

# PRE DEPARTURE TRAINING MANUAL

For Intending Emigrants

**OMAN**

## Part – I

### 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 or other arrangements to take up such employment, 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 Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, administers the Emigration Act through the eight offices of Protector of Emigrants (POEs). The offices are located at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Chandigarh, Cochin, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram.

#### **Service Charge**

No recruiting agent shall collect from the worker the charges more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered under the employment contract, subject to a maximum of twenty thousand rupees, in respect of the services provided and shall issue a receipt to that worker for the amount collected in this regard.

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

Categories of persons, whose passports have been endorsed as “Emigration Check Required” (ECR), if intending to travel to an ECR country (Listed on page 3) for employment purposes, are required to obtain emigration from the Protector of Emigrants (POEs) either directly or through the recruitment agents or through the employer concerned.

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

Section 22 of the Emigration Act, 1983 provides that no citizen of India shall migrate unless he obtains authorization from the concerned POE in the prescribed manner and form. However, with a view to facilitating the movement of the workers, 13 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 with ECR / ECNR status**

There are total of 175 countries (called as ECNR countries) do not require emigration clearance, whereas 17 countries are listed as emigration check required countries, they are listed below:

### **List of Countries for which Emigration Clearance is Required (ECR)**

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

### **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/groups is granted on the same day on which the application is made at any of the offices of the Protector of Emigrants (POE).

#### **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 or through the employer concerned.
- 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/Employer concerned.
- 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 with prescribed particulars by the applicant directly or through a Recruiting Agent or through the employer concerned to the POE.

### **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 duly attested by the Indian Mission.
- 3) Challan towards deposit of prescribed fee.
- 4) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy

### **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) Valid Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Policy
- 5) Approval of the Ministry, if the female worker is below 30 years of age.

### **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
5. Valid Bank Guarantee

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.

#### **Details of the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY)**

- The Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana (PBBY) was started in 2003. The PBBY was upgraded as the Pravasi Bharatiya Bima Yojana, 2006 to provide broader coverage to the emigrant workers.
- The scheme has been further modified in 2008. The emigrant workers get a minimum insurance cover of Rs. 10 lakhs (instead of Rs. 5 lakhs) and the policy will be for the period of employment contract, i.e. either 2 years or 3 years as the case may be. The reduced premium along with other benefits have been made effective from 01.04.08.
- A comparative statement of PBBY 2006 and PBBY 2008 is as under:

<b>Item</b>	<b>PBBY 2006</b>	<b>PBBY 2008</b>
Minimum sum for which insured under PBBY	Rs. 5.00 Lakhs	Rs. 10.00 Lakhs
Hospitalization (Medical Expenses) Covering injuries / sickness / ailment / diseases	Rs. 50,000/-	Rs. 75,000/-
Repatriation covers for medical unfit	Actual one-way economy class air fare	Actual one-way economy class air fare
Family Hospitalization in India	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 50,000/-
Maternity	Rs. 20,000/-	Rs. 25,000/-
Attendant	Actual one-way economy class air fare	Actual one-way economy class air fare
Legal Expenses	Rs. 25,000/-	Rs. 30,000/-
Actual Premium to be charged (without any hidden costs)	Rs. 475/- for the contract period	Rs. 275/-for 2 years policy period. Rs. 375/- for 3 years policy period.

#### **This policy is available from undernoted Insurance Companies:-**

1. Oriental Insurance Company Ltd.
2. United Insurance Company Ltd.
3. National Insurance Company Ltd.
4. ICICI Lombard.
5. Star Health & Allied Insurance Co. Ltd.
6. IFFCO Tokyo
7. Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Co. Ltd.
8. Reliance General Insurance Co. Ltd.

## **Claim Procedure**

Insured worker is supposed to have the copy of PBBY insurance policy with him. Name of the nominee is so mentioned on the policy, in view of the eventuality of death of insured.

In the event of claim, insured worker/claimant has to lodge a claim under the policy, with the respective insurance company's office wherefrom the policy was issued, if not specifically provided by the insurance company otherwise. While doing so, claimant has to indicate the policy number and details of accident. In the event of death, nominee has to lodge the claim.

After intimation of reported claim, insurance company intimates the insured/claimant the details of documents required to settle the claim. After processing such requisite documents, claim amount is paid to the insured worker/claimant, as the case may be.

