani Rial	221.68	209.68
Qatari Riyal	23.81	21.31
South African Rand	4.89	3.89

Israel recruits Indian workers

ROHTAK (Haryana): After a long-drawn Israel's war on Gaza, a labour crisis has emerged in the country, rooted in its decision to block tens of thousands of Palestinians from working in Israel.

In October, Israeli construction companies reportedly requested their government in Tel Aviv to allow them to hire up to one lakh Indian workers to replace Palestinians whose work licences

were suspended after the Gaza offensive began.

The Haryana government in December advertised 10,000 positions for construction workers in Israel, including 3,000 posts for carpenters and ironworkers, 2,000 for floor tilefitters, and 2,000 for plasterers. Its advertisement said the salary for the jobs would be around 6,100 shekels or approximately \$1,625, a month – in a state where the per capita income

is around \$300 a month.

The same month, Uttar Pradesh, country's most populous state, also released a similar advertisement for another 10,000 workers. Reports said the recruitment drive began in state capital Lucknow drawing hundreds of applicants.

Earlier this

GOODWILL MESSAGE



(Cont. on page-2)

Gulf NRI businessmen hail budget

DUBAI: Prominent Indian businessmen and professionals living in the UAE welcomed the interim Indian budget for 2024 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as a crucial blueprint for the upliftment of the masses through specific focus on the poor, farmers, youth and women in the nation's impending transition to the third-largest world economy. The budget, they argue, signals India's ambitious development goals, robust economic growth while offering a blend of opportunities to steer the economy towards a holistic growth.

Yusuff Ali

(Chairman, Lulu group)

Yusuff Ali MA, chairman of Lulu Group: "It is an interim budget as we do not expect major announcements on important initiatives. Key highlights of the budget would be enhancement of transport especially in the railway and aviation sector which will further upgrade connectivity. The budget proposal to set up five integrated aqua parks in the country will certainly benefit the fishermen communi-

ty throughout the country. Apart from this, the budget gives more focus on the poor, farmers, and women empowerment as new measures are being implemented which will help India to become a global economic superpower in the coming years."

GP Hinduja

(Chairman, Hinduja group)

"The Interim Budget is both a time for reflection and visioning for the future while managing adroitly the present. Compliments to FM Nirmala Sitharaman for effectively achieving this. She articulated the achievements of the past decade and spelt out the broad roadmap to 2047 while maintaining the path of fiscal rectitude with fiscal deficit targeted at 5.1pc in FY 25 and down to 4.5pc in FY 26. The budget shunned any populist measures so often resorted to by the governments. But Bharat could certainly do more on its infrastructure CAPEX budgeting which increased nominally by 11pc. Some bold measures are needed to increase the annual FDI level of \$60 billion further. The

banking and power sector reforms coupled with further impetus on digital infrastructure are imperative to Vikasit Bharat with improved sovereign rating. Overall, stability and continuity with judicious acceleration are the wheels deployed through this interim budget for taking off this flight. Now, it's over until July 2024."

PNC Menon

(Chairman, Sobha group)

"As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, this is a budget of creating India's future, reflecting the aspirations of a young India. With a significant increase in the capital expenditure outlay to 11.1pc (Rs 11.11 trillion for FY 25), the budget propels India towards the ambitious target of becoming a \$5 trillion economy by 2027. The extraordinary focus on R&D spending is also a decisive step forward. "The boost in religious and business tourism will lead to more employment in the hospitality sector. The construction of 20 million houses will help in the construction sector. Investment in sunrise sectors and deep tech

will help establish more chip-making plants for which high-skilled employees are needed."

