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Pakistan Cargo Services was the official Cargo Agent of Defence Exhibition and transported all their heavy machines, tanks, etc., from different places to the IDEAS 2022 Exhibition held at Expo Centre Karachi. The Picture shows Mr. Wajahat Kazmi of PCS seen with others.



A Pakistani enthusiast Mr. Saad Sohail (Director PCS Logistics) who specially flew to Doha to watch FIFA World Cup 2022 matches being played by 'Made in Pakistan' Football Al Rihla, waves Pakistan flag at the stadium.



A security official experiences a virtual reality simulator on the final day of the 11th International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS-2022), at the Karachi Expo Centre on Friday Nov. 18.



Holiday season stokes dollar demand

Long queues of citizens heading abroad for winter vacations and the rising cost of travel have increased the demand for dollars in the open market at a time when the US currency is already in short supply, travelling agencies and exchange companies said.

Travel agents said a large number of Pakistanis had booked their tickets for Europe, the United States and Turkiye. Top officials of banks and multinational companies will also hold their meetings abroad, mainly in Turkiye.

“Airlines have increased their fares and it's hard to get even an economy seat. But Pakistanis are eager to fly abroad in December,” said Imran Kaleem of Ansharah Travel and Tours. Data shows that around 5,000 Pakistanis got Turkish visas for December travel.

Malik Bostan, chairman of the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan (ECAP), said: “We requested Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to allow the open market to use at least half of the remittances.”

Earlier, the exchange companies were allowed to keep 75 per cent of remittances and sell 25pc to banks. They are now bound to sell their entire remittances to banks.

The State Bank took this decision to protect the interbank market from immense pressure from importers. Despite this protective measure, the dollar reached close to 240 twice against the rupee in the last three months 239.94 on July 28 and 239.71 on Sept 22. On Tuesday, the US currency closed at Rs220.65.

“Our monthly average remittance figure is \$150 million to \$200m, which has declined from \$300m from a year ago,” said Mr Bostan.

Currency dealers in the open market believe that the availability of 50pc remittances will take some pressure off the rupee.

They say that a shortage of dollars in the open market has created a strong grey market where the US currency is trading at a much higher than the interbank market.

The big difference is leading to black marketing and smuggling of dollars, mainly to Kabul, where the dollar was selling for 238 in rupee terms in the open market compared to 226.5 in Pakistan.

Besides travellers, banks selling credit cards to their clients are also in the race to buy dollars from the grey market, currency experts said.

Sources in the financial sector said that credit cards had been issued at a faster pace this year, putting the rupee under pressure. A person with a credit card can use it for international transactions, which is like transferring dollars from Pakistan to abroad.

Currency experts claim that banks are issuing credit cards carrying up to \$30 million per month compared to \$5m a year ago.

Exchange companies fear that Pakistanis will need more dollars during the winter vacations.

IATA: global passenger traffic continues to recover

The global passenger traffic in September 2022 showed a steady rise of 57% as compared to September 2021 according to The International Air Transport Association (IATA)'s latest report. IATA predicts that the recovery in air travel continues to be strong and global air traffic is now at 73.8% of September 2019 levels. Domestic traffic for European operators was up 6.9% compared in September 2022 to the year-ago period while international traffic climbed 122.2%. Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General said: “Even with economic and geopolitical uncertainties, the demand for air transport continues to recover ground.”

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Nespak consultancy for mega CAA projects



The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has assigned the National Engineering Services Pakistan (Nespak) its mega development projects.

A consultancy contract signing ceremony was held at the Allama Iqbal International Airport here on Wednesday 9 Nov. Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafiq, CAA Director General Khaqan Murtaza and Nespak Managing Director Dr Tahir Masood were also present in the event.

According to a CAA spokesperson, in the light of policy of the government to expand the aviation Industry and to exploit the potential of being a new aviation hub the Nespak has been engaged for its consultancy.

The projects whose consultancy has

been given to Nespak include upgrade and expansion of Begum Nusrat Bhutto (BNB) Sukkur Airport as an international airport for wide body aircraft with all allied facilities, design and construction supervision for expansion and renovation of passenger terminal building and allied infrastructure facilities at the Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore and construction of aviation tower in Islamabad.

After the agreement, a brief presentation was given by the Nespak MD to the aviation minister about the status of the BNB Sukkur airport project. The minister was informed about the expansion plan, including extension of runway and taxiway, reconstruction of apron and terminal building along with other allied and support facilities.

The spokesperson said the new terminal building and airside facilities would cater to the requirements of Code E Aircraft (Boeing 777) for the next 20 years. "In addition to connecting the population of the areas to international destinations, the airport will also cater to the requirement of exporting local handicraft of area, fresh vegetables and fruits to the Middle East," he said.

He said the CAA had also planned to construct a 38-storey high-rise office cum commercial tower at the Jinnah Avenue, Blue Area, Islamabad. "The CAA Tower, which will be tallest building in Islamabad, is going to be an iconic building with around 38-storeys with state-of-the art facilities. The tower will house various directorates and branches of CAA as well as airline corporate offices, airline booking centres, business centres, seminar and conference halls, media centres, financial institutes and banks, recreational facilities including an aviation science museum, art gallery, health and fitness centre, indoor sports facilities, baby day care centre, food courts, hotel/lodging facilities.

The building housing offices of various cadres of CAA will have a covered area of around 850,000 sq.ft with anticipated project cost of around Rs14bn. The CAA Tower, being a green building project, is aimed at achieving sustainability, water conservation, energy efficiency, environment friendly design with less carbon footprint."

Saad Rafique appreciated the efforts of the Nespak and instructed it and the CAA to complete the planning, design and bidding phase within six months to complete the construction activities in the estimated period of next 24 months.

Turkish Airlines introduces its "Gift Card" Product

Flying to more countries than any other airline, Turkish Airlines made another addition to the privileged services it offers to its guests. By introducing Turkish Airlines Gift Card product, flag carrier will offer a brand new option for its guests through online channels. With the new Gift Card service, Turkish Airlines guests will be able to gift their loved ones gift cards filled with flights which are prepared for 10 different concepts such as New Year, Birthdays,



Mother's Day and more. With this new service, goal is to enrich travel experience, contribute to the innovative and digital airline approach and add value to brand image.

On the new gift cards, Turkish Airlines Chief Marketing Officer Ahmet Olmüştür stated: "We are working to offer distinguished services for our guests in every stage of their travels and develop new service models. With this new Gift Card service, our guests will be able to gift their loved ones flights to all over the world with Turkish Airlines privilege. We hope that this new project will be met with satisfaction of our passengers from 129 countries our extensive flight network serves."

Following the Individual Gift Card, Turkish Airlines will also offer Corporate Gift Cards for companies to present them the option to give their employees, customers and business partners a prepaid card that can be used for purchasing flights from Turkish Airlines as incentives or rewards. Additionally, Compensation Gift Card will also be offered to our guests to compensate them for the mishaps during their travels.

Guests are able to reach Turkish Airlines Gift Card through our website at <https://www.turkishairlines.com/en-us/gift-card/gift-card-price-theme/>

Water salute for PIA's inaugural flight to Istanbul

The Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) first (direct) flight to Istanbul left Lahore on Tuesday 15 Nov.

Aviation and Railways Minister Khwaja Saad Rafique saw it off and also cut a cake to celebrate the occasion.

According to a spokesperson, the national flag carrier will now operate six weekly flights from Pakistan to Istanbul, from where Pakistani passengers will be able to fly to 28 cities in Europe, the UK and the USA under PIA-Turkish airlines code-share.

"PIA has commenced flights to Istanbul on the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Türkiye this year," he said and added that the PIA would operate four weekly flights from Islamabad and two from Lahore.

"The PIA flight on arrival at Istanbul airport was given a water salute. The CEO Turkish airlines Bilal Uksi and Istanbul authorities warmly welcomed and greeted PIA CEO Amir Hayat and passengers at

the aircraft. Mr Uksi said the people of Pakistan were their brothers and they would do whatever they could for the progress of PIA," the spokesperson said.

He said various agreements were finalised between the PIA and the Turkish airlines as both would cooperate in the areas of food services, cargo and engineering.

The minister said Pakistan and Türkiye had strong brotherly relations and the flight operation to Istanbul would further improve people-to-people contact. He said the PIA was making efforts to improve its services and expand its network for the convenience of passengers.

After two-year gap, PIA resumes Islamabad-Beijing flights

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed its weekly flight from Islamabad to Beijing on Oct 30 after approval from Chinese aviation authority, official sources said on Friday 28 Oct.

The flight PK-854 first since February 2020 depart from Islamabad International Airport at 6:45am on Sunday and arrive at the Beijing Capital International Airport at 2:55pm. This flight returned to Islamabad later in the evening.

The national carrier's flights on Islamabad-Beijing-Islamabad route were being resumed after a gap of over two and a half years.

In 2020, the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) stopped all international flights to and from Beijing in wake of Covid-19 pandemic. The PIA operated its last flight on the route on Feb 10, 2020.

As per the sources, the CAAC has accorded approval to the PIA to resume direct flight operation between the two capitals.

Pakistani officials, traders and students have welcomed the restart of direct PIA passenger flights between the capital cities of Pakistan and China. These flight will also facilitate Chinese personnel working on different projects being completed under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

A Pakistani passenger leaving for Islamabad from Beijing said the resumption of flights will provide more options to travellers. Earlier this month, the PIA also announced to decrease its fare for Pakistani students and other passengers travelling to China.

Talking to media, Taskeen Ahmad, a Pakistani student, said the discount would greatly facilitate the students, adding a large number of students could now avail the offer of discounted fare and return to their respective universities in China to resume studies.

Although China remained committed to its stringent zero-Covid policy, it recently cut the quarantine period for overseas travellers to seven days plus three days of medical surveillance, according to South China Morning Post.



Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) holds cleanliness walk for the airports.

Saudi Arabia unveils plan for massive airport in capital

Saudi Arabia on Monday 23 Nov. announced plans for a new airport in Riyadh intended to spur rapid growth in the capital while advancing the kingdom's ambitious aviation goals.

The airport, set to accommodate 120 million travellers by 2030 and 185 million travellers by 2050, will be named after 86-year-old King Salman and was announced by his son, 37-year-old de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

"The airport project is in line with Saudi Arabia's vision to transform Riyadh to be among the top ten city economies in the world and to support the growth of Riyadh's population to 15-20 million people by 2030," SPA said. The city's current population is fewer than eight million.

Saudi Arabia's aviation goals, part of Prince Mohammed's wide-ranging "Vision 2030" reforms, include more than tripling annual traffic to 330 million passengers by the end of the decade.

It also wants to draw \$100 billion in investments to the sector by 2030, establish a new national flag carrier and move up to five million tonnes of cargo each year.

The new airport is expected to be able to process 3.5 million tons of cargo by 2050, SPA said.

It "will boost Riyadh's position as a global logistics hub, stimulate transport, trade and tourism, and act as a bridge linking the East with the West," SPA said.

The announcement did not provide information about the cost of the project, which has been designed to cover 57 square kilometres.

"With sustainability at its core, the new airport will achieve LEED Platinum certification by incorporating cutting edge green initiatives into its design and will be powered by renewable energy," SPA said, referring to the green building certification programme.

The kingdom's busiest international airport is currently in the Red Sea coastal city of Jeddah. But officials have in recent years tried to position Riyadh, in central Saudi Arabia, as a rival to business hub Dubai in the United Arab Emirates.

Rolls-Royce and easyJet set new aviation milestone with world's first run of aero engine on hydrogen

Rolls-Royce AE2100 hydrogen test at Boscombe Down ©Rolls-Royce

Rolls-Royce and easyJet have confirmed they have set a new aviation milestone with the world's first run of a modern aero engine on hydrogen.

The ground test was conducted on an early concept demonstrator using green hydrogen created by wind and tidal power. It marks a major step towards proving that hydrogen could be a zero carbon aviation fuel of the future and is a key proof point in the decarbonisation strategies of both Rolls-Royce and easyJet.

Both companies have set out to prove that hydrogen can safely and efficiently deliver power for civil aero engines and are already planning a second set of tests, with a longer-term ambition to carry out flight tests.

The test took place at an outdoor test facility at MoD Boscombe Down, UK using a converted Rolls-Royce AE 2100-A regional aircraft engine. Green hydrogen for the tests was supplied by EMEC (European Marine Energy Centre), generated using renewable energy at their hydrogen production and tidal test facility on Eday in the Orkney Islands, UK.

Grazia Vittadini, Chief Technology Officer, Rolls-Royce, said: "The success of this hydrogen test is an exciting milestone. We only announced our partnership with easyJet in July and we are already off to an incredible start with this landmark achievement. We are pushing the boundaries to discover the zero-carbon possibilities of hydrogen, which could help reshape the future of flight."

Following analysis of this early concept ground test, the partnership plans a series of further rig tests leading up to a full-scale ground test of a Rolls-Royce Pearl 15 jet engine.