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

In the Oman, laws demand that you must not move about in public without your "Iquama". "Iquama" are identity cards / labour cards issued to all expatriates soon after they settle down on their jobs.

Oman does not 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.
- Workers are given gratuity equivalent to 21 days' wages for every completed year of service.

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

The matter may 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 home country. In case the employer needs them for further period; employer may arrange employment visa for such workers.

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 their 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 more than the equivalent of his wages for forty-five days as offered in the employment contract, subject to a maximum of twenty thousand.
- 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 six 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 Oman's 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, Muscat**

Diplomatic Area, Jami at Al-Dowal  
Al-Arabia Street, Diplomatic Qtrs.,  
Al-Khuwair, PO Box 1727, Postal  
Code: 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Oman.

Telephone : 00-968-24684500  
Fax : 00-968-24698291 (General); 24697591 (Amb)  
E-Mail : indiamct@omantel.net.om (General);  
hoc.muscat@mea.gov.in (HOC); hom@indemb-  
oman.org (Amb); couns@indemb-oman.org  
(Counsellor)  
Website : www.indemb-oman.org

### **Important Contacts**

Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs  
Government of India  
Akbar Bhavan,  
Chanakya Puri,  
New Delhi-110021

Telephone No 91-11-24197900  
Fax No: 91-11-24197919.  
Email: info@moia.nic.in

Shri Vayalar Ravi  
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Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

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Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

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Shri Karan A. Singh  
Protector General of Emigrants  
Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

Ph: 91-11-26874250  
Fax: 91-11-24197984  
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, New Delhi 110001.  
Ph. 011 – 23382472  
Fax 011 – 23073908
2. Protector of Emigrants Bombay,  
Building E, Khira Nagar,  
S V Road, Santa Cruz (West), Mumbai, 400054.  
Ph. 022 – 26614393  
Fax: 022 – 26614353
3. Protector of Emigrants Thiruvananthapuram,  
Sugandh, 24/846 (1), Thycaud,  
Thiruvananthapuram – 695014.  
Ph. 0471 – 2741790
4. Protector of Emigrants Kochi,  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Putherikal Building,  
Market Road, Kochi 682035.  
Ph. 0484 – 2360187
5. Protector of Emigrants, Chennai,  
TNHB, Ashok Nagar Shopping Complex (Annexe)  
Ashok Nagar, Chennai 600083,  
Ph. 044 – 24891337
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: 18, A–Wing,  
3rd Floor, M S O Building, D F Block,  
Salt Lake, Kolkata 700084.  
Ph. 033 – 23343407

8. Protector of Emigrants Hyderabad,  
Gruhkalpa, Ground Floor  
Opposite to Gandhi Bhawan,  
Nampally, Hyderabad.  
Ph: 040 - 24652557

#### **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 at [poeonline.gov.in](http://poeonline.gov.in)
- Internal watch-list of recruiting agents
- Recruiting agents having cancelled RC
- Foreign employers on PAC
- Project Exporters at [poeonline.gov.in](http://poeonline.gov.in)
- Emigration Act, 1983
- Emigration Rules, 1983
- Prarsi Bharatiya Bima Yojana
- Redressal of Public Grievances Information on Recruiting Agents and Black Listed Foreign Employers
- Guidelines for recruiting agents/guidelines for prospective Emigrant workers.

#### **Consultation With Public**

PGE conducts the Public Hearings in the office of the Protector of Emigrants, Jaisalmer House, Canteen Block, Mansingh Road, New Delhi between 3.00 PM to 4.00 PM. on all Tuesdays where members of the public could come with their grievances/suggestions without any appointment.

#### **Information Under RTI Act**

For information (under the RTI Act, 2005) citizens may approach the Public Information Officer (RTI) of Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs available from 10:00 hrs to 13:00 hrs on each day (except Monday and Friday). The information pertaining to MOIA is also available on the MOIA Website (<http://www.moia.gov.in>) in detail. Further, the citizens may also approach the PIO (RTI) using email addresses [dsfs@moia.nic.in](mailto:dsfs@moia.nic.in) & [dsemigration@moia.nic.in](mailto:dsemigration@moia.nic.in)

## **Part – II**

### **OMAN**

#### **Introduction**

Oman is the oldest independent state in the Arab world and is one of the more traditional countries in the Gulf region. Till 1970, it used to be one of the most isolated states as well.

