

# PRE DEPARTURE TRAINING MANUAL

For Intending Emigrants

**THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)**

# **PREFACE**

# GENERAL INFORMATION FOR OVERSEAS MIGRANTS

## **Definition**

Emigration, in this context, means the departure of any person from India with a view to taking up any employment (whether or not under an agreement, with or without the assistance of a registered Recruiting Agent or employer) in any country or place outside India.

## **The Present Situation**

Every year hundreds of thousands of Indians emigrate in search of job. The effect of economic liberalization in India is visible on labour migration too. One of the striking features of labour migration from India is that more than 90 percent of the total outflow is to the Middle East.

## **The Emigration Act**

The Emigration Act, 1983, seeks to safeguard the interests and ensure the welfare of emigrants. Only the recruiting agents registered with the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs are eligible as per the Act to conduct the business of recruitment for overseas employment and they are required to obtain proper Registration Certificates (RC) from the Protector General of Emigrants.

The registered recruiting agents are authorized to collect from each category of worker a maximum service charge in 4 slabs as shown below.

<b>Maximum service charge</b>	<b>Category of workers</b>
Rs 2000	Unskilled Workers
Rs 3000	Semiskilled workers
Rs 5000	Skilled workers
Rs 10000	Others than the above

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (Formerly Ministry of Labour and Employment) administers the Emigration Act through the eight offices of Protector of Emigrants (POEs). The offices are located at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Chandigarh, Cochi, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

### **Emigration Check Required (ECR) Category**

Categories of persons whose passports have been endorsed as “Emigration Check Required” (ECR), if intending to travel abroad for employment purposes, are required to obtain emigration clearance.

### **Emigration Check Not Required (ECNR) Category**

Section 22 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides that no citizen of India shall migrate unless he obtains emigration clearance from the concerned Protector of Emigrants (POE). However, with a view to facilitating the movement of the workers, 14 categories of persons (listed later in this chapter) have been exempted from this requirement and have been placed under “emigration Check Not Required’ (ECNR) category. Such persons are not required to obtain any emigration clearance from the offices of POEs before seeking employment abroad.

### **Countries for Which Emigration Clearance is Not Required**

Total number of countries for which emigration clearance is not required is 174.

### **List of Countries for Which Emigration Clearance Is Required (ECR)**

1. Afghanistan
2. Bahrain
3. Brunei
4. Kuwait
5. Indonesia
6. Jordan
7. Lebanon
8. Libya
9. Malaysia
10. Oman
11. Qatar
12. Sudan
13. Syria
14. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
15. Thailand
16. United Arab Emirates
17. Yemen
18. Iraq (Emigration banned)

### **List of Persons/Categories of Workers in Whose Case Emigration Check is Not Required**

1. All holders of Diplomatic/ Official Passports
2. All Gazetted Government Servants
3. All Income-tax payers (including agricultural income tax payers) in their individual capacity
4. All professional degree holders, such as Doctors holding MBBS

- degrees or Degrees in Ayurveda or Homeopathy; Accredited journalists; Engineers; Chartered Accountants; Lecturers; Teachers; Scientists; Advocates etc.
5. Spouses and dependent children of category of persons listed from (2) to (4).
  6. Persons holding class 10 qualification or higher degrees.
  7. Seamen who are in possession of CDC or Sea Cadets, Desk Cadets (i) who have passed final examination of three year B.Sc. Nautical Sciences Courses at T S Chanakya, Mumbai; and (ii) who have undergone three months pre-sea training at any of the government approved Training Institutes such as T S Chanakya, T S Rehman, T S Jawahar, MTI (SCI) and NIPM, Chennai after production of identity cards issued by the Shipping Master, Mumbai/ Kolkata/ Chennai
  8. Persons holding permanent immigration visas, such as the visas of UK, USA and Australia.
  9. Persons possessing two years' diploma from any institute recognized by the national Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) or State Council of Vocational Training (SCVT) or persons holding three years' diploma/equivalent degree from institutions like polytechnics recognized by Central/State Governments.
  10. Nurses possessing qualifications recognized under the Indian Nursing Council Act, 1947.
  11. All persons above the age of 50 years.
  12. All persons who have been staying abroad for more than three years (the period of three years could be either in one stretch or broken) and spouses.
  13. Children below 18 years of age.