Dr. Azad Moopen

(Chairman, Aster Healthcare)

"It is heartening to see that the Interim budget focuses on the upliftment of the masses through specific focus on the poor, farmers, youth and women. The allocation of Rs. 1 trillion with 50-year interest free loans will encourage the start-up culture that India is now thriving upon, encouraging the youth of today to become entrepreneurs and focus on their growth as well as the growth of the nation. "In healthcare, we were hoping to see an increase in the GDP allocation of minimum five per cent for the sector, hopefully this will be addressed in the complete budget to be announced in July this year, under the new government. We are glad that the government is considering adding more hospitals in all districts in the country, which is essential to meet the rising demand. We would recommend focusing on public-private partnerships (PPP) to address this. With all ma-

ternal and child healthcare to be brought under one scheme, this will be essential. It is promising to hear that the government plans to open more medical colleges alongside existing hospital infrastructure. There is now an urgent need for comprehensive reform of medical education, to ensure that the medical professionals of tomorrow are trained in the latest medicine and techniques, like their western counterparts.

Shamlal Ahamed

(MD, Malabar Gold & Diamonds)

"While the Union Budget for the upcoming fiscal year does not carry any landmark provisions, it does carry some welcome initiatives, particularly in the realm of infrastructure development. The government has mandated a significant spending allocation towards air and rail travel. Once implemented, this will be a major boost to connectivity, serving as a substantial catalyst to trade and tourism. The proposed Housing scheme for impoverished communities is also a great initiative, which aligns closely with Malabar Group's ESG initiatives.

Kuwait to ban handshakes at funerals

KUWAIT CITY: Kuwait Municipality plans to prohibit handshakes at funerals and mourning halls in cemeteries on health grounds.

The Kuwaiti ministry of health had called on the municipality to urge mourners gathering at cemeteries to offer condolences to give up hand-

shakes and make do with eye greetings, according to Al Jarida newspaper, citing a municipal official.

"The municipality will issue a circular in this respect, banning handshakes inside mourning halls upon the recommendation of the ministry of health," said the Kuwait Municipality's Director-General

Saud Al Dabus. The ministry said in a circular to the municipality that its recommendation comes out of keenness to take preventive measures to protect public health and curtail the spread of contagious diseases due to handshakes.

In a reassuring message, a spokesman for the

ministry Dr Abdullah Al Sanad said the recommendation to replace handshakes with eye greetings is part of efforts to boost safe health behaviour in everyday life. "But the current health situation inside the country is reassuring," he added.

Meanwhile, Dr Ahmed Al Outeibi, a public health

specialist, was quoted by Al Qabas newspaper as saying that there are no new viral infections in Kuwait. "There are no reports about anything new or illness cases. The circular directed by the ministry of health to the municipality is a mere activation of preventive measures," he said.

Israel recruits Indian...

(Cont. from page-1)

month, recruiters from Israel arrived in India to interview the workers.

An official from Haryana Kaushal Rozgar Nigam, one of the state government agencies overseeing the recruitment drive, told a TV channel that an average of 500-600 applicants were interviewed every day during the

weeklong recruitment drive in Rohtak. Shiv Prakash, a construction worker from Bihar who returned from Saudi Arabia last year, said the salary offered by Israeli companies is three times what he previously made. "Who would want to miss such an opportunity?" asked the 39-year-old.

Kuwait launches online part-time work permits

KUWAIT CITY: Following the introduction of a second job policy for private sector workers last month, Kuwait has launched an online service for obtaining such part-time work permits.

The Kuwaiti Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) announced the availability of the new service on Sahel, a plat-

form for electronic government services. The step aims to address labour market needs and provide a convenient facility for employers.

The service costs KD5 for a one-month permit, KD10 for three months, KD20 for six and KD30 for one year. Kuwaiti workers are exempted from the fees. In Decem-

ber, Kuwait said it would allow private sector workers in the country to take on a second part-time job with the approval of their original employers.

