



OVERSEAS NEWS AND EMPLOYMENT

PASSPORT TO GLOBAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES



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India, Oman sign Comprehensive Economic Partnership

MUSCAT: In the presence Prime Minister Modi and his Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the In-



His Highness Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, hosted an official dinner at Al Bustan Palace Hotel in Muscat in honour of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the accompanying delegation, on the occasion of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

dia-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) was signed by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal and Oman's Minister of Commerce HE Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, marking a major milestone in

India's strategic engagement with the Gulf region. Agreement unlocks export opportunity for India's

ering artisans, women-led enterprises and MSMEs unprecedented market access for Indian Goods with zero-duty access on 98.08 pc of Oman's tariff lines, covering 99.38pc of India's exports by value.

This is the second Free Trade Agreement signed in the last six months after United Kingdom Oman has offered 127 sub-sectors: A wide-ranging package covers computer related services, business services, professional services, audio visual services, R & D services, education services and health services - unlocking high-value opportunities and job creation.

labour-intensive sectors including textiles, leather, footwear, gems & jewellery, engineering products, plastics, furniture, agricultural products, pharma, medical devices and automobiles generating employment and empow-

Air India retains best domestic airline title at Travel + Leisure Awards 2025



MUMBAI: Air India has been named Best Domestic Airline at the Travel + Leisure India and South Asia's Best Awards 2025 for the second consecutive year. The award was decided through a reader vote, reflecting feedback from passengers who travelled with the carrier.

The airline also noted that the honour recognises the efforts of its frontline staff, who play a key role in delivering day-to-day services across airports and onboard flights.

Reacting to the award, Rajesh Dogra, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Air India, said the recognition reflects the airline's focus on improving the travel experience.

India set to add 1.28cr jobs in 2026

NEW DELHI: While the Indian job market closed 2025 on a strong note, the country's hiring outlook for 2026 signals steady growth, with an estimated

1.28 crore jobs. A report by foundit, a jobs and talent platform, showed that the surge in hiring in 2025 was led by robust employer confidence, steady re-

cruitment across major industries and the rising prominence of Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as strategic talent hubs.

(Cont. on page - 2)

Consulate hosts seminar to promote Mexico as prime tourism destination

MUMBAI: The Consulate of Mexico in Mumbai, in collaboration with Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) and its member fraternity of tourism sector, organized a tourism seminar, aimed at showcasing Mexico as an attractive and diverse tourism destination for the Indian market.

The seminar served as a focused platform to engage with leading travel and tour operators, destination management companies and industry stake holders.

The event highlighted Mexico's rich cultural heritage, UNESCO sites historical landmarks, vibrant cities, pristine beaches, culinary excellence and unique experiential tourism offerings, positioning

the country as a destination that caters to a wide spectrum of tourism options for the Indian travellers.

Officials from the Consulate of Mexico underscored the importance of strengthening collaboration with Indian travel trade partners to enhance destination awareness and create sustainable tourism

linkages.

The seminar facilitated meaningful interactions between the officials and Indian tour operators, enabling discussions on travel facilitation, visa regulations connectivity and the orientation of destination facilities etc.

Industry participants welcomed the initiative and

expressed interest in promoting Mexico more actively in the Indian market. The seminar reaffirmed the Consulate's commitments to deepening tourism co-operation between Mexico and India and fostering people-to-people connections through travel and tourism.

Such collaborative ini-

tiatives are expected to contribute significantly to increasing tourism traffic, strengthening bilateral ties and opening new avenues for sustained engagement between the two countries travel and tourism vertical said Mr VS Abdulkareem of Flycreative OnlineLtd. who participated in the seminar.



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India-Oman CEPA

With the signing of the India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), the India-Oman relationship has reached a major milestone. Agreement opens the floodgates for export opportunity for India's labour-intensive sectors including textiles, leather, footwear, gems and jewellery, engineering products, plastics, furniture, agricultural products, pharma, medical devices and automobiles generating employment and empowering artisans, women-led enterprises and MSMEs. The outcome was as expected.