### **Guidelines for Emigration Clearance**

The procedure for emigration clearance has been simplified. Emigration clearance to individuals is granted on the same day on which the

application is made at any of the offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POE). Even where the clearance is required for groups, it is given on the same day at all POE offices.

### **Procedure for Emigration Clearance**

- 1) Emigration clearance will be made on the passport when the individual approaches either directly or through a registered Recruiting Agent.
- 2) In cases in which the profession indicated in visa does not tally with the profession indicated in the passport, an affidavit may be obtained from the Recruiting Agent.
- 3) No clearance may be given for Iraq unless specifically authorized by Indian Embassy in Iraq.
- 4) No emigration clearance shall be granted for recruiting Indian nationals for any Foreign Employer placed in 'Prior Approval Category' (PAC)

### **Applying for Emigration Clearance**

The application for emigration clearance should be made in the prescribed form by the applicant directly or through a Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned.

### **Documents Required for Semi-Skilled Workers**

Semi-skilled individuals who seek emigration clearance directly from the Protectors of Emigrants (and not through Recruiting Agents) are required to produce the following documents in original for scrutiny and return:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid visa.
- 2) Employment contract from foreign employer
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Insurance policy (applicable from December 25, 2003)

## **Guidelines for Emigrants**

The Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) has issued guidelines, which the emigrants must keep in mind before leaving India and on reaching the foreign country. These are:

### **Before You Leave, Ensure the Following**

- You have a valid passport and visa;
- You have a copy of the agreement signed by you and your foreign employer or his agent;
- You have an insurance policy from any insurance company registered with IRDA.
- You have opened a Savings Bank Account to enable you to send your remittances.

### **After Emigration, you should be careful**

- Not to lose your passport;
- Not to sign any other agreement or sign on any blank piece of paper;
- Not to strike work or resort to agitations. It is illegal and you may be sent back to India;
- To always keep the address and telephone number of the Indian Embassy with you; and
- To report all complaints to the Indian Embassy.



## **Documents Required for Unskilled Workers**

Unskilled workers and women (not below 30 years of age) seeking employment abroad as housemaids/ domestic workers shall continue to furnish (in original) the following documents at the time of obtaining emigration clearance:

- 1) Passport valid for a minimum period of six months with valid Visa.
- 2) Work agreement from the foreign employer duly attested by the Indian Mission and signed by employer and employee or Permission letter from the concerned Indian Mission/ Post.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Insurance policy (applicable from December 25, 2003)

## **Documents Required for Emigration Clearance Through Project Exporter**

1. Valid Passport (Valid for at least 6 months)
2. Valid visa in English language.
3. Permit issued by Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, with effective date of validity.
4. Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy 2006
5. Valid Bank Guarantee
6. Approval of the Ministry, if a candidate is a female aged 30 years or less.

The Protector of Emigrants (POE) shall, after satisfying himself about the accuracy of the particulars mentioned in the application and in the other documents submitted along with the application, grants emigration clearance in the prescribed manner and form. In case there is any deficiency, the POE shall intimate the same by order in writing to the applicant or, as the case may be, the Recruiting Agent or employer, through whom the applications have been made about the deficiencies and require him to make good such deficiencies within such time as may be specified in the order or reject the application.

## **Do's and Don't Do's**

In the United Arab Emirates, laws demand that you must not move about in public without your “Bataka”. Iqamas and “Batakas” are identity cards issued by the two countries to all foreign workers soon after they settle down on their jobs.

UAE doesnot allow change in job sponsorship, but only after prior permission is obtained.

- The emigrant workers must get their service agreements prepared in both English and Arabic. They should not part with their passports and copies of the service contracts.
- Non-payment or delayed payment of wages could be reported to Indian missions, for redressal of grievances.
- In the UAE, workers are given gratuity equivalent to 21 days’ wages for every completed year of service.

