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TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL & GLOBAL NETWORKING

SKAL International National Congress 2026 concludes in Coimbatore

COIMBATORE: The SKAL International National Congress 2026 concluded successfully in Coimbatore, bringing together SKAL members from across India and Asia region in a spirit of friendship, fellowship and shared commitment towards strengthening the tourism and hospitality fraternity.

The Congress reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the national chapters and building

stronger collaboration networks among SKAL members across India, while further connecting the Indian SKAL community with its global network. Discussions and

GLIMPSES ON PAGE -7)

interactions during the Congress focused on promoting sustainable tourism growth, strengthening the hospitality ecosystem and creating greater opportunities for members to collaborate and con-

duct business with trust, reliability and mutual support.

The SKAL philosophy of "Doing Business Among Friends" was reflected throughout the gathering, highlighting the value of long-term relationships and responsible partnerships within the industry. The Congress also provided an important platform for members to exchange ideas, explore new business opportunities and

(Cont. on page - 2)



Office-bearers and participants of the SKAL International at the National Congress 2026 concluding session in Coimbatore



INDO-ARAB CONNECT TO BRING 175 TRAVEL AGENTS

Kerala targets three lakh more Arab tourists

KOCHI: The Kerala government is mounting an ambitious drive to attract more tourists from the Arab world, targeting nearly three lakh additional visitors and hoping to generate more than Rs 25,000 crore in economic activity from the segment over the next five years.

The state is particularly eyeing high spending Arab families with Tourism Minister PC Vishnunadh calling for a co-ordinated ef-

fort by the government and tourism industry to position Kerala as a preferred destination for travellers from the Gulf and West Asia.

Vishnunadh had recently released the logo of the Indo-Arab Connect 2026

scheduled to be held in Kochi from August 31 to Sept 2. Speaking after releasing the logo, the minister said tourists from Arab countries will play a critical role in the future growth of Kerala's tourism economy.

Indo-Arab Connect 2026 will bring more than 175 Arab travel agents and tour operators from 11 countries to Kochi from Aug 31 to Sept 1. The summit will provide Kerala's hotels, (Cont. on page - 2)

Free UAE visa for Indians offer open till October 31

ABU DHABI: Indian passport holders travelling from India can receive a complimentary UAE entry visa when booking a minimum three-night stay in Abu Dhabi through participating travel partners and online travel agencies.

The programme runs till Oct 31, 2026, and is available for bookings that include a minimum three-night stay in an Abu Dhabi hotel and a return flight from India. The programme will initially support up to 20,000 visas during its pilot period.

DCT Abu Dhabi will cover the full cost of the UAE entry visa for eligible bookings, reducing the upfront cost for Indian travellers (Cont. on page - 6)



Air India to induct 100 planes in two years: CEO Wilson

NEW DELHI: Air India plans to induct over 100 new planes over the next two years, its CEO Campbell Wilson said.

The statement by the outgoing CEO comes as the Tata Group-run carrier reported record losses last fiscal due to operational challenges, airspace closures and elevated jet fuel prices. During a town hall with staff session, Wilson said the group expects to induct over 100 new planes



Air India CEO Campbell Wilson

in the next two years and that 16 Boeing 787-8 aircraft are to be retrofitted in (Cont. on page - 6)

Tourism ministry updates Haj accommodation regulations

RIYADH: The Ministry of Tourism has approved updates to the regulations governing Haj season accommodation activities, licensing and classification standards. The ministry also endorsed the schedule of violations applicable to facilities designated to host pilgrims in Makkah and Madinah.

The updates aimed to improve readiness of hospitality facilities, enhance service quality and regulate operations in preparation for the Haj season of 2027. Ministry of Tourism (Cont. on page - 2)



SKAL Club Mumbai South delegation participated in the SKAL Congress 2026

SKAL International National...

(Cont. from page - 1)
strengthen professional relationships across destinations and tourism segments. Beyond business, the gathering reinforced the enduring spirit of friendship that remains at the heart of SKÅL.

The successful conclusion of the National Congress marks another important step towards a more connected, collab-

orative and globally integrated SKÅL network, with members committed to working together for the sustainable growth of tourism, hospitality and allied sectors.

The message from Coimbatore was clear: stronger chapters, stronger friendships, stronger business networks-and a stronger SKÅL, both in India and across the world.

Kerala targets three lakh...