Omani-Indian relations are witnessing significant and growing development across various fields, particularly in economic integration, which serves as a fundamental pillar aligned with the ambitions and shared aspirations of both countries. In this context, the state visit of Modi to Oman marks an important milestone in the course of the historic relations between the two friendly nations, which extend back centuries through economic, cultural and commercial ties between the Omani and Indian people.



India is the sixth-largest trading partner of Oman in terms of total exports. The volume of trade exchange between Oman and India reached about RO 1.627 billion by the end of last Sept. Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the value of Omani exports to India reached about RO 17.182 million by the end of last Sept, while total Omani imports from India amounted to RO 13.187 million.

India's direct investment in Oman reached RO 268.4 million by the end of the second quarter of the current year, while Omani direct investment in India amounted to about RO 5.5 million by the end of 2024. The number of Indian-invested establishments in Oman reached 61 by 2024, while the number of Indian visitors to the Sultanate reached 609,789 by Nov 2025.

In an interview, His Excellency Issa bin Saleh Al Shaibani, Ambassador of Oman to India, said that Omani-Indian relations are characterised by deep historical roots and a renewed strategic vision, having witnessed a qualitative leap in recent years. This includes the visit of His Majesty the Sultan to India in Dec 2023 and the issuance of the "Joint Vision" document in addition to enhanced defence and security co-operation, with Oman being the first Gulf country to conduct joint exercises with various branches of the Indian armed forces. He noted that the Omani market hosts more than 6,000 joint projects with investments exceeding \$7.5 billion and that Oman's participation as guest of honour at the G20 Summit in India reflected recognition of its balanced and positive role at the regional and international levels.

He added that the visit comes at a strategic time to enhance political co-ordination and exchange views on regional and international issues, and represents an opportunity to advance towards signing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), supporting economic diversification and investment in line with Oman Vision 2040. The ambassador explained that Oman and India share a clear vision in strategic sectors, including energy, with growing co-operation in green hydrogen and ammonia projects by leveraging Omani resources and Indian expertise. In ports and logistics, Oman is enhancing maritime connectivity with India as a regional trade hub and reducing supply chain costs.

He stressed that the visit sends a clear message of Oman's commitment to a long-term strategic partnership based on mutual respect, and underscores both countries' desire to expand cooperation in areas such as the digital economy, clean energy, food security and healthcare.

India's Ambassador to Oman GV Srinivas said that both the friendly nations are doing their best to make the most of this agreement and some other MoUs which have been in the waiting.

LIPSYNCH

"Time is like a sword; if you don't cut it, it will cut you."
----- An Arabic proverb

Czech Republic reopens Mumbai Consulate, eyes tourism push

MUMBAI: Czechia has marked a major step in strengthening its engagement with India by reopening the Czech Consulate in Mumbai after nearly 15 years, restoring consular services in India's financial capital and signalling a renewed focus on the fast-growing Indian outbound travel market.

The reopening is expected to significantly improve visa access for travellers from western and southern India, while also supporting business, education and cultural exchanges. It



comes at a time when Indian travellers are increasingly exploring European destinations beyond traditional gateways.

What makes this development distinctive is Czechia's co-ordinated "one-voice" approach,

bringing together the Consulate General of the Czech Republic, Czech-Tourism, Prague Airport and CzechTrade to jointly engage with the Indian market. The unified strategy aims to align visa facil-
(Cont. on page - 6)

China Eastern Airlines to relaunch its Mumbai-Shanghai route

NEW DELHI: Owing to robust demand for flights between China and India, China Eastern Airlines has announced the commencement of daily non-stop flights between New Delhi and Shanghai from Jan 2, 2026.

