



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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Now, Wi-Fi on Air India select domestic flights

MUMBAI: Tata group airline Air India has rolled out Wi-Fi internet connectivity services on board domestic and international flights operated by select aircraft in its fleet. With the rollout of this service, Air India has become the first Indian airline to offer internet connectivity on domestic flights.



connectivity on domestic flights. Wi-Fi will be offered free of charge on domestic flights operated by select aircraft for a limited introductory period. The airline did not specify the length of the introductory period. Over time, Air India plans to progressively offer the service on other aircraft in its fleet.

For now, Wi-Fi connectivity will be available on the airline's Airbus A350, Boeing 787-9 and select Airbus A321neo aircraft. The airline was already offering internet connectivity on board international flights operated by these aircraft as part of an ongoing pilot programme. On-board internet services are fast becoming a standard offering, particularly among major full-service carriers (FSCs) globally. Air India has ambitions to be counted among the world's foremost FSCs.

UAE amnesty gives expats fresh start in new year

DUBAI/ABU DHABI: Hundreds of expats are stepping into 2025 with renewed hope and aspirations after regularising their residency status through the UAE's visa amnesty and securing new jobs. Launched on Sept 1 and extended for two months -- from Oct 31 to Dec 31 -- the amnesty programme provided a lifeline to visa and residency violators. Our correspondent spoke to several beneficiaries who shared their joy at receiving a golden opportunity to start anew, earn a livelihood and support their families. UAE visa amnesty ended on Dec 31.

Antony, from the Philippines, arrived in Dubai on a visit visa with his family. After overstaying for more than a year, he discovered that an absconding case had been filed against him. The amnesty programme allowed him to rectify his status without incurring fines, which had amounted to around Dh36,000 and his absconding case was also resolved. "I'm very happy that we were stuck here without (Cont. on page-2)

Interest rates on PPF, post office savings unchanged

NEW DELHI: The Centre has announced interest rates for various small savings schemes for the last quarter (Jan-March) of the financial year 2024-25. The interest rates have been kept unchanged for various small savings schemes, including PPF and NSC, yet again. "The rates of interest on various small savings schemes for the fourth quarter of FY 2024-25, starting from Jan 1, 2025, and ending on March 31, 2025, shall remain unchanged from those notified for the third quarter (October 1, 2024, to Dec 31, 2024) of FY 2024-25," the finance ministry said. The Centre notifies the interest rates for small savings schemes, primarily managed by post offices and banks, on a quarterly basis. The formula for determining these interest rates was recommended by the Shyamala Gopinath (Cont. on page-2)

Air Kerala to start operations by June 2025 from Kannur

KOCHI: Air Kerala, India's newest and upcoming airline based in Kerala, has revealed plans to commence its operations by June 2025 and is geared to hire captains primarily from India. Speaking to a TV channel, Harish Kutty, the CEO of Air Kerala, said there were a lot of pilots in India who would like to join the new aircraft operator. "The first priority goes to the pilots from India," said the CEO. "But there's nothing like that we wouldn't go for foreign pilots," Harish Kutty added. Air Kerala's first flight will take off from Kannur International Airport (KIAL). The Kerala-based aviation firm's recruitment plans come after it received the NOC certificate from the civil aviation ministry in July this year. "Endeavour is to get pilots from India," Captain CS Randhawa, the vice president of (Cont. on page-2)



Tourist officers to help PBD delegates

BHUBANESWAR: To ensure hassle-free experience for NRI guests during the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) convention from Jan 8 to 10, the city police has planned to deploy tourist officers at prominent destinations in the capital city. Sources said police help desks will be set up at Dhauli Shanti Stupa, Lingaraj temple, Mukteshwar temple, Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves, Nandankanan Zoological Park and others. Each help desk will be manned by an officer along with a male and female constable. The cops stationed at the kiosks will assist the tourists in case their belongings get misplaced/stolen or if anyone misbehaves with them. To supplement the efforts of the tourist officers,



at least 500 youths from various slums will be deployed in the city. Sources said all efforts will be made to ensure that no untoward incident takes place which could put Odisha in bad light. The city police has also planned to launch a five-digit helpline number for the visitors. The cops will set up a round-the-clock control centre to attend calls from tourists on the helpline number. Police have also planned to create a WhatsApp bot to provide visitors an opportunity to have a real-time automated conversational experience directly on the messaging app to address their queries and grievances, if any. If their query is not related to the police, then the WhatsApp bot will provide the number of the department concerned to them.



