

NEW UAE CONSULATE OPENED IN THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurates UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram

Getting a visa to UAE for Indians has just become pretty hassle-free as a new dedicated visa centre opened in New Delhi along with a Consulate General in Kerala this week. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated a UAE Consulate in Thiruvananthapuram which will cater to the visa demand from south India.

UAE is home to around 2.6 million Indians who constitute nearly 30 percent of its population. It receives around 10,000 visa applications on a monthly basis. People from south India, who wish to visit the United Arab Emirates, will now get their necessary documents processed at the new mission, to be headed by Consular General Jamal Hussein Al Zabi. The UAE government decided to set up the office here as a significant majority of Indian expats in the UAE hail from Kerala.

Currently, all those proceeding to the UAE from south India have to get their educational certificates and other documents

certified by the UAE embassy in New Delhi or the consulate in Mumbai.

Earlier in the week, UAE Ambassador to India, Ahmed Al Banna inaugurated the dedicated consular and a visa service centre in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi at a programme chaired by Lt Governor Najeeb Jung.

There has been widespread appreciation in Kerala of the United Arab Emirates' decision to open its consular office in the state capital, with scores of social media posts applauding the move. The plan for a UAE consulate in Thiruvananthapuram had been in the making for a few years. The UAE's other consulate office in India nearest to the southern states is in Mumbai.

There are an estimated two million Keralites in the Gulf region, with a significant number in the UAE itself, and the new consulate will be a boon for hundreds of thousands of Keralites working or doing business in the UAE.

The new consulate will be a boon not only for Keralites, but



Jamal Hussain Al Zaabi, the top diplomat at the UAE Consulate General with Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan

also to those from the neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka states who are living and working in the UAE. Many of those from these two states who live in the border districts of Kerala will find it more convenient to travel to Thiruvananthapuram than Mumbai for services like attestation.

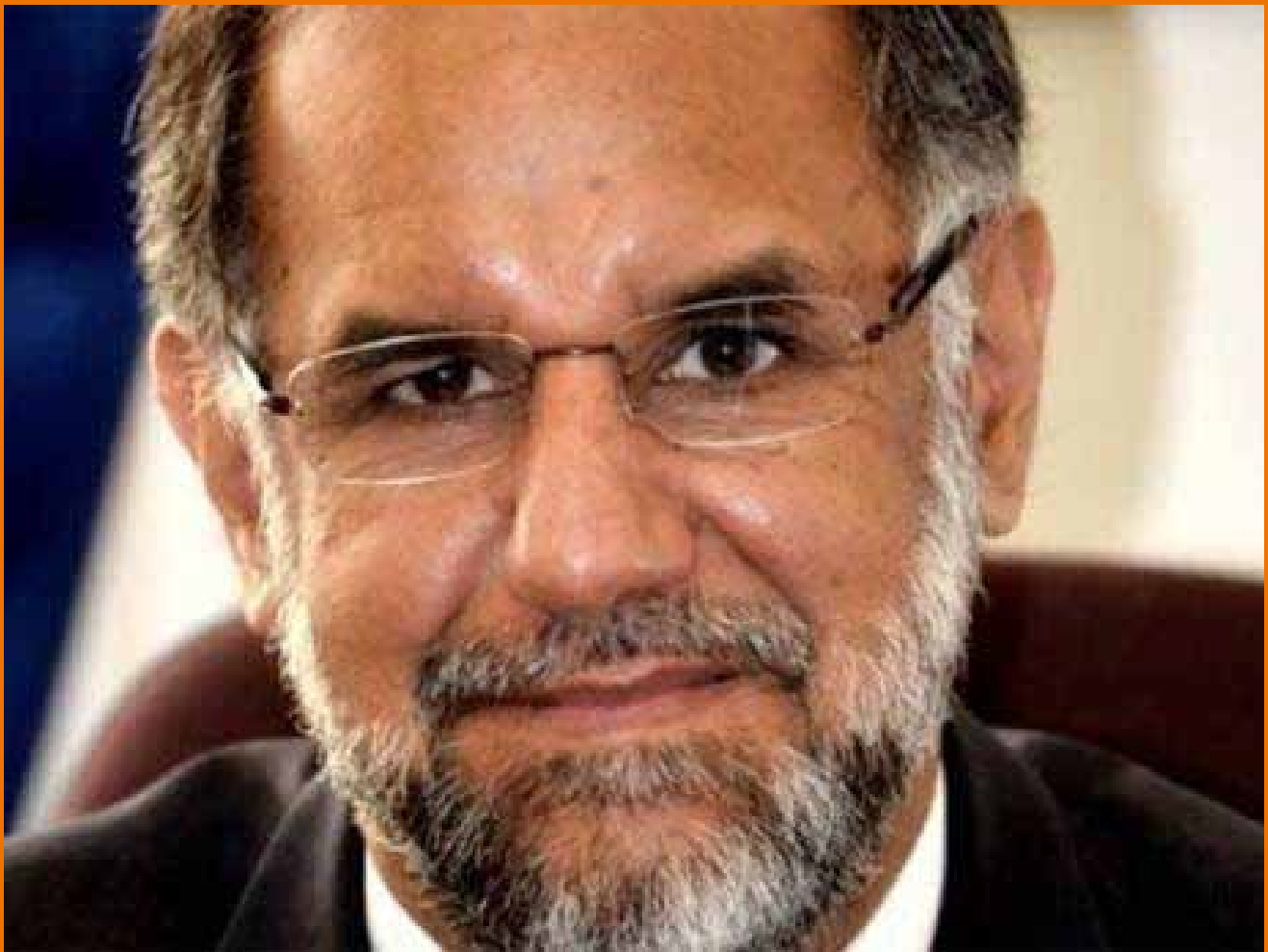
Tourism and the medical tourism segment are also tipped to be significant winners once the consulate services are in full swing.

