

**NEWSFLASH - JULY 2015****PHUKET ON ALERT FOR MERS VIRUS**

Phuket Airport health officials have improved efforts to identify passengers possibly carrying the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) to the island from South Korea or the Middle East, where the virus is spreading, since 9<sup>th</sup> of June, passengers arriving from countries in the Middle East or South Korea have been checked by the Disease Control Centre at the airport.

Airline crew members have also been asked to keep an eye out for any passengers showing signs of influenza and to notify officials upon arrival at the airport. More than 150 people have contracted MERS in an outbreak in South Korea recently. Sixteen of them have died.

**IATA WANTS SMALLER CARRY ON LUGGAGE**

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has announced plans to try and introduce new rules to make hand luggage smaller. The new 'optimal size' would measure 55cm x 35cm x 20cm, including wheels, and is slightly smaller than what nearly all major airlines currently allow.

**FREE VISAS ON ARRIVAL INTRODUCED**

Indonesia has introduced free visas on arrival for 45 countries including South Africa. However, they are only available at certain airports. Visas are available from immigration checking counters at Soekarno-Hatta Airport, Jakarta; Ngurah Rai Airport, Bali; Kuala Namu, Medan; Juanda Airport, Surabaya and Hang Nadim Airport, Batam. The free visa is granted for a maximum stay of 30 days only and it is not extendable or changeable.

**LOCAL CURRENCY PHASING OUT**

Zimbabwe is phasing out its local currency, formalising a multi-currency system introduced during hyper-inflation as inflation hit six years ago, currencies like the US dollar and South African Rand came into use. The Zimbabwean dollar will reportedly be completely phased out by the end of September.

**UK TO RE-EXAMINE WORK VISA REQUIREMENTS**

The UK plans to restrict its Tier 2 work visas in an effort to stop businesses using foreign workers to undercut wages.

**BEWARE OF BULLYING BILKERS**

Travel industry stakeholders have raised an alarm regarding local tour operator Top Places Travel. Allegedly, the operator demands upfront payment for all accommodation and arrangements but then fails to pass on the funds to the relevant service providers, leaving agents and establishments out of pocket.

**GAUTRAIN**

The Gautrain has increased the number of trains running at peak times, as well as reducing the intervals between trains. As of 1<sup>st</sup> of June, the number of trains has increased from five to six per peak hour, while the train service intervals during peak periods has reduced from 12- to 10-minute intervals. The earlier and later departure times on the service between Sandton and OR Tambo International Airport, that were introduced recently, remain unchanged. Additionally, fares between Sandton and the airport have increased from R135 to R142, while Park Station to Pretoria has increased from R64 to R68 during peak, and R55 to R58 during off-peak hours. The fare between Pretoria and Rhodesfield has also increased, from R61 to R64 in peak time, and from R55 to R58 during off-peak hours

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