Looking ahead, China Eastern Airlines said it will expand its footprint in India, with plans to relaunch Kolkata-Kunming flights and introduce a new route Mumbai-Shanghai in the near future. "These initiatives underscore the airline's vision to provide Indian travellers with greater access to China and beyond, while supporting trade, tourism and cultural exchange between the two nations," said China Eastern Airlines in a statement.

The rapid expansion



follows the successful relaunch of the Delhi-Shanghai route in Nov 2025 after a five-year hiatus. While the route was initially planned for a phased increase from three to five weekly flights, the "overwhelming response from both passengers and trade partners" has prompted China Eastern to move directly to daily flights.

Besides China Eastern, Indian airlines are also aggressively expanding their presence in the Chinese market after the two nations approved the resumption of direct flights following a long hiatus.

IndiGo led the revival with the launch of direct services between Kolkata and Guangzhou in late Oct. Air India is set to restart non-stop flights between Delhi and Shanghai (PVG) from Feb 1, 2026.

Direct flights between India and China had been suspended since early 2020, initially due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently amid heightened tensions following the Galwan Valley military standoff that year. The strained relations persisted for several years and only recently have the two coun-

(Cont. on page - 6)

India set to add 1.28cr jobs in 2026

(Cont. from page - 1)

However, growth in the second-half of the year moderated to +four per cent over six months, indicating a shift toward more calibrated, productivity-led hiring. But 2026 is shaping up to be a skills-led year of hiring, as growth expands beyond metros and strengthens India's position as a resilient and future-ready talent market, the report said. "2025

shaped up as a year of strong expansion but disciplined hiring.

We witnessed the decentralisation of talent, with Tier-2 hubs becoming operational anchors for tech, BFSI, logistics and retail," said Anupama Bhimrajka, VP, Marketing, foundit. "As we head into 2026, demand for AI-ready skills, strategic leadership and mid-career digital talent will keep momentum high

despite measured intake in some sectors," Bhimrajka added. The report noted that in 2026, the demand will be strongest for mid-to-senior talent in digital, AI, cloud, data, and cybersecurity, driven by continued enterprise transformation. Tech, BFSI, manufacturing, infrastructure and renewable energy are set to lead hiring, with emerging sectors like fintech, health tech.

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FOREX RATES		
As on 18th December 2025 (In rupees)		
Currency	Bill Buy	Bill Sell
US Dollar	89.74	90.94
British Pound	119.93	121.63
Euro	105.05	107.29
Japanese Yen	57.64	58.55
Swiss Franc (CHF)	112.35	114.85
Canadian Dollar	64.81	66.28
Australian Dollar	58.97	60.31
Norwegian Krone	8.68	8.94
Swedish Krona	9.54	9.82
New Zealand Dollar	51.38	52.53
Hong Kong Dollar	11.39	11.74
Kuwaiti Dinar	304.34	293.69
Singapore Dollar	69.17	70.72
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U A E Dirham	24.18	24.88


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Odisha to develop 15 iconic tourism sites

BHUBANESWAR: The state government has planned to develop at least 15 iconic sites and create around 15 lakh livelihood opportunities as part of its Viksit Odisha @ 2036 vision, said Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi.

Inaugurating the seventh eco-retreat at Ramchandi on the Puri-Konark marine drive, Majhi said the Odisha government plans to place the state among the top five eco-cultural tourism hubs in Asia.

Stating that Odisha offers abundant opportunities for eco-tourism, adventure tourism, heritage tourism and cultural tourism, the chief minister said the government targets to secure arrival of five crore

domestic and seven lakh foreign tourists to the state every year.

"Tourism is a sector which generates employment for low-income groups and also helps promote the heritage, culture, traditions, cuisine and way of life of the state," he added. Majhi further said eco-retreats at Satkosia, Bhitarkanika, Daringbadi, Sonapur and Konark have boosted the significance of nature-based tourism in Odisha. Stating that they serve as a model for creating livelihoods for local communities, raising environmental awareness and stimulating the local economy, he said similar arrangements should be made at other natural sites across Odisha.