Trump's U-turn

The much-maligned, but highly in demand to run the American industry and business, H-1B visa is back in the news--- but for all good reasons. With US president-elect Donald Trump throwing his weight behind the popular H-1B visa scheme, a great element of fear for lakhs of highly skilled Indians has vanished. For, Indians are its largest beneficiaries—as much as 72pc of all H-1B visas went to them in 2023. From calling H-1B very bad and unfair during his first tenure, Trump swung to the other end of the spectrum by claiming “he always liked it” in a recent media interview.

The reality of America's political economy appears to be bumping up against the rhetoric of the campaign trail. Immigration was among the most contentious issues in the presidential election — and Trump's strong stance against illegal migrants arguably helped him sweep it.

But Trump hid his U-turn by claiming that his fight essentially is against illegal immigration and not against intelligent students coming from India or elsewhere and working in the US. The controversy began earlier this month with the appointment of Chennai-born Sriram Krishnan as senior advisor on artificial intelligence to the forthcoming Trump White House. In a tweet in Nov, Krishnan had said: “Anything to remove country caps for green cards/ unlock skilled immigration would be huge.”

His comments outraged some in Trump's hard-core right-wing supporters, whose maximalist position on immigration often crosses into xenophobia. Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, both entrepreneurs, came out strongly in support of H-1B visas, with Musk saying that he would “go to war”, if needed, on the issue. Trump finally came down on the side of skilled immigrants and their prospective employers on Dec 29, stating that he has “been a great believer in the programme”.

Over three lakh Indian students in the US contribute more than \$10 billion in annual revenues, with Indians contributing the largest in terms of international students. Can Trump deny this?

But trump cannot escape from reality so fast. To work towards “Make America Great Again” (MAGA), Trump and his supporters need to ask: What made America great in the first place? This question has reached centre stage as, even before the president-elect occupies the White House, cracks are showing in the social coalition Trump built to sweep the 2024 elections.

It may be recalled that In his first term, Trump imposed restrictions on H-1B visas in what appeared to be a move to mollify the right wing extreme of the Republican party. More recently, during the 2024 campaign, he had said that “if you graduate from a US college, you should automatically get a green card with your diploma”. The latter has sound economic logic behind it: To keep talent trained in the US within the country.

The H-1B visa regime is meant to, and does, provide avenues for companies to bring in skilled labour at the top of the US' value chain. Indian tech workers and other white-collar workers in Silicon Valley and beyond form a significant chunk. The supportive stance on H-1B visas could signal a more optimistic outlook for Indian tech talent seeking opportunities in the US.

LIPSYNCH

“We cannot be both the world's leading champion of peace and the world's leading supplier of the weapons of war.”

— Jimmy Carter

GST kitty up 7.3pc to Rs 1.77-lakh-cr in Dec

NEW DELHI: During December, 2024, GST from domestic transactions grew 8.4pc to Rs 1.32-lakh-crore, while revenues from tax on imports rose about four per cent to Rs 44,268 crore. The gross GST collection rose 7.3pc year-on-year to Rs 1.77-lakh-crore in Dec. The highest-ev-

er collection was in April 2024 at over Rs 2.10-lakh-crore. The Central GST collection stood at Rs 32,836 crore, state GST at Rs 40,499 crore, Integrated IGST at Rs 47,783 crore and Cess at Rs 11,471 crore. During the month under review, GST from domestic transactions grew

8.4pc to Rs 1.32-lakh-crore, while revenues from tax on imports rose about four per cent to Rs 44,268 crore.

In Nov, GST mop-up was Rs 1.82-lakh-crore with 8.5pc annual growth. The highest-ever collection was in April 2024 at over Rs 2.10-lakh-crore.

During the month, refunds worth Rs 22,490 crore were issued, registering 31pc increase over the year-ago period. After adjusting refunds, net GST collection increased by 3.3pc to Rs 1.54-lakh-crore.

Interest rates on PPF....

(Cont. from page-1)

Committee. The committee proposed using the yields on government bonds as benchmarks for setting interest rates on various small savings instruments, with adjustments to be made annually on April 1. According to the latest notification, the interest rates for popular small savings schemes like the Public Provident Fund (PPF) and post office savings deposits have been retained at 7.1pc and four per cent.

