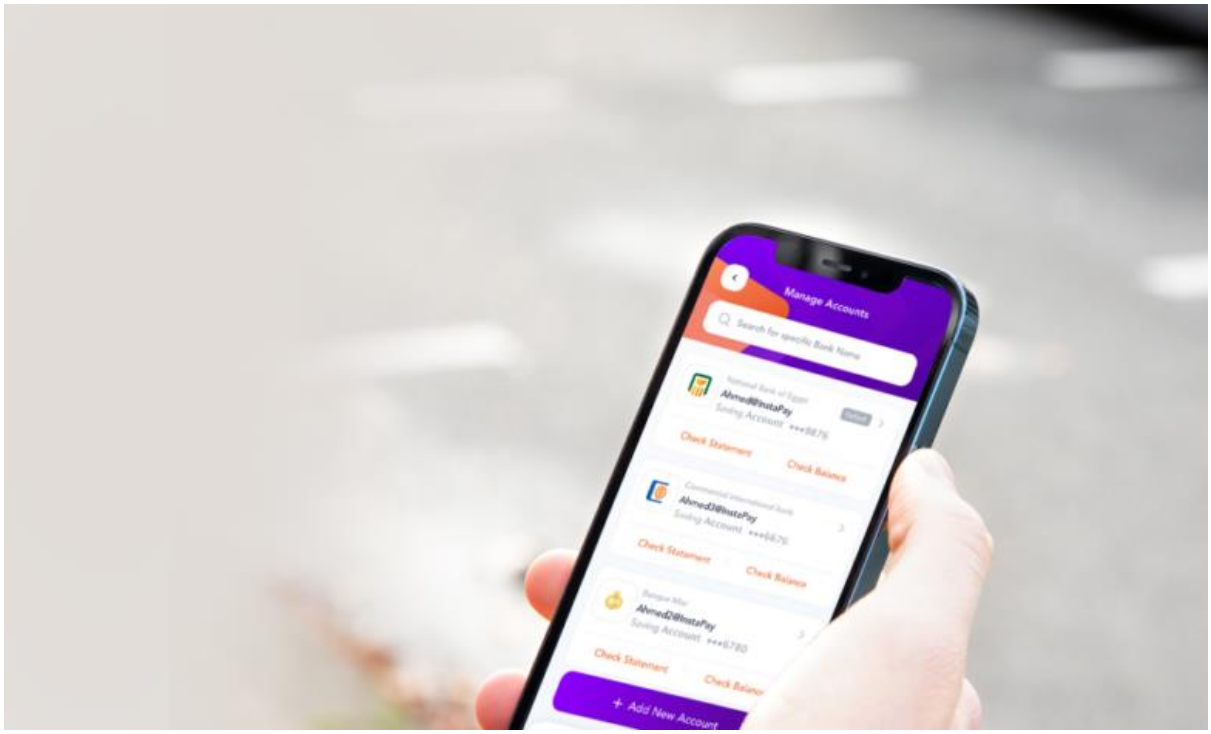
Newsletter 11 - 2024

EGYPT

CBE allows receiving money from abroad via the InstaPay application



The Assistant Sub Governor for Payment Systems and Services at the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) Ehab Nasr said the CBE has officially approved banks operating in the country to receive money transfers from abroad via the InstaPay application, from all over the world.

Speaking on the sidelines of the 11th Edition of the Digital Payments, Financial Inclusion, and Digital Banking (PAFIX) International Conference and Exhibition, Nasr added that the technological and infrastructure structure of the application is more than capable of receiving transfers from abroad.

He added that banks will determine the transfer commission according to the currency used and the country through which the transfer is made, provided that the customer receives the money in Egyptian pounds.

Customers outside Egypt will be able to transfer their money instantly from their banks to their bank account or electronic wallet via InstaPay for a fee determined by the bank, he explained, noting that partnerships have been concluded with Gulf central banks to provide the service.

Agreements have been made with several banks to provide it, including the Al Rajhi Bank of Saudi Arabia.

Nasr explained that the value of InstaPay transactions recorded LE 1.2 trillion by the end of June, which confirms the success of the digital transformation in Egypt. It is expected that the volume of InstaPay transactions will reach 1.5 half billion transactions worth LE 2.6 trillion by the end of the year, he added.

The InstaPay app currently allows bank customers in Egypt to have direct access to all their local accounts and transfer money instantly between them, in addition to paying bills.

The app has gained wide popularity, especially since its services are free until the end of this year.

https://www.egyptindependent.com/cbe-allows-receiving-money-from-abroad-via-the-instapay-application/#google_vignette

SAUDI ARABIA

Riyadh Metro to kick off first phase on Nov 27, includes 3 lines

On November 27, Saudi Arabia will mark a significant milestone in its urban transformation with the launch of the first phase of the Riyadh Metro.

