



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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Indian Embassy in Kuwait celebrates Republic Day



Officials and members of the Indian community attended Republic Day celebrations on Sunday Jan 26. Indian Ambassador Dr Adarsh Swaika addressed the meeting and announced that the government of India has honoured Sheikha Shaikha A J Al-Sabah with the Padma Shri in recognition of her exceptional efforts in promoting Yoga in Kuwait and the region.

Is return ticket necessary to visit US?

NEW YORK: The tightening of US immigration rules under President Donald Trump’s second term has raised fresh concerns within the Indian community, fuelling uncertainty about future travel to the US.

A recent incident at Newark Airport in New Jersey has brought these concerns to the forefront. An Indian couple visiting their children on B-1/B-2 visitor visas was denied entry for failing to provide return tickets — an unexpected requirement reportedly introduced under the US’ 2025 immigration regulations.

The couple had planned

a five-month stay but were informed by immigration officers that return tickets were now mandatory. Despite their attempts to explain, they were sent back to India from the airport.

This incident has left many puzzled, as no prior announcement about the new rule had been made. However, it also raises an important point: The airline that carried them should have been aware of this requirement. Had the airline ensured the couple had return tickets before boarding in India, they could have avoided this traumatic experience.

(Cont. on page-2)

US lawmaker flays policy for children of H-1B visa holders

WASHINGTON: “The extensive Green Card backlogs for high-skilled workers mean that H-1B visa holders must wait decades and even centuries before a Green Card is available to them,” Congressman Jerrold Nadler, senior Democratic member of the House Judiciary Committee, said

during a Congressional hearing on restoring immigration enforcement.

“Right now, if both parents have H-1B status, a child was born abroad, but who has lived in the US for nearly their entire lives must leave the country when they turn 21 unless they have their

(Cont. on page-2)

Australia streamlines requirements for Temporary Graduate Visa

SYDNEY: Australia has streamlined the study requirement for all qualifying degrees for the Temporary Graduate visa (TGV). This includes changes for Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma holders.

A temporary Graduate visa enables international students to live, study

and work after completing their studies. Temporary Graduate visas are classified into four types: graduate work stream, post-study work stream, second post-study work stream and replacement stream.

The Graduate Work stream will be renamed to the Post-Vocational

Education Work stream and the Post-Study Work stream will be renamed to the Post-Higher Education Work stream. The Temporary Graduate visa (TGV) programme has three streams: The Post-Vocational Education Work (PVEW) stream,

(Cont. on page-2)

NRI face higher taxes on property sales as indexation benefit ends

DUBAI: With several Indian expats in the UAE and other countries facing higher taxes on property sales back home after the Indian government removed a tax benefit, a UAE resident is giving voices to the NRIs by supporting a legal fight.

“NRIs are not treated at par with the residents when India revoked a decision to remove the indexation benefit on real estate taxations,” Sreejith Kuniyil, a chartered accountant who has taken up a mission to end the discrimination against NRIs,

told a TV channel.

Kuniyil says the petition seeks to restore the rights of NRIs and treat them equally by giving both the tax options provided to resident Indians.

He said the disparity in the status of NRIs and residents cropped up as the government used the word “resident” instead of “citizen” and went silent about NRIs when it amended a decision regarding indexation benefit on long-term capital gains on property sales last year.

WHAT IS INDEXATION BENEFIT? In



Kuniyil

India, when you sell a property, you might have to pay tax on the profit you make. This is called capital gains tax. To make things fairer, the Indian government used to allow people to

adjust the original cost of the property for inflation. This is called indexation. It helped reduce the amount of tax you had to pay. However, the government in July 2024 removed this benefit.

Why was it revoked? Taxpayers often prefer the higher tax rate (20pc) with indexation because it accounts for inflation and can result in a lower overall tax burden compared with the lower tax rate without indexation (12.5pc), which ignores the impact of inflation

on the property’s original cost.

Following a huge backlash, the government allowed taxpayers to choose between two tax rates for long-term capital gains on property: one with indexation and a slightly higher tax rate, and another without indexation but with a lower tax rate.

