



GCC rail network

All over the world, the railway network provides a comparatively cheaper mode of transport and this is more so in the third world countries. Even developed countries such as Germany and France and one of the richest countries in the world Switzerland encourage their citizens to take the rail route and save money and ecology. Talking about mass transport, no other mode of transport can beat the rail transportation.

Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) nations deserve kudos for their decision to link the Arab world by train. As a first step, a \$11 billion UAE railway network that will be 1,500km-long is scheduled to be operational over the next eight years. Abu Dhabi has also revealed its plans for a new rail network, called Union Railway, that would serve Al Ain. The construction of the Union Railway is about to start this year. Abu Dhabi has joined the fray with a 131km metro rail system which is expected to partially start in 2015. Across the region, the proposed GCC network will include one rail line of 1,970 km connecting all GCC countries and Qatar via a bridge. The second line of 1,984 km will stretch between Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman. The broader perspective would be for the network to extend to Jordan and Syria, linking the Gulf with Europe and Asia via Turkey. No doubt, India is helping the Arab world in this venture. Transportation projects in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait worth an estimated \$170 billion will change the way trade is done. Railway projects alone will be worth an investment of \$108 billion.

According to VG Ramakrishnan, Senior Director, Automotive and Transportation Practice, South Asia and Middle East at Frost & Sullivan, efficient railway network in the UAE and the GCC region will substantially change the way the transportation of goods and people takes place. The way trade is carried out in the region will also change. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is spending \$25 billion on its rail network adding 3,900 km of track through three major projects. Saudi Arabia has already begun work on four different railway projects. Focus will be on 1,000 km-land bridge, East-West Railway project, running from Jeddah and Dammam and bridging the gap between the Red Sea and Arabian Gulf. Saudi Rail Organisation recently issued tenders for the first contract on the 500 km Haramain high speed rail link between Makkah and Madinah. The \$7 billion project aims to provide transport for Umrah and Haj pilgrims. Oman too has appointed consultants to conduct a feasibility study of a 200 km railway network that will start in Sohar connecting Bikra in north Muscat and Duqum. Kuwait is also considering a 1,500 km railway that would link the Iraqi border with the Omani port of Salah on the southern top of the Arabian Peninsula. Bahrain is planning a \$8 billion railway project stretching 184 km. Soon, this network will become the lifeline of the Arab world.



Editorial

LIPSYNCH

"No one can guarantee success in war, but only deserve it."

---Winston Churchill

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New visa rules trouble US Indians, says Ravi

NEW DELHI: Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi was flooded with complaints from Indian Americans during his US visit over India's tightened visa rules. "Every state that I visited in the US, they (US Indians) raised the problem regarding the new visa rules and suggested we make amendments," Ravi, who returned here after a six-day visit, said.

Ravi visited Chicago, Las Vegas, Phoenix and New York and interacted with Indian Americans living there.

The home ministry had, in an attempt to tighten security in the light of the November 26, 2008 Mumbai attacks, notified that Indians who have acquired other nationalities surrender their passports and obtain a "renunciation certificate" to be able to travel to India. This was after Pakistani-American David Headley pleaded guilty to making several scouting trips to In-

dia prior to the Mumbai attack. The 1955 Indian Citizenship Act does not allow dual citizenship and those who continue to retain their Indian passport and use it as a travel document in spite of acquiring foreign citizenship are committing an offence under the Indian Passport Act 1976.

Applications for renunciation certificates, running into thousands, are pending at the

Salesman held for passport tampering

MUMBAI: The police have arrested a person for allegedly tampering with his passport to procure a Czech Republic visa. Nagraj Prithiviraj (29) was charged with forgery and cheating.

"We have arrested Prithiviraj, a sales executive in A4 Enterprises - a company that deals in spare parts and accessories of construction machinery in Chennai. We have impounded his passport issued by the Chennai Passport Office," said sub-inspector B Jadhav of Gamdevi police station. Prithiviraj was remanded in police custody by the additional chief metropolitan magistrate's court.