The policy went into effect last month. A related decree from the Interior Ministry has imposed a maximum of four hours per day for the second part-time job, requiring

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Supervisor - Rigging	50 nos.	Store Keeper	40 nos.
Superintendent - Welding	20 nos.	Material Controller	15 nos.
Superintendent - Mechanical/piping/Static	30 nos.	Logistic Coordinator	10 nos.
Superintendent - Lifting	10 nos.	Lead - HSE	10 nos.
Foreman - Rigging	150 nos.	HSE Officer	120 nos.
Foreman - Welding	30 nos.	HR Assistant	20 nos.
Foreman - Mechanical	250 nos.	Admin Assistant	10 nos.
Lead QC Inspector - Mechanical/welding/static	10 nos.	Senior Technician - Electrical	30 nos.
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- **STRUCTURAL FABRICATOR** (05 NOS.) 160 BHD
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Site Coordinator	10	FITTER (INSTRUMENT)	10
Material Supervisor	10	Safety	10
Logistic Controller	10	SAFETY LEAD	10
Store Keeper	10	SAFETY OFFICER	10
Permit Holder	10	FIRE WATCH / HOLE WATCH	10
Fabricator (Pipe)	10	Rigging	10
Fitter (Pipe)	10	REGGING / LIFTING COORDINATOR	10
General Fitter	10	SUPERVISOR (RIGGING)	10
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- RIGGERS

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- BLASTER(SAND/GRIT)
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- ELECTRICIAN AND PLUMBER
- HELPER
- STRUCTURAL FITTER / FABRICATOR
- MIG WELDER
- INDOOR FITOUT STEEL WORK
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- CONSTRUCTION MANAGER
- PROJECT CONTROL MANAGER
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- PLANNING ENGINEER
- DOCUMENT CONTROLLER
- QC INSPECTORS
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More countries allow UAE residents visit without entry permit

DUBAI: Many destinations have eased travel restrictions for UAE residents, allowing them to explore hidden gems around the world. These include providing visa-on-arrival or waiving the requirement for an entry permit altogether. Here are ten countries to which residents of the Emirates, regardless of the passport they hold, can travel to without a visa, or by getting a visa-on-arrival:

GEORGIA: This beautiful country, situated

at the intersection of Europe and Asia, is a popular destination for travelers from the UAE, with mountains, Black Sea beaches, and historic towns to explore. Tbilisi, the capital, is a mere three-and-a-half-hour flight away, and makes for a relatively more cost-effective holiday destination than other cities in the region as well. UAE residents do not need a visa to enter the country and can stay for 90 days without an entry permit.

UZBEKISTAN: The

Central Asian country gives UAE residents visa-on-arrival and allows stay for up to 30 days without a visa. Popular cities in Uzbekistan include the capital Tashkent, which has the famous Tashkent Tower and historic museums, as well as Samarkand, which is located on the historic Silk Route and is home to beautiful mosques and mausoleums.

MALDIVES: Fancy a beach holiday? Maldives is a world-famous tourist destination that gives

a 30-day visa-on-arrival for travelers from all countries. Apart from serene beaches and blue waters, the country is also famous for its mosques, fish markets and coral reefs.

AZERBAIJAN: The country, another one in the Caucasus region, is famous for its capital Baku's medieval walled Inner City. UAE residents can get a visa-on-arrival, which is valid for one month from the date of issuance. However, if you are planning to stay for

more than 15 days, you must obtain a registration at the State Migration Service. According to the government website, your hotel in the country can help you do this.

KENYA: In 2023, Kenya announced that visitors from across the world would no longer require a visa from Jan 2024. The tourism industry plays a vital role in the African country's economy, offering beach holidays along its Indian Ocean coastline and wildlife safaris inland.

GULF FAQs

Need tenants pay service charges, RERA fee?

Is it necessary to pay service charges, RERA fee in Dubai by tenants?

Pursuant to your question, the provisions of Law No (26) of 2007 Regulating the Relationship between Landlords and Tenants in the Emirate of Dubai; and Law No (6) of 2019 Concerning Ownership of Jointly Owned Real Property in the Emirate of Dubai will be applicable.