The Post Office Monthly Income Scheme (PO-MIS), which provides regular monthly income to investors, offers 7.4pc. The Senior Citizen Savings Scheme (SCSS) maintains its attractive interest rate of 8.2pc catering specifically to senior citizens by offering higher returns to ensure financial security. Deposits made

under the Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana (SSY), which aims to support the education and marriage expenses of girls, will retain an interest rate of 8.2pc.

Air Kerala to start...

(Cont. from page-1)

operations of Air Kerala said.

On Dec 30, 2024, the airline formally partnered with Kannur International Airport Limited (KIAL) by signing an MoU. As part of its initial operations, Air Kerala will have a substantial number of departures from Kannur to nearby domestic destinations within a flying range of one and a half hours.

“We take this opportunity to announce that Kannur International Airport will be a major player in our operational strategy,” read Air Kerala Chairman Afi Ahmed's

latest statement.

Air Kerala has signed a Letter of Intent (LOI) to acquire its first three aircraft from ATR, a Franco-Italian aircraft manufacturer. The airline, which plans to launch international operations in the UAE in 2026, will also consider narrow-body jets in preparation for its international debut. However, the Kerala-based aviation chain is still awaiting its air operator certificate (AOC) from India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The AOC certificate allows an operator to perform specific commercial air transport operations.

UAE amnesty gives expats fresh start...

(Cont. from page-1)

a visa. Now, my family's status has been changed as well. We're looking forward to this new chapter after I found a job as a salesman,” said Antony(35) who is now employed by a private company in Dubai's Al Qouz.

Nasser and Yousef, both from Algeria, had fines totalling Dh40,000 each waived after overstaying for more than a year. They both secured jobs at a company in Deira. “We're relieved. We've both found new jobs, and we're looking forward to working as legal residents in Dubai,” the duo said. Similarly, Heba Saleh from Syria had overstay

fines of Dh10,000 relaxed and secured a job.

“I'm grateful to the authorities for their generosity. Many people like me now have a second chance at life,” Saleh said.

Fayiz Muhammed, administration manager at a typing centre, said hundreds of individuals had regularised their status through the amnesty programme. “We saw a large number of overstayers coming to rectify their status. We helped them change their status to a new visa with no fines,” Muhammed said. Abhijeet Ahire, a 31-year-old computer engineer, from India found a job through the amnes-

ty. The expat had been stranded in the UAE since 2022, as his visit visa was never converted into an employment visa, leaving him with substantial fines.

“I'm really glad I got this chance,” Ahire said.

Similarly, a Dubai-based company recruited about 15 people through the amnesty scheme. Among them is Syed Irfan Nazar, a Pakistani expatriate, who had overstay fines totaling Dh150,000 waived. He has now secured a job as a logistics team member, earning a steady income that allows him to support his family and send his children back to school.

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TAMIL NADU

Tamil Nadu is the southernmost state of India. In addition to the long history of the Tamil people, Tamil Nadu is famous for its temples, festivals, and celebration of the arts. The Hindu temples and monuments at Mamallapuram have become famous tourist attractions.

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FOREX RATES

As on 2nd January, 2025 (In rupees)

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	86.10	85.25
British Pound	108.00	106.84
Euro	89.72	88.08
Japanese Yen	0.55	0.54
Swiss Franc (CHF)	95.56	93.78
Canadian Dollar	60.17	59.00
Australian Dollar	53.82	52.79
Norwegian Krone	7.62	7.47
Swedish Krona	7.83	7.68
New Zealand Dollar	48.55	47.68
Hong Kong Dollar	11.13	10.92
Singapore Dollar	63.6	62.37
Saudi Arabian Riyal	23.03	22.59
United Arab Emirates	23.55	23.10

China globally, including in India, and challenges posed to food security and inflation due to the “climate emergency”, during the fifth pre-Budget consultation meeting. The 2025-26 Union Budget will be presented on Feb 1.

Apart from the finance minister, the meeting was attended by finance secretary of DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management), Secretaries of the Department of Economic Affairs and the Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, among others. Speaking to the media after the meeting, CII president Sanjiv Puri said while the Indian economy is doing very well, globally there are a lot of challenges.