International Airlines Group (IAG) shareholders approve Boeing 737 Order



International Airlines Group (IAG) has announced that its shareholders approved an agreement with Boeing to order a total of 50 737-8-200s and 737-10s, plus 100 options.

Boeing and IAG announced the agreement that was subject to shareholder approval in May 2022. The firm order for 50 737s will be reflected on Boeing's Orders & Deliveries website in November.

"We welcome today's decision by IAG's shareholders to approve a firm order for 50 737-8-200s and 737-10s, with options for 100 more, and we look forward to working with IAG on reintroducing the 737 in to the Group's fleets," said Ihssane Mounir, Boeing's senior vice president of Commercial Sales and Marketing.

The largest model in the family, the 737-10 seats up to 230 passengers in a single-class configuration and can fly up to 3,300 miles. The fuel-efficient jet can cover 99% of single-aisle routes, including routes served by 757s.

The 737-8-200 will enable IAG to configure the airplane with up to 200 seats, increasing revenue potential and reducing fuel consumption.

The 737 incorporates the latest-technology CFM International LEAP-1B engines, Advanced Technology winglets and other improvements to deliver the highest efficiency, reliability and passenger comfort in the single-aisle market. The 737 family of airplanes is on average 14% more fuel-efficient than today's most efficient Next-Generation 737s and 20% more efficient than the original Next-Generation 737s when they entered service.



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IATA to expand Environmental Assessment Certification to Airports and GSPs



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has launched the IATA Environmental Assessment for Airports and Ground Service Providers (IEnvA for Airports and GSPs). Edmonton International Airport (YEG) is the first participant in the expanded IEnvA and will play a leadership role as the value chain aligns to ensure a sustainable future for air transport.

IEnvA for Airports and GSPs is an expansion of the successful IEnvA for Airlines. IEnvA programs enable participants to build robust environmental management plans with continual performance improvements. Some 50 airlines are part of the IEnvA program, with 34 of them fully certified while the others are in the process.

"IEnvA has a solid track record of improving the environmental performance of airlines. As the aviation industry committed to improving sustainability, including achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the expansion of IEnvA to airports and GSPs is critical. With Edmonton International Airport's pioneering participation in the expanded program, we have a clear signal that the industry's sustainability commitments are being actioned in a systematic results-oriented approach across the value chain," said Sebastian Mikosz, IATA's Senior Vice President for Environment and Sustainability.

"This is a significant milestone for airports around the world, and we are proud to be a part of the movement towards a sustainable future for aviation. IATA's Environmental Assessment

Program has supported the sustainability narrative across the aviation industry, and we are excited to be the first airport involved in expanding this program as we continue to prioritize ESG, innovation and forward-thinking solutions to airport operations and strategic partnerships" said Myron Keehn, VP, Air Service, Business Development, ESG and Stakeholder Relations, Edmonton International Airport.

IEnvA is an Environmental Management System based on standards and best practices that were built in collaboration with airlines, airports, ground service providers, IATA and sustainability experts. It complies with ISO14001 (Environmental Management) requirements, and uses IATA's decade's long expertise with safety auditing (IOSA) for oversight, governance and quality control.

IEnvA for Airports and GSPs will make use of tried-and-tested IEnvA oversight, governance, and quality control processes and will include provision of standards and recommended practices, training access, readiness workshops and external assessment.

As the pioneer airport in the IEnvA for Airports and GSPs, YEG will work with IATA to establish the IEnvA Standards for Airports and guidance material to broadly improve performance in areas such as emissions, waste, water, noise, energy, and biodiversity. As with IEnvA for Airlines, upon a successful independent assessment, YEG and other successful entities will be included in the IEnvA Certification Registry.

Dutch court hands life terms to three over downing of Malaysian plane

Dutch judges on Thursday 17 Nov. Convicted two Russians and a Ukrainian of murder for their role in the 2014 shooting down of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine, and sentenced them to life in prison. A fourth man, a Russian, was acquitted.

The MH17 was a passenger flight that was shot down over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014, killing all 298 passengers and crew.

"Only the most severe punishment is fitting to retaliate for what the suspects have done, which has caused so much suffering to so many victims and so many surviving relatives," presiding judge Hendrik Steenhuis said, reading a summary of the ruling.

Families of victims stood weeping and wiping away tears in the courtroom as Steenhuis read the verdict.

The three men convicted were former Russian intelligence agents Igor Girkin and Sergey Dubinskiy, and Leonid Kharchenko, a Ukrainian separatist leader.

A fourth, Russian Oleg Pulatov, was acquitted on all charges. At the time, the area was the scene of fighting between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces, the precursor of this year's conflict.

Russia annexed the Donetsk province, where the plane's wreckage and victims' remains were once scattered across cornfields, after the invasion this year.

Suspects in Russia?

Victims' representatives said the ruling is an important milestone, though the suspects remain fugitives. They are all believed to be in Russia, which will not extradite them.

Moscow denies any involvement or responsibility for MH17's downing and in 2014 it also denied any presence in Ukraine.

In a briefing in Moscow on Thursday, Deputy Foreign Ministry spokesman Ivan Nechaev told reporters the government would examine the court's findings.

Etihaad, Garuda expand codeshare agreement

Etihaad Airways and Garuda Indonesia are strengthening their partnership between Abu Dhabi and Jakarta and beyond their respective hubs. The scope of the partners' codeshare agreement, first signed in 2012, will be significantly expanded to nearly double the number of combined destinations Etihaad and Garuda are able to offer beyond the Abu Dhabi and Jakarta hubs, with 42 destinations across the Indonesian archipelago, South East Asia, Middle East, US and Europe now covered by the agreement.

In addition, the partners offer reciprocal miles accrual and redemption opportunities to members of Etihaad Guest and GarudaMiles across both airline's networks, and will further engage both member bases through joint marketing activities. The carriers intend to explore further areas of collaboration in the light of current market opportunities and company requirements, including Cargo, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul, and Pilot/Crew Training Services.

Antonoaldo Neves, Group CEO of Etihaad Airways, said: "This expansion will serve as a platform for what we envision will be a deep ongoing partnership between our two airlines. We look forward to exploring comprehensive and pragmatic ways in which the two carriers can increase collaboration, enhance benefits and customer experience for our most frequent travellers and further extend the reach of our joint networks beyond our hubs. This reflects Etihaad's continued drive for commercial sustainability and is part of our broader partnership strategy, which enables Etihaad

guests to access nearly 400 cities worldwide, in addition to Etihaad's operating network."

Irfan Setiাপutra, President and CEO of Garuda Indonesia, said: "As a national flag carrier, it is our main focus to connect Indonesia with the world, providing a

coherent relation to a wide range of diversity of nature and cultural richness throughout the archipelago. With both airlines' extensive networks worldwide and nationally, we believe that this extended partnership will not only give added value to Garuda Indonesia's passengers to access popular destinations across the globe, especially to the United States, Turkey and Abu Dhabi, but will also offer a range of domestic destinations, especially in the area of East Indonesia for Etihaad's passengers."

Nium unveils 'closed loop' payments alternative for Airlines and OTAs

Nium, the global platform for Modern Money Movement, recently announced the launch of Nium Airline Payments (NAP), a closed-loop payments solution powered by Universal Air Travel Plan (UATP). NAP provides airlines, travel agents, and online travel agencies (OTAs) with a sustainable and equitable 'closed loop' payment model, which closes the door on damaging surcharges and business restricting non-acceptance policies that have inflated the cost of B2B travel payments for decades. Technology for the solution comes to Nium via its acquisition of travel payments optimization leader, Ixaris, in 2021.

Among the first to contract with Nium for the solution include Air Europa which has tapped the global payments company to solve some of the inequities associated with traditional card payment models. Today, traditional card payments offer travel agents and OTAs financial incentives that strike at the core of an airline's razor-thin margins.

The closed-loop Nium Airline Payments solution eliminates margin-eating intermediaries from the payment

flow, giving airlines the flexibility and control to design transparent incentives for OTA partners, based on routes, seasonality, business volumes, and more.

Unlike other payment programs, Nium's process guarantees payment acceptance for the airlines, as they are already wired to accept payments through the UATP network. Meanwhile the process is IATA Resolution 890 compliant and registered with the IATA TIP (Transparency in Payments) program.

All of this means that Air Europa can finally benefit from significantly reduced per payment cost savings, faster settlement times, and flexible incentives for sellers all without requiring any additional technical integration.

"Without payments, there can be no sale and we are very honoured to help Air Europa resolve what has been one of the biggest airline distribution conundrums of the internet era: do I increase my distribution at the price of accepting high payment fees, or limit distribution to partners who offer better payment terms but reduce overall sales opportunities?" stated Spencer Hanlon, Head of Travel at Nium.

"We were very inspired by Nium's innovative approach to create an alternative payment method, being proud to offer it to our B2B partners," added Yago Casasnovas Head of Payment, Fraud Prevention and Distribution from Air Europa. "We are communicating the availability of this new option to our travel agencies, tour operator and TMC customers and we hope that they will soon join us in taking advantage of the benefits of using it."

Today's news is simply the latest development in the evolution of Nium's range of B2B payment solutions for the whole travel industry including not just airlines but hotels, travel agents and more offering virtual credit cards (VCCs), real-time 'pay-in, pay-out' in over 100 currencies to over 190 countries, and most recently crypto solutions.



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Logistics firm to migrate from GEM to PSX main board

Universal Network Systems Ltd (UNSL), a logistics firm operating under the brand name of BlueEX, said on Friday 28 Oct. it's decided to migrate to the main board of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) from the Growth Enterprise Market (GEM) board, which is a separate PSX counter reserved for smaller and riskier companies.

Only three firms are currently listed on the GEM board that the PSX rolled out last year to help start-ups and growing entities raise capital from institutional and high net worth individuals. UNSL is the second GEM-listed entity that's shifting to the main board as Supernet Ltd, a technology firm, announced early this month that it intended to make the same transition.

Pak Agro Packaging Ltd will be the only GEM-listed firm in case the two companies receive regulatory approvals to migrate to the main board.

Speaking to media, UNSL Chief Financial Officer Salman Hameed said the main purpose of the migration is to encourage a larger number of investors to participate in the share's trading. "The switch will help us attract greater interest from investors," he said.

"Trading is restricted on the GEM board in the sense that not every investor is eligible to buy and sell shares. That's the reason all GEM-listed firms have low volumes," said Mr Hameed.

Only institutional players and "accredited individual investors" with assets of Rs5 million can trade securities listed on the GEM board.

The share price of UNSL was Rs48.50 on Friday, down more than one-fourth from the time of listing less than a year ago. The company CFO blamed the fall in the share price to the overall macroeconomic situation and a lack of price discovery on the side board of the PSX.

Only one trade took place on the GEM board on Friday 28 Oct. versus over 89,000 on the regular board. The total traded volume on the GEM board was only 500 shares while the value traded remained just Rs22,500 on Friday 28 Oct.

PSX Chief Operating Officer Nadir Rahman told media the GEM board has a "narrower investor base" by definition. It provides SMEs with an "initial platform" to gradually move towards the governance requirements for a publicly listed company and ultimately benefit from a main-board listing, he added.

"As the GEM board matures,

regulatory amendments may be considered whereby a public investor may participate in the secondary market after, for example, a certain defined time period," said Mr Rahman.

UNSL sold one-quarter of its shareholding at the rate of Rs65 per share

WFS opens new cargo facility at Copenhagen Airport

Worldwide Flight Services (WFS) has opened its latest and third cargo handling facility at Copenhagen Airport.

The new Terminal 3 cargo building adds a further 3,700m² warehouse facility to WFS' handling infrastructure in Copenhagen, where it handles over 100,000 tonnes of cargo a year, carried onboard passenger and freighter services.

Read more: WFS to be Acquired by SATS for €2.25 billion

Since opening its first Scandinavian handling operation in Copenhagen in 2008, WFS has become the largest cargo handler at the airport, serving over 30 airline clients with flights to the Danish capital. It also provides cargo handling services for more than 125 offline carriers. The original 4,600m² cargo warehouse terminal was added to with a new 3,000m² Terminal 2 facility in 2010, and, in 2019, WFS also invested in a new GDP-certified Pharma facility, increasing its footprint by a further 1,500m², to support the cluster of life science companies in the Greater Copenhagen area.

Read more: WFS and Diagnose pioneer the detection of undeclared lithium batteries using dog detection

in November last year to raise Rs446m. The company was incorporated in 2005 as a domestic cargo consolidator. It shifted its focus towards ecommerce logistics in 2011 and conducted the country's first cash-on-delivery shipment under the BlueEX brand.

The objective of listing was to raise funds for the infrastructure expansion of the company, which aimed to take the number of its nationwide distribution hubs from 35 to 160 in three years.

teams

"Copenhagen is a very progressive airport with a strong commitment to supporting its cargo customers. Since 2008, WFS has also demonstrated its confidence in the Danish and regional air cargo market through our continued investment and expansion, and we will continue to play a lead role in the growth of the airport and the airlines who fly here. We see a great future," Thomas Egeland, WFS' Managing Director Scandinavia, said.