The metro features six routes in total, spanning 176km and 84 stations.

The first phase will see operations kick off on its first three lines, with the remaining expected to be up and running by mid-December.

Riyadh Metro's first phase launch

The lines will connect the following areas:

- Line 1: Al Orouba to Batha
- Line 2: King Khalid International Airport Road
- Line 3: Intersection of Abdulrahman Bin Auf Street and Sheikh Hassan Bin Hussein Street

By mid-December, the additional three lines, covering critical routes such as King Abdullah Road, Al Madina, and King Abdulaziz Road, will further expand the network, increasing the metro's reach and capacity.

Key Vision 2030 initiative

The project represents a total investment of $22.5bn (SR84.4bn), making it one of the largest infrastructure investments in the kingdom. While the project has faced delays due to logistical challenges and the global Covid-19 pandemic, the metro's opening marks a major leap toward Riyadh's vision of becoming a global commercial hub.

Set to redefine public transportation in the capital, the metro is a cornerstone project under Saudi Arabia's ambitious Vision 2030 initiative, aimed at diversifying the economy and modernising urban infrastructure.

Sustainable operations

The Riyadh Metro offers a cleaner, faster, and more sustainable alternative to car-dependent travel.

Solar panels installed at metro stations and depots will generate 20 per cent of the energy needed for critical systems, reducing the carbon footprint of the network.

Additionally, energy-efficient trains and regenerative braking systems will minimise power consumption, while all six lines will eventually run entirely on renewable energy.

The metro trains incorporate energy-efficient technology, including regenerative braking, which recycles energy during braking and reduces overall power consumption.

By the time all six lines are fully operational, the Riyadh Metro is expected to run on 100 per cent renewable energy, underscoring the kingdom's commitment to sustainability and clean energy.

Ticket pricing, including discount packages, will be announced shortly.

https://gulfbusiness.com/riyadh-metro-to-open-first-phase-on-nov-27/

UAE

UAE visit visa: Dh3,000 fund, return tickets required before applying, say travel agents

Stricter requirements were put in place to prevent potential misuse of visit visas and ensure that applicants can sustain themselves during their stay

Travel agents in the UAE are urging visitors to ensure all documents are in order before applying for visit visas. Proof of stay — which includes hotel booking or relatives' residence address — and evidence of sufficient funds are now prerequisites to obtain a visa, they said.

"Earlier, travellers needed to show proof of stay, return tickets, and an equivalent currency of Dh3,000 at the airport when boarding. However, now, they should submit the documents before applying for a visa," said Mir Wasim Raja, manager at Galadari International Travel Services.

Travel agents said these stricter requirements were aimed at preventing potential misuse of visit visas and ensuring that applicants can sustain themselves during their stay in the UAE. The change has also prompted agents to closely scrutinise applications to reduce rejection rates and streamline the process.

Agents told Khaleej Times that proof of stay, return tickets, and bank statements must be uploaded to their systems to ensure visa approval.

Khaleej Times previously reported that travellers were advised to carry Dh3,000 in cash, a valid return ticket, and proof of accommodation while flying to the UAE. However, travel agents have clarified that these requirements must now be fulfilled during the visa application process.

"We process thousands of visas daily, but recently, some of our travel partners informed us that visas were rejected due to incomplete documents," said Masiuddin Mohammed, founder of SuperJet Tours and Travels LLC. "Only a few visas were approved because their documents were in order," he added.

Firoz Maliyakkal, founder and CEO of Tahira Tours and Travels, explained that travellers must ensure their passport has a validity of at least six months, along with a confirmed return ticket. "Airport authorities in the UAE may conduct random checks for these documents, including proof of stay,

return ticket and sufficient funds in cash or credit card equivalent to Dh3,000 for visa of one month and Dh5,000 for two months," said Maliyakkal.

Travel agents have observed that some applicants are unaware of these updated requirements, leading to delays and confusion. To address this, agencies are emphasising the importance of educating travellers and providing checklists to ensure compliance before submission.

Meanwhile, Taha Siddique, owner of Siddique Tours and Travels, reported similar issues, citing cases of visa rejections among his clients. "Two of my clients' visas were rejected because their documents were incomplete, and they were left waiting," said Siddique.

Travel experts reiterated that visitors must prepare their documents meticulously and consult reliable travel agencies to avoid complications for a smooth application process.

https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/uae-visit-visa-dh3000-return-tickets-proof-of-stay-required-before-applying-travel-experts-say

UAE clarifies eligibility of applicants for extended visa amnesty

Grace period to regularise UAE visa status or leave country without fines to end on Dec 31

Abu Dhabi: The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security has confirmed that individuals violating residency and visa regulations after September 1 will not be included in the grace period for exemption from fines for violators of entry and residency regulations. This grace period, launched by the authority at the beginning of September, will continue until December 31.