HOW ARE NRIS AFFECTED? Article 112(a) of the Income Tax Act, which provided the two tax rates options made it applicable to “an individual or a Hindu undivided

(Cont. on page-2)

Rs 10,000 MINIMUM PENSION ASSURED Centre notifies Unified Pension Scheme

NEW DELHI: The Modi government has notified the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS), set to roll out on April 1, 2025, guaranteeing central government employees an assured pension of 50pc of their average basic pay from the 12 months preceding retirement, provided they complete 25 years of service.

The scheme, aimed at providing greater financial security to the 23 lakh central government

employees currently enrolled in the National Pension System (NPS), combines features of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) and NPS to ensure guaranteed pensions.

For shorter service durations, payouts will be proportional. Employees with at least 10 years of qualifying service are assured a minimum monthly pension of Rs10,000. In cases where a retiree dies post-superannuation, the scheme provides for a family

pension equivalent to 60pc of the last admissible payout, offered to the spouse. Retirees will also receive a lump sum amount equivalent to 10pc of their monthly emoluments — basic pay and DA — for every six months of completed service. This payment will not affect the assured pension amount.

This initiative seeks to enhance retirees' financial stability, addressing demands for a more predictable post-retirement

income. Employees with at least 10 years of service who retire on superannuation will qualify for assured payouts from their retirement date. Similarly, those retired under Fundamental Rule 56(j) — a provision allowing the government to retire employees in the public interest — will also be eligible unless their retirement results from a penalty.

Employees opting for voluntary retirement af-

ter 25 years of service will receive payouts beginning on the date they would have superannuated had they continued working. However, individuals dismissed, removed or resigning from service are excluded from the scheme.

Dearness relief, calculated similarly to the Dearness Allowance (DA) for serving employees, will be applied to both individual and family pensions once disbursement begins.

US lawmaker flays policy for...

(Cont. from page-1)

own immigration status," he said. Nadler also slammed President Donald Trump's executive on birthright citizenship.

Trump on Jan 20 signed an executive order declaring that future children born to undocumented immigrants would no longer be treated as citizens. "That's bad enough, but under this executive order, even children born in the US to such parents might have to self-deport because they would be denied citizenship at birth," he said.

"Does it make sense to send children who are born in the US to countries that they don't know, may never have

been to and where they have no support network?" Nadler asked. Testifying before the Congressional subcommittee on the Subcommittee on Immigration, Integrity, Security and Enforcement, David Bier from the CATO Institute said such a policy makes the country weaker. "It discourages legal immigration. It discourages high-skilled immigration. Look, I talked to a lot of high skilled immigrants in this country. They talk about their family. They talk about the hope they have for their children to be Americans and to grow up in this country and to contribute to this country," he said.

Australia streamlines...

(Cont. from page-1)

Post-Higher Education Work (PHEW) stream and Second Post-Higher Education Work stream.

The qualification you use to apply for the Tem-

porary Graduate visa (Subclass 485) will determine which of these streams is right for you.

If you hold an Associate Degree, Diploma or trade qualification, you should apply for the TGV Post-Higher Education Work (PHEW) stream.

Graduate Certificates no longer meet the study requirement for the Temporary Graduate visa. You can still study a Graduate Certificate, which cannot be used as an eligible qualification for a TGV application.



porary Graduate visa (Subclass 485) will determine which of these streams is right for you.

If you hold an Associate Degree, Diploma or trade qualification,

Kerala's Pazhampori attracts 18pc GST

KOCHI: The imposition of an 18pc Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Pazhampori, Kerala's popular banana fritter, has sparked widespread debate about inconsistent tax classifications in the country.

This follows similar controversies surrounding caramel popcorn (18pc GST vs five per cent for plain popcorn) and the earlier "cream bun" GST confusion.

The tax on a staple snack for Kerala's working class highlights the government's inconsistent policies. Despite posing as caramel popcorn, the fritters face vastly different tax rates. This raises questions about the rationale behind such discrepancies and the government's failure to streamline its policies.

The caramel popcorn case highlights the confusion in the GST system. Its classification as a sugar confectionary results in an 18pc tax, while plain popcorn, a "namkeen" (savory) item, is taxed at only five per cent. This disparity has drawn criticism for being arbitrary and unfair.



Is return ticket....

