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**Amadeus hosts the Tech Show in Lahore and Islamabad** (See pages 24-29)





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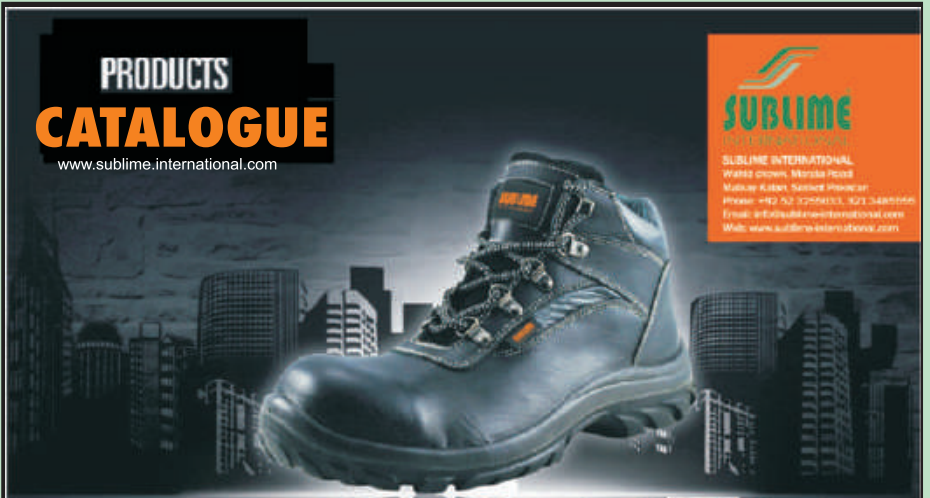
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# CONTENTS

New  
**FLYER**<sup>®</sup>  
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Monthly Magazine of Aviation and Tourism  
Vol 29 MARCH 2023 No.06

Blinken reaffirms US pledge to deliver F-16 fighters to Turkiye	06
Federal Minister for Religious Affairs visits HOAP Sindh Office	07
Aircraft owners seek changes in aviation policy	10
Virgin Atlantic to suspend services to Pakistan	10
DHL suspends `Import Express Product` from March 15	11
Love is in the air for Network Airline Management	11
Flydubai adds unserved saudi routes	12
THAI sees profit return as tourism resumes	14
First class vs business class: What's the difference?	15
The Role of airbags in ensuring the safety of airline passengers	15
Woman dead after private jet encountered severe turbulence over ...	17
Qatar Airways and Qatar Tourism partner to deliver Qatar ...	17
A busy February at Dublin & Cork Airports as passenger ...	19
Seventy Russian aircraft destroyed by Ukrainian defenses since invasion began	21
Kempinski Hotels selects Sabre technology to upgrade customer ...	23
Amadeus hosts Tech Shows in Lahore, Islamabad	24
Three-day maritime exhibition, conference concludes	30
\$1bn deal signed with Uzbekistan to boost trade	32
Roadmap to reduce distortions in economy unveiled	34
South Korea willing to enhance ties with Pakistan in tourism, trade: ex-envoy	35
Sajal praises projects highlighting Pakistan `the right way`	38
Poet of romance Amjad Islam breathes his last	41
Faiz Festival kicks off at Alhamra, Lahore	42
Afghan refugee offers virtual tours of her homeland	42
Once home to civilisations, fabled Antioch left in ruins	43
Experts discover ancient structures, artefacts away from Mohenjo Daro	45
173 Gandhara art pieces from museums loaned to China	47



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## Blinken reaffirms US pledge to deliver F-16 fighters to Turkiye

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Monday 20 Feb. underlined Washington's commitment to delivering F-16 jets to Turkiye as he wrapped up a visit during which he pledged solidarity with the earthquake-hit country.

It was Blinken's first visit to Turkiye as secretary of state in a trip that was planned before a 7.8-magnitude earthquake on February 6, which has now killed nearly 45,000 people in Turkiye and Syria.

Relations between the United States and Turkiye have been strained in recent years, but Washington has found Ankara helpful for its mediatory role between Russia and Ukraine since Moscow's invasion last year.

On Monday 20 Feb., Blinken held talks with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, during which they discussed Ukraine and "the need to work more closely" on issues including defence, energy and collective security, State Department spokesman Ned Price said.

One of the main issues on the agenda of the visit has been Turkiye's desire to buy modernised versions of F-16 fighter jets for its ageing air force.

The US Congress is blocking the sale due to concerns over Turkiye's human rights record and threats to Greece.

"The Biden administration strongly supports the package to both upgrade the existing F-16s and to provide new ones," Blinken told a press conference in Ankara. But he added that he could not provide a "formal timeline" for approval and delivery.

### Nato applications

The other main issue discussed during Blinken's visit is Turkiye's refusal to ratify Sweden and Finland's Nato membership applications.

Finland and Sweden dropped decades of military non-alignment and applied to join the US-led defence alliance last year in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Ankara has criticised Sweden's refusal to extradite dozens of suspects that Turkiye links to outlawed Kurdish militants and a failed 2016 coup.

On Monday 20 Feb., Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said no conditions should be applied to the F-16 jets approval.

"It would not be right to make Sweden and Finland's Nato membership a 6 - MARCH 2023

condition for the F-16s. They are two different issues," he said. "Our hands should not be tied." Turkiye has signalled it is ready to accept Finland into Nato, but Cavusoglu said Kurdish militants continued "all kinds of activities including recruitment, terrorist propaganda" in Sweden.

But the Turkish minister said suspended talks on their membership would resume in Brussels "in the near future", in comments welcomed by Stockholm.

Swedish Foreign Minister Tobias Billstrom told journalists in Brussels that Sweden was ready for talks, adding "this is a welcome and good announcement from Turkiye".

Blinken said the United States "strongly" supported Finland and



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken applauds as he meets with members of USAID and base personnel during his visit to Incirlik Air Base near Adana, Turkey February 19, 2023.

Sweden's admission into Nato "as quickly as possible". "Finland and Sweden have already taken concrete steps" to address Turkiye's concerns, he said.

