



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES

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Saudi lifts ban on foreign workers with expired exit/re-entry visas

RYADH: Saudi Arabia has revoked a three-year ban on foreign workers who hold exit/re-entry visas, but failed to return before their expiry.

The kingdom's General Directorate of Passports has notified different departments, entry points,

airlines and transit terminals to allow the entry of such labourers, reversing the ban.

The restriction preventing the re-entry of an expatriate, who departed the kingdom with an exit/re-entry visa but did not return within its valid period before three years elapsed, has been lifted.

Experts said the decision is part of "successive improvements" introduced by the Saudi authorities into the labour and investment environment.

Requirements to obtain an exit/re-entry visa include payment of all fines linked to the worker's traffic violations, having a passport valid for

at least 90 days and the presence in the kingdom of the person to whom the visa will be issued. Under the Saudi labour system, the employer bears fees of the foreign worker's recruitment, residency, the labour licence, its renewal as well as fees of the profession change,

(Cont. on page-2)

Repo rate unchanged

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (RBI MPC) has decided to keep the repo rate unchanged at 6.5pc for the sixth consecutive time, Governor Shaktikanta Das announced on Thursday. He said the decision was taken by a majority 5-1.

The repo rate was last changed in Feb 2023, when

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\$667m project to boost Makkah's hospitality sector

RYADH: Saudi Arabia's hospitality sector is set to receive a significant boost with local developers planning investment worth SR2.5 billion (\$666.6 million) in Makkah.

This substantial expenditure was cemented through an agreement between Umm Al-Qura for Development and Construction Co., the owner of the Masar destination and the King-

dom's General Authority of Awqaf.

The collaboration aims to develop a distinctive hospitality project in Makkah, expected to add more than 1,000 hotel rooms and suites to the province's accommodation offerings. The agreement was signed in the presence of Makkah's Deputy Governor Prince Saud Al-Saud, during the Haj and Um-

(Cont. on page-5)

LuLu Group plans \$1b IPO

ABU DHABI: LuLu Group International, which operates one of the Middle East's largest hypermarket chains, has invited banks to pitch for roles on a potential initial public offering that could raise at least \$1 billion. The conglomerate is considering plans for a dual listing in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi.

The IPO could take place in the second-half and would likely involve

LuLu's core business in the Gulf Cooperation Council, though the exact scope of the operations to be included in the listing hasn't been finalised. A representative for LuLu declined to comment when contacted.

Dual listings are relatively rare in the region. In 2022, Americana Group, the operator of KFC and Pizza Hut restaurants across the Middle East and North Africa, was the first firm to pull off such a deal in Saudi Arabia

and the United Arab Emirates. Indian origin Yusuff Ali founded LuLu in the early 1990s during a years-long oil boom in the Gulf region. It had annual revenue of about \$8 billion and employs more than 70,000 people, operating in 26 countries across the MidEast, Asia, the US and Europe. LuLu sought pitches from investment banks about a listing in 2022 before delaying those plans.

Job aspirants should opt for safe, legal emigration

MUMBAI: Those Indians who did not get employment in India had the option to opt for over-

seas employment opportunities, in countries like Europe and Gulf nations. For this purpose, the Indian government redrafted the Emigration Act 1922 into the Emigration Act 1983, keeping in mind the interest of the emigrants safeguarding them from various recruitment hurdles faced by the emigrants due to illegal migration of workers.

It has been seen that there has been a huge rise in the number of overseas job seekers being cheated by unregistered recruitment agents by fake job offers.

