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Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) Convention on Thursday in Bhubaneswar. Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati, External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar, Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan etc were present.

Modi praises role of Indian diaspora

BHUBANESWAR: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing the global Indian diaspora here on the occasion of the Pravasi-Bharatiya Divas (PBD), commended them for staying connected with their cultural roots and heritage. The PBD celebrated every two years, is a momentous occasion dedicated to honouring the contributions of the Indian diaspora to the nation's progress.

Emphasising the vital role of the Indian diaspora, Modi reiterated that the Indian government places immense importance on its overseas citizens. It is India's responsibility to safeguard, protect and support our diaspora, especially in times of crisis. Over the past decade, Indian embassies worldwide have ensured that help is always available to the diaspora, regardless of where they live. "We consider it our responsibility to help our diaspora during crises no matter where they are," Modi added.

This year's event held special significance, as Modi praised Odisha for its rich cultural heritage, setting a vibrant tone for the celebrations. He also highlighted the historical importance of the day, reminding the audience that it was on Jan 9, 1915, that Mahatma Gandhi returned to India from South Africa, marking a pivotal moment in the nation's struggle for independence.

The PM also underscored India's evolving global stature, stating: "India is not only the mother of democracy, but democracy is an in-

(Cont. on page-2)

WE SALUTE NRIs FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIA IPEPCIL greets PBD-2025 conclave

MUMBAI: On the occasion of celebrating the 18th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) in Bhubaneswar, Indian Personnel Export Promotion Council (IPEPCIL), extends its heartfelt praises and compliments to the vibrant and resilient Non-Resident Indian (NRI) community worldwide.

Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) holds a special place in our hearts as it commemorates the return of Mahatma Gandhi, the "Greatest Pravasi" to India from South Africa, marking the beginning of a journey that shaped our nation's destiny.

At IPEPCIL, we take immense pride in our contribution to fostering Indian personnel to spread across the world for employment migration in an ethical, safe and secured manner and empowering Indi-

our Member Fraternity, stands as excellent contributors towards the national developments and act as ambassadors of India's rich heritage, civilization, values and industrious spirits.

On the occasion of Pravasi Bharatiya Divas celebrations hailing the achievements and contributions of NRIs, we re-affirm our commitments to support their endeavours and strengthening the bond between India and its global diaspora. We salute their remarkable role in shaping a brighter future for India and the World.

'HAPPY PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS (PBD)'

V.S. Abdulkareem
PRESIDENT – IPEPCIL

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V.S. Abdulkareem

an talents to excel internationally. The significant number of NRIs created by



The GDP puzzle

With global as well as domestic uncertainties looming large coupled with the speculation about the ensuing union budget and above all the likely outbreak of the HMPV virus, nobody is ready to take the GDP forecast on its face value.

GDP slowed down this fiscal and will next year be better or worse? This is the question that haunts us all. The Indian economy is expected to grow at 6.4pc in 2024-25 as per the first advance estimates released by the National Statistics Office (NSO). Considering that the economy grew at six per cent in the first-half of the year, these estimates imply that the momentum which had dipped in the second quarter — GDP growth had slumped to 5.4pc — is expected to pick up pace in the second-half of the year, with growth likely to average around 6.7pc. The NSO's forecast is marginally lower than the RBI's revised forecast. In the last monetary policy committee meeting, the central bank had lowered its growth estimate for the full year to 6.6pc, pegging the economy to grow at 6.8pc in the third quarter and 7.2pc in the fourth quarter. Nevertheless, this latest estimate also implies that growth this year is likely to be 1.8 percentage points lower than the 8.2pc registered last year.

The data points out that the main drag to growth comes from the industrial sector. The sector is pegged to grow at just 5.3pc this year, down from 9.9pc last year. Slower growth is also expected in construction, electricity, gas and water supply segments. The services sector is also likely to witness a deceleration. On the other hand, private consumption is projected to accelerate. In rural areas, household consumption is likely to get a boost from healthy kharif production, and the prospects for the rabi crop are also promising. Private investment remains subdued and central government capital expenditure, which has been a big driver, is actually 12pc lower than last year.