In a clarification regarding whether individuals who violated residency and visa laws after September 1 are covered by the announced grace period, the authority stated that three other categories are also not eligible for this exemption.

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They include individuals reported under administrative cases, such as absconding or work abandonment after the specified date; individuals subject to deportation orders, whether issued by the UAE or other GCC countries; and individuals who entered the country illegally through unauthorised means. These violators must refer to the Department of Violators and Foreigners Affairs for further proceedings.

ICP began implementing the decision to exempt violators of the foreign entry and residency regulations from fines as of September 1, lasting for two months until the end of October. The authority later extended the grace period for an additional two months, until December 31.

Final opportunity

The authority reminded those eligible this extension represents the final opportunity for violators to regularise their status, with an exemption from fines and without receiving a ban that would prevent them from re-entering the country. However, fines will be reinstated for violators who continue their violations after the extended grace period.

It further confirmed that inspection campaigns targeting violators in their locations across the country will be intensified, in cooperation with government partners. Legal action will be taken against those apprehended after the grace period expires.

The authority noted that the decision to extend the grace period coincided with the UAE's 53rd Union Day celebrations, reflecting the country's humanitarian and progressive values. The extension was also in response to appeals, aspirations, and the wishes of violators seeking more time to regularise their status, whether by leaving the country or obtaining employment contracts to adjust their residency status and remain in the UAE. This was based on feedback gathered through official communication channels and customer sentiment studies conducted by the authority's teams.

Since its inception, the grace period has seen a high level of participation from violators seeking to regularise their status and benefit from the granted exemptions.

Meanwhile, the authority and its strategic partners from both governmental and private sectors have worked diligently to overcome obstacles and provide solutions to challenges faced by certain groups of violators, leveraging their legal authority.

Late fees

Separately, the authority announced that it offers a service for exemption from identity card late fees through its website and smart application. It outlined five steps to apply for this service: logging in via the digital identity system, selecting the identity card renewal service, reviewing and updating retrieved data where applicable, automatic application of the exemption for eligible categories before payment, and finally submitting the application and paying the fees.

The amnesty period for rectifying the status of violators has witnessed increasing turnout from families who found themselves in an illegal situation. This initiative has served as a lifeline and an opportunity for them to start a new chapter in the UAE.

Abdullah Al Lashkari, Director of the Labor Relations Department in the Workforce Organisation Sector at the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai, stated that several private sector companies are keen to provide job opportunities for violators.

The directorate urged individuals holding residency permits issued by other emirates who wish to leave the country to contact the respective emirate where their residency was issued. For those who wish to remain in the UAE and secure a job opportunity in Dubai, they can regularise their status at one of the Amer service centres, regardless of their residency status in other emirates.

The directorate also called on violators to seize this golden opportunity to live with peace of mind in the UAE or to return voluntarily to their home countries.

https://gulfnews.com/uae/government/uae-clarifies-eligibility-of-applicants-for-extended-visa-amnesty-1.104720611

UAE Introduces New Tax Law

The UAE has announced new laws to transform tax collection and record-keeping for businesses in the country.

Under new rules, taxpayers in the UAE will be able to standardise and automating invoicing with new digital channels.

The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has announced the issuance of Federal Decree-Law No. 17 of 2024, amending key provisions of Federal Decree-Law No. 28 of 2022 concerning tax procedures.

UAE tax eInvoicing

In addition, Federal Decree-Law No. 16 of 2024 introduces amendments to several provisions of Federal Decree-Law No. 8 of 2017 related to Value Added Tax (VAT).

These legislative updates mark a pivotal step towards implementing the eInvoicing system, reflecting the government's ongoing commitment to digital innovation and enhancing the efficiency of the national economy.

The eInvoicing system will bring significant benefits to both businesses and government entities by simplifying, standardising, and automating invoicing processes. It will enable the immediate exchange of invoices and ensure seamless tax reporting to the Federal Tax Authority (FTA).

The UAE eInvoicing implementation is based on a decentralised, five-corner model that will allow sellers and buyers to exchange invoices via Accredited Service Providers (ASPs).

ASPs will transmit tax invoice data to the FTA enhancing tax compliance in a secure and efficient manner.

The system is designed in line with international best practices, adopting the OpenPeppol standard.

Federal Decree-Law No. 17 of 2024 on tax procedures introduces a definition for the "eInvoicing system" and grants the Minister of Finance the authority to issue the necessary decisions to implement the system, determine its effective dates, and specify the requirements and entities subject to it.

Federal Decree-Law No. 16 of 2024 on VAT introduces broader changes, expanding the definitions of "tax invoice" and "tax credit note" to include electronic invoices. It also adds new definitions for electronic invoices and electronic credit notes.