Gulf NRIs cash in on weak rupee

DUBAI: The Indian rupee slid to an all-time low during the week continuing a sequence of losses that has rattled investor sentiment. The exchange rate stood at Rs 24.6 per UAE dirham, marking the weakest on record and extending the stretch of declines seen in recent weeks.

For NRIs in the UAE, the weaker rupee has opened a temporary window of opportunity. At Rs 24.6 per dirham, remitters are fetching nearly five per cent more compared with early Nov. This boost helps cover monthly obligations such as school fees, rent, and loan repayments back home.

The downturn came as the rupee depreciated by nine paise against the US dollar in early trade, touching a new low of Rs 90.58.

Uncertainty surrounding an India-US trade agreement and persistent foreign outflows from equities and bonds have weighed on the currency. At the interbank market, the currency opened at Rs 90.53 per dollar before easing further.



The dirham's value against the rupee has been steadily climbing across the past month. On Nov 16, one dirham fetched Rs 24.05. By the end of that month, it had strength-

ened to Rs 24.25. The upward move continued into Dec, crossing Rs 24.30 on Dec 1 and breaching Rs 24.40 just over a week later.

After holding near Rs 24.4 for several sessions, the rate nudged higher again from Dec 10 onward. Monday's quote of Rs24.6 per dirham marks the steepest point of depreciation this month, highlighting the currency's persistent weakness.

The rupee's challenges stem partly from sizable capital outflows. Foreign investors have withdrawn more than \$17 billion from Indian equities this year, surpassing 2022's record, while also trimming their bond exposure. Each fresh dip feeds a feedback loop where currency losses deter further inflows, leaving the rupee.



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GULF FAQs

Can a person continue to sponsor family if he relocates to another country?

I have been working in a company in Dubai for the past 10 years. My wife and children are currently under my sponsorship. I have recently received a job offer in Saudi Arabia, which I want to accept. Nevertheless, I would like my school-going children to complete their academic year in the UAE before joining me in Saudi Arabia. I plan to relocate next month, but I would like my wife and children to stay in the UAE until April next. What are my options to ensure they can legally stay in the country during this period?

In the UAE, Article 11 of the Federal Decree-Law No. (29) of 2021 Regarding Entry and Residence of Aliens states that if an individual remains in the country illegally after his

or her visa or residence permit has been cancelled or expired, such individual shall be subject to an administrative fine for each day they continue to stay illegally in accordance with the below:

“Cancelling and expiring of visa or residence: Any alien whose visa or residence permit has been cancelled or whose residence has expired with the expiration of the period of the visa or residence permit, and does not initiate renewal – in cases in which this is permissible – or if he did not leave the state within the periods determined by the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law, an administrative fine shall be imposed on him for each day in which he resides illegally in the state as of the date of the expiry of these periods, and the value of this fine shall be determined



by a decision of the council of ministers.”

The residence permit of family members will be valid for the same duration as the sponsor’s residency permit. The residence period for family members cannot exceed the sponsor’s residence period. Once the sponsor’s permit expires, the family members’ permits shall also expire, regardless of when such residency visas were issued. This is in accordance with Article 54 (3) of Cab-

inet Resolution No. (65) of 2022 Issuing the Executive Regulations of Federal Law by Decree No. (29) of 2021 Concerning the Entry and Residence of Foreigners, which reads as:

“The family members’ residence permit shall be granted for the same period of residence as the guarantor/head of the family and in all cases, the validity term of residence for family members shall not exceed the validity term of the residence of

the guarantor/head of the family.”

Based on the aforementioned provisions of law, you have options to manage your children’s visa status after your relocation. Once your employer cancels your residency visa, you will need to cancel the residency visas for your wife and children currently under your sponsorship.

However, your wife may be eligible to sponsor her own and your children’s visas if she is employed and meets the necessary requirements. Additionally, you may consider contacting your country’s embassy or consulate in the UAE for assistance. They may be able to provide support or guidance regarding your children’s education and residency on compassionate grounds, especially if alternative sponsorship options are not available.