These unregistered/illegal agents operate without obtaining licence from the



By Qureshi Athar Salim
(Working Secretary - IPEPCIL)

Office of Protector General of Emigrants, Ministry of External Affairs, which is mandatory for any recruitment for work abroad. It is reported that many illegal agents operate through Facebook, WhatsApp, text message and other such platforms. These agencies provide little or no details of their whereabouts and con-

tacts. They usually communicate only through WhatsApp, Internet call making it difficult to ascertain the location and identity of the caller's genuineness of the job offer. Such agents also lure by unscrupulous and illegal travel agents on false promise of getting them settled abroad. These illegal agents cheat common citizens especially youth and loot crores of rupees from these emigrants. to work in difficult and life threatening conditions. Such cases are being reported for recruitment to work in several East European Countries like Russia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, some of the Gulf countries, Central Asian countries, Europe-

an Countries like Germany, United Kingdom and Israel and Canada etc.

It is to caution the emigrants that the unregistered agents also use the website of the eMigrate in getting the details of the registered recruiting agents thereby advertising falsely in their name and licence number so the emigrants can verify the credentials of the RAs by given contact number, email and address before going ahead with the recruitment. As per the Emigration Act 1983, section 10 says that no person to function as recruiting agent without a valid certificate it means that any agency like travel agencies, tour

(Cont. on page-2)

FOREX RATES

As on 8th Feb, 2024 (In rupees)

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	83.75	82.75
Euro	90.44	89.24
Australian Dollar	55.60	53.90
Japanese Yen	0.62	0.54
Canadian Dollar	62.65	61.45
Singapore Dollar	62.72	61.52
Swedish krona	8.92	7.13
UAE Dirham	23.19	22.44
Swiss Franc	96.00	94.30
British Pound	105.78	104.58
New Zealand Dollar	51.70	49.70
Hong Kong Dollar	11.57	10.21
Saudi Arabian Riyal	22.83	21.88
Bahraini Dinar	227.37	213.37
Chinese Yuan	12.57	10.77
Danish Krone	12.50	11.50
Kuwaiti Dinar	275.76	259.76
Malaysian Ringgit	18.41	17.06
Omani Rial	221.46	209.46
Qatari Riyal	23.79	21.29
South African Rand	4.89	3.89



Protecting emigrants

The urgent and sustained need for marketing India as a major source of manpower has once again been emphasised by the Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council (IPEPCIL), the largest organisation of licensed recruiting agencies. Already, there is a great demand for Indian manpower abroad, particularly in the Gulf countries and what we need is to streamline the whole process of manpower export into an easy and organised system. Many cumbersome procedures have been removed by the Union government from time to time. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to make India the skill capital is timely and our recruiting fraternity should take it seriously. No doubt, Indians already form a major portion of workers in the Gulf countries. The export of manpower is one of the ways of tackling the unemployment problem within India. The remittances from Indians working abroad run into billions of dollars and this is a huge support to the domestic economy.

First and foremost, the Union government should encourage licensed recruiting agents to widen their business. It is an agreed fact that these agents play a key role in facilitating the movement of the expatriate population abroad. They contribute by identifying suitable candidates, managing the recruitment process and ensuring a smooth transition for individuals relocating for work abroad. These agents streamline the complex logistics involved in international placements, including visa processing and legal compliances. They have been sending about 20 lakh personnel abroad for jobs every year.

By supporting the licensed recruiting agents, the government can eliminate the illegal agents to a large extent. These illegal agents bring bad name for legal recruiting agencies. There is no denying the fact that the government has implemented various safeguards in this business to protect the job aspirants.

One such system is the eMigrate system which is an important tool to safeguard emigrant workers. eMigrate links the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) and Protectors of Emigrants with Indian missions/posts, FEs, PEs, RAs, insurance agencies, Bureau of Immigration (BoI) and the Passport system. On the awareness side, the Pre-Departure Orientation Training (PDoT) plays a crucial role in providing free orientation training to emigrant workers on the host countries' rules and regulations, welfare measures, culture, language etc. Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY), a mandatory insurance scheme for welfare of overseas workers in ECR Countries, is commendable. It offers insurance cover of upto Rs. 10 lakh in cases of work-related death or permanent disability. Insurance under the scheme is available with one time premium.