In Dubai, the tenancy contract takes centre stage in determining the respective rights and obligations of the landlord and the tenant with respect to a leased premise. Subject to the terms of the tenancy contract, the various payment obligations (towards government entities in respect of fees and taxes) of the landlord and tenant are determined. In most cases, such obligations lie on the tenant, unless something to the contrary is agreed in the tenancy contract. This follows Article 22 of the Tenancy Law which reads as follows: “Unless the lease contract states otherwise, the tenant must pay all fees and taxes owed to government entities and departments in relation to the use of the real Property, and must pay the fees or taxes prescribed for any sublease of the real property.”

Notably, there are three components to the amounts charged from you by the management entity, during renewal of your tenancy contract. They are (i) service charges at the rate of two per cent of the annual rent, (ii) Dh226, and (iii) Rera registration fees. We may consider each component in turn, hereinafter.

As to ‘service charges’, it may be noted that the said term is defined in the following manner in Article (2) of the Apartments Law. “The annual charges collected from Owners to cover the cost of management, operation, maintenance, and repair of Jointly Owned Real Property.” Furthermore, by the provisions of Article (25) of the Apartments Law, it is the owner of the premises who is required to pay the service charges to

the management entity. The provisions of the said Article (25) read as follows.

A) An owner will pay the management entity his share of the annual service charges to cover the common parts management, operation, maintenance, and repair expenses. This share will be calculated, using the relevant method approved by the director-general, based on the ratio of the area of the owner’s unit to the total area of the jointly owned real property. A developer will pay his share of the annual service charges in respect of unsold units and in respect of the sold units for which he undertakes, under the provisions of the sale contract or reservation agreement, to pay the service charges on behalf of the purchaser.

B) For the purposes of application of paragraph (a) of this Article, the owner’s share of the service charges will be calculated based on the area of his unit as recorded in the Real Property Register.”

Whereas, by the provisions of the Apartments Law, the owner of the leased property must pay the service charges to the concerned management entity. It is possible that by the terms of your tenancy contract, this responsibility was passed on to you, as the tenant. Consequently, you were required to pay the service charges for the leased property for all the renewals so far. Nonetheless, before the next renewal of the tenancy contract, you may elect to renegotiate the terms of your tenancy contract and request your landlord to bear the service charges.

The RERA registration charges are mandatory fees that are payable to a government entity and therefore by the provisions of Article (22) of the Tenancy Law, you are obliged to pay the charges unless otherwise mentioned in your tenancy contract.

Finally, the additional amounts charged from you at the time of renewal of your tenancy contract would be legal, if you had agreed to such charges in your tenancy contract.

How long it takes to get UAE family residence visa?

DUBAI: If you are new to the UAE and are planning to bring in your family members, you might be wondering how long the entire process may take. According to experts, the family residence visa application process can easily be completed within a week, if all your papers are in place.

It will take a maximum of seven working days, it depends on the approval of the application. Sometimes, we apply for the visa in the morning and the approval comes at night. Then you need to go for the medical fitness test and the Emirates ID biometric scan. Sometimes, it may take time to get an appointment for the biometric scan, but the whole process can be easily completed in a week in most cases.

If you do plan to first bring your family to the UAE on a visit visa, remember that applying for their residence visa later would cost you a little more, as you would need to apply for a “change of status” process.

REQUIREMENTS: You need to first apply for the entry permit, whether they are currently in the UAE or outside. But if they are already here on a visit visa, the entry permit, which is called “entry permit/inside country” will cost you more. You also need to apply for status change, so it will be approximately Dh1,800 more expensive, compared with if your family was outside the UAE.

Family residence visa cost list: File opening charge – Dh269, Entry

permit – Dh500 (if the family is outside the UAE) or Dh1,180 (if your family is already in the UAE), Change of status (if your family is already in the UAE) – Dh675, Medical fitness test – Dh320, Emirates ID – Dh170 for one year, Dh270 for two years, Dh370 for three years, Dh690 for five years and Dh1,198 for 10 years. Visa stamping – Dh500, Three factors that affect the final cost of the visa. If the family members are in the country or abroad, If they need to get medical fitness test.