(Cont. from page - 1)
resorts, Ayurveda centres, houseboat operators and tour companies an opportunity to directly showcase their products to Arab buyers. More than 150 tourism and hospitality establishments from India and neighbouring destinations

are expected to participate.

The state is banking on its established popularity among Arab travellers, particularly from Saudi Arabia, Oman and the UAE, as well as markets such as Egypt, Jordan and Iran.

Tourism ministry updates Haj accommodation...

(Cont. from page - 1)
Spokesperson Nasr Alan-sari stated that the updates are intended to strengthen the regulatory and operational framework and ensure that facilities are fully prepared before commencing operations and receiving pilgrims.

The requirements include verifying operational readiness, meeting safety and maintenance standards, ensuring continuity of essential services and complying with operational requirements to provide pilgrims with a safe, well-organized stay.

The standards classify Haj season accommodation facilities into economy and first-class categories, with specific requirements for each category. They

also address various aspects of accommodation operations, including common areas, rooms, reception areas, cleanliness, maintenance and guest services.

In addition, they provide for multiple stages of inspection and oversight before licensing, prior to commencing operations, and throughout the operational period, thereby enhancing compliance and service quality.

The ministry called on those seeking licenses for accommodation facilities of Haj 2027 to begin fulfilling the requirements early, and complete all necessary maintenance and preparation work before submitting their license applications.

SKAL International India elects new national board for 2026-27

COIMBATORE: The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of SKAL International India was held in Coimbatore on August 14, 2026, during the SKAL International India National Congress 2026. The AGM witnessed the election of the new national board for the forthcoming term.

In the elections held for the key positions, SVN Reddy of Chennai was elected President, Krishna Gopalan of Pune was elected Vice President 1 and Sunil Bahadur Satyawakta of Lucknow was elected National Secretary. The remaining positions were filled unopposed.

The newly elected SKAL International India national board comprises:

- * **President:** SVN Reddy – Chennai
- * **Vice President 1:** Krishna Gopalan – Pune
- * **Vice President 2:** Greesh Bindra – Delhi
- * **National Secretary:**



The new office-bears of SKAL who were elected in the Coimbatore session.

Sunil Bahadur Satyawakta – Lucknow

* **National Treasurer:**

Ravi Agarwal – Hyderabad

* **Director – PR & Communication:**

Dhatri Bharadwaj MP – Mysuru

* **Director – Young**

SKAL: Raja Gopal Iyer – Trivandrum

The AGM brought together SKAL members from across the country and provided a platform to review the organisation's activities and discuss its priorities for the coming year. The election of the new board marks a

new chapter for SKAL International India, with the leadership set to focus on strengthening the organisation's national network, fostering greater collaboration among tourism and hospitality professionals, and promoting friendship, fellowship and co-operation within the industry.

The newly elected team is expected to work towards further strengthening SKAL's presence across India and advancing its objectives of promoting tourism and building professional relationships among its members.

Istanbul overtakes Heathrow airport



LONDON: Figures published by the west London airport of Heathrow show 7.86 million passengers passed through its four terminals in July whereas its Turkish counterpart recorded 8.15 million passengers over the same period.

Annual figures from trade body Airports Council International show Heathrow was Europe's busiest airport from 1996 to 2019. It lost that position in 2020 amid coronavirus travel restrictions before regaining it in 2023

and holding the title since then. Heathrow's July passenger total represented a 1.5pc decrease compared with the same month last year, whereas Istanbul saw a 2.3pc boost.

The Iran-US conflict has had an impact on Heathrow's passenger traffic. Its passenger numbers on MidEast routes in July were down 20.2pc year-on-year.

Despite this, Heathrow continues to operate its two runways at near-full capacity and is seeking UK government permission to

build a third.

An expansion proposal by the airport's owners would enable it to accommodate 150 million passengers per year. It recorded 84.46 million passengers in 2025. Heathrow said in a statement: "Heathrow is operating at capacity."

"The case for expansion has never been clearer, as Heathrow was overtaken in July by Istanbul airport as the busiest hub in Europe." "Our plans will ensure the country gets the infrastructure it needs to

(Cont. on page - 6)

EXPERIENCE THE POWER OF DIGITALISED ADVERTISEMENTS WITH ONE E-NEWSPAPER

TAP ON THE YELLOW BANNER BELOW THE ADVERTISEMENT TO CONNECT WITH ADVERTISERS

Commercial flights start at Bhogapuram Airport

VIZAG:Commercial flight operations began at the newly built Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram in Andhra on Monday, with IndiGo operating the first flight from Hyderabad, marking the start of a new aviation hub for North Andhra.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu flagged off the airport’s first commercial services and handed boarding passes to passengers. An Air India Express flight from Bengaluru also arrived at the airport later in the day.