(Cont. from page-1)

A visa allows a foreign citizen to travel to a US port-of-entry (generally an airport) and request permission to enter the US. A visa does not guarantee entry into the US, according to the US Department of State — Bureau of Consular Affairs. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS), US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials at the port-of-entry have authority to permit or deny admission to the US. If you are allowed to enter the US, the CBP official will provide an admission stamp or a paper Form I-94, arrival/separture record.

NRIs face higher taxes on property...

(Cont. from page-1)

family, being a resident." In this case, NRIs have been left out whereas the status of NRIs while purchasing properties under FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) remains the same as residents," explained Sreejith.

However, he said, now NRIs selling properties after July 23, 2024 are facing a discrimination after the amendment to the IT Act.

WHAT IS THE PETITION ABOUT? Aiming to raise a voice for NRIs, Sreejith has helped an aggrieved Indian expat in Kuwait, who

ended up paying a huge tax amount while selling her property last year, file a petition against the Union of India in the High Court of Kerala. "The petition seeks to restore the rights of NRIs and treat them equally by giving both the tax options provided to resident Indians. While the hearing is going on, we want the government to address the disparity in tax treatment between resident Indians and NRIs regarding long-term capital gains on property sales in the upcoming budget session and provide a solution in favour of NRIs," he added.

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Australian Dollar	54.93	53.86
Norwegian Krone	7.76	7.61
Swedish Krona	7.95	7.80
New Zealand Dollar	49.55	48.66
Hong Kong Dollar	11.19	10.98
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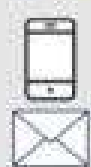

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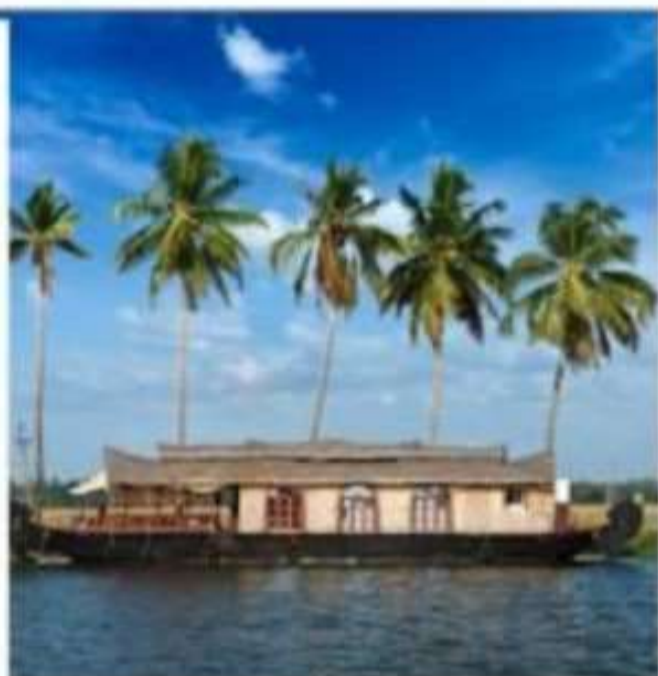
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GULF FAQs

Non-Muslims and registered civil marriage in UAE

We are non-Muslims. My fiancé and I just moved to Abu Dhabi from the UK and wish to get married here. Can you let us know about the formalities?

In this case, the Abu Dhabi Law of Civil Marriage and Divorce Procedures in the emirate of Abu Dhabi is applicable.

In the UAE, non-Muslim individuals who are residents or visitors can apply to enter into a civil marriage in Abu Dhabi, provided they meet specific criteria. This is in accordance with Article-2 of the Regulation no. 8/2022 Abu Dhabi Judicial Department, Decision No. 8 of 2022 on the Adaptation of Civil Marriage and Divorce Regulations in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi (the "Concerning Personal Status for non-Muslim Foreigners in Emirate of Abu Dhabi"):

A court attestation officer shall conclude and register civil marriages for visitors and residents in the UAE and the registration of civil wills for those persons covered by the provisions of this law, taking into account

the legally established rules and provisions."

Article-7 concerning personal status for non-Muslim foreigners in Emirate of Abu Dhabi states: "A marriage is deemed civil if it is conducted and registered in accordance with laws



and regulations without regard to any specific religious law."