The amendments further confirm that VAT refunds will be based on eInvoicing compliance requirements, where applicable.

Businesses subject to the eInvoicing system, in line with the phased roll-out strategy, will be required to issue invoices and credit notes electronically and archive electronic invoice data to meet record-keeping standards.

Further details regarding businesses and transactions subject to the eInvoicing system, as well as implementation timelines and dates, will be announced through upcoming decisions.

The Ministry of Finance reaffirms its commitment to ensuring a smooth implementation of the eInvoicing system through a phased and well-communicated strategy.

By actively engaging stakeholders, the Ministry aims to maximise the benefits of digital transformation, aligning with the UAE's strategic economic objectives.

https://www.gulf-insider.com/uae-launches-new-e-invoicing-laws/

AED1 Million Fine for Hiring Illegal Residents From November 1 as UAE Visa Amnesty Ends Today

Employers will face up to Dh1 million fine for hiring any illegal residents from November 1 as amnesty comes to end on October 31.

The Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security (ICP), in coordination with Dubai's General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA), has warned against employing overstayers after the grace period ends.

Beginning November 1, inspections of companies will commence, and fines from Dh100,000 to Dh1 million will be imposed on entities hiring residency violators. This enforcement follows a federal decree law targeting illegal employment and unregulated labour practices.

Last chance

The ICP reported that many residency violators have taken advantage of the grace period, which started on September 1. This two-month amnesty allows visa violators either to exit the UAE without facing an entry ban or secure lawful employment by rectifying their legal status.

With the two-month grace period to receive UAE visa amnesty ending today (October 31), residency violators continue to flock to the amensty centres across the country.

Field inspections

Large-scale field inspections are set to begin on Friday, November 1, to identify and penalise violators, who fail to rectify their residency status during the grace period.

In recent weeks, Amr centres and the Al Aweer centre in Dubai, have seen high volumes of residents seeking to correct their residency status. This increase in turnout, particularly in the final days of the grace period, underscores the importance of the initiative.

https://www.gulf-insider.com/uae-employers-face-aed1m-fines-for-violations/

Emirates ID: 8 benefits for UAE residents, from checking travel ban to paying for fuel

If you live in the UAE and have a residence visa, you are likely to be aware of the significance of an Emirates ID.

This simple card – which has an electronic chip – contains all essential information of the cardholder. The Emirates ID has encrypted data related to the holder, which can be accessed by authorised authorities.

The Emirates ID is used across the country as the go-to form of identification – from entering a concert to accessing healthcare. Aside from just being a form of identification, this versatile card also has many other benefits.

Here are five ways the Emirates ID will make your life more convenient:

1. Enter/exit the country with ease

Although immigration and emigration processes are streamlined and even those without an Emirates ID can go through immigration check relatively fast, this ID gives residents an edge.

Residents of the UAE can enter and exit the country using their facial scan and boarding pass through e-gates.

2. Get access to visa-free travel

UAE residents get to travel visa-free, or with visa-on-arrival, to many popular destinations across the globe.

From beachy destinations closer to home to mountainous locations further away – having the UAE residency and an Emirates ID can significantly change the way one travels and gives them access to simpler travel.

3. Pay for fuel with your Emirates ID

Did you know at select petrol stations in the UAE, you can even use your Emirates ID to pay for fuel!

Next time you tank up at an Adnoc station, make sure to register for an Adnoc wallet. You can then link your Emirates ID to your wallet, and load funds onto it. So, in the future, instead of swiping your credit card, you can simply swipe your Emirates ID to pay for your fuel.

4. No health insurance card? No problem!

Long-time UAE residents will be able to recall when they used to carry a separate health insurance card to be able to get access to healthcare services.

Now, that is no longer the case. Your Emirates ID contains everything you may need to provide to get healthcare.

5. Check visa status

If you need to check your visa status online, you can do so by simply using your Emirates ID!

Yes, you can use your identification card on the GDRFA (for Dubai) or ICP (for UAE) website.

6. Check travel ban

Do you think you have a travel ban issued against you?

Fret not, you can check online using the Dubai Police application or the ICP website. Simply head to the services section and select the travel ban option, then put in your Emirates ID details to check if you have a travel ban.

7. Access government services online

Accessing government services becomes so much easier once a resident receives an Emirates ID. Residents can use one of the many online portals to access a wide range of services, including those from the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation and Ministry of Interior.

8. Get a driving licence

Applying for and giving rigorous tests to acquire a driver's licence is no easy feat in the UAE. However, an applicant is required to have an Emirates ID to get a local driving licence.

https://www.khaleejtimes.com/life-and-living/emirates-id-8-benefits-for-uae-residents-from-checking-travel-ban-to-paying-for-fuel

UAE: New Golden Visa scheme announced for teachers, school leaders in RAK

The scheme grants self-sponsored long-term residency to professionals who meet a set criteria

A new Golden Visa programme has been announced for private school educators in Ras Al Khaimah. According to the Ras Al Khaimah Department of Knowledge (RAK DOK), the scheme grants self-sponsored long-term residency to professionals who meet eligibility requirements.