Earlier this year, WFS also entered a renewable energy partnership with NRGreen in Denmark to generate 100% of its power requirements by positioning 3,500 high efficiency solar panels across the roof area of WFS' cargo facilities at Copenhagen Airport. The establishment of the 1.4 MW solar power system the largest in the Greater Copenhagen area will provide an annual CO2 saving of up to 240 tons, the equivalent of a passenger car driving 57 times around the world. This is sufficient to power WFS' all-electric forklift and vehicle fleets and the LED lighting systems in its warehouse operations, and return surplus energy to the national grid.



The new WFS Cargo Terminal 3 in Copenhagen

Etihaad Cargo achieves IATA CEIV pharma recertification for pharmaceutical logistics



Etihad Cargo, the cargo and logistics arm of Etihad Aviation Group, has been awarded Center of Excellence for Independent Validators (CEIV) Pharma recertification by the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The carrier is one of only 37 airlines to hold IATA CEIV Pharma certification globally.

The UAE's national carrier first achieved IATA CEIV Pharma certification in 2019 in conjunction with its hub at Abu Dhabi International Airport and Etihad Airport Services Cargo. Etihad Cargo went on to become the first airline in the Middle East and only the third globally to hold the trilogy of CEIV Pharma, CEIV Fresh and CEIV Live Animals certifications.

Etihad Cargo achieved IATA CEIV Pharma recertification following an audit by independent validators that assessed the carrier's capacity to control and enhance its processes through a checklist that focused on Etihad Cargo's Quality Management System that incorporates supplier management, training programmes, processes and procedures, audit programmes, and quality enhancement, among others. Achieving recertification demonstrates Etihad Cargo's and its dedicated pharmaceutical transportation product PharmaLife's full compliance with specific pharmaceutical regulations, including IATA Temperature Control Regulations (TCR), Good Distribution Practices (GDP), a quality system for warehouses and distribution centres dedicated to medications and life sciences products.

"Etihad Cargo is proud to achieve IATA CEIV Pharma recertification following an extensive audit. This industry-wide standard ensures Etihad Cargo's operations and staff comply with all applicable standards, regulations and guidelines expected from pharmaceutical manufacturers. The benefits of CEIV Pharma certification extend to Etihad

Cargo's customers, who can be assured the carrier's dedicated pharma cargo management constantly monitor and analyse the quality and safety of Etihad Cargo's PharmaLife product performance," Martin Drew, Senior Vice President Global Sales & Cargo at Etihad Aviation Group, said.

"Etihad Cargo fully supports Abu Dhabi's vision of becoming a life sciences and pharmaceutical hub. Achieving recertification and providing world-class pharmaceutical logistics solutions demonstrates Etihad Cargo's capabilities in seamlessly transporting life-saving medicines and the latest treatments around the world from the carrier's Abu Dhabi hub."

Etihad Cargo has significantly invested in its PharmaLife product since achieving IATA CEIV Pharma certification for pharmaceutical logistics in 2019. In addition to launching dedicated thermal covers for PharmaLife products across its top pharma origin stations, Etihad Cargo recently announced the upcoming launch of a new, state-of-the-art, 3,000-square-metre pharma facility at its Abu Dhabi hub. The new facility, made possible through the carrier's ongoing partnership with Etihad Airport Services Cargo and Abu Dhabi Airports, will double Etihad Cargo's cool chain capacity to carry and accommodate an additional 50,000 tonnes of cool chain commodities, including pharmaceuticals and life sciences products.

"Organisations holding CEIV certification and their customers recognise that CEIV Pharma certification is a key differentiator, highlighting the additional efforts taken to improve service quality and enhance the customer experience. We congratulate Etihad Cargo on achieving CEIV Pharma recertification. Pharmaceuticals represent one of the world's fastest-growing freight markets, their transportation is critical but challenging. Shippers such as pharmaceutical companies welcome such certification as it gives them confidence in air transport. Etihad Cargo's efforts in achieving recertification support the vision of having a global standard for the safe transportation of pharmaceuticals," Frederic Leger, IATA, Senior Vice President Commercial Products and

Services, said.

Building on the carrier's IATA CEIV Pharma-certified status, Etihad Cargo has committed to raising standards across the pharma supply chain. As a founding member of the HOPE Consortium, Etihad Cargo partnered with Abu Dhabi Airports Company (ADAC), Brussels Airport Company and Pharma.Aero to launch Pharma Corridor 2.0 between Brussels and Abu Dhabi. This initiative aims to provide the highest levels of assurance in the quality of handling to pharmaceutical shippers and forwarders through the establishment of pharma corridors between airports with cargo handling communities certified under the CEIV Pharma programme.

Uzbekistan Airways will deliver passengers from Pulkovo airport



The Northern Capital Gateway Company, which manages Pulkovo Airport, announces flights by Uzbekistan Airways as part of the winter flight program.

Uzbekistan Airways operates flights from St. Petersburg to Tashkent (daily), Samarkand (three times a week) and Fergana (once a week) with further connections to six foreign destinations.

Passengers can fly from Tashkent to Delhi (India), Seoul (South Korea), Istanbul (Turkey), Sharm El Sheikh (Egypt), Europe and North America. From Samarkand and Ferghana, Uzbekistan Airways flights can fly to Istanbul (Turkey).

Also, the Kazakh airline SCAT Airlines offers flights with convenient connections and transfers to more than 10 international destinations. The carrier, within the framework of the winter schedule, opened flights to Astana and continues to operate flights to the resort city of Aktau.

Oman Air welcomes 'future leaders'



Oman Air has officially inaugurated its highly anticipated Future Leaders Commercial Graduate Programme. A special induction ceremony was held for the 11 Omani graduates at the Crowne Plaza Muscat OCEC, under the auspices of His Excellency Sheikh Nasr Amer Al Hosni, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Labour. During the event, the candidates were addressed by Oman Air's Chief Executive Officer, Abdulaziz Al Raisi, and members of senior management. Sumaiya Al Siyabi, who recently became the first Arab woman to win the 'Stars of Science' programme, was also there to offer a few words of encouragement.

After a rigorous selection process which began in July, the candidates; Bashair Al Busaidi, Firas Al Zadjali, Atheer Al Mahrouqi, Ibrahim Al Hinai, Saqar Al Araiimi, Mohammed Al Sarimi, Fatima Al Zahra Shabeer, Usama Al Balushi, Fatma Al Marhubi, Maryah Al Harthi, and Muzdalifa Al Husaini, are now gearing up to begin their exciting two-year journey.

"Oman Air has done a wonderful job designing the Future Leaders Programme, which clearly demonstrates the extent of its interest in empowering more Omani cadres and nurturing them for various leadership and highly specialised positions in the field. Without a doubt, the 11 new graduates will constitute a new building block in the commercial aviation sector. The programme represents an integrated strategy for human resources management and an example of the constructive partnership between the Ministry of Labour and the private sector. Through such efforts, we aim to create a stimulating work environment that follows world-class standards, and

ensures the achievement of the aspirations and goals of Oman's 2040 Vision," Sheikh Nasr Amer Al Hosni said.

"Oman Air is a huge advocate of developing the next generation, in line with our commitment to Oman's 2040 Vision and its economic development. The 11 graduates have been carefully selected for their huge potential and talent. Over the next two years we will nurture that talent and feed it with tangible, practical skills that they can take into their professional, and even their personal, lives. The ceremony marks an exciting milestone for them as the first step in building a promising career in aviation," Abdulaziz Al Raisi, added.

Over two years, the candidates will spend time at Oman Air's hub in Muscat and some of its outstations, gaining experience in all the commercial functions of the airline. They will begin by receiving a formal induction and training for two weeks before starting their employment. Later, they will fly to IATA's European headquarters in Geneva to undergo world-class formal training and sit an exam for the prestigious IATA Air Transport Management Certificate. The rest of the two-year programme will see them spend three to four months rotating around each commercial function. Throughout this time, they'll continue to receive training with a dedicated senior leadership mentor and, at the end, they will come away with internationally recognised qualifications.

In order to meet the demands of a constantly evolving industry, Oman Air continues to invest heavily in training and capacity building. As well as internships and graduate training programmes, Oman Air provides rich and varied career development opportunities that expand horizons for young Omanis and boost its contribution to the national economy.

Emirates and Gulf Air launch codeshare agreement

Emirates and Gulf Air recently signed a new codeshare agreement on the first day of the Bahrain International Airshow. The partnership is scheduled to start next December, although it must still obtain regulatory approval.

Tim Clark, CEO of Emirates, and Waleed Al Alawi, CEO of Gulf Air, signed the agreement at an event that was also attended by Zayed R. Alzayani, Chairman of Gulf Air's Board of Directors, and other members of the management teams of both airlines.

As a result of the agreement, customers of Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, will have more and improved connection options. They will be able to use Emirates' services from Dubai International Airport (DXB) to Europe, Africa, the Far East, and South America.

Once it comes into effect, Gulf Air will market tickets under its "GF" code for Emirates-operated flights. As is customary with this kind of agreements, the partnership will allow ticketing and check-in to be combined and unified into a single booking. In addition, users will have access to a unified baggage policy and more competitive fares. Service will be available through Gulf Air's official website and the airline's other online sales points.

"We are pleased to partner with Gulf Air to offer their customers greater access and strong connection opportunities to unique destinations on our network, complemented by Emirates' signature in-flight service and hospitality throughout their journey from Dubai", said Tim Clark.

"Our relationship with Emirates Airline has always been strong and today we are reaching a higher level of collaboration with many more opportunities in the horizon between the two carriers", said Waleed Al Alawi. "This partnership will empower both of us to offer a more elevated experience to passengers and widen their travel options", he added.

Emirates currently maintains codeshare agreements with twenty-six airlines as well as two rail operators. As a result, the Gulf's largest carrier has expanded its network reach to more than three hundred new destinations.



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Central Asia offered billions of euros for cargo routes bypassing Russia

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is ready to invest billions of euros in the development of cargo routes between Europe and Asia that bypass Russia, its president told Central Asian nations on Friday 18 Nov.

The lion's share of railway traffic between China and Europe goes via the "northern route" through Russia, but Western sanctions against Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine have forced businesses to look for alternative routes.

The EBRD is a major backer of what it calls the "middle corridor", a route crossing Kazakhstan, the Caspian Sea, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Türkiye.

The corridor is slower and more expensive than the northern route, but most importantly, it lacks the capacity to handle large cargo volumes.

"Currently, the middle corridor, also called the Transcaspian route, can handle only 5 per cent of the EU-China railway transit container traffic," EBRD President Odile Renaud-Basso told a conference in the Uzbek city of Samarkand.

"Recent world developments have increased interest in the middle corridor. We already observe how more customers and operators are exploring route diversification."

The EBRD is ready, she said, to support large-scale projects in the formerly Soviet region of Central Asia to address existing bottlenecks, facilitate cargo flows on the middle corridor and explore the feasibility of other routes.

"We recognise (other routes') strategic importance and potential advantages from the point of view of logistics. But we shall be also analysing the political, commercial and fiscal risks the development of these new transport corridors entail," she said.

"It will be important to take such risks into account when prioritising and advancing such multi-billion euro potential investments."

Theoretical alternatives allowed by existing railway and sea links include shipments, for example, from Kazakhstan to Iran with its Gulf ports.

The EBRD is already investing and working with Kazakhstan to boost the capacity of its railways and the port of Aktau, and the Caspian fleet, key parts of the middle corridor.

Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, said that Brussels was promoting

connectivity with Central Asia "not at the expense of other connections".

"We respect and endorse the desire of the Central Asian partners to reject dependency on any single international partner regardless of conditions of history and geography," he said.

Celebrate the 51st UAE National Day with Emirates



Celebrating the 51st UAE National Day on 2 December, Emirates is marking the occasion with a range of activities, from new design motifs and lighting schemes in its aircraft cabins, to traditional Arabic sweets served onboard and in the Emirates Lounges in Dubai, to an exclusive UAE commemorative watch for sale on Emirates RED.

Marking the union of the seven emirates, UAE National Day is celebrated on 2 December and onboard Emirates - passengers in all classes departing Dubai will be given an Emirati-inspired sweet treat, Qahwa or coffee-flavoured milk chocolate in a giftbox adorned with Arabic calligraphy. Passengers visiting Emirates Lounges in Dubai can enjoy miniature date tarts laced with Arabic coffee cream, or a delicately whipped and creamy date mousse. Passengers can also be on the lookout as they board aircraft in Dubai and disembark at their destination, as colourful mood lighting representing the UAE flag illuminates the aircraft interior. In another subtle touch, Emirates' multi-award-winning ice inflight entertainment system will bear the iconic Ghaf tree, which is emblematic of the UAE. The new artistic motif is also used as a design highlight throughout Emirates' newest Boeing 777 and A380 aircraft interiors. The national Ghaf tree is a historic and cultural symbol of stability and peace in the UAE's desert environment.