#### **Location**

Situated at the south-east corner of the Gulf peninsula, Oman occupies a strategically important position at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, between Yemen and the UAE. Till 1938, the year in which Sultan Said Bin Taimur came to power, Oman had experienced decades of international isolation and had been a society run on feudal lines and troubled by internal rebellion.

It has a total area of 309,500 sq. km and a common border on the West with Saudi Arabia, of about 676 km. The country has a coast line of 2092 km. Climatically speaking, Oman is a desert land, hot and humid along the coast, hot and dry in the interior and strong south west monsoon rains in the far south during May to September. There are a few rugged mountains in the north and the south. Summer winds often raise large sandstorms in the interior parts and there occur periodic droughts.

#### **Natural resources.**

The natural resources of Oman are petroleum, copper, asbestos, natural gas, and some marble limestone, chromium and gypsum. Rising soil salinity, beach pollution from spills and scarcity of natural fresh water resources are some of the important environmental issues that Oman currently faces.

#### **History**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Oman was an empire, which extended down the east African coast and vied with Portugal and Britain for influence in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Sultan Said bin Tamur was deposed in 1970 by his son Sultan Qaboos bin Said who opened up the country, embarked upon economic reforms and boosted spending on health education and welfare.

#### **Population**

The total population of Oman came to 3 million in 2005, of which more than one-fifth is constituted by expatriates. The life expectancy of the native population was 73 years for men and 76 years for women in 2006.

Besides the official language of Arabic, English is also used. The other languages spoken, mainly by the expatriate population include Baluchi, Urdu, Hindi and some other Indian languages.

#### **Political conditions**

Oman had no political party, nor a legislature. But there exist bicameral representative bodies, which provide advice to the government. The judicial system bases itself on Sharia- the Quranic law- and the oral teachings of the Prophet. Sharia courts functioned under the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs. An independent office of the Public Prosecutor has been created and the country has now a Supreme Court too. Administratively, the country is divided into three regions called governorates and 60

districts, for purposes of settling local disputes, collecting taxes, and maintaining peace. The three governors are appointed by the Sultan, with the rank of Ministers of State and the district executives (called *Walīs*) are appointed by the Minister of Interior.

In the place of the 10 year old State Consultative Council, the Sultan established in 1991, the *Majlis al-Shura* (Consultative Council), with a view to systematizing and broadening public participation in government. The three names sent by each district are reviewed by a cabinet committee and forwarded to the Sultan, who makes the final selection. The Consultative Council acts as a conduit of information between the people and the Ministries. It reviews drafts on economic legislation prepared by Ministries and makes recommendation on them, in subjects such communications, housing and financial plans.

Oman incurs large defence expenditures due to regional tensions and wars, struggles and agitations in the adjacent countries of Iraq, Iran and Kuwait. Defence expenditure accounted for about one –third of its public expenditures.

### **Economy**

Oman is a middle-income country, with low rates of inflation. Oman joined the World Trade Organization in 2000 and is in the process of liberalizing its markets. The government makes attempts to reduce its dependence on expatriate labour in order to reduce unemployment of natives. Private foreign investment has come to Oman in a big way in industry, information technology, tourism and higher education.

The native currency unit of Oman is Riyal (equal to 1000 *biaza*), which is equivalent to 2.6 US Dollars (about Rs. 115). The average per capita income in 2006 was about US\$ 9000.

Agriculture contributes only about 3 percent of the GDP. The contribution of industry is as high as 40 percent and that of the services sector, 57 percent. The main agricultural products are dates, lime, banana, alfalfa, vegetables, camels, cattle and fish. Industries comprise mainly crude oil production and refining , natural gas production, construction, production of cement, copper and steel, chemical industries, and manufacture of optic fibre.

Oil was discovered in 1964. The oil resources are owned by Oman, Netherlands and France. Omani oil production has during the past three decades fluctuated widely between 285,000 barrels per day to 900,000 barrels per day due to several reasons such as depletion of recoverable oil resources, fluctuations in oil prices and coordination with the policies of the OPEC (in which Oman is not a member)

Natural Gas resources, which provide fuel to several industrial projects, and power generation and desalination plants, stand at 24 trillion cubic feet. A liquefied natural gas (LPG) processing plant with a capacity of 6.6 million tons per year was completed in 2005.

Oman became a member of the World Trade Organization in 2000, and has since been amending its financial and commercial practices to conform to international standards.