Since the first advance estimates are based only on data for seven to eight months of the year, the more precise picture of the economy will only emerge in the months ahead when more data is available. According to Nomura, the final economic growth estimate for India is likely to be revised lower after the central government pegged GDP growth in FY25 at 6.4pc. "We expect advance GDP estimates to be revised lower," the note said, adding "We note that the first advance estimates are prone to large revisions, depending on the stage of the business cycle." The economy grew at 8.2pc in FY24, and the government's advance estimate for the current fiscal year is below the finance ministry's forecast of 6.5pc and 6.6pc projection by RBI.

The note by Nomura pointed out that considering the advance estimates by the government are based on partial data and with the economy on a slowdown phase, it expected a downward revision in the growth rate and closer to its own estimate of 6.2pc. "Nomura believes that India was in the midst of a cyclical slowdown led by headwinds such as fading urban pent-up demand and stress in household balance sheets.

According to Nomura, the final economic growth estimate for India is likely to be revised lower after the central government pegged GDP growth in FY25 at 6.4pc in its first advance estimates released on Tuesday.



New Education Policy from April 1

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of Indian Schools Oman has decided to implement the new National Education Policy (NEP) of India across all schools in the Sultanate of Oman.

As per NEP, the academic structure has been redefined into a 5+3+3+4 system, focusing on a holistic approach to education across different stages of a child's development.

Indian Schools Oman is set to implement 'Balvatika' (preschool) with effect from the academic year 2025-2026, commencing from April 1, 2025.

As per the new education policy, the Foundational Stage will now include three years of Kindergarten (Balvatika) for children aged three to six years, followed by Classes 1 and 2 for ages six to eight years.

The Preparatory Stage will comprise Classes 3 to 5 for students aged eight

to 11 years, the Middle Stage will cover Classes 6 to 8 for ages 11 to 14 years, and the Secondary Stage will span Classes 9 to 12 for ages 14 to 18 years.

A significant shift for Indian Schools in Oman under the NEP is the expansion of the kindergarten programme from the existing two-year structure to a three-year programme, ensuring a more comprehensive foundational education.

Dr. Sivakumar Manickam, Chairman of the Board, at Indian Schools Oman, reaffirmed the Board's unwavering commitment to implementing the new

education policy. He further stated: "The implementation of the National Education Policy across Indian Schools in Oman represents a transformative step towards redefining the educational experience for our children. We assure parents of our steadfast dedication to delivering high-quality education aligned with global standards." He continued, "The introduction of Balvatika as a foundational programme highlights our commitment to nurturing the youngest learners by fostering their physical, intellectual, social, and emotional growth from the earliest stages".

Thailand tourism rebounds with 35m visitors in 2024

BANGKOK: Thailand welcomed more than 35 million international tourists in 2024, surpassing the government's target, as the country strives to revive its sluggish economy, officials said.

The nation's vital tourism sector accounts for

India. The kingdom - known for its pristine beaches and iconic temples - generated more than 1.6 trillion baht (\$46 billion) from tourist spending in 2024, according to tourism minister Sorawong Thienthong. The Thai



almost 20pc of its GDP but has struggled in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and changing traveller habits.

More than 35 million visitors visited the kingdom in 2024, around four million shy of its pre-pandemic high in 2019, according to the Ministry of Sports and Tourism. China has reclaimed its position as the top source of visitors in Thailand - after seeing a decline post-pandemic - with more than six million visitors last year, followed by Malaysia and

government under former prime minister Srettha Thavasin introduced a number of measures to attract foreign visitors, including a free visa programme for Chinese and Indian tourists.

After exceeding its target of 35 million tourists in 2024, the government has set a target of 39 million visitors in 2025. World Bank has estimated that the country will exceed its pre-pandemic level in 2025, but tourists are spending less than they did before.

LIPSYNCH

"In the long run, we are all dead."