The programme is open to two main categories of educators:

1. School leaders: Principals, vice-principals, and school directors.

2. Teachers: All qualified educators currently employed in private schools in Ras Al Khaimah.

The regulatory authority will streamline the application process to qualify applicants based on a specific criteria. This includes a minimum of three years of residency and employment in Ras Al Khaimah, a relevant advanced degree, and a demonstrated positive impact on their school's performance.

Who can apply and how?

Eligible educators must submit an official appointment letter, proof of educational qualifications, documentation of residency and employment, and evidence of their contributions to improving school performance.

Once all necessary documents are submitted, the RAK DOK will review them, and send confirmation of eligibility to the educator to visit the Federal Authority for Identity, Citizenship, Customs, and Port Security (ICP) for Golden Visa processing.

School administrators are not eligible for the 10-year visa, the RAK DOK clarified in an eligibility guide. "The policy is intended for educators directly involved in teaching and school leadership roles."

The Golden Visa is open to eligible educators of all nationalities. The RAK DOK does not charge an application fee for the eligibility review. Applicants may need to pay the relevant fees when submitting documents to the ICP. The typical review period is a maximum of two weeks.

Once the educator Golden Visa is approved, family members (spouse, parents, and children) may qualify for the long-term residency, the authority stated in the guide.

Eligibility criteria

According to the guide, school leaders and teachers must have the following to be eligible:

Official appointment letter from the Ministry of Education (MoE) or RAK DOK.

Advanced degree (master's or PhD), with an equivalent certificate from the MoE if the degree was obtained outside the UAE.

Must have resided and worked in Ras Al Khaimah for at least three years.

School leaders

- Must demonstrate positive contribution to school performance (for example, school rating went up from 'acceptable' to 'good' or 'good' to 'very good').
- Must have an endorsement letter from the school board of governors confirming the leader's exceptional contribution to the school.

Teachers

They must provide evidence of meeting at least three of the following criteria:

1. Demonstrated positive contributions to student learning outcomes.

2. Positive feedback from students, parents, and school leadership.

3. Receipt of awards or formal recognition for educational contributions at the regional or national level.

4. Positive impact on students of determination.

5. Introduction of innovative teaching methods and effective integration of technology.

6. Active participation in professional development.

"This initiative recognises the critical role that educators play in improving the quality of education for all students in Ras Al Khaimah," said Dr Abdulrahman Al Naqbi, RAK DOK board member. "The programme acknowledges the invaluable contributions of teachers and is consistent with our overarching objective of establishing a world-class education system in Ras Al Khaimah. By qualifying top educators for long-term residency, we reaffirm our dedication to nurturing a robust educational environment that fosters talent and innovation, further enhancing our educational offerings and ensuring the continued success of our students."

https://www.khaleejtimes.com/uae/uae-new-golden-visa-scheme-announced-for-teachers-school-leaders-in-rak

Anax Developments unveils new luxury tower in Dubai

Anax Developments, a subsidiary of Dubai-based investment company Anax Holding, has announced the launch of its second project, Evora Residences, within the Al Furjan community development.

Designed as a tranquil retreat that embodies an urban lifestyle while providing excellent connectivity to the city, the Evora Residences are scheduled for completion in Q3 2026, said the company in a statement.

The tower features 10 residential floors and offers a range of one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments; each one featuring spacious balconies with a fusion of modern elegance and contemporary design throughout its layout.

It will be located within the rapidly growing, lush green expanse of Al Furjan, minutes away from Dubai's landmarks, including Legoland, IMG Worlds of Adventure, and Ibn Battuta Mall.

The project was unveiled at a first-of-its-kind gala event at the Jumeirah Beach Hotel, in the presence of VIP guests, stakeholders and media representatives.

According to Anax, the tower embodies its ethos of "Live Large", embracing a life of impact and abundance.

The philosophy is extended to creating spaces with purpose - designed for residents to live well, enjoy robust investments, and expansive amenities.

Evora Residences will offer an end-user focused 30/70 payment plan with prices starting at AED1,068,777 ($290,959) for one-bedroom apartments, it stated.

Evora Residence also ensures that sustainability is a key feature amidst the modern comforts and serene living, with solar panels to support energy consumption, and the highest standards of Smart Home Automation.

Residents will get to enjoy amenities designed to elevate their living experience. Each apartment is equipped with top-of-the-range fittings like Bosch kitchen appliances, and sanitary ware by Teka, it added.