“We are seeing dumping of a lot of products (by China) into various parts of the world, including India. We also have the issue of climate emergency, which, besides other things, also impacts food and nutrition, (food) security and

inflation. In this context we have made several suggestions and ideas”.

He said the CII has sought measures to provide impetus to areas that have large employment potential like garments, footwear, tourism, furniture, among others, apart from making suggestions for MSMEs and integrating India into global value chains. “From a perspective of boosting consumption, we have suggested that there be

some relief provided to income tax up to a Rs 20 lakh on the marginal income tax rate so that it boosts consumption, there is more disposable income and in turn also leads to buoyancy in revenues.

“We have also suggested that excise on petroleum be reduced a little, that will also provide higher disposable income and contribute to a virtuous cycle in the hands of the consumers,” Puri said. In-

dustry bodies, including PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), urged the government to scrap STT. With STT collections amounting to font40,114 crore between April 1 and Dec 17 of the current fiscal year, stakeholders argued that removing this levy would reduce the tax burden on investors and encourage equity market participation.



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GULF FAQs

Is it legal to ask employees to be 'on call' after eight-hour duty?

I work for a company in mainland UAE. If I work the required 9.5 hours, can I be expected to be "on call" after work hours? There have been many instances of me having to log in to work from home after work hours. Is this legal?

In the UAE, the maximum working hours for an employee should not exceed eight hours per day or 48 hours per week under Article 17(1) of the Federal Decree Law No. 33 of 2021 on the Regulation of Employment Relations. Furthermore, if an employee works beyond the regular hours, the extra time is to be considered overtime. For overtime, an employee may receive pay in addition to their regular salary, with at least an increase of 25pc. This

is by Article 19 (2) of the Employment Law.

"If the work conditions necessitate that the work-

In addition, if the work condition requires an employee to work overtime between 10pm and 4am,

regarding the overtime, to receive the wage prescribed for the normal working hours calculated according to the basic wage plus an increase of not less than 50pc of that wage. The workers working based on shifts shall be excluded from this clause."

Additionally, an employer calling upon an employee to work for more than eight hours without any overtime payment may lead to employment by force. This is by Article 14(1) of the Employment Law, which states, "An employer may not use any means susceptible of obliging or forcing the employee, or threaten-

ing him with any penalty, to work for him, or forcing him to do a work or deliver a service against his will."

By the aforementioned provision of the law, if you are required to work beyond the permissible working hours i.e. eight-hour per day or 48-hour per week, it may be considered overtime, and therefore you are entitled to receive additional compensation. In such a situation, you may discuss your concerns with your employer and may ask for overtime compensation.

Furthermore, you may approach the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MoHRE) for resolution of the matter in case you and your employer are unable to resolve this matter amicably.



er works for more than the normal working hours, the excess period shall represent overtime, for which the worker shall receive a wage equal to the wage corresponding to the normal working hours, which is calculated according to the basic wage plus an increase of not less than 25pc of that salary."

the said employee should receive pay in addition to their regular pay salary, with at least an increase of 50pc by Article 19(3) of the Employment law which states,

"If the work conditions require that the worker works overtime between 10pm and 4am, the worker shall be entitled, re-

Raises rent by 30pc, tenant plans legal action

I rented a villa from a real estate office for a year in Dubai. Now I asked them to renew the lease contract. Two months ago, the real estate office sent me a message via email increasing the rental value, equivalent to 30pc of the value of the lease contract. Is this increase allowed? What is the maximum increase that a landlord can impose on a tenant?

The real estate office doesn't have the right to ask for an increase equivalent to 30pc of the value of the lease contract because the maximum legal increase amount is 20pc, according to Article-1 of Decree No. 43 of 2013 On Determining the Increase in the Real-Estate Rentals in the Emirate of Dubai.

This states that the

percentage of the maximum increase in real estate rentals in Dubai shall be determined upon renewing the real estate leases as follows:

rent value of the real-estate unit, if its rental is decreased by 11pc, 20pc of the average market rental rate.

c) 10pc of the rent

unit, if its rental is decreased by 31pc, 40pc of the average market rental rate; and

e) 20pc of the rent value of the real-estate unit, if its rental is decreased by more than 40pc of the average market rental rate

This increase is annual. For the purpose of applying Article-1 hereof, the average market rental rate shall be set according to the "Rent Index of the

Emirate of Dubai" which is approved by the Real Estate Regulatory Agency. The Agency shall have the exclusive authority to specify percentage of rent increase

in the emirate, in view of economic circumstances.