— John Maynard Keynes

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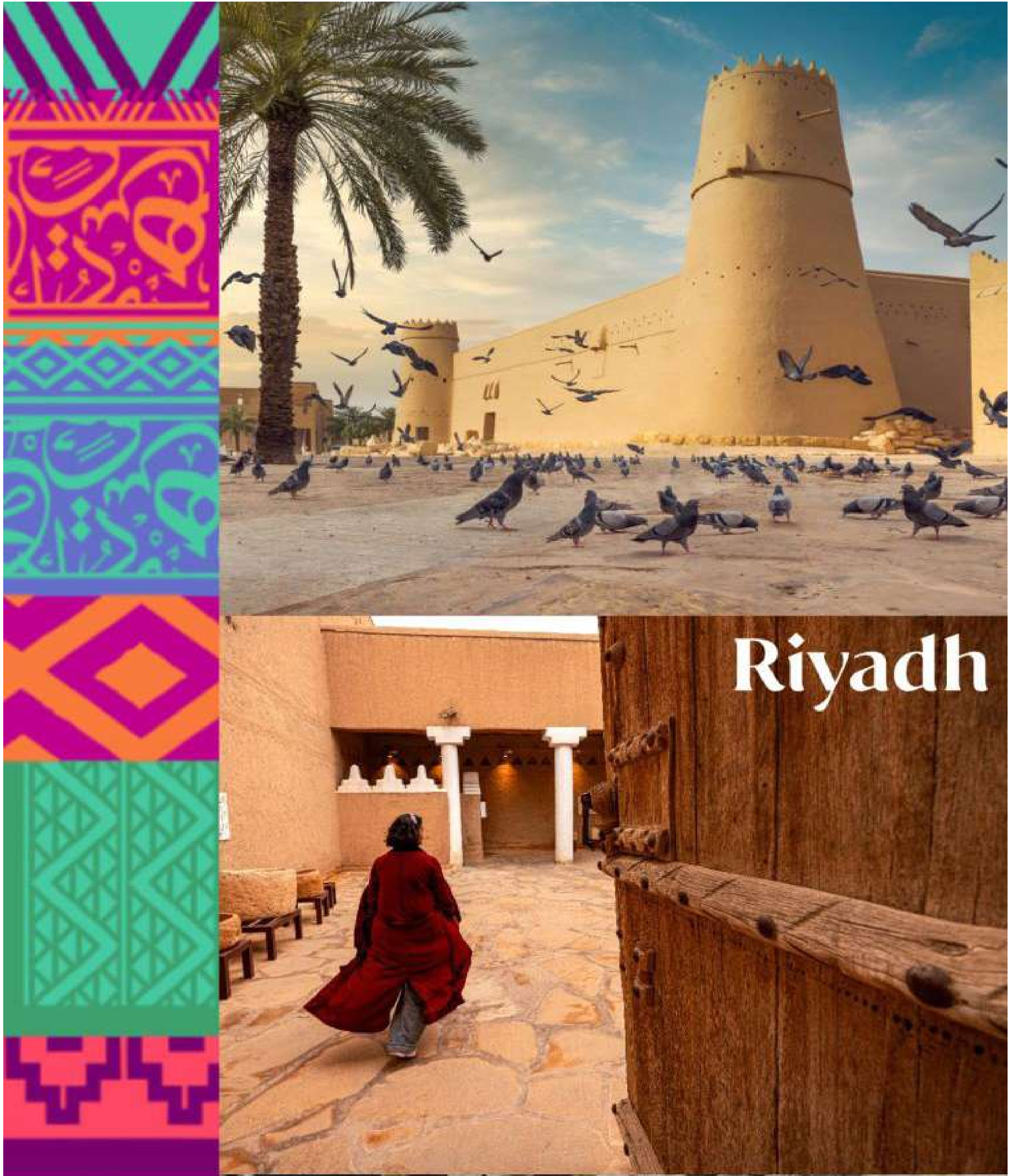
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GULF FAQs

Non-Muslim marriage in Dubai; what's the procedure?

I am a non-Muslim living in Dubai. I plan to get married in the UAE. How does the process work? Do I have to take care of the court formalities before hosting the wedding party? If so, how is that done?

In the UAE, non-Muslim individuals may apply the provisions of UAE Personal Laws for Non-Muslims if they intend to marry in the UAE.

This is by Article 1(1) of the Federal Decree-Law No. 41 of 2022 on Civil personal Status, which states, "The provisions of the present Decree-Law shall apply to non-Muslim citizens of the UAE and to non-Muslim foreigners who reside in the state unless one of them invokes the application of their respective law, about matters of marriage, divorce, estate will and proof of affiliation, without prejudice to Articles 12, 13, 15, 16 and 17 of the reference Federal Law No. 5 of 1985".