Satish Sanpal, the Chairman of Anax Holding, said: "Upholding our philosophy, our vision is to create spaces which allow residents to live large, create impact and where one truly feels at home. With Evora Residences, given its location in the family-friendly Al Furjan community, our priority is to combine urban living and peaceful surroundings."

According to Anax, the development beautifully integrates lush greenery with urban panoramas within the vibrant Al Furjan community.

Residents will benefit from an extensive network of modern amenities, including retail hubs, adventure parks, fitness clubs, a well paved jogging track around the residences and other recreational areas, ensuring a harmonious lifestyle, stated the developer.

"We have strived to capture this essence throughout our design process, a philosophy that will continue to dominate across all our future projects as we continue to build with Anax Developments and bring more than 2,000 homes to the market in the next twelve months," he noted.

With a pipeline of upcoming projects, Anax is planning to bring in a cumulative project value of $1 billion to the market in the next year, he added.

On the launch, Ravi Bhirani, Managing Director of Anax Developments, said: "This project, along with our upcoming developments in Meydan, and Dubai Islands reinforces our commitment to enhancing Dubai’s residential landscape with elevated living across each of our new ventures."

"We strive to cater to a diverse audience at various price points ensuring that exceptional residential experiences are accessible to a broad spectrum of investors and home buyers," stated Bhirani.

https://www.tradearabia.com/news/IND_428493.html

Kuwait

Kuwait temporarily halts business registrations for Article 18 residency holders

The Ministry of Commerce is currently collaborating with the Ministry of Interior and the Manpower Authority to devise mechanisms addressing the status of Article 18 residency holders involved in business partnerships

KUWAIT CITY: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry has temporarily banned Article 18 residency holders expatriates—from establishing companies, acting as partners or managing partners, or registering in the commercial registry unless their status aligns with Article 19 regulations. This measure, informed sources stated, aims to prevent combining worker and employer roles and will remain in place until new regulatory controls are implemented.

Data from the Public Authority for Manpower reveals that approximately 9,600 private sector employees holding Article 18 residencies are listed as partners or managing partners in limited liability companies, linked to nearly 44,500 business licenses.

The Ministry of Commerce is currently collaborating with the Ministry of Interior and the Manpower Authority to devise mechanisms addressing the status of Article 18 residency holders involved in business partnerships. Proposed changes include revising Article 19 requirements, such as increasing the minimum contribution value of 100,000 KD and the three-year ownership condition. Additional recommendations suggest restricting companies with Article 18 contributors from opening multiple branches unless operational needs justify expansion.

While regulatory revisions are underway, existing companies with Article 18 shareholders will continue their operations without changes. New rules are expected to safeguard the legal and financial rights of stakeholders while offering a one-year grace period for affected partners to transition to Article 19 or adapt to the updated conditions.

The Executive Regulations of the Foreigners' Residence Law grant Article 19 status to expats as investors or partners under specific terms. These new arrangements aim to encourage foreign investment, improve Kuwait's business environment, and curb residency trading.

Difference Between Article 18 and Article 19

Article 18: Workers under this residency are subordinate to their employers, as defined by the 2010 Private Sector Employment Law, which categorizes them as employees working under the supervision and management of employers in exchange for wages.

Article 19: Residency is granted to foreign investors or partners in commercial or industrial activities if they own a share of no less than 100,000 KD, reflected in their last three certified budgets.

The ongoing reforms are part of a broader initiative to attract serious investors while maintaining market stability and protecting stakeholders' rights.

https://www.zawya.com/en/economy/gcc/kuwait-temporarily-halts-business-registrations-for-article-18-residency-holders-erp0w7us

Kuwait Tightens Residency Rules To Combat Iqama Trade

The Kuwaiti government has approved a draft law on foreigners' residency aimed at combatting trade in residency permits or iqamas and entry visas for expatriates and toughening penalties against violators.

The 36-article draft approved at a Cabinet meeting earlier this week sets strict rules for foreigners' entry, notification of the competent authorities, foreigners' residency, trading in residency permits, associated crimes, deportation, and penalties.

The articles include banning trade in residency that exploits the recruitment of a foreigner or facilitates it via an entry visa, residency permit, or its renewal, in exchange for money or any other benefit.

Moreover, the employer or the recruiter of a foreigner is prohibited from employing the expatriate for purposes other than those he/she is recruited for, or facilitating his/her work for others without a licence from the Interior Ministry, or unlawfully refraining from paying his/her dues.

Meanwhile, an expatriate is prohibited from working for others without permission from his/her governmental employer, or from the competent authorities. And in all cases, a third party is barred from sheltering or employing a foreigner, whether his/her residency permit is valid or expired. Additionally, it is prohibited to shelter a foreigner who has no valid iqama in Kuwait.

Another article in the draft stipulates that the recruiter of an expat must notify the Interior Ministry of the expiration of his/her entry visa or temporary or regular residency permit if he/she does not leave Kuwait.