“The commencement of commercial flight operations at Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport is a matter of great happiness and pride,” Naidu said, describing the development as the beginning of a new chapter for North Andhra and a potential catalyst for new opportunities in the region. Prime Minister Modi inaugurated the airport on Aug 1. The airport has been developed with infrastructure and facilities aimed at supporting greater air connectivity to the region and facilitating future economic activity.

Naidu said the airport would provide fresh impetus to North Andhra, which has historically been regarded as a relatively backward region, by improving connectivity and creating conditions conducive to investment, tourism, employment and broader economic activity.

He said the airport was designed not only as a piece of transport infrastructure but also as a reflection of the region’s history, heritage and culture.

The minister also acknowledged the contribution of farmers who gave up their land for the project and the role of GMR in developing the airport. He said their co-operation was important in creating infrastructure that could support the region’s long-term development. Connectivity to the airport is also being strengthened, Naidu said. Several roads have been widened and seven major road projects have been taken up, including the Sontyam road connecting the airport from the Simhachalam side

India targets \$1trillion exports as overseas shipments rise 15pc

NEW DELHI:India is aiming to take its total exports to \$1 trillion in the current financial year with shipments growing by around 15pc during the first four months, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

Addressing the Bharatiya Vyapar Mahotsav 2026, organised by the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO) and the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT), Goyal said the country had achieved record exports of \$863 billion in the previous year.

The total included \$442 billion in merchandise exports and \$421 billion in services exports, he said, adding that India’s exports have expanded by nearly 73pc over the past six years. Goyal acknowledged that moving from

\$863 billion to the \$1 trillion mark would require a substantial increase in exports, particularly amid geopolitical tensions and uncertainty in global markets. “Taking 863 to one trillion is a big jump,” Goyal said, while pointing to the approximately 15pc growth recorded in exports during the first four months of the financial year as evidence of India’s increasing presence in global trade.

The minister also highlighted India’s expanding network of free trade agreements, saying nine FTAs concluded over the past four years cover economies with a combined GDP of around \$60 trillion.

FOREX RATES		
As on 17th August 2026 (In rupees)		
Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	94.76	96.03
British Pound	127.87	129.69
Euro	108.98	111.34
Japanese Yen	59.48	60.43
Swiss Franc (CHF)	115.98	118.52
Canadian Dollar	67.76	69.32
Australian Dollar	66.68	68.19
Norwegian Krone	9.86	10.15
Swedish Krona	9.81	10.1
New Zealand Dollar	55.3	56.56
Hong Kong Dollar	11.92	12.29
Kuwaiti Dinar	318.2826	299.356
Singapore Dollar	73.71	75.41
Saudi Arabian Riyal	24.92	25.71
U A E Dirham	25.53	26.27

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GULF FAQs

What are the penalties for defaulting on personal loans in UAE?

I have fallen on hard times and am struggling to repay outstanding credit card bills and personal loans. Could you explain in detail the legal consequences of defaulting on these debts? Can a bank use my end-of-service gratuity to recover the amount owed?

Pursuant to your queries, it is assumed that you have availed a personal loan from a lender in the UAE. Therefore, the provisions of the Personal Loan Agreements Formats Approved by Central Bank of UAE are applicable.

In the UAE, a personal loan provided by a lender to a borrower may fall under the provisions of Notice No. 3692/2012 of Central Bank of the UAE pertaining to General Terms & Con-

ditions and Loan Agreements texts drafted and approved by Emirates Bank Association (the "Personal Loan Agreements Formats Approved by the Central Bank of UAE"). When a personal loan is granted to a borrower, a lender will enter into a personal loan agreement with a borrower.

A personal loan agreement between a lender and a borrower may include a clause stating that the salary and the end-of-service benefits of a borrower needs to be credited in a bank account of a lender from which a borrower has availed a personal loan. This is in accordance with Article 2(1) of Securities and Documentation of the Personal Loan Agreements Formats Approved by Cen-

tral Bank of UAE.

As a guarantee and security to pay the loan interests, commissions, fees and any other amounts become due under this agreement the borrower commits and undertakes as follows:

* Provide the bank with a letter from the borrower's employer pursuant to which the employer undertakes to transfer his monthly salary and the end-of-service benefits to the bank throughout the loan period."