So far so good. But we need more measures aimed at safeguarding the interests of emigrant workers, particularly in the Gulf nations. Job aspirants on their part, should only approach legal recruiting agents and government agencies which are ready to help them.

LIPSYNCH

"Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm."

— Winston Churchill

Saudi launches new visas to woo investors, entrepreneurs

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has launched five new visa types, known as "Premium Residency Products" to attract skilled professionals and investments to enhance the country's status as a global talent hub.

The initiative aims to further drive the Saudi's economic transformation by creating employment opportunities and fostering knowledge transfers. The new visa categories are the Special Talent, Gifted, Investor, Entrepreneur and Real Estate Owner Residency and will offer holders unparalleled opportunities for settling in Saudi Arabia. The new visas have been tailored for working professionals, talents and investors who fit into specific categories. The products offer a wide range of benefits to holders, including the abil-

ity to conduct business, own real estate, obtain work permits for holders and family members and many more advantages the Premium Residency Center provides in co-operation with government partners.

Dr Majid bin Abdullah Alkassabi, chairman of the Board of the Premium Residency Centre, outlined the five new Premium Residency products and emphasised the move will accelerate Saudi Arabia's trajectory towards a knowledge-based, diversified economy in new sectors. He also highlighted that the doors to all Premium Residency products are open to those who can add value to the national economy and actively participate in Saudi Arabia's rapid development journey under Saudi Vision 2030. Nevertheless, no specifics have been

provided regarding the duration of these five new visas or the associated costs for investors and entrepreneurs seeking to obtain them.

The "special talent" residency caters to executives and professionals who specialise in health-care, science and research. It aims to attract individuals with unique skills and experiences who can contribute to knowledge and technology transfers.

The "gifted" residency aims to integrate skilled professionals and talented individuals into Saudi Arabia's vibrant and growing cultural and sports sectors. Meanwhile, the "investor" residency is designed for investors looking to capitalise on Saudi Arabia's thriving business landscape and generate high-impact returns from across the economy.

Iran okays visa-free travel for Indians

NEW DELHI: Indian tourists can now travel to Iran without a visa. The Iranian embassy in Delhi released a statement announcing free-visa policy for Indian travellers. The free-visa policy is applicable to those travelling to Iran via air border and for tourism purposes, said the Iranian embassy. In addition to this, there are certain conditions regarding the stay period.

Under Iran's visa-free policy, Indian tourists with ordinary passports will be allowed to enter Iran without a visa once every six months, with a maximum stay of 15 days. "It is important to note that the 15-day period cannot be extended," the Iranian embassy said. "The visa abolition only applies to individuals entering the territory of the Islamic Republic of Iran for tourism purposes," it added.

Saudi lifts ban on foreign.....

(Cont. from page-1)

exit/re-entry and the cost of the employee's return to the home country upon the end of the contractual relation.

However, the worker bears the cost of return to the homeland if deemed unfit for the job, or if he/she wishes to return to the home country for no legal reason. Foreigners make up around 13.4 million or 41.5pc of Saudi Arabia's overall population of 32.2 million.

Job aspirants should opt

(Cont. from page-1)

Emigrants seeking jobs abroad are requested to use the safe and legal services of registered Recruiting Agents (RA) only. All registered RAs are issued a licence number which is prominently displayed in their office premises and in their advertisements, including newspapers and social media. Prospective emigrants are advised to cross check the genuineness of the RA by visiting the government website www.emigrate.gov.in and click the link "List of active RA". Name and address of registered office, contact number, email address and their status.

In case the emigrants find any difficulties regarding the credentials of the RAs they can approach the concerned POE office or the office of Protector General of Emigrants, Akbar Bhavan, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. email:- pge@mea.gov.in

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GULF FAQs

Can a maid on visit visa begin work in UAE?

I am bringing a maid from my India to the UAE. She is coming here on a visit visa and will stay with me and my family as I get a maid visa for her. During this transition period, can she take up duties at home? What's the procedure to get her a maid visa?