In recent months, Kuwait has pursued a relentless crackdown on illegal trade in iqamas as the country has rounded up thousands of unlawful expat workers.

The Kuwaiti Interior Ministry has announced detaining and deporting more than 21,000 foreigners for violating the country's residency and labour laws in nine months. Meanwhile, 11,970 others readjusted their legal status.

Dozens of fake companies used for the illegal business have been exposed and referred to public prosecution.

Kuwait has an overall population of 4.9 million people including 3.3 million foreigners.

https://www.gulf-insider.com/kuwait-approves-strict-law-on-residency-trade/

Kuwait Tightens Property Ownership Rules For Non-Citizens

Kuwait has rolled out stricter controls on property ownership for non-citizens, aiming to maintain economic stability in the real estate market while balancing state interests.

The new rules establish specific requirements based on the nationality of prospective buyers, with significant distinctions between Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizens and other nationalities.

Under the updated regulations, GCC nationals from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, and Oman are granted property rights in Kuwait on equal terms with Kuwaiti citizens, reflecting close economic ties within the region.

For non-GCC Arab nationals, however, ownership comes with several conditions, including a residency of at least ten years in Kuwait, a clean legal record, financial eligibility, and an approved application from the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers.

Properties for non-GCC Arab nationals are capped at 1,000 square meters, and they may not own additional real estate within the country.

Additional regulations address complex scenarios, such as inheritance and citizenship changes. Non-GCC heirs who inherit Kuwaiti property must sell it within a year unless exceptional permission is granted.

Kuwaiti women who lose citizenship and adopt GCC nationality retain property rights; however, if they adopt citizenship from non-GCC Arab or non-Arab countries, they are subject to different ownership rules or are required to dispose of their property.

This regulatory framework also includes a recent mandate from the Ministry of Justice, requiring notaries to verify citizenship status through digital platforms for individuals with revoked Kuwaiti citizenship. This measure follows Kuwait's withdrawal of citizenship from 489 individuals.

https://www.gulf-insider.com/kuwait-tightens-property-rules-for-expats/

Radisson Hotel Group opens second property in Kuwait

Radisson Hotel Group has announced the opening of its second hotel in Kuwait - Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Apartments within the bustling Mahboula district, just south of the capital Kuwait City.

It offers 180 modern rooms and 70 serviced apartments, all with stunning sea views. Guests can enjoy nearby dining and beach access within walking distance of the property in addition to key business facilities.

These include a cutting-edge conference centre with three multipurpose halls, including the grand Al Nuwair Ballroom, which is perfect for business and social gatherings, said the hospitality group in a statement.

The Al Maha restaurant serves a signature breakfast buffet, live cooking stations, and à la carte options for lunch and dinner, it added.

Strategically located, it is a 30-minutes drive from Kuwait International Airport, with the famous Al Kout Mall only a 10-minute drive away. It also offers easy access to key locations, including the Warehouse Mall and Kuwait Towers.

Tim Cordon, COO Middle East & South East Asia Pacific for Radisson Hotel Group, said: "The opening of the Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Apartments Kuwait underscores our commitment to continued growth in the region."

The hotel, he stated, offers a perfect blend of comfort, convenience, and the feel-good vibe that the Park Inn by Radisson brand is known for.

"With a contemporary all-marble décor from the lobby to the suites, the hotel exudes a modern lifestyle and sets itself apart as a unique destination in Kuwait," he noted.

The country's strategic location at the crossroads of global business makes it a key destination for corporate travellers, while its picturesque beaches, thriving arts scene, and exquisite culinary offerings attract leisure guests year-round.

Kuwait has a dynamic blend of rich history and modern development, offering visitors a unique cultural experience. From the traditional charm of Souq Al-Mubarakiya to the architectural marvel of Kuwait Towers, the city effortlessly merges its heritage with contemporary advancements, said the hospitality group in a statement.

Visitors can explore the vibrant cityscape, indulge in world-class shopping at The Avenues Mall, or experience the tranquility of the Arabian Gulf coastline, it stated.

Odile De Groot, the General Manager of Park Inn by Radisson Hotel & Apartments Kuwait, said: "Our team is thrilled to open the first Park Inn by Radisson in Kuwait. This property is designed for short and extended stays, offering breathtaking sea views, cutting-edge innovative facilities, and spacious meeting areas catering to all guest needs."

"We are excited to deliver an elevated experience that showcases the best of Kuwait's hospitality while championing diversity within our leadership," stated Odile De Groot.

"Achieving a 50/50 gender balance is central to our mission, and we are committed to fostering an inclusive and empowered team," he added.

According to him, wellness enthusiasts will enjoy the hotel's fitness center, which offers panoramic sea views.