Passengers who wish to commemorate the UAE in the form of a sleek and functional timepiece, can purchase a limited edition Zinvo Air Blade 50 years Anniversary Edition Automatic Watch, onboard all Emirates flights. Priced at \$199.00, the watch is a futuristic and eye-catching matte black, with subtle green and red-coloured hands, and a 12 o'clock emblem in white, paying tribute to the colours of the UAE flag. The back of the watch also features an engraved and enamelled flag to symbolise the UAE's national day. The commemorative piece is in high demand, so quantities are limited.

Emirates RED pre-order is also available on most flights, where passengers can shop from 21 days up to 40 hours before their flight, browse a wide range of exclusive products - some of which are not available onboard. Passengers need to provide their flight details during checkout, and the orders are delivered by cabin crew directly to the passenger's seat inflight.

Passengers wishing to learn more about the UAE can browse the multi award-winning entertainment library on ice, which has content about the history and future of the UAE, highlights of food and drink beloved in the region, UAE arts and culture including many movies, podcasts and songs by Emirati artists, and travel guides exploring both world famous UAE attractions and hidden gems.



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Goodbye boarding passes, hello biometric facial recognition

Air New Zealand customers were some of the first to experience biometric verification at the boarding gate after a successful trial at Los Angeles Airport recently.

It's all part of Air New Zealand's plan to take the friction out of travel and to make the journey through the airport that much smoother. No sighting passports and no scanning boarding passes.

Upon entering the US, customers are provided with the opportunity to register with Customs and Border Protection (CBP) using their biometric information.

Using the automated airport kiosks, this same data is then used to verify their identity at the time of boarding. Biometric information is secured by CBP and not directly accessible to Air New Zealand or any other airline using this service.

Air New Zealand Chief Digital Officer Nikhil Ravishankar says this technology will speed up the boarding process, creating a seamless experience for customers and airport staff.

"We've heard from customers that they want their airport experience to be hassle-free and technology is a key enabler of that. According to IATA, more than 75 percent of customers see huge value in biometric verification and want to use it instead of passports and boarding passes.

"The feedback from the more than 1000 customers who have used this technology to board our flights has been really positive."

The next cab off the rank is San Francisco, followed by the airline's other US ports.

"Contactless technology changes are coming thick and fast and we're continuing to learn and adapt to new innovations that will make travel easier. In the new travel era, we need simplicity not complexity."

Earlier this month, the airline launched its improved Air NZ App, which has had close to 2.3 million downloads.

"Using biometrics at the boarding gate is only the beginning and we're in talks with industry players, globally and

here in New Zealand, about how we can use biometric technology throughout the whole airport process."

This is another step towards our ambition to become the world's leading digital airline, and is the result of months of hard mahi, planning and collaboration."

Virgin Atlantic resumed operations between London and Cape Town

On November 5 Virgin Atlantic resumed operations between London (LHR) and Cape Town (CPT), after an absence of 638 days. This route will complement its non-stop services to Johannesburg (JNB).

Flight VS 478 was operated in a Boeing 787 registered with the registration number G-VFAN and christened "Pin Up Girl", which took off from Heathrow International Airport (LHR) at 18:00 local time and landed at Cape Town Airport (CPT) at 06:46 the following day, after 10 hours and 46 minutes.

The route will be operated on Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft seating 258 passengers in three classes (31 Upper Class/35 Premium Economy/192 Economy).

"The return to this beautiful destination reflects the positive demand for long-haul travel to premium destinations. The daily direct service is expected to attract a substantial proportion of leisure travelers looking for a bit of winter sun to explore the world-renowned wine regions and soak up South Africa's rich culture," said Shai Weiss, CEO of Virgin Atlantic.

According to data compiled by the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) 377,938 passengers were flown between London and Cape Town. Prior to the pandemic, South Africa was the British capital's main market in Africa in terms of passengers and seats per seat kilometers (ASK).

In addition, Virgin Atlantic has an interline agreement with AirLink giving travelers more options to connect to various domestic destinations in South Africa and other international routes in Africa.

Sabre and THAI Smile implement distribution agreement

A leading software and distribution agreement technology provider that powers the global travel industry, recently announced the implementation of a distribution deal with THAI Smile, to support the hybrid carrier's growth strategy.

Joining Sabre's global marketplace will enable THAI Smile to enhance its geographic reach and target new leisure and corporate traveller segments, while providing travel agents with increased options to create optimal experiences for their clients.

"We're elated to be able to distribute our fares and offers through Sabre's extensive global marketplace at this pivotal time for Thailand tourism," said Mr. Thamanoon Kuprasert, Acting Chief Executive Officer, THAI Smile Airways. "Now that Thailand has fully re-opened to the world's tourists, the implementation of our distribution agreement with Sabre is perfectly timed to enable us to help strengthen Thailand's position as a top tourist and business destination."

A subsidiary of Thailand's flag carrier Thai Airways International, THAI Smile flies to a host of domestic and international destinations, having first taken to the skies just over a decade ago, and the carrier is also incremental in extending Thai Airways route network with connecting flights for leisure and corporate travellers.

"As we look forward to further industry recovery and growth around the world, it is essential that all airlines, whether full service, low cost, or hybrid, have the right distribution strategy, and the right technology partner, to get their content in front of the right customer," said Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions, Airline Sales. "We're thrilled to be marking THAI Smile's tenth anniversary by welcoming them to Sabre's global travel marketplace."



Manoeuvres enthral crowds at IDEAS 2022 Karachi Show



(Clockwise) Skydivers float to the ground with their parachutes deployed; the navy band plays traditional local and foreign tunes; a Sea King helicopter drops SSG commandos during a VIP rescue operation; uniformed officers climb aboard a navy hovercraft while a counter-terrorism drill is conducted by navy personnel on the beach.

The International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS) 2022 Karachi Show at Nishan-i-Pakistan on Seaview beach provided a rare opportunity for local and foreign visitors to witness up close the swift tactical skills and maneuvers of the armed forces of Pakistan in the form of a joint demonstration here.

A smart navy band kept the audience entertained by playing local and foreign tunes. Starting with the famous and popular 'Allah O Akbar', they played various tunes including the English 'Never on Sunday' 17 Nov.

Soon after being warmly welcomed by Rear Admiral Raja Rab Nawaz, Commander of all Coastal units of Pakistan Navy, there was action in the form of the marine rifle drill followed by the VIP protection demo and the counter-terrorism drill.

Even though it was announced beforehand that the shots being fired during the programme were all blank, there were still startling moments where you jumped or missed a heartbeat. And was how you were taken through the mock-ups of safely evacuating VIPs from hostile areas, overpowering smugglers and terrorists with the help of clever land, sea and air reconnaissance using gunboats, hovercrafts and submarines, Mirage aircraft and Sea King helicopters.

As the simulation played out in the Arabian Sea before you, there was also the scenic backdrop of sailboats and the Oyster Islands to be appreciated. And the impressive air show or flypast made things all the more attractive with Sea King helicopters, which are also known as 'sharks' and Zulu-9 helicopters, performing difficult maneuvers.

The freefall display where a C-130

plane dropped 16 paratroopers was another spectacular event. There were the Pakistan Navy freefall jumpers wearing white coveralls under dark blue parachutes, the Pakistan Air Force paratroopers were wearing dark blue coveralls and had light blue parachutes and the jumpers and black coveralls under the maroon parachutes belonged to the Pakistan Army.

The SSG Navy paratrooper carrying the SSG flag was the first one to land, followed by the Pakistan Navy flag carrier, the Army flag carrier, the PAF flag carrier and finally the Pakistan flag carrier touched down on the beach. The ground staff was careful and mindful not to let any of the flags touch the ground, especially the most respected green crescent and star

Pakistan's share in global arms export market growing

Made-in-Pakistan weapons are so effective that they determine the outcome of war.

According to one private-sector arms manufacturer present at the 11th International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS) 2022, his company's 40mm single-shot grenade launchers played a "key role" in helping Sri Lanka win its war against the Tamil Tigers in the late 2000s.

"Their chief of army staff called our CEO to thank him personally," Daudsons Armoury Ltd General Manager Irfan Ahmed told media on Wednesday 16 Nov.

He said about 30 per cent of the company's total revenue comes from export channels while the rest originates from the domestic market, which consists of the armed forces, law enforcement agencies and private citizens.

Most exhibitors that media spoke to were reluctant to go into specifics with regard to the size of their operations, pricing and clientele given the secretive nature of the arms business. But many of them happily stated that foreign business has been flourishing for the last many years.

"We export weapons mainly to the Middle Eastern countries. I can say confidently that Pakistani businesses are growing their share in the global arms market.

That's because our quality is a lot

Showing his pride for the armed forces of Pakistan, the Chief Minister of Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, who was the chief guest at the event, finally said that he found the Karachi Show demonstration heartening. He congratulated the forces, especially Pakistan Navy for arranging the incredible event at Nishan-i-Pakistan in a befitting manner. "Each time when I come here, I feel thrilled even more than before," he said.

"Showcasing weapons at the IDEAS 2022 is a proof that technology plays an important part in the defence of any country. It is also an honour for Pakistan that our friends from different corners of the world are participating in this exhibition. I want to send this message across the world that Pakistan is a peace-loving country and we would like to take all possible measures to avoid conflict with any country. But the desire for peace should not be misunderstood as weakness as Pakistan's armed forces are fully ready to respond to any aggression if imposed upon us," he said.

better than that of arms manufacturers from other, comparable nations," he said.

According to trade data compiled by the International Trade Centre (ITC), Pakistan exported arms and ammunition worth \$3.8 million in 2021. In contrast, imports amounted to \$30.1m in the same year. These figures appear understated as the original source of the ITC data is the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

Daudsons Armoury makes aircraft bombs weighing from 250 pounds to 2,000 pounds for the Pakistan Air Force and also sells the same to foreign governments. The state-owned ordnance producer has a monopoly over the explosive substance that goes inside a bomb. Daudsons Armoury produces the body of a bomb — a highly precise job in which even a minute inaccuracy can change the projectile's centre of gravity and lead to a missed strike.

Official data shows the top export destination was the United Arab Emirates, which bought Pakistani arms and ammunition worth \$1.9m in 2021. It was followed by France (\$1.5m) and the United States (\$165,000).

Another exhibitor, Cavalier Group, told media that made-in-Pakistan weapons have a huge export potential given the changing nature of international warfare. "We make superior-quality multi-role combat vehicles, body armour, bullet-proof jackets and unnamed armoured vehicles (UAVs)," said Isphandiyar Tajammal Awan, a group director.

Over 40,000 visit four-day mega defence show in Karachi



Visitors inspect different machines at IDEAS 2022 on the last day of the exhibition on Friday 18 Nov.



The four-day International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS) 2022, organised by the Defence Export Promotion Organisation, drew to a close at Expo Centre Karachi on Friday 18 Nov.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 11th edition, Defence Production Minister Mohammed Israr Tareen said that it was heartening to see the overall response for the exhibition from all over the world with over 500 national and international exhibitors and more than 285 delegates from 64 countries visiting the exhibition.

“Various countries established their exclusive pavilions. There was also new participation from Romania and Austria. In addition more than 40,000 visitors, including suppliers, vendors, trade visitors, academia and other organisations visited the exhibition, and all those who were a part of this mega event deserve great appreciation,” he said.

He added that they have signed more than 30 Memorandums of Understanding (MOU), which was proof of the positive response received from prospective buyers from all over the world.

Defence production minister says more than 30 MoUs signed with prospective buyers; 11th edition of IDEAS concludes

“We have made our best efforts to make this event a great success,” he said, while appreciating the dedicated efforts put in by DEPO in organising the event.

He also thanked the federal and provincial governments, Pakistan's armed forces, law enforcement agencies and the media along with friends and partners in various projects of the defence production industry.

“Pakistan deserves to further deepen, broaden and strengthen its partnership in all fields including defence cooperation,” he said, adding: “We are a peace-loving nation and desire to live in harmony with all our neighbours. However, we cannot lower our guards against regional and extra-regional threats.”

DEPO chief Major General Mohammed Arif Malik reminded that IDEAS was held this time after a gap of four years instead of the usual two due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said Pakistan has been in defence production since decades and the country is producing high-quality products, which are competitive in cost but equal in terms of quality.

This time, some major indigenously developed products were showcased including the battle tanks, Al-Khalid, Al-Zarrar, fighter aircraft JF-17 Thunder, armoured personnel carriers, and armed unmanned aerial vehicles, anti-ship cruise missile Harbah-NG, etc, he said.

Replying to a question about following up on the MoUs signed in 2018 and providing details of the agreements signed this time, he said that it was an ongoing process and major deals take time to be cemented.

Also details of such deals were kept confidential as the other party might not want to make everything public, wishes which should be respected, he said and pointed out that there were 14 MoUs signed in 2018 and 30-plus this time around.

To another question regarding opening the exhibition to the general public, it was explained that IDEAS was a business networking platform with the core purpose for companies to generate business. Therefore, it should not be confused with the Defence Day of Pakistan, which is celebrated on September 6 every year and where the people of the country celebrate the armed forces and are invited to participate in various events.