Pursuant to your queries, as you intend to recruit a maid to take up your household domestic work, the provisions of Federal Decree Law No. 29 of 2021 Regarding Entry and Residence of Foreigners and Federal Decree Law No. 9 of 2022 Concerning Domestic Workers are applicable.

In the UAE, employing a maid without a valid work permit and UAE residency visa is illegal. Any individual indulged in employing a maid without a work permit and UAE residency visa may have to bear a penalty of at least Dh50,000 and up to Dh2 lakh per Article 17 (3) (a) of the UAE Domestic Workers Law. The violations include:

(a) Provides employment to a domestic worker without obtaining a work permit for the latter. Furthermore, the penalty may also include deportation as per the provisions of UAE Immigration Law as well. This is in accordance with Article 25(1) & (7) of the Immigration Law, which states, "(1) There shall be punishment with a fine of Dh50,000 to anyone who employs, harbours or puts the alien in violation of the provisions of this Decree-Law, and the penalty shall be imprisonment and a fine of Dh50,000 in case of recidivism.

Article-7 : In all cases, the court shall order the deportation of the violating alien as well as it shall also order the deportation of the alien who has employed him or harboured

him upon recidivism. Based on the aforementioned provision of law, you may not employ your prospective maid immediately once you bring her from your home country on a visit visa. Instead, on her arrival to UAE on a visit visa, you may apply for her work permit and UAE residency visa as per the provisions of UAE Domestic Workers Law and the prevailing rules and regulations in the UAE pertaining to employing a maid at your home. By practice, you, as an employer, are required to fulfil minimum salary criteria, marital status and number of rooms in the apartment or villa where a proposed maid will work.

Furthermore, the provisions of UAE Domestic Workers Law emphasise recruitment of domestic work through government-recognised maid recruitment agencies. The recognised recruitment agencies' obligations are mentioned in Article-5 of the UAE Domestic Workers Law.

You, as an employer of a maid, need to follow the guidelines and provisions of UAE Domestic Workers Law while employing a maid at your residence. It may include but is not limited to providing the maid with the facilities to perform her duties, providing appropriate accommodation, provision of food and means, clothing if required to perform the duties, timely payment of remuneration, incurring costs related to health insurance, be respectful to the maid and the maid should be allowed to retain her official documents. This is in accordance with Article 11 of the UAE Domestic Workers Law, which states the obligations of the employer/sponsor towards a domestic worker.

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3	Finishing Carpenter (Drawing, Design)	10	BD 125 - 140 + OT
4	Furnace Operator (Aluminium, Steel)	10	BD 150 - 180 + OT
5	Helper	30	BD 85 + OT
6	Heavy Driver (Original Valid GCC License Only)	15	BD 130 + OT
7	Plumbing Foreman	3	BD 130 + OT
8	Operator (Excavator, JCB, Boiler) (Original Valid GCC License Only)	20	BD 140 + OT
9	Mason (Tile / Marble)	10	BD 120 - 140 + OT
10	Shuttering Carpenter	25	BD 100 + OT
11	Plumber	7	BD 120 - 130 + OT
12	Mechanic (Petrol / Diesel / Hydraulic)	15	BD 120 - 140 + OT
13	Aluminium / Fabricator / Fitter	5	BD 150 - 160 + OT
14	Furniture Carpenter	5	BD 120 - 140 + OT
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Dubai ranks third globally for talent flows, says Harvard Business Review

DUBAI: Dubai has been recognised as a premier global city for talent flows, securing the third position just after London and New York, according to a Harvard Business Review report.

Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Crown Prince of Dubai and Chairman of the Executive Council of Dubai, lauded the emir-

ate's notable ranking, which reflects its strategic initiatives to draw and nurture top talents.