Blinken arrived on Sunday at Incirlik air base in southern Turkiye, through which the United States has shipped aid after the earthquake. The United States has now contributed \$185 million in assistance to Turkiye and Syria.



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# Federal Minister for Religious Affairs visits HOAP Sindh Office

Mr. Furqan Abdul Qadir, Chairman HOAP Sindh Zone, Mr. Masood Shinwari, immediate past Chairman Pakistan HOAP, along with Zonal Executive Committee Members and Members HGOs warmly welcomed the Honorable Guests, Mufti Abdul Shakoor, Federal Minister MoRA-IFH along with their team members. Brief Introduction of the Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) is the flagship Trade Organization and leading voice of the Hajj Organizing sector licensed and registered with the Ministry of Commerce, Govt. of Pakistan and incorporated with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, with a mandate to promote and develop the Private Hajj Groups Pilgrimage sector. HOAP acts as a bridge between the Government and all concerned stakeholders including the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Pakistan and all airlines with aims and enterprises to improve the standard of services rendered to Hujjaj ensuring maximum facilities. The chairman HOAP said that under the supervision of Mufti Abdul Shakoor



Mufti Abdul Shakoor Federal Minister for Religious Affairs with Mr. Furqan Abdul Qadir, Chairman HOAP Sindh.





the last year Hajj was successfully completed in a very short time and on the very short notice. The chairman further added that “we are willing/wishing to this that Ministry’s role with Private HGOs/Hujjaj as a Leader or as a father to support us in KSA for any hurdle we face and we communicate our issues and problems with MoRA to resolve them promptly; commonly it is observed that HGOs having feared this if we share our issue MoRA will penalize/complaint on us, due to this fear they were hiding their issue with MoRA, therefore it is requested you kindly take some initiatives for these problems which we are facing for the betterment”. He further added that Hajj is performing the rituals of Hajj not the Package of the Hajj, it is appreciable that MoRA arranges the learning/training sessions for the Hujjaj here in Pakistan but in Saudi Arabia, there is no such type of sessions and it is commonly observed that there is no mechanism to observe/monitor the each and every Haji perform their Hajj rituals properly or not.

Honorable Federal Minister, Mufti Abdul Shakoor, thanked Mr. Masood Shinwanri, Mr. Furqan Abdul Qadir and the whole team of HOAP, and he said “it is an honor to me and my team for this moment sitting with the genuine

stakeholders of Hajj Trade who were serving the hujjaj since decades, this hajj trade is just like purely serving the people /guests of Almighty ALLAH, you are well aware of each and every things of the Hajj rituals of the Private Hujjaj”. He further told that “in my tour of KSA for the signing of the MOU with the KSA authorities, I have fought in every official Meeting in KSA for the depreciation in the packages offered by the Saudi Authorities for the Pakistani Hujjaj both sectors Government Hujjaj as well the Private Scheme Hujjaj”. The Honorable Federal Minister added that “we also working on the Long term offer letter for the private HGOs same submitted to the authorities for final approval and proceedings”. Honorable Minister further said that in the last few years, Monitoring Mechanism has opted that was too hard and problematic for us and private HGOs as well in this regard, and after several intimations on the matter from HOAP, we have taken the initiative to change /update this mechanism into soft/normal manners which will be more beneficial for us. The Honorable Federal Minister further added that due to the current situation of the Country, we are suffering from a very crucial time in the country. He said that when Hajj Packages will be finalized later

then we will intimate you. We have conducted several meetings with airlines for the airfares, after several meetings negotiation on the airfares is the core agenda, we are trying to fix airfares as low as possible which will be the same for the Government Hujjaj and Private Scheme Hujjaj fares for their passenger. Mr. Masood Shinwari, Immediate past Chairman of HOAP Pakistan thanked the Honorable Federal Minister to visit and added his suggestion that the Packages Committee will take part or member of the Monitoring Mechanism team for the betterment and it will be very beneficial for us. Mr. Zaeem Akhtar Siddiqui seconded Mr. Masood Shinwari's suggestions and added that Mina and Arafat's complaints against HGOs were not entertained by the Ministry because these days were solely under rolling/control by the Saudi authorities. He further added and shares the last year complaints of hujjaj.

Mr. Furqan Abdul Qadir, Chairman, HOAP Sindh presented the memento to the Honorable Federal Minister and thanked him for visiting HOAP Office, and urged for rapid implementation on the suggestions, for betterment of the services related to pilgrims.





# Glimpses of the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs visits HOAP Sindh Office



## Aircraft owners seek changes in aviation policy

The Aircraft Owners and Operators Association (AOOA) has urged the government to direct the aviation ministry to adopt the Senate-passed modifications in the National Aviation Policy, 2019, as soon as possible.

The National Aviation Policy 2019 modifications and the Civil Aviation Rules 1994 revisions, which will now be known as Civil Aviation Regulations, 2022, were adopted and passed by the Senate on Aug 4 last year.

Imran Aslam Khan, founder of the AOOA, said in a statement that the aviation ministry had undermining constitutional powers of the parliament.

Mr Khan said that the ministry should take on board all stakeholders to discuss the quick implementation of the policy.

The National Aviation Policy, 2019, binds the aviation ministry to hold biannual meetings with stakeholders, but such meetings have not been held for more than two years, the association said.

The aviation ministry, under Rule 1963 of Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business in the Senate 2012, was supposed to implement these amendments after the lapse of 60 days, i.e the amendments concerned became binding on Oct 4, 2022, but officials in the aviation sector have been undermining the powers of the parliament, it said.

Last month the Aircraft Owners and Operators Association had written a letter to the prime minister, bringing the issue to his knowledge.

The letter, written by AOOA General Secretary Nawaz Asim, said there was a need to establish supremacy of the parliament as no one had the constitutional powers to ignore the order of the parliament.

The relevant adjustments were made after extensive discussion and on the request of the Senate's Standing Committee on Aviation. Although the aviation ministry and the Civil Aviation Authority had not yet objected, these revisions were not being followed.