Further, Article-8 of the Concerning Personal Status for non-Muslim Foreigners in Emirate of Abu Dhabi provides for the conditions for concluding civil marriage.

A civil marriage is concluded if the following conditions are met: **Age:** Both husband and wife have reached at least 18 calendar years, and age is proven by any

official document issued by the country to which they belong. The free will of those wishing to marry; those wishing to marry shall explicitly express their consent to the marriage and there should be nothing to legally prohibit their con-

sent.

Eligibility: The spouses must have the necessary mental capacity. The absence of blood relationship; the marriage must not be between siblings, children, grandchildren uncles or aunts.

No polygamy: None of the spouses is bound by any existing marital relationship. The chairman may add any other conditions. Applicants are exempted from submitting a medical ex-

amination certificate before marriage and no witnesses are required for the marriage to take place.

Additionally, Article-9 of the concerning Personal Status for non-Muslim Foreigners in Emirate of Abu Dhabi provides for

the procedure for registration of civil marriage.

Civil marriage procedure: Those who are covered by the provisions of this law may conclude their

civil marriage before the court, by following the steps below: 1. Fill in the form designed for registering civil marriage in both Arabic and English, noting it is available on the Department's website, attach the required documents and then pay the prescribed fee. The spouses must disclose the existence of any previous marital relationship for either of them, indicating the date of divorce, and must declare

that they do not have any existing marital relationship.

2. The court verifies that all conditions for civil marriage are met and that the required procedures are fulfilled. 3. In the event an application is approved, the court will contact the spouses within three working days at most from the date of submitting the application in order to set a date for the issuance of the marriage certificate, in the presence of the spouses before the court, whether virtually or physically at the court's headquarters.

4. The marriage attestation officer shall certify the conclusion of marriage and will produce a bilingual civil marriage certificate according to the template attached to this decision. This certificate is recorded and kept in the electronic civil marriage registry."

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, you and your fiancé, may register your civil marriage in the Civil Family Court at Abu Dhabi Judicial Department.

Paid holiday for Israa Wal Miraj in Oman, Kuwait; why not in UAE?

Can you please explain why Israa Wal Miraj is not a holiday in UAE?

Oman declared Jan 30 a paid holiday for both public and private sector employees in observance of Israa Wal Miraj. Kuwait, another Gulf country, has also decided to suspend work across all ministries, government agencies, public authorities and institutions on Jan 30. This means residents of Oman and Kuwait will enjoy a three-day holiday, including their weekend (Friday and Sat), from Jan 30 to Sat, Feb 1. Although Israa Wal Miraj officially falls on Monday, Jan 27, both Gulf countries decided to move the holiday to Thursday for an extended week-end.

Unlike their neighbours, UAE residents will not have a holiday for Al Israa Wal

Miraj. The occasion was previously included in the UAE's official list of holidays until 2018. However, in 2019, the government decided to exclude it from the list. It was the same year that the cabinet unified public and private sector holidays.

What is Israa Wal Miraj? Known as the Prophet's Ascension, Israa Wal Miraj is the night that Prophet Muhammad journeyed from Masjid Al Haram in Makkah to the Masjid Al Aqsa in Jerusalem. According to the Islamic calendar, Israa Wal Miraj is celebrated on the 27th night of Rajab 1446, which falls on Jan 27 this year. Rajab is the seventh month in the Islamic calendar.

When is UAE next public holiday? The next public holiday in the UAE is expected to fall at the end of March or the beginning

of April, depending on the sighting of the moon. The Islamic holiday of Eid Al Fitr will most likely give residents up to four days off this year. According to the UAE cabinet, the first three days of Shawwal (the month after Ramadan) will be holidays. If Ramadan lasts 30 days, the 30th of Ramadan will also be a holiday, giving residents a four-day break (from Ramadan 30 to Shawwal 3). However, if Ramadan lasts 29 days, the holiday will only cover the first three days of Eid (from Shawwal 1 to Shawwal 3).

Depending on moon sighting, if Ramadan begins on Saturday, March 1, and ends on Sunday, March 30, Eid Al Fitr likely fall from Monday, March 31, to Wednesday, April 2

Kumbh Mela airfares up by 600 pc



NEW DELHI: The airfares to Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj have skyrocketed by around 600pc due to the ongoing Ma-

hakumbh Mela, where crores of people have already taken a dip and as many are expected to arrive for Jan 29, a key

bathing day on the occasion of "Mauni Amavasya".