"This achievement reflects Dubai's ongoing efforts to attract top global talents, professionals and entrepreneurs. Our city's commitment to developmental initiatives further contributes to Dubai's Economic Agenda D33, which aims to be among the top three

global economic cities by 2033 and the best city in the world to live in," Sheikh Hamdan tweeted. The Harvard Business Review's report, drawn from LinkedIn data between August 2022 and July 2023, provides insights into global talent hubs. It identifies four tiers of cities: Global Superstar Hubs, Global Talent Hubs, Significant Hubs, and Regional Hubs, with Dubai being recognised as a Global Talent Hub. London leads the pack as a Global Superstar Hub with 49 mentions, while New York follows with 36. Dubai, highlighted for its 26 mentions, not only surpasses other significant metropolises in talent attraction but also solidifies its position as a major pivot for skilled professionals globally.

Repo rate unchanged....

(Cont. from page-1) it was hiked from 6.25pc to 6.5pc. Between May 2022 and Feb 2023, the repo rate was raised by 250 basis points (bps).

Das said that the impact of the 250 basis points hike in the repo rate is yet to unfold fully. The RBI MPC has also decided to keep its stance of "withdrawal of accommodation" unchanged with a majority of 5-1. On inflation, Governor Das retained the forecast for 2023-24 at 5.4pc.

\$667m project to boost...

(Cont. from page-1) rah Services Conference and Exhibition 2024.

The event, recently opened in Jeddah, highlights the region's commitment to enhancing its religious tourism infrastructure. Yasser Abuateek, CEO of Umm Al-Qura for Development and Construction Co and Imad Al-Kharashi, governor of the General Authority for Awqaf, led the signing ceremony. The signing of the deal was also witnessed by prom-

inent figures including Tawfiq Al-Rabiah, Saudi minister of Haj and Umrah. The partnership is expected to yield significant returns on endowment assets. It aims to enrich the guest's experience at the Masar destination and to drive forward the region's economic and social development. The project will also contribute to the Saudi Vision 2030 goals of diversifying the Kingdom's economy and enhancing the quality of life in Makkah.

And now, sleep tourism picks up

DUBAI: Travelling for adventure or experience is passé, sleep tourism is a growing trend among UAE travellers. A new study has found that people in the Emirates are increasingly showing interest in destinations that prioritise a good night's sleep for visitors.

Sleep tourism, a specialised travel niche, caters to individuals seeking relaxation, rejuvenation and immersive sleep-centric experiences during their journeys. Industry executives say that trends are shifting away from experiences to sleep in the travel and tourism sector as travellers want to switch

off and spend time away from their gadgets and screens.

Conducted by OnePoll, a survey released by global travel site Skyscanner showed that 80pc of people in the UAE are more conscious of sleep quality than a few years ago. The survey was conducted in August 2023, covering 1,000 UAE respondents. According to Skyscanner, 46 per cent of UAE travellers say they're not getting the recommended 7-8 hours of sleep a night, with 59 per cent stating they feel the need for a sleep retreat remedy in 2024.

Around 63pc of the UAE respondents said

they sleep better when they're on holiday. Based on reviews on Skyscanner, the best destinations for a great night's sleep are Hui An (Vietnam), Santorini and Rome.

It was also found that sleep topped the board of UAE travellers' main activities for their next holidays at 24pc, followed by snow sports (21pc), sporting events (20pc) and heading to a gallery (19pc).

Julie Mallon, a UAE sleep expert and founder of Nurture 2 Sleep, said in Feb 2023 there was a 1,110 per cent increase in searches for sleep retreats, so this reflects where the demand is go-

ing.

"Sleep tourism is a specialised travel niche where travellers are now looking to find things that are very much sleep-centric - things that will support their sleep. One of the main reasons is that post-pandemic, everybody's sleep was impacted in a very negative way, whether it was physiological or psychological. One of the biggest negative outcomes of the pandemic was sleep disruption." Many years ago, she added, when people went on holidays, it was all about experiences and enjoying the thrills.