## **Verification of the genuineness of visa/an employment contract**

The Protectors of emigrants’ offices may be contacted with full details for obtaining visa. The matter may also be referred to the Embassy of India in the destination country, if necessary, with full particulars of the sponsor company (Name, Address, Telephone and Fax No.) which issued the visa, along with Passport particulars.

## **Fate of Indian Nationals with ‘Visit visa’**

Some companies issue ‘visit visa’ (commercial ‘visit visa’) to meet their urgent manpower requirement for short-term work. After the work is finished, workers are allowed to come back to the destination country (after leaving it) on normal employment visa in case the employer needs them for further periods, or repatriated to India.

Visit visa is different from employment visa and it is not covered by the labour laws of the destination countries. Therefore visit visa workers do not have legal rights.

## **Employment Contract**

Indian workers are advised to obtain written contract duly signed by the sponsor/employer company before arrival in the destination country.

The official language of the contract recognized by the Gulf countries is Arabic. In a bilingual contract (English and Arabic), the Arabic version prevails in case of any dispute on the clauses of the contract.

## **Essential terms for a contract**

The contract should contain all-important terms of employment as per 15(2) of Emigration Rules.

- (i) period of employment/place of employment ;
- (ii) wages and other conditions of service ;
- (iii) free food or food allowance provision ;
- (iv) free accommodation ;
- (v) provision in regard to disposal, or transportation to India, of dead body of the emigrant ;
- (vi) working hours, overtime allowance, other working conditions, leave and social security benefits as per local labour laws ;
- (vii) to-and-fro air-passage at the employers' cost ; and
- (viii) mode of settlement of disputes;

## **Obtaining copy of the contract while in India**

As per the instructions of the Government of India, recruitment agents are expected to provide a copy of employment contract to each worker before his/her departure. To safeguard his/her own interest, an individual worker has to demand from the recruitment agent a copy of the duly signed contract before departure. Complaints may be lodged against defaulting agencies with the nearest Protector of Emigrants.

## **Important Documents**

In addition to all the originals, copies of the following documents may be retained with the employee.

1. employment contract,
2. passport,
3. visa and
4. certificates of educational qualification

## **Guidelines for those Emigrating through RAs**

- Be sure of your Recruiting Agent. Ask him to show his Registration Certificate issued by the Protector General of Emigrants, Govt. of India. Do not deal with him unless he is registered and the registration is valid. In case of doubt, check with any of the offices of the Protectors of Emigrants (POEs) or the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).
- DO NOT deal with sub-agents as they are not permitted under the Emigration Act, 1983 and Rules.
- Ask the Recruiting Agent to show you the Demand Letter and Power of Attorney from the foreign employer.
- Also carefully go through the Employment Contract detailing the salary/wage levels and other service conditions.
- DO NOT pay the Agent anything other than the service charge of Rs.2,000 for Un-skilled workers., Rs.3,000 for Semi-skilled, Rs. 5,000 for Skilled workers and Rs. 10,000 for other than the above categories.
- Make payments preferably by Demand Draft or Cheque and obtain a receipt. Complaints of overcharging or cheating can be lodged with the concerned POE or with the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).

## Check Before Departure

- ◆ Ensure you have a valid Passport at least for 06 months. A valid Visa must be either stamped on or accompany your Passport. Always keep a photocopy of your Passport and Visa.
- ◆ You must possess a copy of the Employment Contract signed by you and your foreign employer duly attested by the registered recruiting agent.
- ◆ Insist on a copy of Employment Contract in English duly authenticated by the recruiting agent.
- ◆ Open a Savings Bank N.R.E. Account in one of the Banks in India to enable you to send your remittances from abroad.
- ◆ Get familiar with local labour laws, working and living conditions of the country of employment. Keep complete address of the Indian Embassy there with you.