Further, a lender may have a right to demand from a borrower to pay the outstanding balance of a personal loan if a lender feels that an event (may be termination of employment) could lead to the inability of a borrower to re-

pay the personal loan.

This is in accordance with Article 4(6) Personal Loan Agreements Formats Approved by Central Bank of UAE, which states: "The Loan elapses and all the instalments, interests and any other fees and expenses become due and payable immediately without having to give any notification or any court ruling and without prejudice to any other rights of the bank according to this agreement or in accordance with the law in the event of occurrence of any of the list-

ed below events: * If the bank notices that there are grounds which could lead to the inability of the borrower and/or any of his guarantors, as permissible under Central Bank's prevailing regulations, to fulfil his obligations towards the Bank." Based on the aforementioned guidelines of the UAE Central Bank on personal loan agreement, in the event of termination of your employment, the lender may freeze your bank account (only withdrawal facility from the account) once your end-of-service benefits is credited to the bank account with the lender with whom you have outstanding personal loan.

Married in Dubai, divorced in India---what documents you need?

I got married in Dubai, but my divorce was finalised in an Indian court. Do I need to have the divorce attested in the UAE?

It is assumed that you are a non-Muslim resident; therefore, the provision of the UAE civil procedure code is applicable. A notarised foreign document may be enforced in the UAE in accordance with Article 224 of Federal Decree-Law No. (42) of 2022 Promulgating the Civil Procedure Code, Chapter 4: Execution of Foreign Judgments, Orders and Instruments of the UAE Civil Procedure Code (UAE Civil Procedure Code), which states:

"1. An order may be made for the enforcement in the state of notarised documents and memoranda of composition certified by the courts of a foreign country on the same conditions laid down in the laws of that country for the enforcement of similar instruments issued in the state.

2. An application for an enforcement order in

Clause (1) of this Article shall be requested by means of a petition submitted to the Execution Judge with the same procedures and conditions stipulated in Clause (2) of Article [222] of this Code.

No order for enforcement may be made until after it has been ascertained that the conditions for the enforceability of the document or memorandum have been satisfied in accordance with the law of the country in which it was notarised or certified and that it contains nothing contrary to morals or public order in the state."

Your marriage was registered in Dubai, and the divorce was subsequently obtained from an Indian court; therefore, the Indian divorce decree must therefore, be duly attested and legalised up to the UAE diplomatic mission in India before it can be recognised by UAE courts or authorities for any purposes such as updating marital status records, residency, remarriage, or other civil and administrative matters.

Can cos terminate employees on maternity leave?

A female employee in my company was on maternity leave and is scheduled to return to work at the beginning of Sept. The company intends to terminate her employment because her position has become redundant. Can the company legally terminate her employment while she is on maternity leave?

According to Article (30) of law, it is not permissible to terminate the service of the female worker or notify her of the same because of the pregnancy, having a maternity leave or her absence from work in accordance with the provisions of this Article.

Furthermore, Article 35 provides that (If either party to the employment contract wishes to terminate the contract in accordance with the provisions of this



Decree-Law and its Implementing Regulation, while the worker is on the leave, the validity of the notice period agreed upon in the employment contract shall not begin, except from the day, following the day scheduled for the worker's return from the leave, unless both parties agree otherwise.)

Based on the above, although the intended reason for termination is the redundancy of the position rather than the employee's maternity leave, serving

notice during the maternity leave may create legal risks. In any event, the notice period would not commence until the day after the employee's scheduled return to work.

So, in order to avoid the risk of any allegation that the termination is connected to the employee's maternity leave, it is better that the employer issue the notice of termination on the employee's first scheduled working day following her return from maternity leave.

Dubai airport ready to face return holiday rush

DUBAI: Operational readiness is in place across Dubai airports to handle an expected influx of citizens, residents and visitors returning from holidays, with additional staff and smart-gate capacity deployed to speed up procedures. Measures include redeploying personnel, assigning additional technical support teams and operating smart gates at maximum capacity.

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support teams and operating smart gates at maximum capacity.

The General Directorate of Identity and Foreigners Affairs – Dubai (GDRFA Dubai)-- said it had raised readiness levels across passenger processing points to ensure smoother arrivals and reduce processing times.

Measures include redeploying personnel, assigning additional technical support teams and operating smart gates at maximum capacity.