UAE firms want to tap India for funds

DUBAI: More UAE firms are turning to India for funds and expansion in order to benefit from the resilience of the country's economy to the global financial crisis.

While Dubai-based alternative investment firm Evolve Capital has launched its third India-focused fund, UAE's incumbent Etisalat looked set to strengthen its presence in the Indian sub-continent with reports suggesting it is close to buying a 26 per cent stake in Reliance Communications. Meanwhile, Zulekha Hospitals, a UAE-based healthcare group, said that it was plan-

ning to expand and restructure its affairs in the UAE and the Indian sub-continent. Clyde & Co, a leading law firm in the Middle East, is advising Zulekha on the restructuring as well as obtaining a \$24 million convertible loan facility from the IFC, a member of the World Bank Group.

"The Indian economy has shown considerable resilience registering a 7.2 per cent growth in the financial year 2010, even during the global economic downturn," said Khaled Al Muhairy, CEO of Evolve Capital. "We believe that this growth is broad based

and will translate into long-term potential in the Indian private equity space."

The Evolve India Fund II - following the successful closing of Evolve India Fund I in 2007 and Evolve India Life Sciences Fund, a health care and life sciences fund in 2008 - is targeting a corpus of \$400 million from institutional and high net worth clients from across the globe. The fund aims to make select investments in the mid-market growth capital segment in the Indian private equity market, through fund investments, co-investments and direct investments.

Saudi Arabia takes steps to combat money laundering

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia is determined to curb money laundering and in its ongoing drive, the justice ministry has instructed all courts and public notaries to inform it of any suspicions of money laundering and financing of terrorism they may have during real estate sale and purchase procedures. A circular from the ministry asked these bodies to ensure that cheques are

used in land and sale purchases and also directed law firms to inform the ministry of any similar suspicions. The ministry has previously taken a range of steps to tackle terror financing and money laundering.

Programmes also look at Saudi laws on combating money laundering and the nature of admissible evidence and issues arising from it, such as the burden

of proof being placed on the accused. The kingdom has achieved the highest commitment levels to FATF's 40 recommendations for combating money laundering and its recommendations for fighting terrorist financing, according to a report by FATF and MENA-FATF.

FATF - the Financial Action Task Force - is an inter-governmental body that devel-

Ravi cautions bogus NRI marriages

NEW DELHI: New Zealand and Australia are fast becoming new hotspots for rising cases of fraudulent marriages by NRIs for receiving large dowry. Overseas Indian Affairs Minister Vayalar Ravi, who visited both the countries, said he was worried over the growing menace, particularly in New Zealand and was planning to take measures so that women did not fall into such traps.

As a first step, Ravi said the government would launch an awareness campaign in Punjab, the state to which most of the victims belong, to make people aware about the realities

as well as precautions to be taken to avoid such exploitation. Girls are lured to the wedlock for getting dowry and as and when their visit visa expires, they do not have any legal status and are dumped in India.

"In New Zealand, the minimum marriage age for girls is 16 years. So imagine the plight of a young girl if she faces such harassment," he said, adding that he would write to Punjab chief minister to take necessary steps to ensure that our girls do not face any harassment'.

Asked whether the government could bring the guilty to book or approach the authorities in New Zealand to take action against NRIs involved in such marriages, a senior official in the ministry said it was difficult to ensure punishment for them. "Moreover, taking dowry is not an offence in New Zealand," the official said. The Indian population in New Zealand is a little over one lakh, which is 2.6 per cent of the total population of the country.

Maid inherits millions

SINGAPORE: A Filipina maid inherited Singapore \$6 million (over US 4 million) from her late employer after more than 20 years of service. "I am the luckiest maid in Singapore, with or without the money," the 47-year-old single woman - identified only by the pseudonym "Christine" - said. The maid refused to be named in public for fear of possible threats to her life in the impoverished Philippines, where wealthy people have been kidnapped for ransom and some killed by their abductors. The windfall, including cash and a luxury apartment near the Orchard Road shopping belt, came from the estate of her employer Quek Kai Miew, a medical doctor and philanthropist who died last year at 66.