## In the Country of Your Employment

- \* Obtain a Resident Permit or Identity Card, Labour Card or IQUAMA.
- \* DO NOT part with your Passport and copy of Employment Contract signed by you in India.
- \* DO NOT sign any other Employment Contract or any blank paper.
- \* DO NOT strike work or resort to agitations. These are illegal under local labour laws. You could be arrested, imprisoned and also deported.
- \* AVOID all contacts that may result in AIDS – a dreaded disease.
- \* Keep in touch with the nearest Indian Mission and report any complaints about non-payment or delayed payment of wages or compensations or any other problem to the Indian Mission.

## **Customs Formalities**

- ❑ Personal baggage – Customs checking is VERY STRICT. Kindly co-operate with the Customs staff at the International Airport.
- ❑ Ensure that you do not carry any narcotics or alcoholic drinks. Alcohol is strictly prohibited. Its consumption is a serious offence attracting severe punishment.
- ❑ DO NOT accept any unchecked parcel from any one. If you have to take a parcel for someone, check thoroughly that it does not contain alcohol or narcotics. Otherwise, it may land you in serious difficulties on arrival in the country of employment.

## **Precautions**

- ◆ You must make and keep a photocopy of all the pages of your Passport. DO NOT lose your Passport or its photocopy.
- ◆ In case you misplace your Passport, inform the nearest Indian Mission immediately giving them details, i.e. Passport number, date and place of issue, your name and date of your entry in to the country of employment. You can give these details only if you keep a photocopy of your Passport.
- ◆ DO NOT lose your copy of Employment Contract. Make photocopies and keep them with you always.
- ◆ You must have a full name, address, telephone/fax number of your foreign employer, before you leave India.
- ◆ If you have difficulty in locating your foreign employer, contact the nearest Indian Mission immediately.
- ◆ DO NOT accept temporary or permanent employment with another person or establishment other than the sponsoring Company/ establishment/ person. Employment with persons other than your original sponsor is strictly prohibited and attracts severe punishment.

- ◆ Before the Visa or Employment Contract expires, get them renewed. If you are returning to India for a short while during the tenure of your Employment Contract abroad, ensure that the validity period of Visa does not expire before you return to the country of employment.
- ◆ Ensure also that your Passport is valid. Get it revalidated from the concerned Indian Mission abroad or from the Regional Passport Office (RPO) in India, at least two months before its expiry.

## **Embassy of India**

Embassy of India, Abu Dhabi, P.O. Box 4090, (Near Pepsi Cola, Off the Airport Road), Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

Phone: 00-971-2-4492700, Fax: 00-971-2-4444685 / 4447768

Email: indiauae@emirates.net.ae

Ambassador

Email: amb@indembassyuae.org

Labour & Welfare Wing

Second Secretary (L&W). Email: lnw@indembassyuae.org

## **Important Contacts**

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Government of India

Akbar Bhavan,

Chanakya Puri,

New Delhi-110021

Telephone No 91-11-2419700

Fax No: 91-11-24197919.

Email: info@moia.nic.in

Shri. Vayalar Ravi	Minister for Overseas Indian Affairs	Ph. (O) 91-11-24676836/37  Fax (O) 91-11-24197985  Email: minister@moia.nic.in Ph (R) 91-11-23792148/49 Fax (R) 91-11-23792142
Shri. K. Mohandas	Secretary, MOIA	Ph: 91-11-24674144 -24674143 -24197902 -24197991 Email : secretary@moia.nic.in
Shri. J Panda	Protector General of Emigrants	Ph: 91-11-24197972 -26874250 Email: pge@moia.nic.in

### **List of Offices of Protector of Emigrants in India**

1. Protector of Emigrants, New Delhi Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block, Mansigh Road. ND 110001.  
Ph. 011 2338 2472
2. Protector of Emigrants Bombay, Building "E, Khira Nagar, S V Road, Santa Cruz (West), Mumbai, 400054.  
Ph. 022-2614 7393, 022 2612 3579
3. Protector of Emigrants Trivandrum, Sugandh, 24/846 (1), Thycaud, Trivandrum 695014. Ph. 0471 2741790
4. Protector of Emigrants Kochi, Mercy Estate, Ravipuram, M G Road, Kochi 682015. Ph 0484 2360187