Oman is engaged in the expansion of capacity of its international airports, seaports, roadways in important cities and port towns of the country. Copper mining and refining industries are being expanded. The establishment of oil refineries, patro–chemical complexes, fertilizer plants, aluminium smelters and cement factories is also on.

## **Religion**

Oman is a Muslim Country, but fairly liberal and tolerant. Islamic ideals provide the foundation of Omani customs, laws and practices. Foreigners are required to be sensitive to Islamic culture and observances. Dress should be modest and should not be revealing or provocative; sleeveless shirts and blouses, halter-tops and shorts should be avoided.

Oman has its own brand of Islam called Ibadhism. Omanis are however, tolerant towards Shia and Sunni Muslims and even to believers of other faiths, who are allowed to open their churches, temples and *gurudwaras*.

Beautiful, ornate mosques are found throughout Oman. Ramadhan is observed fastidiously, in fasting and praying, for about a month. Non-Muslims are expected to observe the same principles as of the Muslims in their public conduct during the Ramadhan period.

Muslim women do not marry Non-Muslim men. But Muslim men marry Non-Muslim women. Non-Muslims are not allowed to enter mosques.

## **Culture**

Oman has a rich culture in arts, architecture and the intricacies of civil society. The Sultanate enjoys an unspoiled culture and traditional life style in almost every aspect. The country offers many an old-world wonder.

Photography: Care should be exercised in taking pictures of persons particularly women. It is preferable to seek permission to take photographs. Photographing military and public facilities is banned.

## **Consumption of Alcohol.**

Muscat, which is the capital of Oman, has hotels in which alcohol is served to some minority groups in a limited number of controlled situations. Consumption of alcohol is not permitted for Muslims in general. Retail outlets exist from which expatriates are allowed to purchase alcohol, which operate on a licensing system. During Ramadan, alcohol is not permitted to be sold anywhere. Consumption of alcohol should not cause any inconvenience or disturbance to the public. Heavy fines and even prison terms are imposed for traffic offences in which alcohol or its use is involved.

## **Expatriate life style**

If an expatriate is a male, non-Muslim and does not speak Arabic, life becomes dull. With a little effort, an expatriate could make life informative, interesting and rewarding.

Expatriate women should wear tops with sleeves and long skirts or trousers. Men are requested to wear trousers and shirts with sleeves. Expatriate women should cover shoulders and knees and avoid figure-hugging clothes. They should not wear shorts, strap sundresses, mini-skirts and low-necked dresses in public places.

It is good manners to exchange handshakes for greeting though traditional ways of Arab greeting are also widely observed. To begin a conversation with an Omani, start with a few pleasantries. A few words of Arabic would ease and warm up the situation quite a lot. Women may refuse to a handshake; it is courteous to bow with hand on the chest before a woman. Take off shoes before entering an Arabic household. Do not sit in a posture exposing the soles of your feet pointing at someone; and don't eat or offer things, with your left hand.

People may address using the first name, not the surname. Don't refuse cool drinks, coffee or tea offered by your host. And don't drink more than three cups.

### **Public Holidays.**

Islamic holidays are based on the lunar month. Holidays are announced on TV Oman. The birthday of the Prophet, Eid al-fitre and Eid al-adha are public holidays. Besides, the New years Day (January) the Renaissance Day (July 23) and the National Day (November 18) are also public holidays.

### **Transportation**

Roadways are the principal means of transportation in Oman. No railways exist. Besides, there are numerous airports, seaports and harbours. Road conditions are good in general, in cities and towns: but poor roads exist in some rural areas. Travel at night may be hazardous due to Poor Street lighting, wandering livestock and speeding drivers.

Seat belt is required and the use of non-hands-free cellular phones is prohibited during driving. In the event of an accident, the driver should not move the vehicle from the spot of the accident without police permission. In order to obtain an Omani driving licence, a driving test must be taken.

Omani employers often ask expatriate employees to deposit their passports with the employer, although the practice is not required by Omani law.

### **Entry**

The documents required on entry to Oman are passport (original and two clear copies), visa/ residence permit (two clear copies) and work permit

For Customs clearance, visa/residence permit is required. Personal effects may be opened for inspection by customs Authorities. Books, audio/video cassettes, CDs and records and other literature will be screened by customs and released to the consignee only after approval by the Ministry of Information.