Can car rental companies charge users for stains, regular wear and tear?

I rented a car on a long-term basis. When I returned it, there were some stains on the seats, as could be expected from regular wear and tear. Can the company now charge me for cleaning those stains?

In the UAE, car rental and leasing services are regulated under Federal Decree-Law No. (14) of 2024 on Traffic Regulation. According to Article 29 of this law, rental companies must be licensed by the relevant authority and are obligated to ensure that the renter holds a valid driving licence recognised in the UAE.

Here’s what Article-29 says:

1. Vehicles shall be rented and leased in accordance with the provisions



of this Decree-Law and the legislation in force in the state in this regard.

2. Vehicle rental activity may not be practised unless a licence is obtained from the Competent Authorities. The Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law shall determine the conditions for practising vehicle rental activity.

3. Companies licensed to engage in vehicle rental activities shall ensure the

validity of driving licences approved in the state, duplicated or recognised by the renter, in accordance with the controls and procedures specified in the Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law.

4. The Executive Regulations of this Decree-Law shall determine the controls for renting vehicles, the obligations of the drivers of these vehicles and the procedures for regis-

tering them.” Assuming you rented a car from a company based in Dubai, there are additional local regulations that apply. All car rental companies in Dubai are required to return consumers’ credit card holds and other deposits within 30 days of the vehicle’s return. This directive comes from the Dubai Corporation for Consumer Protection and Fair Trade, which operates under the Department of Economy and Tourism.

In accordance with these, when it comes to cleaning charges, whether or not you’re liable depends largely on the terms of your rental agreement. While some level of wear and tear (such as minor stains or signs of regular use) is generally expect-

ed, the rental company may be entitled to deduct a reasonable amount for cleaning.

You may review the rental agreement you signed with the rental company, particularly any clauses related to vehicle condition upon return and cleaning fees.

Typically, such incidental costs — like cleaning or minor damage — are covered by your security deposit. If you feel the charges are unreasonable or were not clearly disclosed, you can request a detailed breakdown from the rental company. If the issue remains unresolved, you may also consider reaching out to the relevant consumer protection authority for further assistance.

Saudi revokes expat fee for industrial workers

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has revoked fees imposed on expatriate workers in industrial establishments licensed under an industrial licence.

The decision was taken by the Council of Ministers,

chaired by Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman. This was based on the recommendation of the Council of Economic and Development Affairs (CEDA).

This decision comes as a

continuation of the support and empowerment that the industrial sector receives from the wise leadership and within the framework of the Crown Prince's keenness and interest in empowering national fac-

ories, enhancing their sustainability and global competitiveness. This is also aimed at achieving the Kingdom's ambitious vision towards building a competitive and

resilient industrial economy, as industry is one of the fundamental pillars for diversifying the national economy in accordance with Saudi Vision 2030.

Minister of Industry and Mineral Resources Bandar Alkhorayef said that the Cabinet decision to revoke expatriate fee for industrial workers will enhance sustainable industrial development in the Kingdom. He expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation to Custodian of the Two



Holy Mosques King Salman and Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed bin Salman in this regard.

During the period from 2019 to the end of 2024, the sector has achieved significant leaps, including an increase in the number of industrial establishments from 8,822 factories to more than 12,000, and a 35pc increase in the total value of industrial investments, from SR908 billion to SR1.22 trillion. Non-oil exports also recorded growth of 16 pc.

India's tourism promotion only on paper?

NEW DELHI: India's tourism promotion strategy, as outlined in the recent written reply in Parliament, presents an impressive inventory of initiatives—global roadshows, international trade fairs, food festivals, familiarisation trips, digital campaigns and a long list of domestic programmes. From Dekho Apna Desh and Bharat Parv to Meet in India, India says I do and the Best Tourism Villages initiative, the activity calendar appears full.