Equipped with the latest cardiovascular and strength-training equipment, saunas, and steam rooms, the facility ensures a comprehensive wellness experience, he stated.

Cordon said Kuwait's warm hospitality, paired with a growing focus on tourism, ensures a welcoming environment for all travellers.

https://www.tradearabia.com/news/CONS_428459.html

Bahrain

Bahrain issues over 10,000 Golden Residency permits

The permits have been granted to a select group of property owners, skilled professionals

Bahrain's Nationality, Passports, and Residence Affairs (NPRA) has issued over 10,000 Golden Residency permits to recipients from 99 countries, to drive economic and investment growth and attract skilled talent.

This initiative aligns with government directives led by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister, with the follow-up of General Shaikh Rashid bin Abdullah Al Khalifa, the Minister of Interior, a Bahrain News Agency (BNA) report said.

The permits have been granted to a select group of property owners, skilled professionals- including artists and athletes, as well as long-serving employees and their families who met the eligibility criteria.

Investing in a Rapidly Transforming Region

The announcement was made at the recent Gateway Gulf 2024 hosted by Bahrain. The forum brought together international government officials, business leaders and executives under the theme 'Investing in a Rapidly Transforming Region'.

Shaikh Hisham bin Abdulrahman Al Khalifa, Undersecretary of NPRA, noted that the Minister of Interior's directives have strengthened Bahrain's investment climate across multiple sectors,

supporting the economy in line with Bahrain's Economic Vision 2030 and advancing digital transformation within residency services.

The Golden Residency is available to eligible employees or retirees who have lived in Bahrain for over five consecutive years with a minimum monthly salary of BD2,000 ($5,307).

The following categories are eligible for immediate Golden Residency based on specific requirements:

Property Owners: Must own property or properties in Bahrain valued at a minimum of BD200,000.

Retirees: Must have a monthly income of at least BD4,000.

https://www.zawya.com/en/economy/gcc/bahrain-issues-over-10-000-golden-residency-permits-yyq96g2i

Master's Degree and Experience: New Requirements for Expat Workers in Bahrain's Public Sector

In a significant move to prioritize local talent, the Bahraini Parliament today passed a law that imposes strict hiring criteria on expatriates seeking employment in public sector roles. The new legislation mandates that expat hires must hold a master's degree and have at least ten years of experience in their respective fields. Additionally, contracts for expatriate employees are limited to two years, renewable only with the approval of the Civil Service Bureau.

This law received near-unanimous support from MPs, with only MP Abdulla Al Rumaihi opposing the measure. By setting high qualifications and contract limits for expatriate hires, the legislation aims to ensure that Bahrainis are given preferential access to government job opportunities. Importantly, expatriate employees are now required to train a Bahraini staff member to take over their responsibilities, fostering knowledge transfer and empowering local workers to assume key roles.

While the initiative seeks to enhance job prospects for Bahrainis and equip them for future public sector positions, it has raised concerns regarding potential hiring inflexibility. Government officials have warned that the stringent requirements may restrict the pool of qualified candidates for

specialized roles, potentially hindering the ability of departments to fill essential positions with necessary expertise.

His Excellency Ghanim Al Buainain, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, reported a 17% decrease in the number of expatriate employees in the public sector, with current statistics revealing that 5,800 expats are employed in government roles. Al Buainain expressed concerns over the feasibility of the new requirement for a master's degree, noting that the prevailing standard qualification is typically a bachelor's degree. He further highlighted the fact that 28 positions in the public sector remain unfilled because no Bahraini applicants have come forward for these roles.

In a memo to government officials, it was cautioned that maintaining flexibility in hiring practices is essential to attract specialized skills. The memo emphasized that rigid standards, if codified into law rather than left as administrative guidelines, could prevent departments from adapting to the evolving demands of the job market.

As Bahrain moves forward with this legislation, the government faces the challenge of balancing the need to prioritize local talent while ensuring that essential roles within the public sector are filled by qualified professionals.

https://www.gulf-insider.com/bahrain-enacts-strict-expat-hiring-rules/

QATAR

Payments for government services to be exclusively through Himyan cards from 2025

The Qatar Central Bank (QCB) has announced the start of a digital transformation process — for payments to different government departments — in a phased manner, starting in February 2025.

The QCB said Qatar's national payment card Himyan will become the exclusive payment method for fees paid to government entities for different services.

The move aims to raise the level of security in government transactions in Qatar and reduce the costs associated with payment processes.

The QCB reiterated that the change will not affect the quality and flow of services provided to the country's citizens, residents, and visitors. Further details about the digital transformation process will be announced in due time, ensuring their ease of access to government services.

Himyan is the first national payment card with a Qatari identity, owned by the Qatar Central Bank.

https://www.qatarliving.com/forum/news/payments-government-services-be-exclusively-through-himyan-cards-2025