For the purposes of renewing a lease contract, the landlord and tenant may, prior to the expiry of the lease contract, reconsider increasing or reducing the rent.

If the landlord and tenant fail to reach an agreement in this regard, the agency may determine the fair rent, taking into account the economic situation in the emirate; the condition of the real property, the prevailing rental value of similar real property in other similar real property markets within the same area; the provisions of any legislation in force in the emirate regulating real property rent, and any other factors which the agency deems appropriate.



a) With no increase in the rent value of the real-estate unit, if its rental is less than 10pc of the average market rental rate.

b) Five per cent of the

value of the real-estate unit, if its rental is decreased by 21pc, 30pc of the average market rental rate.

d) 15pc of the rent value of the real-estate

Odisha to fill 1.1 lakh New Year brings cheers to stock market

BHUBANESWAR: In a move to expedite the recruitment process to fill 31. He instructed departments to conduct special recruitment drives with-



up all vacant posts in administrative departments, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi has advised the chairpersons of three service selection commissions to increase the manpower of the government for better public services delivery.

Chairing a high level meeting attended by chairpersons of Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC), Odisha Staff Selection Commission (OSSC) and Odisha Sub-ordinate Staff Selection Commission (OSSSC) at LokSevaBhavan, Majhi specifically instructed that vacant positions in departments providing essential services such as health, home, education and agriculture be filled up as soon as possible so that the critical departments function efficiently and effectively.

He emphasised the need for a transparent, fair and impartial recruitment process in the state. The government has set a target to employ 1.5 lakh people over a period of five years and fill up 65,000 vacant posts in the first two years. Currently, there are 1,10,557 vacant positions in various departments across the state.

The CM directed all departments to submit proposals for recruitment to vacant posts to respective service selection commissions by March

in a specified time frame to fill up the vacancies reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Majhi said there is no need to take approval of empowered committees concerned to fill up Group-B posts. He directed for reconstituting the empowered committee currently functioning in the finance department to oversee selection and reservation for recruitment of persons with disabilities (PwDs) to include representatives from the Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities department.

MUMBAI: India's equity markets kicked off calendar year (CY) 2025 on a positive note as the benchmark indices – BSE Sensex and NSE Nifty – ended higher on Wednesday. The Sensex gained 368.40 points or 0.47pc to settle at 79,943 and the Nifty surged 98.10 points or 0.41pc to close at 24,188.

The broader market, especially the Nifty Smallcap 100, outpaced the benchmark Nifty50, settling positively with gains of around one per cent. Sector-wise, Nifty Auto rose by more than 1.3pc while the Realty index saw a correction of 1.1pc.

“The sustainability of the trend will depend on the earnings growth in Q3, where the expectation is positive on a Q-o-Q (quarter on quarter) basis. An uptick in core sector data and prospect of ramp-up in capex spending by the government in the remaining part of the fiscal aided sectors like capital goods, industrials, auto, and power,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Re-

search, Geojit Financial Services.

In the Nifty50 pack, Maruti Suzuki, M&M, Bajaj Finance, L&T, and Eicher Motors were among the top gainers.



The top laggards were Dr Reddy's Labs, Hindalco Industries, Adani Ports, ONGC and Tata Steel. While the index recovered, FII selling remains a concern for the market. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) sold (net sales) shares worth Rs 1,782.71 crore on Wednesday.

Vaibhav Agrawal, CIO – Alternates (Public equity), MOAMC, said that while the FII flows remain volatile, a pickup in corporate earnings in 2H FY25 and expect-

ed easing in geopolitical tensions post Trump joining office, could turn higher foreign flows into Indian equities vs other emerging economies (grappling with slow-

down).

“With global liquidity tightening starting to ease, continued strength in domestic and retail participation, consumption growth likely having bottomed out, political continuity, government spending to be better in the second half of current financial year (2H FY25) and valuation correction from highs, here is a reasonable likelihood that the markets could be well-positioned for CY25,” added Agrawal.

Colourful fireworks, festivities usher in New Year in UAE



Dazzling light shows and brilliant fireworks illuminate the Dubai skyline during New Year's Eve celebrations in Dubai.