Yet, beneath this busy surface lies a critical gap: there is no formal assessment of whether these efforts have actually translated into higher tourist arrivals, increased spending or deeper destination engagement. The ministry itself acknowledges that no evaluation has been carried out to measure the impact of these promotional campaigns. In an era where global destinations compete aggressively using data-driven strategies,

this absence of outcome analysis raises important questions.

Tourism promotion today is no longer about visibility alone. It is about conversion—how many travellers were influenced, how many visits were generated and how much economic value was created. Without these metrics, promotion risks becoming an exercise in repetition rather than progress.

Domestic initiatives such as Dekho Apna Desh and Bharat Parv aim to build awareness and national pride, while international campaigns target MICE, weddings and leisure travel. The intent is sound. The execution is energetic.

But the missing link remains accountability. For instance: Have Best Tourism Villages witnessed a measurable rise in visitor footfall or local income? Did India say I do convert into a tangible increase in international destination weddings? Has meet in India resulted in more glob-

al conferences choosing Indian cities? These are not critical questions—they are basic policy follow-ups. The next logical step for India's tourism policy must be impact audits, not just activity reports.

Knowing what works—and what doesn't—is essential if India wants to position itself not just as a visible destination, but as a high-performing one.

Dhar Jha corporate brand director of OPO Hotels

MUMBAI: OPO Hotels & Resorts, part of the RS Global Group of Hotels, has appointed Dhar Jha as Director – Corporate Affairs and Brand Relations, reinforcing its senior leadership as the brand accelerates expansion across Delhi NCR and key Indian markets.

With over 26 years of experience in the hospitality and tourism sector, Jha brings deep expertise in sales, marketing, public relations, stakeholder engagement and brand strategy. An alumnus of IMS Ghaziabad, he has held senior leadership roles with leading hotel



brands, where he played a key role in strengthening brand positioning and driving commercial growth.

In his new role, Jha will lead corporate affairs, strategic partnerships and brand relations across OPO's growing portfolio, with a focus on enhancing brand vis-

ibility, strengthening institutional relationships and aligning communication strategies with the group's long-term growth plans. Commenting on the appointment, Sandeep Basu, CEO said that Jha's industry understanding and strategic clarity would be instrumental in building a strong and credible brand voice as the company scales across markets. The appointment underlines OPO Hotels focus on structured leadership and brand-led growth, as the company continues to expand its footprint in India.

China Eastern Airlines to...

(Cont. from page - 2) tries moved to improve trade and diplomatic engagement. Industry experts believe that the resumption of direct flight services between India and China presents major growth opportunities by making travel, trade and cross-border business more efficient for both countries.

China Eastern also offers interline connectivity, allowing travellers to book single-ticket journeys to and from 39 Indian cities

via Delhi to Shanghai and onward to destinations across its extensive global network. During the winter schedule, Flight MU564 will depart Delhi at 19:55, arriving in Shanghai Pudong at 04:10 the following day. The return flight MU563 will depart Shanghai at 12:50 and land in Delhi at 17:45. Operated by an Airbus A330-200 wide-body aircraft, the service offers a 18 lie-flat business-class seats and 245 economy-class seats.

Czech Republic reopens Mumbai Consulate

(Cont. from page - 2) itation, destination promotion, aviation connectivity and trade collaboration under a single roadmap. Indian interest in Czechia is also evolving beyond Prague, with growing attention towards the country's historic spa towns, wine regions and heritage cities, reflecting rising demand

for culture-driven, experiential and wellness-oriented travel. Commenting on the renewed engagement, Barbara Andelova, International Marketing Manager, CzechTourism, said: "The reopening of the Czech Consulate in Mumbai brings us significantly closer to Indian travellers and trade partners. We are

seeing increasing interest in Czechia beyond Prague, particularly in our spa destinations, wine regions and heritage cities. India is an important market for us, and our focus is on presenting Czechia as a diverse, immersive destination offering culture, gastronomy, wellness and authentic local experiences."