The plan for a UAE consulate in Kerala had been mooted in 2011, but it could be realised only four years later. Kerala also hosts the consulates of Russia, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan will be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade next year.

Navdeep Singh Suri to be New Indian Ambassador to UAE

Suri, currently serving as the Indian High Commissioner to Australia, will take charge this month



Senior Indian diplomat Navdeep Singh Suri will be the new Indian Ambassador to UAE and he will take charge at the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi this month.

Suri, currently serving as the Indian High Commissioner to Australia, will take charge in the UAE, said Neeta Bhushan, Charge d'Affairs at the Indian Embassy in Abu Dhabi. He is replacing T.P. Seetharam who retired from service in August.

Suri joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1983 and has served in India's diplomatic missions in Cairo, Damascus, Washington, Dar es Salaam and London and as India's Consul General in Johannesburg.

He has also headed the West Africa and Public Diplomacy divisions at the Ministry of External Affairs. He was India's Ambassador to Egypt prior to his present assignment. His innovative use of social media in public diplomacy has received extensive recognition and two prestigious awards.

Suri has learnt Arabic and French, has a Masters degree in Economics and has written on India's Africa policy, on Public Diplomacy and on the IT outsourcing industry. His English translations of his grandfather Nanak Singh's classic Punjabi novels have been published by Penguin as 'The Watchmaker' and by Harper Collins as 'A Life Incomplete'.

Source : Indian Express

UAE has no plans to impose Personal Income Tax

Companies whose revenues range between Dh1.87 million and Dh3.75 million will have an option to either register under the system or not during the first phase of rolling out the system.

The UAE has no plans to impose personal income tax, a top government official said. Younis Al Khouri, Under-Secretary at the finance ministry, told Arabic daily Al Bayan that the UAE is also not studying the introduction of any new fees on services.

Al Khouri's assurance of no new taxes came in the wake of the UAE announcing the establishment of a Federal Tax Authority (FTA) ahead of the planned introduction of five per cent VAT (value added tax) in early 2018. The FTA, which will facilitate a smooth transition to a tax era, will issue guidelines and clarifications to taxpayers. It will also inspect taxpayers' records and documents, review tax returns and audit reports submitted to the authority. Khouri said projects in the UAE's new five-year Dh248 billion budget unveiled on Sunday would not rely on new taxes or additional fees, or revenues from VAT.

Khouri said the finance ministry, which has been studying the social and economic impact of a proposal on corporate tax, is taking those studies to the cabinet, with a view to building a comprehensive tax regime. He did not elaborate on any possible changes to corporate tax but said an initial step in developing the tax regime had been taken with establishment of the FTA.

Under the VAT system, companies in the UAE that record annual revenues over Dh3.75 million will be obliged to register and will accordingly be taxed.

Companies whose revenues range between Dh1.87 million and Dh3.75 million will have an option to either register under the system or not during the first phase of rolling out the system. For long, the International Monetary Fund has been urging GCC countries to increase government revenues through various taxes, including VAT, corporate income taxes as well as property and excise taxes.

Source : Khaleej Times

UAE money exchanges won't accept notes

Deadline of 50 days too short, remittance industry official says

NRIs in the Gulf countries are one set of people who are going to be seriously affected by the inconvenience caused by PM Narendra Modi's surgical strikes on the war Indian expatriates in the UAE cannot exchange the invalid Rupees 500 and 1,000 currency notes from the money exchange centres in the UAE from Wednesday based on the news being received from the top remittance/exchange houses.

"We have to wait for more information and clear instructions [from the Indian authorities in this regard]. Therefore, we cannot start accepting those notes from Wednesday," said Osama Al Rahma, Chairman of the Foreign Exchange and Remittance Group (FERG) – an official platform of the companies engaged in the business of money exchange and remittances in the UAE. Money exchange centres have stopped buying the Indian currency notes in the denominations of 500 and 1,000 immediately after Modi announced the decision to make them invalid from Tuesday night.