Lawmakers may take up the issue in the parliament and question the officials concerned for disgracing the collective wisdom of the parliament and may use the

constitutional power to restore the public confidence in the Senate by enforcing implementation without delay, the AOOA statement said.

The letter stressed the need for appointing three aviation professionals in the PCAA board of directors as per Civil Aviation Ordinance, 1982.

"These positions have remained vacant for more than three years and unilateral decisions taken by the PCAA board of directors consisting only of bureaucrats have created a negative impact on the aviation industry since no aviation professionals are included in the BoD concerned," the letter said.

## Virgin Atlantic to suspend services to Pakistan



Virgin Atlantic announced recently that it will be suspending services between London Heathrow and Lahore and Islamabad.

A Virgin Atlantic spokesperson said: "As we continue to ramp up our flying programme in 2023, we've taken the opportunity to review our entire network and decided to make a few changes.

"Following this review, it is with regret that we've taken the difficult decision to suspend our services between London Heathrow and Pakistan. Since commencing operations in December 2020, we have been proud to offer choice for customers travelling between London and Manchester in the UK, and Islamabad and Lahore in Pakistan. During that time, we have also provided important cargo capacity, as well as delivering vital medical supplies."

"This is not a decision we have taken lightly, and we'd like to apologise for any inconvenience caused. We would like to wholeheartedly thank everyone in Pakistan; our customers, teams, partners and the authorities for their support over the past two years."

Virgin Atlantic will continue to

operate services between London and Lahore until 1st May and between London and Islamabad until 9th July.

We will communicate to any customers due to fly after these dates - who will be affected by the cancellations - to provide options, which include rebooking, where applicable, or a full refund.

## Planes grounded amid fuel shortage

Edhi's air ambulance operation is among a number of general aviation activities that have come to a halt due to a 'severe shortage of jet fuel', Sky Wings Aviation Company said in a statement.

The company, which specialises in training pilots, said the grounding of Edhi's air ambulance will impede much-needed medical evacuations vital to save lives.

It claimed that the State Bank of Pakistan has failed to open a letter of credit for jet fuel stuck at Karachi's Port Qasim since December 2022.

The aviation company added that \$23,000 needed to pay for the fuel had already been deposited with a commercial bank but it didn't pursue the matter with the central bank over fears of reprisals.

"We have refused many medical emergency evacuation requests due to shortage of fuel," it added.

While seeking government help, the aviation company said it was accruing demurrages on the fuel which has already arrived in the country.

Virgin Atlantic to cease operations Separately, British airline Virgin Atlantic will cease its flight operation to Pakistan within the next few months, the airline has said in a statement.

Currently, the airline is operating flights from Heathrow Airport to Lahore and Islamabad.

The airline will continue to operate flights between London and Lahore until May 1 and between London and Islamabad until July 9, said the statement released recently.

A Virgin Atlantic spokesperson said the difficult decision was taken to suspend services between London Heathrow and Pakistan. The airline commenced flights in December 2020.



## DHL suspends 'Import Express Product' from March 15



*DHL Pakistan says it will restrict outbound shipments to a maximum weight of 70kg for all customers.*

**D**HL, a global logistics company, announced on Monday 27 Feb. to suspend some of its operations partially in Pakistan due to restrictions on outbound remittances by the government.

DHL Pakistan has informed its customers that it is suspending 'Import Express Product' and restricting outbound shipments to a maximum weight of 70kg per shipment for all customers billed in Pakistan from March 15.

The company said the last pick-up date would be March 14 and shipments picked up on or before this date would still be delivered.

Amid fast-dwindling foreign exchange, the PMLN-led coalition government and the State Bank of Pakistan have imposed restrictions on outward remittances for foreign companies operating in Pakistan.

“The remittances sent by DHL Pakistan cover the cost of DHL's international aviation, hub, gateway and last-mile delivery incurred through our global network for the shipments sent/received by valued customers, the courier service provider said, adding that this constraint has made it unsuitable for DHL Express to continue providing the full product offering in Pakistan.

The company said it is in regular contact with the Pakistani authorities to allow pending remittances to resume the full suite of services in the country at the earliest.

Meanwhile, Businessmen Group (BMG) chief Zubair Motiwalla said the government should settle the grievances of DHL amicably as exporters need the

foreign courier service for sending their samples to foreign buyers.

Jawed Bilwani, Chief Coordinator of Pakistan Fashion Apparel, said “we usually send textile samples which are necessary to secure future orders.”

However, some exports of goods like surgical items are made from Sialkot while some packaging items are also exported from Lahore via DHL. The trading community usually brings in imported items from various countries, he added.

The government is not allowing dollar outflow while foreign shipping lines have also warned of suspending their operations in Pakistan as banks had stopped remitting freight charges to them due to the unavailability of dollars.

Profit repatriation on foreign investment stood at \$220m in 7MFY23 as compared to over \$1bn in the whole FY22.

## Saudi Arabia announces new guidelines for travellers with pets

**U**nder Saudi Arabia's new protocol for passengers leaving the country with pets, they must first seek permission from that country's government to ship their animals abroad, a spokesman for Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said on Sunday 19 Feb.

He said that according to a notification issued by the Saudi government, airlines must inform passengers in advance about the new rules for shipment of pets.

The General Authority of Civil Aviation's (GACA) notification reads: “Airlines must inform passengers that it is necessary to submit import/export applications for animals through the new electronic link (<https://nanma.sa>), before travelling.”

It further said airlines must not ship animals, including those accompanied by their owners, without obtaining a permit from the ministry of environment.

Failure to comply with the circular issued by GACA is an explicit violation of the Saudi government's order, the notification added. “Legal procedures will be initiated against violators held responsible.”

## Love is in the air for Network Airline Management



**N**etwork Airline Management transported 1,500 tonnes of freshly cut flowers, from Nairobi, Kenya into Liege, Belgium, to meet additional demand ahead of Valentine's Day this year.

This year's “Valentine's Day Flower Rush” throughout the first two weeks of February, saw Network operate a total of 15 x B747F flights, including three extra flights to meet this year's higher than normal demand.