The soaring airfares have prompted avia-

tion watchdog DGCA to step in as score of people hope to reach the world's largest religious gathering, especially on key bathing days such as Mauni Amavasya.

More than 12 crore people have visited the Mahakumbh after it started on Jan 13. The gathering, which takes place once every 12 years, will conclude on Feb 26.

As per travel portal Skyscanner, air ticket prices for the Delhi-Prayagraj flights have risen sharply, with one-way-tickets costing upwards of Rs21,000 as of 11:00 am on Monday.

Mumbai to Prayagraj tickets are priced between Rs 22,000 and Rs 60,000. Pilgrims coming from Bengaluru would have to fork out anything between Rs 26,000 and Rs 48,000 for a direct one way ticket. This sudden surge in airfare is against the around Rs5,000 for a one-way trip to these cities under normal circumstances.

Aviation watchdog Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has asked airlines to rationalise airfares for flights to Prayagraj in view of the Maha Kumbh.

Indian student shot dead in US

WASHINGTON: Indian student Ravi Teja was shot dead in Washington. He was a resident of RK Puram Green Hills Colony in Hyderabad. He was fatally shot dead at a gas station in the US after assailants opened fire at him in Washington.

He had gone to the US in March 2022 for a Masters Degree. After successfully completing his studies, he had been actively searching for a job. While the exact details of the purported shooting remain unclear,



Ravi Teja

the incident has left Ravi Teja's family in deep shock.

Meanwhile, the North American Association of Indian Students posted on X, "Hours before the inauguration, Ravi Teja, a 26-year-old student from Hyderabad, India, was tragically shot and killed in Washington. He had moved to the US in 2022 to pursue his MBA. The circumstances surrounding the shooting are currently under investigation."

Great potential for India-Qatar startup collaboration

DOHA: India's top diplomat in Qatar has highlighted the South Asian nation's robust startup ecosystem and potential for collaboration with Qatar, emphasising India's impressive track record of over 100 unicorns in the past years.

"The cultural connection between our two countries fosters this collaboration, allowing many Indians to work in Qatar," Indian ambassador Vipul D-Ring Road.



India's ambassador in Qatar Vipul

D-Ring Road.

"As India continues to progress in the startup sector and with Qatar's focus on innovation and areas like sustainability, there is significant potential for Indian startups to thrive here," Vipul pointed

out. Asked what role India could play to help cultivate Qatar's unicorns, the ambassador lauded Qatar for developing a strong ecosystem to encourage startups to establish and expand their footprint here. He said Qatar offers substantial financing and access to other global markets.

"Startups that come to Qatar can effectively test their products and ideas, and once they achieve the necessary scale, they can expand into other markets."

Goa Carnival starts on Feb 28

PANJIM: The annual carnival float parades will commence from Feb 28 while Shigmo parades will begin in the state from March 15, according to Director of Tourism Kedar Naik.

Naik told media persons that the carnival parades will be organised from Feb 28 to March 4, 2025, offering five days of colourful celebrations and float parades across Goa. A grand curtain-raiser will be held in Porvorim on Feb 28 which will set the tone for the event.

Parades will also be held in Panjim on March



1, Margao on March 2, Vasco on March 3 and Mapusa and Morjim on March 4. This vibrant

festival promises to attract tourists and locals alike with its lively atmosphere, he said. The

prize plus infrastructure money allotted for Panjim, Margao, Vasco and Mapusa Carnival organising committee is Rs 27.35 lakh whereas that for Porvorim was Rs 17.35 lakh and Rs 14.25 lakh will be allotted to the Morjim Carnival organising committee.

Naik further informed that the Shigmo

festival, a grand 15-day celebration of Goa's vibrant folk traditions, will be held from March 15 to 29, with colourful float parades organised across 19 centres. These parades will highlight Goa's rich cultural heritage, featuring traditional music, dance and artistic performances, offering locals and tourists an unforgettable experience, Naik said.

A decision to increase the prize money for the centres by Rs 50,000 was also taken during the meeting chaired by Tourism Minister Rohan Khaunte.