India's decision in 2013 to strictly implement rules and

regulations that do not allow Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) to carry Indian currency to India meant that most Indian expatriates in the UAE have not been keeping big amounts of Indian rupees. Reported cases of fake currency being carried to India from abroad also influenced the decision.

Still, most of the Indians may be keeping at least Rs 1,000 with them when they come back from home and given the size of Indian population in the UAE (around 2.6 million), the 50-day timeframe to return the currency notes is not enough. Even in India, this timeframe will not be enough.

Y. Sudhir Kumar Shetty, the president of UAE Exchange, told Gulf News that India's decision will help curb black money and eliminate counterfeit currency from the market. "It is a good move as it focuses on removing corruption from the society. The new decision will also encourage people to switch to non-cash mode of transactions though the usage of cards, mobile technology and banks," he said.

Source : Gulf News & Khaleej times

Rates set for Indian Sales Tax reforms

India has set rates for its new Goods and Services Tax (GST) system, its biggest tax reform since independence. The new rates will range between 5% and 28% depending on the product, with 12% and 18% as the standard. The long-awaited changes aim to streamline the country's fragmented tax system and transform it into much less complicated beast for all. Currently, everything sold in India is subject to a multitude of taxes varying from state to state.

Indian businesses have been lobbying for the country-wide tax rates as the reform is expected to reduce costs, particularly for shipping goods across state borders.

There has been no announcement yet, though, of which products fall into which of the tax categories. There is still a long way to go as the policy makers are yet to release the final classification list. According to Mr Jaitley, half of the items in the consumer price index would not be taxed at all to protect the poor. The index is a basket of consumer goods and services used to measure changing prices and inflation.

The GST Bill was one of the central pillars of PM Narendra Modi's economic agenda before he swept into power during the general elections. The centralised tax is intended to cut through the red tape and corruption generated by the swathe of state taxes currently in force.



The country's finance minister Arun Jaitley described the tax reform as "transformative", telling the BBC it would increase efficiency and tax compliance as well as bringing in additional revenue.

The new GST Bill passed by the government should prove instrumental in allowing for a seamless transefer of goods and services across the length and breadth of the Indian subcontinent.

Currently, goods brought for example from the northern city of Haryana to Chennai are taxed in six different states. With every state deciding its own taxes, it also encourages local protectionism. Optimistic estimates suggest the changes could bring more than 2% of added economic growth.

SPOTLIGHT: INDIA

MODI'S SURGICAL STRIKES IN THE WAR ON BLACK MONEY

Overnight ban on INR 500 & 1000 notes.

In an unexpected & sudden address to the nation last night, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced that starting midnight (from 9th November onwards), existing Rs. 500 and Rs. 1,000 notes can no longer be used for any transactions.

They must be deposited, starting Thursday and through December 30, at post offices and banks, he said, describing the move as essential to fight "the disease of black money."

New Rs. 500 and Rs. 2,000 notes, cleared by the Reserve Bank of India, will be introduced on Thursday.



The new Rs. 500 and 2000 notes will be issued on November 10

"Your money will remain yours...you need have no worry on this account," PM Modi said, stressing that the new notes will be in limited supply at first and will then be increased.

For now, notes currently in use can be traded for upto Rs. 4,000 till November 24 and for larger amounts thereafter. Against notes that are deposited, withdrawals of upto Rs. 10,000 a day or 20,000 a week will be permitted for now.

PM Modi, urging the country to bear with "temporary hardships" in the implementation of the new rule, said that banks will be closed to the public tomorrow and ATMs will not work in some places for the next 48 hours and withdrawals will be limited till Friday to Rs. 2,000.

The PM said that though India is now "a global bright spot" with its fast-growing economy, corruption and black or undeclared money "are the biggest obstacles to our success."

"We are No 1 in rate of economic growth," he said, while adding that despite some progress, India still ranks at No 76 in world rankings for perception of corruption.

PM Modi said that since his government was elected, 1.25 lakh crores of black money "belonging to the corrupt" has been uncovered, through a series of measures including a

voluntary disclosure scheme which has seen a good response.

By making the present Rs500 and Rs1,000 currency notes illegal from Nov. 09 onwards, the government has effectively forced the entire country to go to the banks (or post offices) and have their cash (in those denominations) added to their accounts.

It's still too early to gauge how well the entire replacement mechanism will work, despite the 50-day window the government has announced. But this much is clear: The move will have a massive impact on the black money and counterfeiting ecosystem.

That's simply because the monetary value of Rs500 and Rs1,000 notes in circulation far outstrips any other denomination

With these notes now going out of circulation overnight, the government has created a solid opportunity to clean up the system. Those hoarding cash at home—which in all likelihood will involve Rs500 and Rs1,000 notes—will have to put the money into the formal system. And terrorist organisations, which according to the government have made repeated use of fake currency, will suddenly find their cash piles containing these notes worth nothing. The PM said that fake Rs. 500 notes are employed "by the enemy across the border" to sponsor deadly attacks.

Source : CNBC - Indian Express - Gulf News