The gates use facial recognition and biometric technology, allowing eligible passengers to complete passport procedures within seconds and providing what the authority described as a fully contactless travel experience.

FLYCREATIVE JT MD, DIRECTOR (OPERATIONS) MEET TOURISM MALAYSIA BOARD MEMBERS



FlyCreative online Limited Joint Managing Director Adl Abdulkarim and Hen-na Adlkarim (Director –Operations, FlyCreative) (third and second from left) met with Malaysia Tourism Board to explore new Itineraries, innovative travel experiences and collaborative ideas aimed at strengthening tourism from India and offering Indian travellers fresh exciting ways to discover Malaysia. Malaysian Tourism officials present were Mohd Amirul Rizal Abdul Rahim , director General of Tourism Malaysia, Nigel Wong, president, MAZZA-Malaysian Association of Tours & Travel Agents, Haryanty Abu Baker, Director (Western India), Tourism Malaysia, DatoA'Aruldass, President, MITTA and Suhaimi Bin Baharun, Chief Assisant Manager, Tourism Division-Langkawi.

Air India to induct 100 planes in two years..

(Cont. from page - 1)
2027. Currently, Air India Group, comprising Air India and Air India Express, has nearly 300 planes.

He told the employees that the airline continues to make steady progress on its transformation journey despite a challenging operating environment marked by geopolitical uncertainty, airspace disruptions, fuel price volatility and macroeconomic pressures.

Air India begins drug screening of all pilots after

turbulence-hit Phuket-Delhi flight captain tests positive. To reduce costs, the airline had recently curtailed its domestic as well as international operations. According to Wilson, during temporary network curtailments due to airspace restrictions, fleet improvement initiatives were implemented.

Wilson also said that the annual salary increments will come into effect from Oct 1. The recently revised pay structure for pilots will also be effective on the

same date.

The town hall talk took place at a time when the airline is facing regulatory scrutiny over the Phuket-Delhi flight incident on August 4, in which

the aircraft suddenly lost 300 feet of altitude, and the pilot-in-command tested positive for a psychoactive substance.

It also took place in the middle of a leadership

transition with former Ethiopian Airlines Group chief Tewolde Gebremariam set to take over as the CEO and MD of Air India. Wilson is likely to leave the airline next month.

Free UAE visa for Indians offer open...

(Cont. from page - 1)
visiting the emirate.

India remains a key international tourism market for Abu Dhabi, according to DCT Abu Dhabi. Abdulla Yousuf, Director of International Operations at DCT Abu Dhabi, said: "India continues to be one of our most important international markets, and we remain committed to working closely with our travel partners to make Abu Dhabi even more accessible for Indian travellers."

He said covering the visa cost would make it simpler for Indian travellers to choose Abu Dhabi while giving travel partners another reason to recommend the destination. Yousuf added: "We

look forward to welcoming more visitors as they spend longer exploring Abu Dhabi's culture, entertainment, hospitality and natural attractions." The initiative follows recent efforts by Abu Dhabi to strengthen air connectivity, expand travel trade partnerships and create new opportunities for Indian visitors.

The offer is available to Indian passport holders departing from India who book an Abu Dhabi holiday through a participating travel partner.

To qualify, the booking must include: A minimum three consecutive nights in an Abu Dhabi hotel, a return flight from India, booking through a participating travel partner or online travel agency,

travellers cannot apply independently for the offer. The programme has been developed specifically for participating travel partners and OTAs.

Planning a trip to India? New UAE guide explains how to apply for an Indian tourist visa. How does the free visa programme work? Participating travel partners can choose between two options. They can work through a DCT-appointed destination management company (DMC), with DCT Abu Dhabi covering the visa costs directly. Alternatively, travel partners can continue working with their existing DMC partners. In this case, DCT Abu Dhabi will reimburse Dh285 for each visa issued.

Istanbul overtakes...

(Cont. from page - 2)
stay competitive and will deliver all-important economic growth."

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander launched a consultation on the re-named Heathrow expansion national policy statement in June, setting out the conditions needed if the project is to be given the go-ahead.

Then-chancellor Rachel

Reeves said at the time she was determined to get "spades in the ground" for the third runway in the current UK parliament, and for it to be built by 2035. Prime Minister Andy Burnham, who sacked Reeves, previously expressed concerns over Heathrow expansion, stating the plans divert infrastructure investment "away from the North and traps it in London."

GLIMPSES OF SKAL MEET IN COIMBATORE