5. Protector of Emigrants, Chennai, TNHB Shopping Complex  
Ashok Nagar, Chennai 600083, Ph. 044 24821337
6. Protector of Emigrants Chandigarh, Kendriya Sadan  
Fifth Block, Ground Floor, Sector 9A, Chandigarh- 160017.  
Ph. 0172- 2741790
7. Protector of Emigrants Kolkata, Room No: 116,  
A- Wing, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, M S O Building, D F Block, Salt Lake,  
Kolkata 700064. Ph. 033 2343407
8. Protector of Emigrants Hyderabad, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Chandra Vihar, APHB, MG Road, Hyderabad- 500001.  
Ph: 040 4732867

#### **Information Available on the Website of MOIA**

- Revised emigration requirements
- Recruiting agents having suspended RC
- Online emigration clearance system
- List of Registered recruiting agents with valid RC as on 31-10-2007
- Internal watchlist of recruiting agents
- Recruiting agents having cancelled RC
- Foreign employers on PAC
- Project Exporters
- Emigration Act, 1983
- Emigration Rules
- Pravsi Bharatiya Bhima Yojana 2003
- Redressal of Public Grievances Information on Recruiting Agents and Black Listed Foreign Employers
- Guidelines for recruiting agents/guidelines for prospective Emigrant workers.

## THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (UAE)

### **Introduction**

The federation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was formed in 1971, comprising the seven states of Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaima, Al Fujirah and Umm AL Qaiwan. It has a total area of nearly 83000 sq kilometers and a population of 2.6 million ( in 2006). The UAE is situated in the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, between Oman and Saudi Arabia on the East and the West and Qatar on the North. Most off the land is barren and dry. The capital of the UAE is Abu Dhabi.

### **History**

The population of the area converted to Islam in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The area entered into a truce with the British in 1820, which was made permanent in 1853. The arrangement continued till 1971, when the British withdrew from the Persian Gulf in 1971.

### **Political System**

Each of the member states of the UAE constitutes a sovereign country ruled by the Sheikh (tribal chief). Besides the Sheikhs, there is a federal government ruled by a Supreme Council of Rulers, made up of the seven Sheikhs. It is the Supreme Council, which appoints the Prime Minister and the cabinet. There does not exist any system of general elections or peoples representation in government.

## Religion and Language

The official language of the UAE is Arabic. However, Persian, English, Hindi and Urdu are also in use. Islam is the religion of the UAE with 96 percent of the native population Muslim. Abu Dhabi is the largest member of the UAE and Ajman, the smallest.

## Climate

The area is a desert land, with flat, barren coastal plains merging into rolling sand dunes of vast desert wasteland, there are a few mountains on the east where the climate is in general cooler than elsewhere in the emirates. The climate is the hottest and the most humid in the world during summer months.

Natural Resources. Petroleum and natural gas are the two most important natural resources of the area.

## Economy

The UAE has an open economy with a high per capita income (of about US\$ 24000 in 2006) and an annual trade surplus. Oil and gas account for one-third of the GDP. In the past three decades, the UAE has achieved an economic miracle, transformation from an impoverished desert to a modern nation, with flourishing manufacturing, trade and tourism. It jealously guards its traditional local occupation of pearl diving. It was the discovery of oil and natural gas in 1958 that brought immediate wealth to the area (Particularly to Abu Dhabi and Dubai) and heralded a process of rapid progress to the entire region ever since then.

Agricultural land forms only about 1% of the land area and it is cultivated with dates, watermelon and vegetables; poultry and dairy-farming and fishing also form part of the primary sector activities in the area. While agriculture contributes less than 3 % of the GDP, the contributions of industry and services have been 52 % and 45 % respectively. The important industries are petroleum-refining, fish-processing, petro-

chemicals, construction materials , boat building, pearl refining and handicrafts. The UAE maintains strong trading relations with Japan, South Korea, India , China, Thailand, Germany , France, the UK and the USA.