Furthermore,

non-Muslim individuals (bridegroom and the bride) who wish to marry in the UAE through

states:

1. Civil marriage procedures may take place before the certification

especially the joint custody of children.

3. The marriage contract form shall include the disclosure by the spouses of any prior marriages along with the date of divorce, if any, and a declaration by the wife that no marriage is still effective. The husband must submit this declaration if the law of his home country does not permit polygamy. In any event, the husband must disclose any existing marriage relationship before the certification judge.

4. The contract must include an indication of the consent of each of them, verbally or in writing.

5. The implementing Regulations of this Decree-Law shall specify the approved bilingual contract form for civil marriage and

6. After verifying the fulfilment of all the conditions of a civil marriage contract and after completing the procedures stipulated in this Article, the certification judge shall ratify the

marriage contract and the contract shall be entered in the register maintained for this purpose."

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, you and your partner may consider marrying before a judge in the Personal Status Court of Dubai upon fulfilling the aforementioned requirements mentioned in UAE Personal Laws for Non-Muslims. Based on the religion of you and your partner, you may also consider marrying at a church, Hindu or Sikh temple in Dubai which is licensed and approved by the Community Development Authority of Dubai.

According to your nationality, you may confer with your embassy or the respective Consulate General in the UAE if it provides services for conducting marriages for non-Muslim residents of the UAE. For any additional information on the procedure, you may avail legal advice from a legal counsel in the UAE.



the respective Personal Status Court, must be at least 21 years of age, a bridegroom and a bride need to expressly declare before the judge his and her consent to marriage and both need to sign the disclosure form. The conditions related to civil marriage of non-Muslims in the UAE are mentioned in Article-5 of the UAE Personal Laws for Non-Muslims.

Additionally, the procedures of civil marriage for non-Muslims in the UAE are mentioned in Article-6 of the UAE Personal Laws for Non-Muslims, which

judge in the competent court, by filing an application using a form prepared to this effect, and subject to the other conditions and procedures outlined in the present Decree-Law and its implementing regulations.

2. Marriage shall take place by filling out the form prepared to this effect by both spouses before the certification judge. Spouses may agree on the conditions of the contract, and the contract shall, as between them, prevail in terms of the rights of spouses during marriage and post-divorce rights,

Requirements for domestic workers' visa

What are the requirements for domestic workers' residence visa in new online procedure?

All domestic worker visa services — including application, renewal and cancellation of residence permits — can now be accessed through the "Dubai Now" app.

The Dubai Now smart app now serves as the sole channel for the issuance, renewal and cancellation of domestic workers' residence permits.

This initiative is aimed at simplifying the process and sig-

nificantly reducing the time involved in such transactions. This unified platform was a project put together by the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (Mohre) and the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai (GDRFA).

With the new "Domestic Worker Package", the number of service channels involved in transactions has been cut from four to one, and the steps required to complete the process have been reduced from 12 to four.

Visits to service cen-

tres were slashed from eight to two and the processing time has been reduced from 30 to five days. The number of required documents has also been cut from 10 to just four, leading to a cost reduction of Dh400 per transaction.

For those who are applying for a domestic worker's residency, here are the steps:

*One will have to fill out a unified service package form, where

he/she will enter the domestic worker's details, and submit identity and passport information.

*The employment con-

tract is signed electronically within the app.

*The worker's ID and residency permits will then be issued.

The rollout of this Domestic Worker Package is the third phase of the Mohre's Work Bundle project, which eases the processes for residence visas and employment permits by

unifying all services in one platform. The first phase was rolled out in Dubai in March and later implemented in all seven emirates.



Singapore work visa essentials that foreigners need to know

SINGAPORE: There are thousands of talented people from around the world with different qualifications who long to come to Singapore, which is world-famous for its sound economy, strategic location and business-friendly environment. Such dreams may include foreign students seeking a job in Singapore after graduation, professionals searching for career opportunities in Singapore or entrepreneurs planning to open doors in Singapore.

Work Visa permits are most important to understand, considering the fact that it varies from one country to



another.

WORK VISAS FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS: While studying in Singapore, for-

foreign students usually want to find some ways of getting work experience after graduating. Eligible students can either apply for the Work Holiday Pass or the Employment Pass based on their qualifications and job offers.