Among the prohibited items are alcoholic beverages, tobacco and tobacco products, pornographic literature, wireless and communication equipment, political or religious literature (which may be allowed with prior approval of the Ministry of Information), drugs and narcotics, ivory, explosives, firearms, ammunition, knives, swords, daggers, spears etc, and products of Israeli origin.

Most locals in Muscat understand English. It is advisable to purchase a guidebook, available in most bookshops in the city. Most brands of popular baby food are available and also the services of qualified paediatricians. Shopping malls have play areas for children. Oman offers all sorts of cuisine. Italian, Greek, Mexican, Japanese, English, American, Chinese and Indian, besides the local food.

### **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 easier. 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. 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.

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 sahan	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.

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.

The standard greeting is *Ahlan wa sahlán* – which means welcome.

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, particularly in Saudi Arabia.

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!

### **Don't Dos**

- 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 or mosques. 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.

### **Contact Details of Embassy**

Tel Nos : 24684500

Fax Nos : 24698291 (General)

24692791(Consular & Community Welfare Wings)

International Dialing code for Muscat: 00968

E-mail : indiamct@omantel.net.om

Location : Jami'at Al-Dowal Al-Arabiya Street, Diplomatic Area,  
Al Khuwair, PO Box 1727. PC 112.

Working hours: 8:30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.

Thursdays and Fridays are closed

Timings for Consular Services

Depositing of Documents: 9:00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

Collection of Documents: 3:00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.

The Embassy timings for Consular Services: Saturday - Wednesday Depositing of Documents: 9:00 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

Collection of Documents: 3:00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m.

### **Application for a new passport in lieu of lost / damaged Passport**

List of documents to be submitted to the Embassy of India, Muscat, for processing the request for issue of Duplicate Passport in lieu of Lost Passport :-

1. Police report issued by ROP, Immigration Department in Original and one Photocopy.
2. Letter from Sponsor/Company briefly stating the Circumstances of Loss. He has also to certify the period of employment of the applicant with the Sponsor / Company
3. Copy of Sponsor's Identity Card.
4. Letter from the applicant intimating the Circumstances of Loss of Passport.
5. Copy of Employment Agreement or Labour Card or Residence Card of the applicant.
6. Photocopy of the Passport reported Lost.
7. Two sets of Passport application form duly filled and affixing Photos in the space provided with signature of the applicant across the photo.
8. Affidavit duly filled (Format available at the Counter)
9. Two sets of Personal Particulars Form duly filled. (Format available at the counter)
10. Total Seven (7) Numbers of Recent Passport Size Photograph of the applicant.
11. Applicant should come personally or the Documents should have been verified by the Honorary Consular Agent authorized by the Embassy.
12. Original Newspaper advertisement of Loss of Passport, published in Arabic and English Dailies in Oman. Full page of the newspapers containing the advertisement should be produced.

### **Duplicate Passports**

Sr. No.	Description	Fee (RO)
1	Issue of a duplicate passport in lieu of a lost/damaged passport. Where an application is made for a fresh passport after the final expiry of an old passport, reported to be lost/damaged, the fees will be those prescribed for a fresh passport only.	48.200

### **Renewals - Passports**

Sr. No.	Description	Fee (RO)
1	Renewals - This service is applicable only in case the passport was issued with short - validity initially. The passport may be extended to its full ten-year validity on application. (In case the applicant is a housemaid, it is extended only for a further period of 1 year)	—

### **Miscellaneous Services**

Sr. No.	Description	Fee (RO)
1	Change of name after marriage	4.000
2	Change of name	4.000
3	Change of address	4.000
4	ECNR	4.000
5	Deletion of Child's name from the mother's passport	4.000
6	Certificate pertaining to the deletion of a Child's name from the mother's passport	7.900
7	Emergency Certificate	2.000
8	Confirmation of passport details (in case of applying for a passport in India) - Telex Charges	4.000
9	Registration of Indian nationals	

### **Visa Copy Attestation**

Original Visa to be brought to the Embassy for verification alongwith two photocopies and photocopy of passport of the passenger.

### **Affidavit / Declaration**

The Affidavit / Declaration is to be signed by the applicant before concerned Consular Officer in the Embassy. It is to be submitted to the Embassy in duplicate alongwith passport copy of the applicant.