With Network's own 'NAS NBO' Operations team overseeing the operation, each flight reached a maximum payload of approximately 100 tonnes of freshly cut flowers, giving an approximate total Valentine's figure of 1,500 tonnes.

Upon landing in Liege, the fresh roses and carnations were quickly processed, then transferred by road to various cities in Europe and the United Kingdom.

Network Airline Management's senior commercial manager – managed fleet, Sam Lindsey said “We are once again happy to support the Kenyan flower industry throughout the Valentine's peak season. All the Network teams were fully focused to ensure smooth operations and ensure our valued client's demands were met.”

The Network Aviation Group has been supporting Kenya's horticulture industry for over 35 years and currently operates six weekly flights from Nairobi to Liege all year round, utilising their managed fleet of B747F aircraft.

## American Airlines CEO says airlines is ready to match Delta Air Lines pilot salaries



American Airlines will match the pay rates and profit sharing that was contracted by Delta Air Lines

Chief Executive Officer of American Airlines, Robert Isom, has said that American Airlines is prepared to compete with a rival airline, Delta Air Lines, as Delta signs their pilots to a new groundbreaking contract. Isom has said that for American Airlines to match Delta Air Lines' contract, it would cost the company more than \$7 billion. He continued on saying,

"A deal like this would be a game changer for our pilots."

Delta Air Lines contract

Delta Air Lines signed a new contract with its pilots early this month. The contract signing comes after several years of negotiations, beginning back in 2019. In 2020, the contract negotiations entered federal mediation but were later paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new contract between Delta Air Lines and the Air Line Pilots Association, which represents Delta Air Lines pilots, will last several years, extending until 2026. The ALPA has released that the contract's pay increase will represent more than \$7 billion in increases over the contract's term.

Delta Air Lines and the ALPA have released that the contract will provide a 34% pay increase over the next four years. Along with the pay increases, the contract will also improve vacation and other benefits.

This contract represents the 15,000 pilots that work for Delta Air Lines. The airline has said that the contract will position these pilots to continue leading the industry in compensation and work rules.

## Flydubai adds unserved saudi routes



Flydubai is increasing its route map to 16 destinations in Saudi Arabia over the coming weeks.

Dubai-based LCC flydubai is further growing its network in Saudi Arabia with the addition of two new destinations and the resumption of two more.

The airline, which already serves 12 points in the kingdom, plans to connect Dubai (DXB) with Neom (NUM) and Qaisumah (AQI) from March 16 and March 21 respectively. Both destinations are new for flydubai and will each be served twice a week using Boeing 737-800s.

Neom is a proposed \$500 billion megacity in the northwest of Saudi Arabia, while Qaisumah is located near the city of Hafar al-Batin in Eastern Province.

Flydubai will face competition in the Dubai-Neom market from Saudia, which launched the 2,013-km (1,087-nm) route last August and currently provides one

flight per week. The sector between Dubai and Qaisumah is unserved and flydubai will become the sole operator of flights to the Saudi destination from the UAE.

In addition, flydubai intends to commence a 3X-weekly service to Najran (EAM) from March 18 and a 4X-weekly route to Jazan (GIZ) from April 26. Data provided by OAG Schedules Analyser shows that the LCC last served Dubai-Najran in May 2015 and Dubai-Jazan in November 2020. Both routes are currently unserved.

"Flydubai remains committed to opening up underserved markets and so we are pleased to offer our customers more options for travel with the launch of these four destinations," CCO Hamad Obaidalla said.

"As Saudi Arabia continues on its path of economic growth and investment in developing its tourism sector, we look forward to offering passengers from the UAE and around our network the opportunity to explore more of the country."

Saudi Arabia is seeking to diversify its economy away from oil and has set a target of attracting 100 million tourists annually by 2030. It also wants to increase the number of destinations with direct flights from the country to more than 250, up from about 120 at the present time.

Earlier this month, national carrier Saudia outlined plans to start four new routes, offering flights to: Beijing; Birmingham, England; Johannesburg, South Africa; and Kano, Nigeria. The proposed services will be supported by the Saudi Air Connectivity Program, financed by the state-owned Public Investment Fund.



Emirates, Philippine Airlines sign interline agreement





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## THAI sees profit return as tourism resumes

**T**hai Airways International (THAI) reported its fourth quarter profit almost tripled after Thailand eased pandemic-related border restrictions and tourists started to return to the country, according to various media reports. The carrier's net income for the three months ended 31 December rose to 11.2 billion baht (US\$322 million) from 4 billion baht a year earlier, Chief Executive Officer Chai Eamsiri said. Operating income for the period was 8.9 billion baht versus a 2.6 billion baht loss a year earlier, while total revenue jumped almost 370% to 36.9 billion baht.

"The return of Chinese travelers will help support our strong growth in 2023," Chai told a press briefing. "Demand is so high that we're scrambling to add flights



and procure more aircraft."

Thai Airways plans to exit from a court-supervised debt restructuring earlier than scheduled in late 2024 as a rebound in global air travel boosts its cash flow and reduces the need for new loans. The airline, which has posted net losses every year barring two since 2013, filed for

bankruptcy protection in 2020 before most creditors agreed to extend terms and cut some payments as part of its \$5.3 billion rehabilitation plan.

For the full year, Thai Airways' operating loss excluding one-time items came in at 4.6 billion baht, down from a 29.2 billion baht deficit in 2021. The company's net loss for the period was 252 million baht versus a 55 billion baht profit a year earlier, when it booked a one-time gain of about 62 billion baht from a debt restructuring. Total operating revenue in 2022 jumped 342% to 105 billion baht.

Thailand's flagship airline expects to carry about 19 million passengers this year, up from 9 million in 2022, according to Chai. Total revenue will probably reach 140 billion baht in 2023, he said.

## Jet fuel from the air? How DOD contract aims to experiment with sustainable aviation fuel

**S**ustainable aviation fuel (SAF) startup Air Company announced a \$65 million deal with the Department of Defense Tuesday 28 Feb. Under the agreement, Air Company will have a chance to further develop its technology and eventually produce fuel for the Air Force directly from atmospheric carbon dioxide directly on military bases around the world.