You would not need to apply for a medical fitness test for children who are under the age of 18 or for the Emirates ID biometric for children under the age of 15. You can then get an estimate of the visa cost, based on the cost list above, depending on the age and number of your family members.

Abu Dhabi safest city in the world

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi Police has revealed that Abu Dhabi has been ranked first on the world’s safest cities list in 2024, according to online database Numbeo, reflecting the emirate’s global leadership in implementing best security standards, enhancing quality of life for citizens, residents and visitors. Notably, Ras al-Khaimah, also features in the top 10 with a score of 83.3, along with Muscat, Oman (80.2), The Hague (79.8) and Bern, Switzerland (79.5).

Visa on arrival for Indians now easier with Emirates

ABU DHABI: UAE has announced a pre-approved visa-on-arrival facility for some Indian passport holders. The option is available to eligible Indians who have booked their travel with Emirates (airlines).

Issued as a 14-day single entry visa, the new ini-

tiative will enable Emirates customers to skip queues when arriving in Dubai. The application is fulfilled by the Dubai Visa Processing Centre (DVPC) — VFS Global’s facility designated by Emirates Airline to process UAE visas.

Indian nationals with a

normal passport valid for a minimum of six months can obtain visa-on-arrival in the UAE. The Indian passport holders must have a US visa or green card or EU or UK residency that’s valid for at least six months.

Eligible travellers have been getting vi-

sa-on-arrival at UAE airports since 2017. The visa is typically stamped at the immigration counter once travellers disembark from their flights. With the new service, Emirates customers can pre-arrange the visa, simplifying their arrival

formalities by letting them “breeze through customs”. The initiative costs \$47, with a service fee of \$18.50. The issuance of visas remains at the “absolute discretion of the General Directorate of Residency and Foreign Affairs”, Emirates said.

Golden visas: UAE cancels minimum down payment for property investors

DUBAI: The UAE has cancelled the Dh1 million (\$272,294) minimum down payment required for people to qualify for a golden visa through real estate investment, as it seeks to encourage more residents and investors to establish deeper roots in the country, according to sources.

Previously, to qualify for the 10-year renewable residency programme, which was introduced in 2019, investors were required to acquire property valued at Dh2 million or above.

But for properties bought on mortgage or instalment plans, homebuyers had to make a minimum down payment of Dh1 million, or 50pc of the property's value, to the bank or developer to be eligible for the golden visa. The recent change eliminates the need for a

minimum down payment altogether, according to Maroun Abou Harb, an associate at law firm BSA Ahmad bin Hezeem & Associates.

Now, investors can qualify for the golden visa if the property's value is Dh2 million or more, regardless of whether it's off-plan, completed, mortgaged or not mortgaged, he said. However, the change has not yet been reflected on the Dubai Land Department's Cube website, a customer service initiative to support investor and golden visa services for property buyers.

The eligibility criteria for obtaining the golden residency for real estate investors stays unchanged, with the property value requirement set at a minimum of Dh2 million. BSA Ahmad bin Hezeem & Associates

was informed about the change on Jan 22, Abou Harb said.

"No circular has been sent out yet, although when we visited the DLD at The Cube, where they handle the golden visa applications, that's where we were made aware of this change," said Jess Stephenson, head of sales progression at Dubai property broker Allsopp & Allsopp. In recent years, the UAE, the Arab world's second-largest economy, has undertaken several economic, legal and social reforms to boost foreign direct investment and attract skilled workers.

The Emirates introduced the golden visa programme in 2019. The visas are valid for 10 years and aim to encourage exceptional workers and foreign investors to establish deeper ties

to the country. In 2022, amendments were introduced to the golden residency initiative to simplify the eligibility criteria and expand the categories of beneficiaries. The 10-year visa is granted to investors, entrepreneurs, skilled professionals who earn a monthly salary of more than Dh30,000 (\$8,167), exceptional talents, scientists and professionals, outstanding students and graduates, property investors, humanitarian pioneers and frontline heroes.