Dirham is the national currency in the UAE. One Dirham is equal to 100 Fils and about Indian Rs. 11. The total labour force of the UAE is about 2.8 million of which three-fourths in the age group of 15-64 years, are expatriates, mostly from the south and south East Asian Countries. Agriculture absorbs only about 7percent of the labour force, while industries and services employ 15 percent and 78 percent respectively (2000 estimates).

### **Transport and Communications**

Roadways are the principal means of transportation within the UAE. Railways and waterways do not exist. There are several important ports and harbours in all the member countries of the UAE. There are more than 40 airports with facilities for internal and international flights.

Communication facilities are well developed in the UAE with abundant telephone main lines and mobile cellular telephones in use. Radios and televisions also exist in large numbers. Internet services and websites are also well developed.

### **Entry Requirements**

A single visa is valid for all the seven member countries (emirates). To enter the UAE, passport is required. AIDs test is required for work and residence permits. Tests are conducted after arrival in the UAE.

### **Public Conduct**

Women are found in employment in most professions and in commercial activities such as banking and retail trade. Loud speech and guffaw are considered crude and vulgar.

## **Government**

Each of the seven emirates of the UAE is a sovereign principality ruled by the head of the leading family of the tribe that settled there. Each ruler has the title, Emir (Prince or commander) and the style of sheikh (chief). The head of the UAE is the ruler of Abu Dhabi. Traditionally the prime minister of the UAE is the ruler of Dubai. Ministers are appointed from among all the ruling families.

## **Medical Facilities**

Modern medical facilities and medicines are available in most cities of the UAE, but not in all the outlying areas. Information on vaccinations and other health precautions such as safe food safe water and protection from insect bite is available from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

## **Socio-cultural Activities**

The expatriate population in the UAE has developed several social and cultural activities. They have established schools and built temples, churches and *gurudwaras*.

## **Criminal Penalties**

Penalties for breaking the law are severe in the UAE. Persons violating the UAE laws, knowingly or unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession and use of, or trafficking in, illegal drugs are severe and usually invite lengthy jail sentences and heavy fines. Paedophiles and child pornographers are also heavily punished. Drug trafficking is an offence for which death sentence may be awarded. Crimes of fraud and non-payment of bills may result in imprisonment and fines. Drinking alcohol without proper permit is illegal and might result in arrest, fines and imprisonment.

## **Labour Laws**

Expatriates are allowed to stay in the UAE only as long as their work permits and residence visas are valid. Employers have no right to retain

the passport of employees. The UAE does not provide residency or citizenship to foreign nationals. If an employer has cheated an expatriate, the victim has the right to sue the employer for compensation, supported by ample evidence of having been cheated. Employees have the freedom to resign from jobs if they so wish. Employers are not entitled to force employees to refund the visa fee or other expenses, except in certain specified cases. The labour contract entered into by an employer should be endorsed by the Ministry of labour for it to become legally valid for all purposes. There is no such thing as open visa even though many sponsors sell visas for high amounts and many culpable aspirants for jobs buy such visas. Changing of jobs is permissible with the consent of the employer under whom a person works. Expatriate workers cannot appeal against termination of their jobs. But they may claim compensation for the loss of work. It is illegal for employers to accept money from employees for transferring their sponsorship. Break of contract by an employee is illegal and the employer concerned is entitled for compensation from the employee. An employee who has acquired a residence visa in Dubai is eligible to apply for a family visa, but only in Dubai.

Complaints may be made by employees against employers, to the ministry of labour and Social Affairs if the employer makes unlawful deductions from employees salary.

In cases of submission of false identity of nationality, of forged documents, of causing huge loss to the employer, of disobedience, of failure to discharge basic duties, of divulgence of secrets and confidential matters, of punishment by courts of law for misconduct, of drunkenness during working hours, for assaults on the employer, supervisory personnel or colleagues and of unauthorized absence from work, the employees are liable to punishment.

Employers are liable to defray the cost of returning home or to the place of new employment, due to termination of work contract. A worker, who has completed one year of continuous service, is entitled to severance pay on the termination of employment.