IDEAS is to showcase products, provide an opportunity for our defence-related industry, both in the public and the private sector, to interact directly with the defence industry of the developed world and enjoy defence diplomacy by hosting a number of great activities including demonstrations, simulations, international seminars, networking and business

expansions.

DEPO officials Brigadier Naveed Azam Cheema, Commodore Mohammad Tahir and Badar Expo Solutions chief executive Zohair Naseer were also present.

The closing ceremony also included recognising the exhibitors by giving away certificates and participation awards.

Later, the seal for IDEAS 2024 was unveiled with hopes and wishes to invite more countries to come over to Pakistan. The ceremony concluded with another live performance from the navy brass band.



Pakistan Cargo Services (Pvt) Ltd. was the official Cargo Agent of the Defence Exhibition IDEAS 2022 and transported the heavy machines, tanks and other equipments from different places to the Expo Centre Karachi. Photo shows Mr. Waqar and Mr. Wajahat of PCS handle the special equipments.

Airport Management takes up cleanliness drive at Allama Iqbal International Airport (AIIAP), Lahore



Airports are a regular hub of a large volume of travelers and are also amongst the most visited places. Reaching out to resources that you may have in your community and making folks, particularly passengers, visitors, and airport functionaries aware of your cleanliness preferences assist in taking the Airports to greater heights. To reinforce the significance of harmonized approach to ensuring a neat and clean airport environment, an intensive cleanliness drive inside the airport premises, offices, operational areas, etc was carried out as an integral part of CAA's top management's vision. This campaign was led by Syed Aftab Ali Shah Gilani, COO/APM CAA AIIAP, Lahore, wherein members from ASF, ANF, Pak Customs, Chairman AOC, GHAs, Airlines, other stakeholders and CAA employees joined hands together as change agents to promote awareness in Airport fraternity. Participants were wearing green caps and fluorescent jackets to mark the occasion and highlight

its importance and spread awareness. The cleanliness drive began with a walk, with partakers holding banners, and concluded with an address and vote of thanks by the Airport Manager (APM). The APM in his talk emphasized that the surroundings of the Airport reflect the face and soul of the country and assured all possible support by Airport Management in this regard to keep AIIAP, Lahore glossy and gleaming. The same exercise was simultaneously undertaken by respective sectional heads including the project office, SVMT, Cargo, Fire Station, and all other AIIAP installations, within their domains under the auspice of the Airport Manager to make it a success and for envisaged objectives. The activity also included painting trunks of trees/plants with white color to keep them safe from weather effects and protect them from insect damage. Also, embellishment of AIIAP Lahore was taken care of too, leaving no stone unturned to bring about a visible, and sustainable positive change in all aspects of cleanliness.

CAA issued notice on plea of construction firm

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday 28 Nov. issued notices to the secretary of the aviation division, director general of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), public procurement regulatory authority (PPRA) and others on a petition impugning the evaluation criteria set to invite bids for the reconstruction of a runway at Karachi airport.

A two-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M. Shaikh asked the respondents to file comments till Dec 9.

M/s Umar Jan and Company approached the SHC stating that the CAA had invited bids in September for the reconstruction of the runway at Jinnah International Airport and the petitioner had obtained the bidding documents. But it was shocked to read the evaluation criteria set in such a way that no capable Pakistani firm, including state-owned entities, would qualify for the project, it added.

The lawyer for the petitioner, Mukesh Kumar, argued that the respondents had set out discriminatory and ambiguous criteria in violation of Rule 32 of the PPRA.

He submitted that the CAA, without waiting for the decision of the written complaint filed by the petitioner under Rule 48 and without providing any right of hearing to the firm, was bent upon to award the subject contract to its favourite third party without adhering to the mandatory provisions of the law.

The petitioner pleaded to issue directives to the ministry to decide its grievance petition after providing proper opportunity of hearing and within the prescribed period, and till then further process of the procurement besuspended under Rule 48(4) of the Public Procurement Rules 2004.

The counsel also asked the SHC to suspend the operation of the impugned letter issued on Nov 22, technically disqualifying the petitioner. -Staff Reporter



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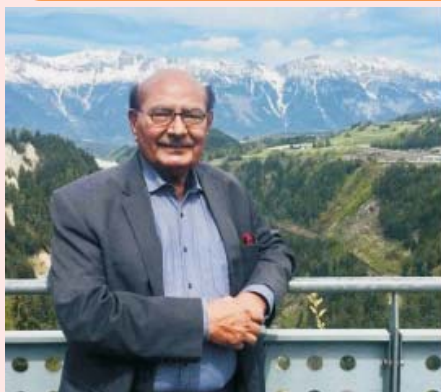
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Indigenous Industry of Medicines

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)



It has proudly been claimed by the 'Pakistan Pharmaceutical Industry' that it has successfully acquired ability and met 95% of the country's medicine requirement and the country's imports have dropped up to merely 5 percent and that too are required in rudimentary form to be developed in country later on. These consist of medicines based on new molecules and compounds and new research-based products. The later (5%) will be recovered in due course of time too. Here, we must not forget that originally only 5% medicines were produced at the start of Pakistan's medicine-history. Pakistan had inherited only 14 big industries at the time of its birth in 1947. The rest were gone to or shifted to India. Consequently here; we the people of Pakistan started from a scratch for nearly every industry including Pharmaceutical. Majestically, Pakistan has now become an important exporter of medicines to under-developed or third world countries, developing countries and has also included some developed ones, mainly because of a presentable high quality and quantity.

The 'Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan' (DRAP) has allowed the import of some finished products however, from China and India. But this factor has been desisted and declared as disastrous by the union of the 'Pharmaceutical Industry of Pakistan' and quite rightly so. If we take into consideration, the import of raw wool in the beginning from Australia for use in our hand woven carpets exported to the world-markets in huge numbers yielding foreign exchange and bring a huge price only after getting converted in finished product; now Pakistani wool has replaced the Australian wool which is a welcome sign. Subsequently, we shall realize the justification of our pharmaceutical industry to disallow the imports from India and China in finished form of some pharmaceutical products when we have the ability to develop them locally in

better format and ingood quality. It may probably be due to some vested interests working behind the scene as it appears from the argument and this practice happens quite often in Pakistan which is to be resisted severely. It has to be probed entirely and checked strictly with iron hand.

Above views were expressed by Senior Vice Chairman of 'Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association' (PPMA) during a meeting with President 'Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry' and President 'Federation of Pakistan Chamber & Industry'. Even though Pakistani drugs have a higher acceptance rate in the international market than India's, but the actual fact is that India's export of medicines is more than Pakistan's. The main reason is the political mileage which Pakistan's has got decreased in the past decade due manipulated regime changes, economic instability, political turmoil and dissatisfaction of masses in the systems, nature's calamities caused by frequent floods and Covid-caused slow growth of economy in the country's export markets of other countries similarly affected. As soon political stability is gained, stability in trade and commerce will consequently come back. Pharmaceutical industry which has a great potential due its better quality, competitive price and high demand, shared acceptability by the end-user; the export will boost manifold and lead the South Asian region and enter the world economic arena.

Health : "Pakistan to sink in swamp of diabetes, if no immediate policy action taken" : (Experts). It is an irony that diabetes in Pakistan is increasing at an alarming rate, despite the fact that its people have moderate living-means. But the current situation is that Pakistan has third highest burden of people living with diabetes and the rate at which the diabetes is increasing is alarming. Pakistan is



the country with fastest growth of diabetes. In just two years, number of people living with diabetes has increased from 19.4 million to 33 million. If you happen to visit a doctor for any disease: his first question before diagnostic proceeding will be to ask you if you are not diabetic..? Luckily there are yet a majority of people who are non-diabetic and they are mostly young people or have taken precautionary measures during their lifetime, like avoiding eating too much of sweets, doing physical exercise especially having a walking habit all their life and are thus immune from this diabolic-diabetes disease spreading fastly, which ultimately affects the span of life and is pitiable on growth worldwide.

For Pakistan, if no urgent policy action is taken, number of people living with diabetes will increase to 62 million by 2045. Sugary drinks are major contributors to diabetes. Government shall take immediate policy actions to reduce their consumption. This was stated by health experts at "Dissemination of International Diabetic Federation" organized by "Pakistan National Heart Association" (PANA) at a local hotel in Islamabad. The scribe wishes for a healthy society to flourish.



Qatar Airways, the Official Airline of the Journey celebrates the historic opening of the FIFA World Cup

The FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ is officially underway and Qatar Airways, as the official airline of the journey, is marking the month-long tournament with special football-themed experiences at the stadiums and at fan zones across the country.

World-class sports infrastructure, a five-star airport expansion and a host of fun-filled tourist attractions and cultural experiences also await the 1.5 million fans expected to attend the event.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "The countdown is complete, and after more than a decade, our dream of bringing the world together has truly come alive. We have witnessed a spectacular opening ceremony, one that is truly worthy of honouring the greatest show on Earth.

"We have 63 more matches ahead of us and I am sure every single one of them will be an unforgettable experience. We are excited to give the world a taste of Arab hospitality and share our passion for connecting the world through travel and sport."

The World's Best Airline recently launched a FIFA World Cup™ campaign anthem on board flights arriving in Qatar and dedicated it to fans everywhere. "C.H.A.M.P.I.O.N.S." sung by internationally acclaimed singer Cheb Khaled and superstar DJ Rodge has

already received millions of views across the airline's official channels.

For the duration of the tournament, the Qatar Airways fleet is carrying the FIFA World Cup™ decal on 120 aircraft. The specially-branded aircraft include 48 B777s, 31 B787s, 21 A320s, 12 A330s, and eight A380s. Three specially-branded Boeing 777 aircraft are hand-painted in FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ livery.

Upon arriving to any of the eight stadiums on match day, guests are invited to enjoy various interactive and family-friendly games at Qatar Airways' stands.

Football fans staying in Qatar during the tournament are invited to visit the Qatar Airways Skyhouse, located at the FIFA Fan Festival™ at Al Bidda Park which is situated along Doha's beautiful Corniche. The Skyhouse has a zipline experience, a Neymar Jr. interactive challenge, a swing photo booth and a QVerse virtual tour of Qatar Airways' award-winning business class. Global music acts and local artists will be also be joining the line up to entertain fans at the fan zone.

Qatar Airways has also partnered with social media platform 433 'The Home of Football' for the duration of the tournament, and will be broadcasting post-match analysis featuring football legends.

In 2017, Qatar Airways announced its partnership with FIFA as the Official Airline. The alliance has gone on to

connect and unite fans globally, with The World's Best Airline also sponsoring numerous football tournaments such as the FIFA Confederations Cup 2017™, the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia™, the FIFA Club World Cup™, and the FIFA Women's World Cup™.

Poland's national team flies to Qatar for the 2022 World Cup were escorted by F-16 fighter jets



A passenger jet carrying Polish football national team was escorted by a pair of F-16 fighter jets.

"We were escorted to the southern border of Poland by F16 planes!" the Twitter account for the national team posted recently. Thank you and greetings to the pilots!

The fighter jets were seen flying almost wing-to-wing along-side the passenger jet, decorated in Poland's national colours of red and white.

'Republic of Poland' was written down the side of the passenger plane. Its tail wing was adorned with images of historic figures of Poland, with the dates 1918 – 2018. In Polish, a message read: '100th anniversary of regaining independence of Poland'.

Video also showed the national team posing for a farewell photograph with staff before boarding the plane. Footage, shot through a window of the passenger jet, showed the two fighter jets flying along-side.

Poland qualified for the World Cup from the same group as England, finishing six points behind them in second place.

Unmatched ceremony kicks off World Cup in Qatar



Dancers perform during the opening ceremony of the football World Cup at Al Bayt Stadium in Al Khor, Qatar.

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Pakistan, China agree to expand, accelerate CPEC

China on Wednesday 2 Nov. assured Pakistan of its continued support to the country's sustainable economic and strategic projects, including expansion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Main Line-1 (ML-1) rail track besides an additional assistance package of RMB 500 million for the country's flood-relief efforts.

According to the Prime Minister Office (PMO), Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang made these commitments during separate meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the People's Great Hall in Beijing.

The two sides signed and concluded a number of agreements covering bilateral cooperation in the areas of e-commerce, digital economy, export of agricultural products, financial cooperation, protection of cultural property, infrastructure, flood relief, post-disaster reconstruction, GDI, animal disease control, livelihood, cultural cooperation, space, geosciences as well as law enforcement and security.

With this, Prime Minister Sharif concluded his two-day maiden visit to China and returned back to the country on Wednesday night.

During his meeting with President Xi, the two leaders, reaffirming their mutual commitment to the CPEC, agreed that as a project of strategic importance, both countries would make joint efforts to "launch ML-1 as an early harvest project under the CPEC framework".

They also acknowledged the need for a mass-transit project in Karachi, and agreed to finalize all formalities for the early launch of the Karachi Circular Railway.

