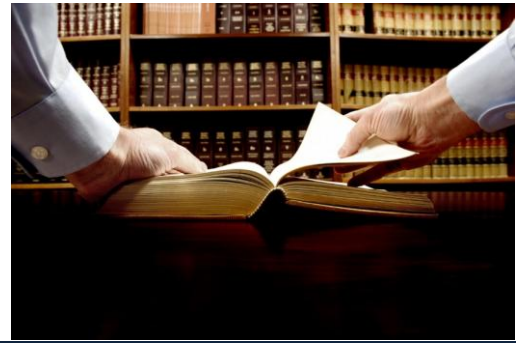


inBrief

**UAE Introduces New Humanitarian and Sector-Specific Visa Categories**

By Chatura Randeniya, Mevan Bandara, Aleefa Ahmed and Anita Hajynia |

10 September 2025

The UAE continues to reform and expand its immigration framework with the issuance of Federal Administrative Decision 74 of 2022 as amended by Federal Administrative Decision 51 of 2025 (the **Decision**).

This latest round of reforms introduces new visa categories, clarifies and re-evaluates eligibility conditions, and introduces more flexible humanitarian pathways for resident visas.

What's New?**1. Residence on Humanitarian Grounds Broadened**

The UAE now offers a renewable one-year residence permit to foreign nationals from countries affected by war, natural disasters, or unrest without the need for a local sponsor.

Applicants must already be present in the UAE and meet certain housing and financial requirements at the time of application. While permits may be renewed after the initial first-year period, they will be automatically cancelled in the event the permit holder travels outside the UAE.

The Decision also expands family reunification options, allowing citizens and residents to sponsor a broader group of relatives, including parents and siblings. The number of individuals that can be sponsored is dependent on the sponsor's monthly income, which should be at least AED 10,000 to sponsor up to five individuals and AED 15,000 per month to sponsor six or more. Sponsors are also required to evidence adequate housing for their relatives.

Notably, the Director General of Identity and Foreigners Affairs has the discretion to waive the financial and housing requirements set out in the Decision.

Another key update is that widows and divorcees may apply for residence for themselves and their children if they were resident in the UAE and sponsored by their husband at the time of the death or divorce. Applications must be made within six months of the death or divorce and be supported by documents such as the certificate of marriage, certificate of death or divorce, proof of sponsorship and evidence of financial solvency and adequate housing.

The Authors

Chatura Randeniya

Partner

crandeniya@afridi-angell.com

Chatura's practice focuses primarily on dispute resolution. He advises and represents clients in arbitration, and has represented clients in DIAC, ADCCAC, ICC and ad hoc arbitrations. He also works with local advocates on matters before the UAE Federal courts. Chatura regularly advises clients in high value construction, and maritime and shipping disputes. He is admitted as Attorney-at-Law of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka. He is a ranked practitioner by Chambers and Partners and Legal 500. Chatura is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb).



Mevan Bandara

Partner

mbandara@afridi-angell.com

Mevan practices in the firm's dispute resolution group. He advises and represents clients in arbitration, DIFC Court litigation and on-shore litigation. Mevan has represented clients in DIFC-LCIA, DIAC, ICC and ad hoc arbitrations seated in London, Dubai, Singapore and Sri Lanka. He specialises in cross-border disputes, tax, construction, banking, real estate, maritime and employment disputes. Mevan is a Legal 500 EMEA recognised practitioner.