Engineers and professionals are allowed to change job after two years of continuous service under an employer, if they have valid residence visas and no objection certificates from the sponsor.

For women employees, maternity leave of 45 days is permissible, if they have been in continuous employment of their present employers for a period of not less than one year. For persons who have not completed the stipulated period, half-pay maternity leave may be granted.

An employee may leave his/ her present job if his/her employer fails to comply with the obligations under the contract, if the employer or his legal representatives assault the employee, and if the employer fails to give the employee regular salary.

Employers are not allowed by law to take custody of the passports of employees. Expatriates are not allowed to work without work permits, residence visas and labour contracts. Employers are not permitted by law to force their employees to review employment contracts.

Housemaids are not protected by the UAE's labour laws.

While an employee gets promotion, he/she should make a new contract with the consent of the employer and it should be endorsed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.

In the case of limited contracts (in terms of time), the party which terminates the contract should give compensation to the other party. In unlimited contracts, either party can terminate the contract at any time, with proper notice. If an employer fails to pay salary to employees even after court orders in favour of the employees, the court orders may be executed by attaching the properties of the employer and selling them.

## **Social Customs in Arab Countries**

Arab customs are, generally, very different from those in the west, and you should be aware of what you're expected to do and not to do. Acquaintance with local customs and social behaviour will make your adaptation more easy. And being a foreigner, this adaptation is inevitable for you. Apart

from criminal actions and behaviour, there are certain unwritten rules that you must observe in order to avoid offending local sensibilities.

## **Dress**

There are different ways of dressing for local and expatriate women. Outside the home, Arab women dress according to religious custom ie they must cover most of the body, from head to foot. The traditional black overgarment (*abaya*) is ankle length with long sleeves and a high neckline, and the hair is covered. Some Arab women (especially Saudis and those with strictly religious husbands) are totally covered, including their face and hands. This is to protect women from unwanted attention. In Saudi Arabia even foreign women must wear an abaya outside the home and the religious police will stop any woman with uncovered head and direct her to cover it immediately. In other states, foreign women can wear western clothes but should always dress conservatively.

Arabs proscribe clothes for women which reveal the shoulders, arms and legs. Any woman dressing provocatively will be regarded as being of 'easy virtue' or perhaps even as a prostitute. In the home, Arab women often adopt western dress, particularly younger women, and there are no restrictions on dressing for foreign women in private.

Arab men wear the thobe (a loose, ankle-length robe). It can be worn for all occasions, including social and business. The traditional head covering is the *guthra* (a white or red and white checkered cloth) held in place by the *agal* (a black 'rope'). Arab men wear casual dress on very informal occasions or at the beach, but Saudi men are strongly encouraged to wear national dress at all times.

Foreign men are not expected to wear Arab garments. Men should avoid wearing shorts and sleeveless shirts in public. However, suits are rarely worn in the Gulf, except for important business meetings and related social events. Standard dress in the office is a shirt (usually long-sleeved), tie and lightweight trousers.



## Forms of Address

It is important to greet local people in the correct way. It is important to address a person by his full name, particularly on formal occasions and in correspondence. The general formal address is Sayyed (sir) for men and Sayeeda or Sayeedity (Madam) for women, followed by the person's full name. Rulers are addressed "Your Highness (Your Majesty)". Senior members of the ruling families are called your Excellency followed by Shaik and their full name.

## Greetings

The most common greeting in the Gulf is *Salam alaykum* ('Peace be upon you'), and the correct reply to which is *Wa alaykum as-salam* ('And upon you be peace'). Other common greetings and the accepted replies are:

Greeting	Meaning	Reply
Ahlan wa sahlan	Hello	Ahlan bik
Sabah al-khayr	Good morning/afternoon	Sabah an-nur
Masa al-khayr	Good evening	Masa an-nur

Note that *tisbah ala-khayr*, meaning 'good night', is said on parting, as in English, and the reply is *wa inta min ahlu*.

You should always shake hands when greeting and parting from Arab men. In the case of Arab women, you should be guided by the woman's behaviour: many Arab women won't shake hands with non-Arab men, although educated women might. This is normal even with close friends whom you meet frequently.