Mr Sharif congratulated President Xi on his reelection as the general secretary of the Communist Party of China at its 20th Central Committee. He also thanked him for China's invaluable assistance to Pakistan's relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in the wake of the devastation caused by super floods in the country.

The two leaders reviewed the progress in Sino-Pak bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

They reaffirmed their commitment to the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries that has withstood the test of time. The two nations have stood firmly side by side in realizing their shared vision of peace, stability, development and prosperity.

Prime Minister Sharif strongly emphasised that Pakistan-China friendship enjoyed complete consensus across the political spectrum in Pakistan and was a model of inter-state relations.



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif speaks with Chinese President Xi Jinping, prior to their talks at the Great Hall of the People, on Wednesday 2nd Nov.

Paying tribute to President Xi's leadership for China's prosperity and his vision for strengthening bilateral relationship, the prime minister said Pakistan drew inspiration from China's socio-economic development and national resolve to the country's progress and prosperity.

The two leaders discussed cooperation across a range of issues, including defence, trade and investment, agriculture, health, education, green energy, science and technology, and disaster preparedness.

They also exchanged views on the rapid transformation in the international environment, which had exacerbated economic challenges for developing countries. They affirmed their shared belief in dialogue and cooperation based on equality and mutual benefit as critical for global peace and prosperity.

They agreed that contemporary challenges like climate change, health pandemics, and growing inequalities needed unqualified cooperation among states, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter.

Prime Minister Sharif and President Xi also discussed regional issues, including the situation in India-held Kashmir and Afghanistan. They acknowledged that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan would promote regional security and economic development, and agreed that CPEC's extension to Kabul would strengthen regional connectivity initiatives.

The prime minister also extended an invitation to President Xi for visiting Pakistan at an early date, which the latter accepted graciously.

Meeting with Chinese counterpart

PM Sharif and his Chinese counterpart Li Keqiang, in a meeting, agreed to expand the CPEC besides ensuring early completion of the corridor-related projects. The PM was warmly received by Premier Keqiang at the People's Great Hall where he was given a guard of honour.

The two sides also held delegation-level talks headed by the respective leaders.

PM Sharif also met chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, Li Zhanshu, and discussed bilateral matters and mutual cooperation.

Chinese firms encouraged to invest

The PM also met leading Chinese companies that expressed keen interest in investing in Pakistan's solar, water and other infrastructure projects.

Speaking on the occasion, the prime minister invited Chinese corporate heads to visit Pakistan and invest in the government's comprehensive solar power project aimed at generating 10,000 megawatts of electricity, the PMO said. He also encouraged Chinese investment in Pakistan's alternative energy resources, including wind turbine power plants.

Mr Sharif stressed early completion of the infrastructure of Gwadar International Airport, which the Chinese companies assured would be completed by early next year.

Moreover, in a meeting with Chinese investors and businessmen, PM Sharif claimed the government since assuming power in April had resolved several issues pertaining to businesses and paid them pending dues of Rs160 billion. He further said a revolving fund had been established by the State Bank of Pakistan on the directives of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar with seed money of Rs50bn.

He vowed to address on priority the issues relating to land acquisition for construction of Diamer Basha Dam and other hurdles in the way of completing Mohmand Dam.

Shehbaz also assured that foolproof security would be provided to Chinese personnel working in Pakistan, and said across-the-board security would be ensured for those deputed on CPEC.

To address water shortage in Karachi, the premier said the federal government along with the Sindh government was ready to collaborate with Chinese companies.

Foreign policy priorities

Later, in a joint statement, the Chinese side reiterated that relations with Pakistan would always be given the highest priority in its foreign policy. The Pakistani side underscored that the Pakistan-China relationship was the cornerstone of its foreign policy and that the Pakistani people always supported the close friendship between the two countries.

Pakistan also expressed its commitment to the One-China Policy and support on the issues of Taiwan, South China Sea, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet. The Chinese side reaffirmed its support for Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity, security, and promoting its socio-economic development and prosperity.

Four corridors being added to CPEC, says Chinese diplomat

Chinese Consul General in Lahore Zhao Shiren has said four corridors are being added to the flagship China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as both Islamabad and Beijing have agreed to it during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent visit to the country.

Speaking at a seminar here on Sunday 13 Nov. on impacts of the policies adopted at the 20th congress of the Communist Party of China that elected President Xi Jinping as its secretary general for another five-year term, he termed Shehbaz Sharif's maiden visit as premier "unprecedentedly constructive and successful" as both sides agreed to adding four new corridors — digital, industrial, green and health — to the CPEC project.

Replying to questions about the "slowed down" pace of work on the CPEC in the recent past, the diplomat said he would not blame anyone, in China or Pakistan, for it, but could assure [Pakistanis] that from now on things would speed up.

He said the project would benefit both China and Pakistan, but it would be more beneficial for the latter. He urged Pakistanis that being on the driving seat, they should take ownership of the project, while Chinese could only facilitate them in this regard.

Foreign affairs expert Muhammad Mahdi lamented that the first phase of the CPEC could not be completed because of 'ineptness' of the previous [PTI] government. He said all political parties needed to make a commitment with the CPEC in their respective manifestos for the next elections so that the project could not be harmed again.

About the anti-CPEC propaganda, he said the Western world is also being taken on board on the project, while premier Sharif made it clear during a reception hosted by the US ambassador that Islamabad would go with the country that would come forward and help Pakistan at this critical time.

He said China has so far given Rs30 billion in aid — the largest by any country — for the flood victims, while it's also

expected to announce the biggest relief for Pakistan at the Paris Club meeting.

Jawed Salim Qureshi, the chairman of an agricultural research organisation, stressed on transfer of technology in the agriculture sector, particularly for major crops like cotton, wheat and maize, to enhance the yield and cut cost of production for the local farmers.

Comparing the data on the wide agricultural production gap between China and Pakistan, he said old seeds of various crops were failing to give desired results and there's need for introducing new ones. He said if there was any obstacle in government-to-government cooperation, then avenues of business-to-business cooperation should be explored to accelerate local farm productivity as the private sector did not require subsidies but facilitation.

Former additional secretary Nazeer Hussain said the CPEC was targeted by the vested interests through thousands of "fake" articles published in the print media and called for an effective response to such propaganda. He said the civil society must be taken along for sustainable Pak-China relations. Chinese diplomatic and economic help would also be needed for stability in Afghanistan, the route to Central Asia, he added.

Dr Amjad Magsi from the Punjab University said China's vision of building a human community with a shared future is gaining support from more countries and will play a vital role in promoting world peace and development.

Dr Khalid Jalal from a UK-based university regretted that the previous government in Pakistan showed a lack of commitment to the CPEC. Referring to the Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa's troubleshooting role in relations between the two countries, he said Islamabad could not yet decide on the post-Bajwa scenario with regard to sustainability of the CPEC.

Dr Qais Aslam, Dr Waheed Ahmed Khan, Tayyab Aijaz Qureshi, Sajjad Mir, Javed Nawaz, Yasir Habib, Dr Hussain Paracha and others also spoke on the occasion.

FPCCI sees 10-year extension in GSP+

The business community representatives have claimed that Pakistan will soon have a 10-year extension in the GSP+ status starting from Jan 1, 2024 to December 2034, as the EU has agreed to do so.

They have criticised the federal government and the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) for allowing the import of finished products from China and India which is disastrous for the local pharmaceutical industry.

"We had a meeting with the European Union parliamentarians in Islamabad in which they said they are re-involving Pakistan in GSP+ status from 2024 to 2034 which is crucial for the country's export industry," Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Irfan Iqbal Sheikh disclosed in a meeting at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) on Monday 7 Nov.

The EU parliamentarians also said that Pakistan could increase the export of its pharmaceutical products to the European markets many times which were being imported from India earlier.

Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) Senior Vice Chairman Nadeem Zafar said the pharmaceutical industry currently meets 95 per cent of the country's medicine requirements. It only imports 5pc of medicine based on new molecules and compounds and new research-based products.

"Despite knowing this, the DRAP has allowed import of finished products from China and India which is disastrous for the local pharmaceutical industry," he deplored. "Even though Pakistani drugs have a higher acceptance rate than India's," he said, adding that up to 90pc of the pharmaceuticals that the EU imports come from Indian companies which have received FDA approvals.

He said Pakistan has the ability and potential to export drugs to Afghanistan while pharmaceuticals are already being exported from India to Kabul via Pakistan.

Pakistani pharmaceutical businesses are unable to even change distributors in Afghanistan due to registration restrictions imposed by the former Afghan government, which allowed Indian companies to export their goods in large quantities.

Speaking on the occasion, the LCCI president Kashif Anwar assured PPMA of supporting its stance on the issue.

Afghanistan registered trade surplus with Pakistan: report

Afghanistan registered a trade surplus of \$79 million with Pakistan, one of its largest trading partners, from July 2021 to June 2022, according to the latest report by an official US monitoring agency, known as SIGAR.

The report — prepared for the US Congress by the office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) — noted that Afghanistan's currency, the Afghani, appreciated by 11.6 per cent against the Pakistani rupee.

The agency noted that despite economic and political troubles, the Afghan currency remained relatively steady this quarter, appreciating by 6.1pc against the euro and 0.2pc against the Indian rupee as well.

Data issued by Afghanistan's central bank, Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB), however, showed that between the end of June and mid-September, the Afghani depreciated 0.6pc against the US dollar and 1.9pc against the Chinese yuan.

Quoting from the most recent trade

data collected by the World Bank, SIGAR reported that Afghanistan's main imports from Pakistan this year remained food items, followed by pharmaceutical products and wood.

But rising oil prices in the international market, tilted bilateral trade in Afghanistan's favour as Pakistanis looked for alternative fuel sources.

"Afghanistan is exporting about 10,000 tons of coal a day to Pakistan," the SIGAR report added, showing how Afghanistan's Taliban rulers were benefiting from rising oil prices.

"Between June and July 2022, the Taliban tripled prices on coal exports to raise revenue from its mining sector amid booming coal exports to Pakistan," the report said.

The US monitoring agency, however, noted that the Taliban's diplomatic isolation continued as to date, no country has officially recognised the regime as the government of Afghanistan after the group seized control of the country in August last year.

However, several countries,

including China, Pakistan, Russia, and Turkmenistan, have allowed Taliban-appointed diplomats to take up residence at Afghan embassies in their capital cities.

While the United States has not yet recognised the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan, US officials have continued to engage with Taliban representatives on a wide range of issues and closely observe Taliban actions in a number of areas, SIGAR reported.

The report noted that the United States remains the largest donor to Afghanistan, providing more than \$1.1 billion to Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover.

Quoting from data collected by the Costs of War Project at the Watson Institute at Brown University, the report noted that US costs for the 20-year war in Afghanistan was more than double the estimates released by the Pentagon.

The Costs of War project 2001–2021, puts total costs of the Afghan war at \$2.26 trillion against the Pentagon's \$933bn.

Unlike the Pentagon's Cost of War Report, the Watson report adds what it considers to be Afghanistan-related costs of \$433bn above the Department of Defence's baseline costs, \$296bn in medical and disability costs for veterans, and \$530bn in interest costs on related borrowing.

Consequently, it is affecting their working capital, putting their business to a halt by hampering their export activities. It is ultimately affecting the country's foreign exchange reserves which are continuously declining.

Textile exports are expected to increase from \$19.35bn (FY22) to \$25bn this fiscal year and \$50bn over the next five years.

Considering that the local currency depreciated by 60-70pc in the last year, exports have climbed to over Rs3 trillion, but working capital has not increased.

He further stated that the pace of competitiveness and modernisation in the global textile market is progressing exponentially. "We must lower our cost of doing business and make it comparable to our regional competitors such as India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam," he added.

He further stated that the Pakistan textile industry is likely to lose markets internationally because of various taxes, levies, presumptive taxes and surcharges, making the exports 10 to 15pc costlier against the regional competitors hence, it is the need of the hour that government should adopt pro-export policies.

FBR fails to refund Rs200bn to exporters

As the stuck-up refunds and tax credit of export-oriented industries swelled to over Rs200 billion in the current fiscal year, the exporters on Tuesday 22 Nov. warned of closing down their textile units as a severe liquidity crunch made it impossible to continue their operations.

The stuck-up payments range from sales tax refunds to duty drawback of local taxes and levies, a support government offered to textile and clothing exporters to offset the cost of doing business.

Data showed that the refund payment orders worth Rs45bn is pending since Oct 16 with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), while deferred sales tax refund edged up to Rs55bn in the last six months.

The exporters' income tax credit outstanding is approximately Rs100bn. The tax credit is offered to industrialists on expansion or modernisation of the production line.

At the same time, the duty drawback of local taxes and levies outstanding

amount is Rs45bn. Of these, Rs10bn is ready for payment with the State Bank of Pakistan.

Govt warned of units' closure amid liquidity crunch

Textile Exporters Association Patron-in-Chief Pakistan Khurram Mukhtar said with the withdrawal of the zero-rated regime (SRO 1125) and the implementation of a 17pc general sales tax on export-oriented sectors, the cost of doing business has increased to unsustainable levels.