"These contracts allow you to focus on the growth of technology and the development of technology," Air Company CEO Gregory Constantine told media.

He said the deal puts the company's technology one step closer to eventually powering commercial flights – a sign of how quickly SAF technology is evolving and being implemented.

How does Air Company's fuel work?

According to Constantine, Air Company uses a process to produce fuel by capturing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and combining it with sustainably-produced hydrogen. The resulting reaction creates a mix of alcohols and paraffins that can be burned as fuel in combustion engines.

"The core of our technology is really centered around carbon utilization," he said, estimating that if all the methanol, ethanol and kerosene-dependent industries switched to this technology to

produce their fuel, roughly 10% of global CO2 emissions would be mitigated.

What is sustainable aviation fuel?: Some say it's the key to a greener airline industry.

Constantine added that this method, known as power to liquid, is more flexible than many other SAF production methods because it does not rely on agriculture or other kinds of feedstock that can be difficult to transport or have other competing uses.

**When will power to liquid fuel flights?**

It's going to be a while.

Constantine said Air Company is working on scaling up its technology, but even millions of gallons of power to liquid production would be small relative to the needs of airlines and other potential users. He added that Air Company can't be the only player in the fuel-to-liquid space, either.

"We need to produce more," he said. "It can't be a one-stop shop with us."

Air Company plans to open a large-scale production facility in the next few years.

Even if airlines had enough supply available, another complication is that legislation in most places prohibits airlines from using pure SAF to power flights.

"With current legislation and regulation, there are blend limits that we

have to adhere to," Constantine said. "The fuel we create has the components to not be blended. We are hopeful that over the course of the next several years, those blend limits will increase" and that regulations will eventually allow the use of 100% SAF.

Sustainable flying: United Airlines announces new investments to move the needle on decarbonizing aviation

To that end, Dutch airline KLM recently conducted tests with engine manufacturer CFM International and SAF producer Neste to see how a jet engine would operate on pure SAF.

"SAF is currently approved for use in all aircraft, but only in blends of up to 50% with conventional jet fuel," a spokesperson for the airline said in a statement. "The use of 100% SAF in aviation has not yet been approved (by most global regulators) and requires certain specifications, which can only be determined on the basis of extensive research and data."

According to KLM, the test confirmed that 100% SAF can be used safely in aircraft engines.

"This test is a small, but significant step towards making the airline industry more sustainable," a statement from the airline said.

Zach Wichter is a travel reporter for USA TODAY based in New York. You can reach him at [zwichter@usatoday.com](mailto:zwichter@usatoday.com).



## First class vs business class: What's the difference?

Most planes today have either first or business class, but very few have both, and what you can expect varies a lot by airline and the plane or route you're flying.

It's hard to pin down exactly what qualifies as first or business class, but the offerings typically fall into three categories: domestic first class, which is usually a large, recliner-style seat; long-haul business class, which most frequent flyers have come to expect will mean a fully flat bed, increasingly with direct aisle access for every seat; and long-haul first class, which is the pinnacle of luxury in the sky on most airlines. Some high-end carriers like Emirates even have full suites with onboard showers for their first-class passengers on some planes.

### Domestic first class



The low end of these high-end offerings is domestic first class. It's nothing to sniff at, of course, but if you book a domestic first-class ticket, you shouldn't expect a bed onboard, either.

Most major U.S. airlines have first-class seating on their single-aisle planes, and typically these seats are larger than those in economy, with more legroom and recline. Many carriers that offer first class also provide enhanced service to the passengers seated there, with perks like complimentary alcohol or even meals on longer flights.

They're actually generally comparable to the increasingly common long-haul premium economy seats. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines this past summer became the latest airline to introduce that class of service.

This trick saved me over 60% in plane tickets: How to travel business class without spending a fortune

### Long-haul business class

This is where the boundary between first and business class starts to get a little blurrier.



Many airlines have phased out separate first- and business-class cabins on their longer routes as travelers got used to more luxurious business-class offerings.

Luxury overhaul: American Airlines reveals new business class and premium economy seats

Most international and many transcontinental flights on full-service airlines feature business class with a fully flat bed, high-end amenities and specialized service. More airlines are moving to an enclosed suite configuration as they install new business class seats, with many travelers coming to expect a partition that blocks them off from the aisle.

Check out USA TODAY's analysis of the evolution of airplane cabins for a closer look at how business class has evolved over the years.

### International first class



On the airlines that still offer it, international first class is what most people think of when they hear the phrase "first class."

It typically features the fleet's largest and most luxurious seats, with the most attentive service and best amenities the airline offers.

Although it's becoming less common, carriers including Air France, British Airways and Etihad continue to fly planes with both business- and first-class cabins.

These invariably also have fully flat beds, much like long-haul business class, are configured more spaciously, and typically include other perks and amenities.

## The Role of airbags in ensuring the safety of airline passengers

Certain aircraft seats have installed airbags for increased safety in case of an emergency.

While flying is generally safe, unexpected incidents happen, making safety measures imperative. Aircraft airbags are used as a safety measure to protect passengers in case of an emergency, both in commercial and general aviation. But how do they work, and why don't all seats and airlines have them?

### Invisible protection

Usually installed onto seatbelts, airbags enable airlines to reduce the distance between seats and bulkhead walls and, in some cases, are required by aviation regulators.

Generally, aircraft airbags are designed to keep a passenger conscious after an impact. According to Chris Muklevicz, vice president of sales and marketing for aviation restraints at AmSafe, survival chances in the presence of smoke and fire can be significantly increased if the passenger is conscious and able to evacuate the plane after an impact.

However, not every airline or seat contains an airbag. In fact, seatbelt airbags are mostly used in first class, business class, premium economy, economy bulkhead, or exit row seats where the distance between rows of seats is farther. Meanwhile, in other economy class seats, the seat backs of rows beyond the specified seats are constructed to absorb a portion of the impact forces.