If the handshake you receive when leaving somebody is longer than the one you received when meeting him, it indicates that you've made a good impression.

Incidentally, newcomers should note that refusals or protracted reluctance to meet people are frowned upon.

Note also that you shouldn't approach Arab women, look at them or talk to them unless you've been properly introduced.

After handshaking, it's customary to enquire after the other person's health and other matters, and you should expect similar enquiries to be directed at you.

(Don't enquire after the health of the female members of an Arab's family, however, but restrict your questions to those regarding the family in general or the sons.) This can take a long time, as neither party wishes to be the one to draw matters to a close.

Foreigners aren't expected to know or use all the subtleties this ritual involves, but you will make a good impression if you learn at least some of the standard expressions and use them in the correct way.

Whether in face-to-face conversation or speaking to people on the telephone, don't talk business straight away; if you do so, Arabs will assume that you're impatient or not interested in them personally.

## **Hands & Feet**

You should accept refreshment whenever it's offered, but note that you should always use your right hand for drinking and eating, as the left hand is regarded as unclean (as it's used for 'toilet purposes'). Similarly, you should avoid showing the soles of your shoes or feet, which implies that you think the other person is 'dirty', which is obviously highly offensive. You should therefore keep your feet flat on the ground and not cross your legs.

## **Invitations**

If you're invited to the home of an Arab, you should always accept.

## Dos and Don't Dos

*You should also heed the following warnings:*

- Don't offer alcoholic drinks to an Arab, unless you're certain that he drinks alcohol. This can cause great offence.
- Don't walk on a prayer mat or in front of any person at prayer and try not to stare at people who are praying.
- Don't try to enter a mosque without first asking permission. It's unlikely that you will be allowed in.
- Don't try to enter the Holy sites. The roads are well signposted to notify everybody of this restriction. If a non-Muslim is found within the prohibited areas, he's likely to be assaulted and will be afforded no protection against the assailants.
- Avoid blasphemy, particularly in the presence of Muslims.
- Avoid putting an Arab in a position where he might suffer a 'loss of face' in front of other Arabs. He will appreciate this, if he notices your action.
- Don't beckon to people with a finger, as this is considered particularly impolite. Arabs might use such a gesture to summon a dog.
- Avoid shouting and displays of aggression or drunkenness at all times, as such behaviour is rarely tolerated.
- During Ramadan, don't eat, drink or smoke anywhere where you can be seen by Muslims during the hours of daylight and don't engage in any noisy behaviour or embrace or kiss anyone in public.

You should generally take every opportunity to become acquainted with local people and avoid the natural tendency to stay within the social and physical confines of your foreign ‘ghetto’.

Your Arab host will be interested in you and your views. However, you should avoid politics and religion as subjects for discussion; your opinions might be regarded as ill-informed or even offensive, even if they seem acceptable to you from a western perspective.

When you enter the *majlis*, the reception room for visitors, you should always remove your footwear, unless the host indicates otherwise (you should therefore ensure that there are no holes in your socks!).

If you’re with a female companion, she will be whisked off to join the women.

You will almost certainly be offered something to drink and perhaps eat; accept the offer.

Arabs are almost always polite and expect the same from those they meet, and believe that sharing a meal with a person positively affects the relationship.

It’s certainly worth learning enough Arabic to communicate the pleasantries, greetings and responses of the country you’re living in.

You will enjoy people’s reaction and your hosts invariably offer encouragement to those who attempt to speak their language. It’s important to note, however, that the Arabic language has a special significance, having been designed to carry the word of God, so it’s important to use it respectfully.

You should also never call at an Arab’s house without warning him that you’re coming. If the women of the family are present, this won’t be appreciated.

You should also avoid expressing admiration for any of your host’s possessions, as tradition dictates that he must then offer it to you.

Although this tradition isn't followed by everybody, it can nevertheless cause embarrassment. What's more, the correct response is for the recipient to give an even more valued gift in return, so think twice before admiring an Arab's Rolls Royce!

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