"But now we are see-

ing these things daily. So going on holiday is getting away completely from everyday routine. In a world that is 24/7, we are getting away from the stress of work. It is also worth noting that it is not just about duration of the sleep but also about quality of sleep."

She revealed that jet lag is when a human being's biological clock is in a one-time zone - back in the home environment - but the body and brain are in a new time zone, so they are out of sync. "We are living in a society which never turns off," she said during the launch of the survey.

Navi Mumbai airport to become operational by year-end

NAGPUR: The ambitious Navi Mumbai International Airport is set to commence operations by end of this year, revealed Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia.

During his visit to Nagpur, to inaugurate the AAR-Indamer Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) facility at the MIHAN SEZ, Scindia also outlined plans for at least 10 major cities in the country to have a minimum of two airports each within the next 10 to 15 years.

Officially named the DB Patil International Airport, the Navi Mumbai International Airport

is under construction in Ulwe, Navi Mumbai, in the Raigad district. Once completed, it will serve as the second airport for the Mumbai Metropolitan Region alongside the existing Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport. The ground breaking ceremony for the airport took place on February 18, 2018, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiling the foundation plaque.

The greenfield airport is being developed in three phases, with the initial phase capable of handling 2.5 crore passengers per annum. The final phase, scheduled for completion by 2032,

will have the capacity to accommodate over nine crore passengers and handle 25 lakh tonnes of cargo annually. Interacting with media persons, Scindia stated, "The Navi Mumbai International Airport will commence operations in November or December this year. The inaugural flight is expected to land during this period, marking a significant milestone in the development of Navi Mumbai." He emphasised that the airport would contribute to the substantial growth of Navi Mumbai and its neighbouring area, particularly the Konkan region.

Fares get cheaper as IndiGo removes fuel charges

DUBAI: In a significant move, Indian budget airline IndiGo has removed the fuel charges on all its domestic and international flights. This waiver relieves passengers as it will lead to reduced airfares and marks a departure from the fuel charge introduced in October 2023 in response to escalating Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) prices. Fuel prices comprise nearly 45 pc of airlines' operational expenses.

The removal of the fuel charge aligns with recent reductions in

ATF prices, offering a positive outcome for travellers. As ATF prices remain dynamic, IndiGo assures passengers that the airline will continue to adjust fares and related components to promptly adapt to any fluctuations in fuel prices or market conditions. A release from IndiGo said that despite the challenges posed by the volatile nature of fuel prices, the airline remains steadfast in its commitment to providing affordable and hassle-free travel experiences for its customers.

Dubai airport set to join '100 million passenger club'

DUBAI: Dubai International (DXB) airport could join the "100 million passengers club" (referring to the number of passengers serviced in a year) this year as the aviation sector continues to grow at an exponential pace in the post-Covid period.

According to a global aviation analyst CAPA - Centre for Aviation, a

market intelligence firm for the aviation and travel industry, several cities will join or rejoin, the "100 million passengers club" in 2024.

One of cities mentioned is Istanbul, which now has the largest network of routes in the world at a single airport, with a total (as of the week commencing December 18, 2023) of 298 direct routes

at Istanbul Airport, and a further 125 at the Sabiha Gökçen Airport. Istanbul has been part of the 100 million passenger club before.

"Other cities likely to join or rejoin the club this year are Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Tokyo, Dubai, and Atlanta (a single airport). London will again by far be the largest in terms of passenger num-

bers at its collective airports with 177 million passengers anticipated in the calendar year 2023, based on growth rates in the first eight months of 2023," CAPA - Centre for Aviation said in its outlook for 2024.

With a current capacity of 100 million passengers annually, DXB is deploying innovative technologies, expanding and re-

furbishing existing infrastructures which is likely to increase the airport's capacity to 120 million. Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said that the rise of Dubai airport is one of the world's most fascinating stories which started with humble beginnings but with an absolutely fantastic vision.