2. New Visa Categories to Drive Economic Activity

The reforms also introduce several new visa categories to support different industries:

- i. **Business Exploration Visa** – For foreigners seeking to explore business opportunities in the UAE. The applicant must demonstrate financial solvency and be engaged in the relevant activity through a foreign business or as a qualified professional.
- ii. **Event Visa** – For those attending exhibitions, festivals, or seminars. The visa must be sponsored by the host of the event.
- iii. **Entertainment Visa** – For visitors participating in commercial gaming activities, sponsored by an entity fully licensed to organise commercial gaming activities in the UAE.
- iv. **Cruise Tourism Visa** – A multiple-entry visa for passengers aboard cruise ships as well as permits for cruise ship workers.
- v. **AI Specialist Visa** – Single or multiple-entry visas may be issued to professionals specialising in the field of artificial intelligence sponsored by an entity that specialises in the field of technology.
- vi. **Revised Truck Driver Visa** – Visas for foreign truck drivers issued on a single or multi-entry basis. Applicants must be sponsored by licensed shipping or transport companies and hold health insurance.

These visa categories reflect the UAE's focus on innovation, tourism, and logistics in furtherance of its economic and developmental goals.

3. Visa-on-Arrival Access for Indian Nationals

The recent reforms also facilitate easier entry for Indian nationals and their accompanying family members, who may now obtain visas on arrival in the UAE if their passports are valid for at least six months and they hold a valid visa, residence permit, or green card issued by the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, or South Korea.

4. Grace Periods and Validity Extensions

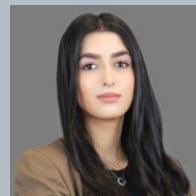
The Decision also introduces more flexible post-expiry grace periods, which allow residents to continue to stay in the country without incurring financial penalties after their residence permits have expired. These include a 180-day grace period for Golden, Green (issued to self-employed, skilled professionals and freelancers) and Blue (issued for individuals who have made significant contributions to the protection of the environment) visa holders, widows, divorcees and graduates. A 90-day grace period is available for skilled workers and property owners and a 30-day grace period for all other categories of visa holders.

Family members of Golden, Green and Blue visa holders are also permitted to retain their residency even if they remain outside the UAE for more than 180 days. The UAE generally requires residence permit holders to enter the country every 180 days.



Aleefa Ahmed
Associate
aleefa@afриди-angell.com

Aleefa is an associate in the firm's dispute resolution practice and advises and represents clients on a wide range of corporate, commercial and dispute resolution matters before the on-shore courts and the DIFC and ADGM courts, as well as in DIFC-LCIA and DIAC arbitrations. Aleefa regularly advises HNW's on matters of asset protection and estate planning, and advises clients on employment matters, high-value construction disputes and regulatory disputes before the DFSA (amongst others).



Anita Hajynia
Paralegal
anita@afриди-angell.com

Anita is a dedicated paralegal who provides essential support to lawyers in corporate, commercial, real estate, tax and dispute resolution matters. She plays a key role in conducting legal research, drafting memoranda, and reviewing a variety of contracts and documents.

Why It Matters?

The Decision reflects the UAE's forward-looking immigration policy, commitment to harmonising talent attraction, humanitarian sensitivity, and administrative ease. In a world grappling with displacement, technological transformation, and evolving mobility norms, the UAE continues to position itself as both a safe haven and a hub of opportunity. ■

Afridi & Angell

Founded in 1975, Afridi & Angell is a full-service UAE law firm at the forefront of the legal community. The firm celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2025. From the beginning, our hallmarks have been a commitment to quality, unsurpassed knowledge of the law and the legal environment, and crafting of innovative business solutions. Licensed in the three largest Emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah as well as the Dubai International Financial Centre, our practice areas include banking and finance; corporate and commercial law; arbitration and litigation; construction; real estate; infrastructure projects; energy; project finance; maritime (wet and dry); and employment. We advise local, regional and global clients ranging in size and sophistication from start-ups, sole proprietorships, family-owned businesses, entrepreneurs and investors to some of the world's largest public and private companies, governments and quasi-government institutions. We attract and retain clients with our dedication to practical guidance focused on their business needs supported by decades of experience here in our home jurisdiction, the UAE.

Afridi & Angell is the exclusive member firm in the UAE of top legal networks and associations, most notably Lex Mundi, the world's leading network of independent law firms, and World Services Group.

www.afridi-angell.com