Mr Mukhtar expressed serious concerns over unnecessary delay in payment of exporters' sales tax refunds. After witnessing a historic hike, the textile exports fell by 15.23pc in October mainly because the exporters were witnessing an extreme liquidity crisis.

Despite all the commitments, the FBR had failed to pay the sales tax refunds of zero-rated sectors within 72 hours as payment of exporters' refund claims has been stopped for over a month.

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A peep into Harappa through the ages

Archaeologists and experts from related fields got together at the roundtable conference at the 11th Thaap Conference here on Saturday 19 Nov. and discussed the past and present of Harappa.

The theme of the conference this year was 'Archaeology and Living Cultural Legacy of Harappa Civilisation'.

Dr Rafique Mughal, a former professor of archaeology, raised the question whether "the people currently in the region are descendants of the people of Harappa and how much change, if any, has occurred in the lifestyle of the people living in the region since that time". He wondered whether we were genetically linked with the residents of Harappa.

There was research that the residents of Harappa in recent and current times were the descendants of the ancient Harappans but it went unnoticed. He said 'gughu ghoras' were there in all cultures but the question was whether Harappan artifacts were connected with other civilisations, reminding the audience that the horse had not arrived in India when Harappan civilisation existed.

Linguist and language historian Dr Tariq Rehman said, "the Harappan language does not exist now as the language is spoken but the script is there now, which has not been deciphered. But the question is how old it is."

A recent book, Dawn of Everything 2021 by David Graeber and David Wengrow, claimed that it could be 15,000 to 25,000 years old which meant that not only the Harappan script but everything related to that civilisation was much older than what it was earlier thought.

He says deciphering the script was another problem. "All we know is that there was some kind of script but we don't know what it is. There are words which don't belong to Sanskrit, Persian or any other known language in the subcontinent," he said.

Dr Nadeem Omar Tarar, executive director of the Centre for Culture and Development, Gandhara Resource Centre, said archaeology was just one discipline of the field of study of heritage but there were disciplines also like linguistics, folklore, anthropology, painting and sculpture. He said anthropology was needed today.

The ancient civilisation of India has been bracketed by religions in Buddhist or

Hindu or Muslim terms. Even today in Sindh, Buddhists are still living around Buddhist sites which was an example of the living cultural tradition that we are looking for, he said.

"Archaeology needs historical anthropology along with the cultural anthropology being practised in Pakistan since 19th century. In the community there are links of the past," he added.

Dr Tohid Ahmad Chattha, a historian, said that in Pakistan oral history and archaeology had been separated which had created problems and new research being done in various departments had no connections. He said research on Harappa was not being done in the history department of any university of Punjab because the history professors send such thesis topics to archaeology departments. He said there was not a single department of Punjab Studies in the whole of Punjab, raising question why it is not being done. He raised the demand that Punjab Studies centres should be established in the universities.

Shafiq Butt said the ownership of the main archaeological site had not been with the government since the start of excavations more than a century back. "Only 132 acres were owned by government while 358 acres were property of the people where excavation was not possible. Harappa could not be on the list of Unesco as the land was owned by the people, though it was protected. When archaeology became a provincial subject after the 18th amendment to the Constitution, we started making an effort to urge the government to own the land," he said.

He said a campaign was launched with the help of the local community and the officials to get funds released for buying land from the landowners which was not easy. "When Najam Sethi became a caretaker chief minister of Punjab, he released about Rs200m for acquisition of land and the land was acquired," Mr Butt added.

Nain Sukh said that Rigveda maligned the native people while the invaders had been eulogised. "The main things that have been found in Harappa are pottery and stamps, showing their lifestyle. We can say that the real people of Harappa were the weavers or artisans," he said.

Iqbal Qaiser connected Harappan

civilisation with Baba Farid and Waris Shah who lived within the 60km of Harappa and Baba Nanak who had a gurdwara near Harappa.

Maqsood Ahmed, the director of the Department of Archaeology, also spoke.

Earlier, in the morning, Sumbul Natalia of the National College of Arts, Sumbal Sarfraz, Sadia Qutub Hashmi and Nomana Zaryab read out their research papers on Harappa and Indus Valley civilisation.

S.M. Muneer passes away

S.M. Muneer, a senior leader of the business community and chairman of Din Group of Industries, passed away on Monday 28 Nov. due to a cardiac arrest.

Mr Muneer always remained at the forefront



to resolve the business community's issues with the government. He attended his last function at the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry on Monday 28 Nov.. "Mr Muneer came at the function at 12:15pm. He was looking fine and also addressed the businessmen and left the function at 2:30pm," Kati President Farazur Rahman said, adding that at 8pm the business community heard the shocking news of his passing away.

He said Mr Muneer was the patron-in-chief of Kati and United Businessmen Group. He was also a former chairman of the Trade and Development Authority of Pakistan.

He was also the chairman of social welfare organisation Chiniot Anjuman Islamia which runs hospitals, maternity homes, schools and colleges in Karachi, Faisalabad and Chiniot.

Mr Muneer received Sitara-i-Eisaar and Sitara-i-Imtiaz in 2006 and 2007, respectively. He was awarded a lifetime achievement award in 2012 by the president of Pakistan.

Centuries-old Swat mosque becomes centre of attraction after restoration

Known for its nifty floral wood-carved pillars and doors, the oldest mosque in Chamtalai village has become the centre of attraction for worshipers, heritage lovers and architectures after it was restored and conserved.

Presently known as Chinar Jumat, the mosque earlier known as the Molyano Jumat reflects Swati and South Asian vernacular architecture. It is located in the heart of Chamtalai village in Khawazakhela tehsil.

According to the locals, it was constructed by Akhund Baba some 600 years ago. Since then, it has been expanded, renovated and reconstructed with the gradual increase in population of the area. However, it needed urgent restoration and conservation as it was not repaired for a long time.

Swat Participatory Council (SPC), with the assistance of Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and guidance of Shaukat Associates and conservation expert Sameta Ahmed, restored and conserved the mosque and protected its originality.

Locals say it was built by Akhund Baba 600 years ago

“While conserving the mosque, special importance was given to the wooden pillars, columns and doors. The mosque has a high degree of artistic merit and has been mentioned in several books and research works including Islamic Architecture: the Wooden Style of Northern Pakistan by A H Dani and The Arts and Crafts of the Swat Valley: Living Traditions in the Hindu Kush by Johannes Kalter,” said Saddam Hussain, the executive director of SPC.

He said that the writers and researchers considered the mosque as a heritage unparalleled on the world stage of culture and crafts for being refined as a rural heritage and containing the combined fusion of elements that drew multicultural influences from the ancient cultures of Gandhara, China and the Indus Valley Civilisation.

The local elders said that it was a multipurpose building. “From daily religious prayers to community meetings and casual relaxation, it allows a range of activities and does not distinguish between the rich and poor,” said Israr Hussain, a resident of the village.

He said that the mosque was originally built some 600 years ago by Akhund Baba, then some 400 years ago it was reconstructed by Yousafzai clan of Chamtalai. He said that many tourists also



A view of ancient Chinar Jumat after restoration work.

visited it due to its wood carvings.

The elders said that many people came and asked them to give them the wooden pillars and doors, and in return, they would construct a new building for the mosque, but they did not accept the offer.

They said that hundreds of carpenters and artisans of the entire tehsil participated in its construction.

They said that many of them did not receive money but worked voluntarily.

Gul Nawab, an 82-year-old villager who was reciting the Holy Quran in mosque, said that the wooden planks and pillars were brought from different parts of Swat and Shangla.

“I was a child when its last expansion was under way. Many carpenters and wood carvers from the Azikhel clan used to work here without payment while people of the village would come and watch their craft. We enjoyed seeing wood carving of various patterns and designs,” he said. He added that the wood carvers had no sample or epitome, but they would do it from their minds.

Cultural activists said that mosques and hujras that employed artistic wooden traditions had become scarce, and the remaining few if conserved, would greatly contribute to preserving local heritage.

Ganga Ram's descendant visits historical places

Kesha Ram Hinsdale, the great-great-granddaughter of Sir Ganga Ram, spent a busy day in Lahore by visiting several historical places on Sunday 20 Nov.

Ms Hinsdale serves as a member of the Vermont Senate in the US. She had served in the Vermont House of Representatives from 2009 to 2016.

Osman Khalid Waheed, the chief executive officer of Ferozsons Laboratories and a trustee of LUMS, who is the host of the visiting American senator and her spouse John Hinsdale, told media that they visited the Samadhi of Sir Ganga Ram in the morning. He said Evacuee Trust Property Board Additional Secretary Rana Shahid Saleem spoke about Sir Ganga Ram's contributions to Lahore, Punjab and the humanity of the subcontinent.

ETPB chairman Habibur Rehman Gilani, Secretary General Syed Faraz Abbas and member Dr Javeria Ghazanfar Suharwardy also attended the event. Mr Waheed said Lahore Sangat members worked closely with the EPTB for the event. He said the Board had done excellent arrangements for the visit during which the Pandit also performed a ceremony. The visitor prayed at her great-great-grandfather's Samadhi.

Later, she visited Sir Ganga Ram's house in Taxali, where Lahore Sangat

placed a plaque. Fauzia Qureshi, an art educationist, told media that Sir Ganga Ram's house was 100 years or so old. “It is in bad shape and Lahore Sangat will try to conserve it,” she said. She said it's a house that belonged to the early part of the 20th century. The house was under the ownership of Ganga Ram Hospital and the plaque the Lahore Sangat had placed there reads, “Sir Ganga Ram, Civil Engineer, Philanthropist used to live here,” she said.

Mr Waheed said the US senator was then given a tour of the Walled City and Walled City of Lahore Authority Deputy Director Ayesha Khan facilitated it. The senator visited Delhi Gate, Shahi Hamam and Wazir Khan Mosque where she enjoyed traditional food.

Ms Hinsdale also visited the residences of Ustad Daman and iconic singer Noor Jahan. She said Noor Jahan was the favourite singer of her father.



Mkesha Ram Hinsdale, the great-great-grand daughter of Sir Ganga Ram, along with her husband John Hinsdale, stands in front of a hoarding welcoming them to Lahore.

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Unesco expert says rain-hit parts of Mohenjo Daro need urgent repairs

Visiting Unesco expert Thierry Joffroy has asked for capacity reinforcement budget for the next four months for the initial phase of urgent 'stabilisation work' at Mohenjo Daro. Parts of the world heritage site had sustained damage in the aftermath of the unprecedented rains and flooding in recent months.

Mr Joffroy had arrived at the site on October 24 and conducted a survey to assess the extent of damage and estimate the cost of rehabilitation work. Officials of the culture department and member technical consultative committee of the National Fund for Mohenjo Daro assisted the Unesco expert in conducting the survey.

Mr Joffroy appreciated the work carried out by workers following the heavy rainfall across Sindh in August and September this year.

Sources privy to the rehabilitation plan told media that the project would cost \$430,000 to be carried out over a period of three years for which short-, mid- and long-term schemes were being designed. The schemes would focus on conservation

and climate change mitigation measures.

In the initial phase which would take over four months' time, \$70,000 would be required, the sources said. A more comprehensive restoration plan would be prepared after completing this project during January 2023 when the Unesco expert would be visit the site again, they added.

The four-month capacity reinforcement project would include recruitment of fresh staff [about 28] to form four operational teams to undertake the stabilisation work along with skilled personnel at the site. The work would be focused on re-levelling of drainage system, underpinning and reconstruction of walls. Temporary deployment of two assistant conservators at the site will also be made. A satellite internet connection would be needed to establish communication with international partners and experts for preparing a long-term restoration plan.

Under the plan to lay a drainage system at the site, a study would be conducted on how to ensure a safe and smooth flow of rainwater into Indus River.

Such a system would be designed for each area of the site, the sources said.

They pointed out that the Unesco expert, during his five-day stay in the city, undertook an extensively survey of the site along with the director archaeology Shakir Shah, member NFM technical consultative committee Altaf Aseem, Conservator Ali Haidar Gadhi, Naveed Sangah and others.

They also accompanied Mr Joffroy in his visit to the proposed disposal outlet, the protective dyke around the ancient site and the spurs erected to control the river's flow.

In discussions with him, the element of 'climate change' was taken as a key factor contributing to the disastrous rainfall and floods as the Unesco expert was told that this factor would possibly cast an adverse impact on the ruins. Designing a workable drainage system and studying types of channels suitable for draining rainwater through gravity were also discussed.

Mr Joffroy and his team members decided that a variety of situations should be mapped before the next monsoon.

Winter family festival begins

The yearly winter family festival began at Jilani Park on Thursday 17 Nov.

The monthlong event, which runs until Dec 17, was inaugurated by Punjab Senior Minister Mian Aslam Iqbal.

Storytelling, a book fair, an Icelandic model, a magic show, a mascot parade, traditional food competitions, trading, technical and vocational education, a Sufi night, a poetry competition, music, drumming, dance, Kabbadi, Naat, horseback riding, a flower exhibition, qawali, gymnastics, puppetry, and fireworks are all part of the festival.