"This policy change would benefit many buyers and end users as this will open up the golden visa option to pretty much everybody who's bought a property, because most properties are valued at more than Dh2 million," Stephenson said. "That way, all mortgage buyers would be able

to apply for the golden visa, and then they can also sponsor their family and domestic staff. This means there would be more buyer confidence in the city, too." Another property agent said he would test the policy change first hand when one of his customers visits the DLD this week to register a transaction for a property worth more than Dh2 million.

Meanwhile, "excellent government initiative" would help boost the property market, said Matthew Gregory, branch director at real estate agency Betterhomes. "This enables us to have positive conversations with potential clients, especially from overseas and help them get on the property ladder and obtain a visa even quicker with a minimal investment," he said.

NRI wins \$1m in Duty Free draw

DUBAI: An Indian national based in Saudi Arabia has been added to the ever-growing list of Indian winners of \$1 million when the draw for the latest Dubai Duty Free Millennium Millionaire promotion was held at Concourse-A of Dubai International Airport.

Edward George, a 53-year-old Indian national based in Riyadh, won a \$1 million in Millennium Millionaire Series 448, with ticket number 2270, which he purchased online on January 11.

George is a resident of Riyadh for 26 years and a regular participant in the Dubai Duty Free draw.

Mumbai Airport registers 35pc growth in passenger traffic

MUMBAI: Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) recorded a steep 35pc growth in passenger traffic in 2023 over the previous year.

Last year, the CSMIA notched a total of 51.58 million passengers, comprising more than 25.4 million arrivals and over 26.1 million departures from here. Simultaneously, it catered to a stupendous 334,391 air traffic movements --- a 20pc increase compared with 277,052 recorded in 2022 --- comprising both domestic and international flights.

In 2023, the highest passenger traffic movement for a single day in a month was seen on Nov 25 with 167,132 passengers travelling through the airport, including 120,000 domestic and over 46,000 international fliers. On November 11, the CSMIA achieved its high-

est-ever single-day ATM with a total of 1,032 flights. The next month, Dec, 4.89 million passengers passed through the CSMIA, a growth of 13pc compared with 4.34 million fliers in Dec 2022.

Overall in 2023, the CSMIA said it achieved a 110pc recovery in passenger traffic compared with the pre-pandemic era. Last year, New Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai remained the top domestic destinations while Dubai, London and Abu Dhabi were the most preferred international destinations for air travellers. Among the airlines, IndiGo, Vistara and Air India led the domestic market share and the international front was dominated by IndiGo, Air India and Emirates.

In 2023, CSMIA expanded its international connectivity to destinations like New York, Lagos, Jakarta, Entebbe, Melbourne and frequency

additions to destinations such as Bangkok, Frankfurt, London, Doha, Mauritius and many more along with Azerbaijan Airlines (Baku) and Air Canada (Toronto).

The Middle East dominated with a strong 35pc share, followed closely by Australasia at 23pc, Europe at 19pc, North America 15pc and Africa contributed eight per cent. Last year, the CSMIA also took major initiatives like successfully concluding its re-carpeting project for Runway 14/32 to enhance operations; introducing "Taxiway Z" to slash the entry-exit time taken by aircraft and lowering carbon emissions, commissioning a specialised Disabled Aircraft Recovery Kit (DARK), the first airport in Asia to possess this facility with High-Pressure lifting bags and introducing an advanced Parking Guidance System at Terminal- 2.

Saudi may open liquor shop for non-Muslim diplomats

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia plans to allow alcohol sales to non-Muslim diplomats for the first time modifying strict rules governing liquor in the conservative country. Alcohol "will be sold to non-Muslim diplomats" who previously had to import alcohol via a diplomatic pouch or sealed official package.

The sales will take place in a store in Riyadh's Diplomatic Quarter, a neighborhood of foreign missions and residences west of the city centre. Access to the store will be restricted to people who register on an application known as the Diplo App, and monthly quotas will be enforced, the document said. Prohibition has been the law of the land in Saudi Arabia since 1952.