SINGAPORE RAISES S. PASS REQUIREMENTS: The Work Holiday Pass allows eligible undergradu-

ates or graduates from selected universities to work in Singapore for not more than six months. Graduates who are searching for long-term employment may think about the Employment Pass issued mainly to applicants earning a minimum of S\$5,000 a month.

Singapore offers several visa options for skilled workers and professionals. The Employment Pass is the most well-known of all these, especially for foreign professionals, manag-

ers and executives. Depending on them, middle-skilled foreign workers can apply for the S Pass, which has lower salary requirements and quota limits.

The Personalised Employment Pass (PEP) is another very attractive option for high-paid professionals, in which case it is not tied to any specific employer and provides a certain level of flexibility because holders can look for jobs without having to apply for new visas.

Women in GCC area expect pay rise; men more bonuses

DUBAI: Men in the region are likely to get more bonuses and other monetary perks compared with women, according to a new report. The Bayt.com survey also showed that women benefit more from policies supporting work-life balance.

However, it noted that flexible working hours were offered to only 25pc of respondents and that family-oriented benefits like educational allowances or travel support remain scarce.

The survey which received respondents from over 1,200 employees

quest a raise in 2025, reflecting elevated wage expectations.

Employees in the GCC indicated benefits from employer-provided housing and allowances. In terms of earning dynamics, around three quarters of men who took part in the study claim to be sole earners, while only 31pc of women participants claim to receive support from and rely on spouse or family income.

The survey highlighted that men exhibit a higher tendency to switch jobs compared with women (65pc vs 50pc), often driven by the pursuit of



across the GCC, North Africa and the Levant, identified how employers could improve compensation structures, retain talent and better understand the needs of today's workforce.

A majority of respondents, 66pc, did not receive raises in 2024, with 46pc of women and 34pc of men currently expecting salary increases of 20pc or more in 2025. One in five plans to re-

better compensation or career progression.

Younger respondents, especially those in the 18 to 25 age group, had a higher turnover rates with over 40pc showing a tendency to switch jobs. Many have held three or more roles early in their careers. In contrast, employees aged 36 and above often report having five or more past roles, reflecting career stability and growth.

Mumbai airport bags top accreditation

AHMEDABAD: The Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) in Mumbai has become the first airport in India to have received the prestigious Level 5 accreditation from the globally acclaimed Airports Coun-

world to attain Level 5 accreditation from ACI for "Customer Experience".

"There is no greater manifestation of business success than a company's ability to serve its customers. Every moment, it is this guiding

giuous Level 5 Accreditation for Customer Experience. Not only are we the first airport in India but also only the third in the world to do so," the Adani group chairman informed.

Meanwhile, CSMIA maintained its growth momentum in Nov 2024, recording as many as 4.77 million passengers during the month and a double-digit surge in cargo operations. The passenger traffic at the airport comprised 3.4 million domestic and 1.37 million international travellers.



cil International (ACI), Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani has said.

Adani stated that CSMIA, managed by Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (AAHL), is not only the first airport in India but also the third in the

principle that I urge all members of Adani Airports to dedicate their hours to," Adani said.

"And there can be no greater feeling of gratitude than to have our @CSMIA_Official receive @ACIWorld's presti-

During the month, the Mumbai International Airport handled 27,200 Air Traffic Movements (ATMs) -- 9,696 domestic ATMs, including freighters and 7,504 international ATMs, including cargo freighters.

PBD is family reunion, says Jaishankar

BHUBANESWAR: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, addressing the diaspora, said that the PBD "is like a family reunion; Indians living abroad are able to see and experience for themselves the progress and development taking place in their country". Indians are also proud of the success and achievements of the diaspora.

Speaking about the

importance of the diaspora, Jaishankar said: "In a globalised era, the diaspora only becomes more important with each passing year. Whether it is technology, best practices or resources. Be it tourism, trade or investment, the two-way flows you enable are invaluable."

Jaishankar noted that despite the global upheavals, the message

that the diaspora will carry forward and take away from the convention "is of a Bharat which is more confident, modernising and inclusive, where tradition and technology go hand in hand, where the journey towards Viksit Bharat is ongoing and each one of you in your own way can make a difference to the realisation of that goal."