"The PHA, working with the government and the private sector, has assured the provision of a number of activities in a bid to help the people enjoy by having some recreation," said Mr Iqbal. "This huge recreational event has been held in Lahore after a long period of time.

He said he was grateful for the way the PHA administration, police, and other departments worked together to set up top-notch security, logistics, and administrative arrangements for the event.

He said that measures had been taken to formalise the PHA gardeners' services



Dancers perform at the opening ceremony of the winter family festival at Racecourse Park.

and that 48 city grounds were being upgraded.

The event, according to Commissioner Amir Jan, will promote Pakistani and Punjabi culture alike.

Chief Minister Parvez Elahi promised that the government will occasionally ensure such activities in a video message for the winter family festival. The PHA has always played a major role in organising

numerous colourful events, such as Jashan-e-Bahawaran, Sawan Mela, Canal festival, and Winter Festival, he said. "Allah Almighty has given us four weathers at which times," he remarked.

He asked the PHA administration to use all available resources to make this event fantastic with the participation of a greater number of people. He encouraged the people to attend the winter celebration.

Nadir Magsi becomes jeep rally's man of the moment



Mir Nadir Magsi won the 7th Thal Muzafargarh Jeep Rally which concluded with exciting activities on Sunday 20 Nov.

Known competitors Sahibzada Muhammad Ali Sultan, Jafar Magsi, Asif Fazal Chaudhry and Zain Mahmood also participated in the event. Mr Mahmood failed to defend the title he won last time. Mr Sultan's vehicle met with an accident but he remained unscathed.

Thirty-eight vehicles including those of two women participated in the final round and Nadir Magsi got the first position by covering a distance of 190 kilometres in two hours, 10 minutes and 15 seconds. Asif Fazal Chaudhry reached the finishing line in two hours, 12 minutes and 35 seconds, followed by Jafar Magsi who completed the track in two hours, 50 minutes and 16 seconds.

Speaking on the occasion, Nadir Magsi claimed that the track was very rough and challenging. He expressed hope that the event would be made better and better in the coming years.

A number of people enjoyed the thrilling competition and a host of other activities. Deputy Commissioner Samiullah Farooq said it was a big challenge for him to ensure a successful mega event. He said the tourism department also helped in preparation of the route.

The award-winning ceremony was held at Faisal Stadium. Maham Sheraz got the first prize among women in prepared category while Palvasha took the first position in stock category.

The district administration failed to set up a food street or any point.

NDMA issues guidelines for tourists during winter

Anticipating a large number of visitors to tourist destinations during the ongoing winter spell, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has issued guidelines for tourists.

According to a statement, considering past experiences, the winter season, which will last till Feb 2023, was expected to attract tourists to Murree, Galiyat, Abbottabad, Gilgit-Baltistan, Naran, Kaghan and other areas.

There is a dire need to adopt proactive measures apart from fore-warning/guidance against the developing situation and accordingly take requisite precautionary measures, it noted.

Tourists and other visitors to Pakistan have been advised to regularly check the weather forecast for planned destinations from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) and NDMA's website for updated weather information.

They have also been asked to check NDMA's web portal and social media handles (Twitter and Instagram) for remaining updated on the developing situation. Also check/consult websites for area specific alerts and advisories, the statement said.

Before departing, they have also been told to check with National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) on their website or helpline for the status/road condition of the intended route before departure, carry basic travel necessities especially dry food, which can suffice for basic needs of all accompanying travellers for a period of at least 24 hours.

Tourists have been asked to carry specific medicine for any ailment or sickness a fellow passenger may suffer from.

They have been advised to check the requirement of anti-skid/tire chains and coordinate over their availability in case of need, follow guidance arrangements of NHMP, Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) and traffic police for ensuring safety during travelling, ensure proper checking and maintenance of vehicle from a mechanic and carry a spare tire, checked and filled with required air pressure, radiator fluids and lubricants, as advised by the mechanic.

Tourists have also been asked to carry warm clothes and keep a passage for fresh air circulation through air conditioning

mechanism or keeping a window slightly ajar, and ensure availability of accommodation and seek prior confirmation from hotel/guestroom for reservations before departing on a trip.

139 Hindu pilgrims arrived in Lahore

139 Hindu pilgrims arrived in Lahore from India by crossing the Wagah border on foot to attend the 314th birth anniversary of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Sawami Shadaram Sahib to be held at Hayat Pitafi, Mirpur Mathelo, Sindh.

The pilgrims expressed joy after being received warmly by the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) officials led by the additional secretary (shrines).

"We are very happy about the arrangements made here by the ETPB to facilitate us in attending this event," the pilgrims' group leader Udaster Laal told the media at Wagah border.

According to the scheduled programme, the ETPB dispatched the pilgrims to Sindh by train under strict security measures.

From Nov 23 to 25, they will stay at Hayat Pitafi to attend the main ceremony and perform their religious rituals. On Nov 26, the pilgrims will visit Khanpur Mehr and Jarwar. They will also visit Ghotki (Adilpur), Sukkar (Pano Aqil, Sadhu Bela Mandir and Mathelo (Arora, Mata Kalka temple) on Nov 27, 28 and 29, respectively.

On Nov 29, the pilgrims will reach Mirpur Mathelo and stay at Shahndani Satasang Hall. On Dec 1 and 2, they will reach Dahrki and then visit Nankana Sahib.

On Dec 3, the pilgrims will return to India via Wagah border.



Indian Hindu pilgrims cross over to Pakistan to participate in the 314th birth anniversary celebrations of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Shib at the historic shadani Darbar in Hayat Pitafi, at the Wagah border

Saka Panja Sahib's 100-year celebrations held

The 100-year celebrations of Saka Panja Sahib concluded on Sunday 30 Oct. at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hassan Abdal, where the handprint of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak is believed to be imprinted on a boulder.

Hundreds of Sikh yatrees (pilgrims) and various political and socio-religious leaders from India and other countries participated in the event.

"Saka Panja Sahib teaches us that we should not hesitate to make any sacrifice for peace and unity," Indian delegation leader Sardar Harmet Singh said. "We have been honoured and are grateful for all arrangements made here."

Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Pardhan Sardar Amir Singh said the government of Pakistan had won the hearts of the entire Sikh nation by issuing special visas and permission for the ceremony in the spirit of goodwill.

Addressing the ceremony, Rana Shahid Saleem, additional secretary of the Evacuee Trust Property Board, said development work was under way rapidly at all gurdwaras across the country. He insisted that all places of worship were safe and comprehensive measures had been taken to promote religious tourism.

Argentine writer releases book of World Cup tales

A man jumped into a river full of crocodiles to get tickets for the 2010 World Cup, a Uruguay player returned to the field just after suffering a heart attack and a Russian couple broke up after arguing over who was the better player, Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo.

These are some of the unusual facts that Argentine writer Luciano Wernicke has compiled in the latest version of his book, *Incredible World Cup Stories*, published in 20 languages in the run-up to the Qatar World Cup.

Wernicke looks at covering the world's most important sporting event from "different perspectives", he said in an interview, as "even the smallest stories somehow describe what the passion for soccer is".

In 1994, he wrote, an Albanian man went into a betting shop and gambled his wife on an Argentina win against Bulgaria. His bet lost 2-0, which subsequently led to the loss of his horrified wife as well.

Sixteen years later, a radio station in host country South Africa offered two tickets to the final match to whoever did the craziest thing to get them. The winner: a man who threw himself into a river full of crocodiles.

With a new chapter added for each

World Cup, this is Wernicke's third edition of the book, and he is already gathering bizarre tidbits on the coming Qatar tournament, the first to be held in a Middle Eastern country.

"There are many interesting things, starting with all these boycott claims and the human rights issues," Wernicke, 52, said. "Outside of sports, there will undoubtedly be plenty. The social side will weigh heavily."

Wernicke's next chapter may be inspired by Friday's news: world soccer governing body FIFA announced alcoholic beer would not be sold at stadiums in Qatar.

Women stopped from entering parks in Kabul

Afghan women were stopped from entering amusement parks in Kabul on Wednesday 9 Nov. after the Taliban's morality ministry said there would be restrictions on women being able to visit public parks.

A spokesperson for the Ministry for Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice (MPVPV) confirmed that women would be restricted from entering parks, but did not respond to requests to provide further details.

It was not clear how widely the restrictions applied or how they affected a previous rule from the MPVPV saying parks, including open-air spaces, must be segregated by gender and certain days would be aside for women.

Bilal Karimi, a deputy spokesperson for the Taliban administration, did not respond to a request for comment.

At a Kabul amusement park containing rides such as bumper cars and a Ferris wheel, witnesses observed several women being turned away by park officials, with Taliban agents present observing the situation.

Masooma, a Kabul resident who asked that only her first name be published for security reasons, had planned to take her grandchild to visit the park, but was turned away.

"When a mother comes with their children, they must be allowed to enter the park, because these children haven't seen anything good ... they must play and be entertained," she said. "I urged a lot to them, but they didn't allow us to get inside the park, and now we are returning home."



The concluding ceremony of 100-year celebrations of Saka Panja Sahib is under way at Gurdwara Panja Sahib on Sunday 30 Oct. Hundreds of Sikh pilgrims from India and other parts of the world travelled to Pakistan to participate in the event.



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'Mother goddess' found in New York returning home to Pakistan



A 'Maitreya' idol that was returned to Pakistan.

More than 5,000 years' old figurines of the mother goddess from Mehrgarh were rescued from the basement of a New York art dealer. So was a relic showing Gautama Buddha meditating under the tree of awakening.

The two are among 341 artefacts that US officials have recovered and handed over to Pakistani officials in New York since November 2020.

On Nov 1, a trial court in India, sentenced 71-year-old art dealer Subhash Kapoor and five of his accomplices to 10 years in prison for theft and illegal export of 19 antique religious idols from a temple in the state of Tamil Nadu.

Kapoor, who led a smuggling ring, was charged in 2019 with trafficking over

2,600 individual objects worth over \$143 million from India, Pakistan, and other places.

The Pakistani artefacts were recovered in New York by a joint team of the Homeland Security (DHS) and the Manhattan District Attorney's (DA) office. Pakistan received the first batch of 45 artefacts in 2020, another of 104 in 2021 and then of 192 artefacts earlier this week. Besides those of the Mehrgarh and Gandhara civilisations, the recovered item also includes a beautiful Multani vase, about 250 years old.

"Subhash Kapoor and others engaged in the theft and smuggling of valuable cultural heritage are being pursued and prosecuted," said Pakistan's Consul General Ayesha Ali who received the objects from US officials.

The total worth of valuables received this week was about \$3.4m, she said.

Among the 192 items returned on Thursday 10 Nov. are a Gandhara statue depicting Maitreya, or an enlightened Buddha, and Mehrgarh Dolls between roughly 4,500 and 5,500 years old.

The antiquities were looted from a Neolithic archaeological site in Pakistan before being trafficked to New York. They were placed in a storage unit rented by the agents of a group called Art of the Past until their seizure by US authorities this year.

The archaeological site of Mehrgarh in Pakistan was discovered in 1974 and subsequently faced looting.

The Manhattan DA's office says it has recovered more than 2,500 artefacts trafficked by Kapoor and his network from numerous countries between 2011 and 2022.

"We began this journey with the DA's office and DHS for its vital role in ensuring that the criminal network is punished," Ms Ali said.

US officials, she said, were now planning to bring the smugglers from India and prosecute them in the United States.

Museum digs deep into rare marble plaque

As part of an extensive research programme on non-Muslim heritage of Pakistan, the Lahore Museum is conducting research on an exclusive art piece depicting a pilgrimage scene on a marble plaque.

This was stated by Hindu and Jain Bhuddist collection Curator Ahtesham Aziz.

He told media that cleaning of the marble plaque titled, 'Pilgrimage Scene on a Marble Plaque' was under way and research was also being carried out on the artistic value of the piece which was placed in the Lahore Museum around six decades ago.

Mr Aziz said the marble plaque was unique and spellbinding. "The plaque is in relief work and such a work just can't be found anywhere else. He said Hindu and Jain pilgrims take immense interest in this plaque when they visit the museum from all over the world," he said.

"It is a large marble plaque from Gujranwala and dates back to the 19th century AD. It is beautifully decorated in relief and painting, and depicts the holiest site of Jain in Shatrunjiya in Gujarat, Kathiawar (India), showing approach to its fortification from the Palitana railway station. The entire painting follows the typical Rajasthani style. This plaque was originally a votive offering by some pilgrims to the Jain temple of Gujranwala. The paintings it has on it and its shimmering golden colour with many other hue present a highly gleaming look," he explained.

The curator said the museum had initiated a research programme under which it would co-relate the in-house museum artifacts with the original sites situated in Pakistan and promote various aspects of cultural heritage of Pakistan. He said the museum was now conducting further research on the marble plaque and a team would also visit the original site -- the place in Gujranwala from where this plaque was brought.



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