The maid had also taken care of the doctor's late mother and was told that she would be a beneficiary of her employer's will when it was drawn up in 2008. "There were no secrets between us. I was not a surprise at all when she told me how much I was going to get," the maid recalled. Christine was devastated when Quek died a year ago, as the two were inseparable and temporarily moved in with the doctor's nephew for solace.

"It was heartbreaking for me as I saw more years with Doctor Quek than with my own mother. I would break down every time I thought about her.

Charity fund earns freedom

DUBAI: An Indian who spent 16 months in prison for not being able to pay up a fine for an offence he had committed has been released. Gopal Ram, the 42-year-old man from Rajasthan, left for India four years after he arrived in UAE. He has become the first Indian in the UAE to benefit from the initiative taken up by the Indian Community Welfare Committee (ICWC).

Under the patronage of the Indian Consulate in Dubai, ICWC had launched a fundraising campaign in June to

release Indians languishing in UAE jails due to their inability to pay fines and blood money in non-criminal cases. ICWC convener K Kumar said Ram's case caught the attention of consulate officials and ICWC members during one of their regular jail visits.

Ram, who is a mason, ended up in jail for not paying up fine of Dh27,700. His friends managed to raise Dh4,000 for him and the balance, Dh23,700 has now been paid by ICWC, following which the father of three was released.

Gulf FAQs

Three years back, when I was working for my previous company, I applied for a personal loan from a local bank in Dubai. During the recession, I was terminated from my job. I have found another job now and I always pay my loan instalments on time but my salary is paid into another bank. The bank which I took the loan from keeps on calling me and telling me that I should pay the full amount or find someone to guarantee me otherwise they will use the security cheque to put me in jail. I don't have the full amount to pay them and I cannot provide someone to guarantee me. Can they sue me by using the security cheque as I always pay the monthly instalments on time?

The questioner should settle the matter with the bank amicably especially as the bank has a security cheque for the loan which can be used against the questioner. If the bank fails to receive its rights this way and so decides to file a case before the civil court, the bank might lose its case especially as the questioner is making the monthly instalments regularly and also if the court found that it was the bank itself which breached the terms of the loan agreement.

I would like to enquire about my options pertaining to my situation. My husband works for a recognised company in the UAE and together we have two sons above 12 years of age. My sons and I are on my husband's sponsorship and the three-year visa term ends as of 2010. Due to disagreements in household matters, I am not sure if he wants to renew my visa. The company, which he works for, has informed me that unless he wishes, they cannot assist me in the matter in any way. I would like to know what my rights are as the mother of the children and the

legal wife of my husband. I am currently employed and have a valid labour card which allows me to work until 2011. Can I approach the immigration authorities to help and resolve his decision?

As per the law, a husband has the right to not renew his wife's and children's visas if he decides to repatriate them. As per the law of emigration and residence, he is not entitled to cancel only the wife's visa while keeping the children's, thus depriving the mother of her children. Therefore, if the questioner has failed to reach an amicable solution with regard to marital disputes, the questioner may file a family case before the Sharia Court concerned. Finally, the reader may adjust her status by processing a new visa through the company where she is currently employed if her visa has been cancelled by her husband, as the change of her visa on the company where she is currently employed does not require the husband's consent from the Ministry of Labour or General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs.

I am an NRI based in Doha and I want a loan against my deposits lying in Non-Resident (External) Account as well as Foreign Currency Non-Resident Account. Some time ago, when I had approached my bank where I have these deposits, I was informed that the maximum loan that could be given was Rs2 million. Is this correct? Can the bank give loans to my friends in India against the security of my deposits?

Up to April 2009, the limit for giving loans against security of NRE/FCNR deposits was Rs2 million. Thereafter, this limit has been enhanced to Rs10 million. The loan can also be given to third parties. In other words, you can take a loan against your NRE/FCNR deposits from the bank or the bank may give a loan to both you and your friend, so long as the aggregate amount of the loan does not exceed Rs10 million. Banks have been advised not to undertake artificial slicing of the loan amount in order to circumvent the aforesaid limit.