Developed in the early 2000s, the seatbelt airbag system gained more traction when in 2005, the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) mandated that all US aircraft built after 2009 meet the "16G rule," which states that aircraft seats and belts have to withstand forces equivalent to 16 times earth's gravity (aircraft manufactured prior to 2009 were required to have seats and belts that could withstand a 9G static load).

Therefore, in order to fulfill the Federal Aviation Administration's head injury requirement, some airlines have thus opted for airbags. Instead of airbags, another option is to replace them with shoulder belts, which are the typical seatbelts found in cars.



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## Woman dead after private jet encountered severe turbulence over New England, NTSB says

One person is dead after a private jet suffered severe turbulence that forced the plane to land in a Connecticut airport, officials said Sunday.

A Bombardier CL30 jet departed Dillant-Hopkins Airport in Keene, New Hampshire, Friday en route to Leesburg Executive Airport in Virginia, the Federal Aviation Administration said in a statement to media. During the flight, the plane encountered "severe turbulence" and diverted to Bradley International Airport in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, around 4 p.m. local time.

The National Transportation Safety Board told media three passengers and two crew members were on the jet, and the turbulence resulted "in fatal injuries" to one of the passengers.

Aviation officials investigate severe turbulence incident

The NTSB is leading an investigation into the incident, alongside the FAA. The aircraft is secured at Bradley International Airport, the NTSB said.

"NTSB investigators have removed the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder and are continuing to gather information from the flight crew, operator, and passengers about the circumstances of the event," the agency added.

A preliminary report is expected to be released within the next three weeks.

Deceased individual identified

Connecticut State Police confirmed to media the deceased individual was 55-year-old Dana Hyde of Cabin John, Maryland.

Authorities said state troopers responded to Bradley International Airport, and Hyde was transported to a local hospital, where she was pronounced dead.

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Diverted: 7 hospitalized when Lufthansa flight hits severe turbulence

What is turbulence?

The FAA defines turbulence as "air movement created by atmospheric pressure, jet streams, air around mountains, cold or warm weather fronts or thunderstorms" that can give airplanes "a sudden jolt."

Turbulence can be unexpected and can happen when weather conditions appear clear.

### Severe turbulence and injuries

Passengers and flight crewmembers that aren't buckled into their seat belts can sustain injuries, the FAA says. Data from the agency showed that turbulence resulted in 146 serious injuries from 2009 to 2021, 116 of which involved crewmembers. An NTSB report found

## Qatar Airways and Qatar Tourism partner to deliver Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) 2023



Qatar Airways and Qatar Tourism have announced the 12th Qatar International Food Festival (QIFF) will take place from 11 to 21 March at a new waterfront location in Qatar's newest city, Lusail.

The world-class festival is set to bring together many unique culinary experiences, featuring the biggest names in hospitality, outstanding restaurants, a cooking theatre, nightly fireworks shows and live entertainment.

This year, QIFF will celebrate the world's best cuisines, in a picturesque environment at Al Saad Plaza, between the iconic architecture of Lusail towers at Lusail Boulevard, the street synonymous with the 2022 FIFA World Cup final celebrations. The festival is set to provide incredible gastronomic delights in collaboration with international and local celebrity chefs.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive and Qatar Tourism Chairman His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "QIFF has proven to be one of the most popular festivals over the years and this

turbulence accounted for 37.6% of accidents on commercial flights from 2009 to 2018.

The FAA said a serious injury is one that results in hospitalization for more than 48 hours, bone fractures, severe hemorrhages, involves internal organs or second- or third-degree burns.

The incident comes after seven travelers on a Lufthansa flight from Austin, Texas to Frankfurt, Germany were hospitalized after their flight hit a "brief but severe" patch of turbulence. In December, 36 people were injured after a Hawaiian Airlines flight from Phoenix to Honolulu was struck by severe turbulence.

year Qatar Airways' global destinations are being represented via the amazing national dishes and cooking influences on display at this international event. I am confident that Qatar's food tourism industry will continue to grow at an exponential rate due to our exciting calendar of globally appealing events. Qatar Airways and Qatar Tourism are working hand in hand to cement our country's strong position as a desirable travel gateway, renowned for a multitude of events, sporting competitions, festivals and amazing food."

Gastronomy lovers can look forward to 100 kiosks featuring a variety of culinary delights, a nightly cooking theatre, two premium catered food lounges in collaboration with 5-star hotels, afternoon tea, daily entertainment, a skating rink and a family-friendly fun-filled atmosphere.

They can savour the very best of Indonesia, home to the famed Spice Islands as this year's event will honour the Qatar-Indonesia 2023 Year of Culture. Visitors can sample dishes that bind the country's diverse culinary traditions with a rich complex flavour. The food festival will also feature a special Qatari cultural tent that includes local delicacies, and a fascinating experience with Le Petit Chef, an interactive dining experience using 3D mapping, in collaboration with The Ritz Carlton, Doha.

Additionally, to celebrate the upcoming International Horticultural Expo 2023 Qatar, which will take place in October under the theme "Green Desert, Better Environment," a special kiosk will be present with special plant giveaways for festival visitors.

## 10 Passengers onboard Spirit Airlines hospitalized after battery fire



10 Spirit Airlines passengers were hospitalized after the battery fire intensities flight to make an emergency landing in Florida.

The Spirit Airlines (NK) flight bound for Orlando made an emergency landing at the Jacksonville International Airport (JAX) Wednesday 1st March afternoon, as per the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department.

The NK flight 259 took off from Dallas at 2:01 p.m. and had to make an emergency landing at JIA at 3:53 p.m. due to a battery fire that initiated in an aloft bin.

As cited by First Coast News, The passenger onboard the NK flight said, "There was a retired fireman that jumped up and flight crew came in and they tried putting water on it and another guy went and got a bucket because I think the fireman reached in and grabbed it and they got it put out, but it took about 20 minutes."

NK provided the subsequent information to First Coast News:

"Spirit Airlines flight 259 from Dallas (DFW) to Orlando (MCO) diverted to JAX following what's supposed to be a battery fire from a Guest item in an overhead bin that was extinguished inflight. The plane landed at JAX and taxied to the terminal without incident. We thank our crew and Guests for their quick actions to ensure the safety of everyone onboard, and we thank first responders for meeting the aircraft."

Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department Comments

The JFRD Captain Eric Proswimmer said, "It was not until almost 6 o'clock that more people started feeling bad, and we then turned it into what we call an MCI level 1."

"We ended up transporting a total of 10 patients from this flight," he further added.

The department also stated that 10 patients were taken including the cabin crew staff. They further said that crew

## Man tried to stab United Airlines flight attendant, open plane's emergency door during flight, feds say

A Massachusetts man aboard a cross-country United Airlines flight on Sunday 5 March tried to open the emergency door while the flight was in the air and then tried to stab a flight attendant in the neck, prosecutors said.

Francisco Severo Torres, 33, was charged with one count of interference and attempted interference with flight crew members and using a dangerous weapon, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Massachusetts announced Monday 6 March.

The incident took place on flight from Los Angeles to Boston Sunday 5 March, just under an hour before the plane was set to land at Boston Logan International Airport.

Here is what we know about the incident:

### 'A threat to the aircraft'

About 45 minutes before the flight was scheduled to land, the flight crew was notified of an alarm in the cockpit that a starboard side door was disarmed, prosecutors said.

A flight attendant inspected the door and found the door's locking handle was moved out of the fully locked position, according to court records. The emergency slide arming level was also moved to the "disarmed" position, prosecutors said.

It was then reported to the captain and flight crew.

A flight attendant told the captain he saw Torres near the door, and believed Torres tampered with the door, authorities said. Torres was confronted about the door, and asked if there were cameras on the plane that saw him do it, according to court documents.

The flight attendant notified the captain they believed Torres posed "a threat to the aircraft" and the captain "needed to land the aircraft as soon as

possible."

members onboard were able to take the material that witnessed the fire and extinguish it in a bucket of water.

The US Aviation regulatory body will investigate the incidents.

Also, read: Seven passengers hospitalized after a Lufthansa #LH469 made an emergency landing in Washington DC – AIRLIVE

possible."

After Torres was initially confronted, prosecutors say he got out of his seat and approached the side door where two flight attendants were located. One of the attendants saw Torres mouthing something before he attempted to stab one of them, prosecutors said.

"Torres then allegedly thrust towards one of the flight attendants in a stabbing motion with a broken metal spoon, hitting the flight attendant on the neck area three times," prosecutors said.

Passengers tackled Torres and the flight crew assisted in restraining him before the flight landed, when he was taken into custody. The flight attendant said Torres hit his shirt collar and tie three times, according to the complaint.

### Suspect said he was trying to kill flight attendant, knew people would die if door was open

Investigators gave the following account in Torres' criminal complaint:

Torres admitted going into a bathroom and breaking the spoon in half to make a weapon.

When he left the bathroom, Torres attempted to disarm and open the door but was unsuccessful. He had an idea to open the emergency exit door and jump out of the plane.

"Torres admitted to knowing that if he opened the door many people would die," the complaint read.

After he was confronted by the flight attendants, Torres he tried to stab one of the flight attendances in self-defense.

"Torres stated that he believed the flight attendant was trying to kill him, so he was trying to kill the flight attendant first," according to the complaint.

### What did United, Association of Flight Attendants say about the incident?

In a statement to media, United thanked the "quick action" of the flight



crew and passengers for restraining a customer that became a "security concern."

United said the flight landed safely and no serious injuries were reported. Data from FlightAware shows the flight landed in Boston early, just before 4:15 p.m. ET.

"We have zero tolerance for any type of violence on our flights, and this customer will be banned from flying on United pending an investigation," United

said.

Sara Nelson, president of the Association of Flight Attendants, said in a statement she was relieved no life-threatening injuries were sustained, adding the incident adds to the "urgent need" to create a national banned disruptive passenger list.

"Aviation's first responders are charged with the safety of everyone onboard," Nelson said. "When incidents like this happen, it not only risks the safety of the

crew involved, it takes away from flight attendants' ability to respond to medical, safety, or security emergencies." Nelson said. "It puts everyone at risk and there's zero tolerance for that."

#### Charges

Torres could be sentenced to life in prison if convicted of his charges, prosecutors said, or up to five years of supervised release and a \$250,000 fine. He made his initial appearance in court and was detained. He's expected to return to court.

## A busy February at Dublin & Cork Airports as passenger figures exceed pre-Pandemic levels

The Irish capital city saw more than two million people use its airport last month.

With commercial air travel continuing to forge a path of recovery, February 2023 was another busy month at some of Ireland's busiest airports. Indeed, Dublin (DUB) and Cork (ORK) saw their passenger numbers for the month exceed those experienced before the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, partially thanks to holiday traffic.

#### The key figures

Serving the capital city, it comes as no surprise that Dublin Airport is the busiest in Ireland. However, while its present traffic figures are impressive compared to the country's other airports, they also exceed those seen at the facility before the global health crisis. Indeed, last month, 2.06 million passengers used Dublin Airport.

2019 is typically used as the yardstick for such comparisons, and this figure was 3% higher than that year. However, Dublin Airport's busiest-ever February came right before COVID-19 hit in February 2020. Impressively, the 2.06 million passengers carried last month also exceeded these levels, meaning that 2023 has seen Dublin Airport record its busiest-ever February in terms of passenger numbers.

Check out all the latest European aviation news here!

Historically speaking, Cork Airport has generally been Ireland's second-busiest, although the impacts of coronavirus saw it drop to third place behind Shannon Airport (SNN). That being said, it is now bouncing back strongly, and with 157,000 passengers handled last month, its figures for February were 4% higher than in 2019. Compared to 2022, Dublin and Cork were up 55% and 63%, respectively.

#### Returning leisure traffic was a key contributor

While January typically represents a quiet start to the year for airlines and airports, February often sees increased holiday traffic and, thus, higher passenger numbers. This was certainly the case at Ireland's busiest airports, as Kenny Jacobs, the Chief Executive Officer of the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA), explains:

"The addition of an extra Bank Holiday weekend in February, combined with Valentine's Day and the mid-term school break, meant February was another very busy month at both Dublin and Cork airports. Passenger numbers at both airports were boosted by the Six Nations rugby, which saw thousands of French fans traveling to watch their match against Ireland, while many thousands of Irish fans headed to the games in Wales and Italy."