**Following documents are required to be submitted along with the forms for individual service contract**

- (a) Photocopy of passport of person being recruited
- (b) Commercial Registration (CR) copy of the sponsoring company.
- (c) Signatory copy (authorised signatories of the sponsoring company)
- (d) Labour Clearance from Ministry of Manpower
- (e) Original Visa alongwith two photocopies.

Please note that the Service/Employment agreement [in bilingual i.e English & Arabic] should be attested by Ministry of Manpower and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

### **Recruitment of Maid Servant**

The following are the guidelines for recruitment of an Indian housemaid :-

1. The housemaid proposed to be employed in Oman should not be less than 30 years of age.
2. Sponsor / agent should submit the following documents:-
  - i) Application for employment of housemaid.
  - ii) Employment/Service Agreement, in original, duly attested by the Ministry of Labour and Ministry of Foreign affairs, Sultanate of Oman along with a photocopy.
  - iii) Emigration Form in duplicate, duly signed by the sponsor.
  - iv) 5 copies of No Objection Certificate form with details of the proposed housemaid and sponsor duly filled in.
  - v) An Undertaking as per standard form to be signed personally by the sponsor
  - vi) Photocopy of the labour clearance for employing the housemaid.
  - vii) Copy of relevant pages of the passport of the proposed housemaid.
  - viii) Certificate of Income/Salary of the sponsor (Minimum income of the sponsor should be RO. 500/-pm or RO.6000/- per year).
  - ix) Photocopy of sponsor's Identity Card. (or Labour card in case of non-Omanis).
  - x) Photocopy of the housemaid's visa along with its original for verification.
  - xi) Minimum salary of the housemaid should be RO. 50/- per month.
3. Attestation Fee for documents is RO. 10.000. For visa copy, if to be attested, an additional attestation fee of RO. 4.000 will be charged.

Note:- While application and supporting documents can be completed and presented to the Embassy by a representative/agent of the sponsor, all of them must be personally signed by the sponsor.

4. On receipt of the above set of documents, the Embassy will attest Employment/Service Agreement and Emigration Form and issue No Objection Certificate (4 copies).

5. The housemaid or her representative in India would present three copies of the No Objection Certificate to the office of the concerned Protector of Emigrants (list attached) for granting emigration clearance. The Protector of Emigrants will return all the three copies to the housemaid or her representative after stamping them and granting emigration clearance.
6. All the three copies of the No Objection Certificate duly stamped by the concerned Protector of Emigrants should be presented by her to the immigration authorities at the airport/exit point at the time of her departure. After immigration authorities at the airport/exit point have stamped all the three copies of the No Objection Certificate, the housemaid should collect one copy and bring to the Embassy on arrival in Oman. The remaining two copies will be retained by the immigration authorities at the exit point.
7. Sponsor/agent should bring/send to the Embassy the housemaid alongwith the copy of the NOC issued by the Embassy (and duly endorsed by the concerned Protector of Emigrants and immigration authorities in India) within 4 weeks of the arrival of the housemaid in Oman

#### **Individual Employment Contract (Domestic Servants)**

Following documents are required to submitted along with the forms below: -

- (a) Photocopy of passport of person recruited
- (b) Commercial Registration (CR) copy of the sponsoring company.
- (c) Signatory copy (authorised signatories of the sponsoring company)
- (d) Labour Clearance from Ministry of Manpower
- (e) Original Visa along with two photocopies.

Please note that the Service/Employment agreement: [in bilingual i.e English & Arabic] should be attested by Ministry of Manpower and Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

#### **Permit for Recruitment (Form VI) and Demand Letter Attestation**

The following are the documents to be attached along with Form - VI

- (a) Demand Letter - addressed to recruiting agent with details on account of number of persons to be employed, description of employment, qualification, eligibility, salary.
- (b) A specimen of the Employment Contract.
- (c) Commercial Registration (CR) copy of the sponsoring company.
- (d) Signatory copy (authorised signatories of the sponsoring company).
- (e) Labour Clearance from Ministry of Manpower.

On the basis of above Permit for recruitment (Form VI) and Demand Letter attestation, recruiting agent obtains permission of the concerned Protector of Emigrants for recruitment.

Please note:- There is an additional service charge of RO. 2/- per person being recruited.

**Source**

Ray Jureidini (2003), Migrant Workers and Xenophobia in the Middle East, Geneva, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

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The World Fact Book, [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ba.html](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ba.html).

Human Rights Watch. [www.humanrightswatch.org](http://www.humanrightswatch.org)

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