Dublin and Cork saw their busiest days on February 19th and 12th, respectively. Despite the high numbers seen then and throughout the month, security waiting times largely remained

low. The DAA notes that "96% of passengers [passed] through in less than 20 minutes, and virtually all through in under 30 minutes."

#### Another busy month in store

The DAA also expects March 2023 to be a busy month at Ireland's busiest airports. Much like how Valentine's Day catalyzed traffic growth in February, this month will see increased holiday traffic around St Patrick's Day (March 17th).

Additionally, traveling rugby union fans will also contribute to another healthy performance this month, with March seeing the final two fixtures of Ireland's Six Nations campaign. The side will travel to Edinburgh (served by Ryanair from Dublin and Cork and Aer Lingus from Dublin) to face Scotland at Murrayfield on March 12th before welcoming England to Dublin's Aviva Stadium on March 18th.

What do you make of the performance of Dublin and Cork's airports in February 2023? Did you use either facility last month? Let us know your thoughts and experiences in the comments!



Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority holds 31st E-Kachehri to listen and remove the passengers complaints at the airports. Picture shows DG CAA Khaqan Murtaza Presiding the meeting, ADG CAA, Director Airports and other Sr. Official were also present on the occasion.

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## Seventy Russian aircraft destroyed by Ukrainian defenses since invasion began



Photofex\_AUT / Shutterstock.com

A United States Air Force General has confirmed that Ukraine has lost over 60 aircraft since the Russian invasion but destroyed over 70 enemy planes.

General James B. Hecker, who serves as the commander of United States Air Forces in Europe, disclosed details while speaking at the AFA Warfare Symposium on March 6, 2023.

According to Air & Space Forces, Hecker also claimed that the success of both Russia and Ukraine's integrated air and missile defenses have made "much of those aircraft worthless."

"[Russia has] downed over 60 Ukrainian aircraft. Ukraine's downed over 70 Russian aircraft," Hecker explained.

Neither the Russians nor the Ukrainians have so far been able to gain air superiority since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"So, both of their integrated air and missile defense, especially when you're talking about going against aircraft, they've been very effective," Hecker added. "And that's why they're not flying over one another's country."

The general hinted that new weapons given to the Ukrainians may allow forces to reach further into Russian territory.

"Recently, we've just got them some precision munitions that had some extended range and can go a little bit further than a gravity drop bomb," Hecker said.

He also said JDAM precision-guided bombs provided by the US will extend the reach that GMRLS rockets fired by HIMARS launchers can achieve.

Defense blog Oryx documents the number of Russian and Ukrainian vehicles and equipment that have been destroyed during the conflict, only including "destroyed vehicles and equipment of which photo or videographic evidence is available."

The website acknowledges that the true figure is "significantly higher" than recorded on the site. However, current

data on the blog also has the number of destroyed Ukrainian aircraft at 60 and the figure for downed Russian planes a 70.

Despite very similar figures between

## Anti Drone technology could solve a recurring issue at Dublin Airport

The proposed solution could have minimal costs compared to those faced amid drone-induced delays.

Recent weeks have seen Dublin Airport (DUB) face extensive disruption due to drone sightings near the active airfield. With these incidents understandably generating considerable frustration, a solution is needed, and one may be on the horizon in the form of anti-drone technology that comes with minimal costs.

### Multiple incidents

To understand the proposal, we must first establish why anti-drone technology has become a necessity at Ireland's largest and busiest airport. In recent weeks, operations in Dublin have been halted a total of six times by drones flying in the area. This is despite the operation of such aircraft within 5 km (3.1 miles) of the airport being illegal, according to a recent report by the BBC.

The problem was arguably at its worst in early February. As Simple Flying reported at the time, unauthorized drone activity in the facility's airspace caused temporary operational suspensions on three consecutive days last month. This caused periods of disruption lasting up to an hour, with flights diverting to Belfast and Shannon in the meantime, impacting many inbound passengers.

### Check out all the latest European aviation news here!

Later that month, the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) called for stricter punishments for those found guilty of operating drones in its restricted airspace. However, last week, Ryanair Group CEO Michael O'Leary suggested that anti-drone technology would instead be a 'reasonably easy' solution to this recurring problem.

### Proposed anti-drone systems

The BBC adds that, according to O'Leary, such technology is commonplace at major European airports. Operated by the facilities' resident police forces, it is said to cost as little as €100,000 (\$106,655). The Journal also notes that, from a regulatory point of view, there

Oryx and the US Air Force, the methodologies used by each to determine whether an aircraft has been destroyed could be entirely different.

According to Flight Global's World Air Forces directory, at the end of 2021, the Ukrainian military (the Air Force, the Army and the Navy) had 196 active airplanes and 122 helicopters.

would be little in the way of obstacles to getting it going.

This is because, as the Irish publication explains, it is believed that the implementation and use of anti-drone technology would not require any primary legislation. With this in mind, Eamon Ryan, Ireland's minister for Transport, is set to ask the Cabinet to advise the DAA to bring anti-drone technology into use in Dublin.

A decision on the matter should be made today, with a relatively quick turnaround expected. Indeed, accounting for the implementation of the systems and the necessary training, Irish state broadcaster RTE notes that it could be operational within 'a number of weeks.' This will come as a relief to Dublin Airport, given that it just experienced its busiest-ever February amid rising travel demand.

### DAA Statement

Simple Flying contacted the DAA, with a spokesperson sharing the following statement from CEO Kenny Jacobs:

"Exact timelines cannot be confirmed just yet given the requirement to identify and procure the most suitable technology, engage with the Irish Aviation Authority on its use and train those that will ultimately deploy it. But we are moving very quickly, and we will have this technology in place as soon as possible."

### Drones can cause serious disruption

Of course, Dublin is not the only airport to face drone-related operational difficulties in recent years. Indeed, you may remember that, in December 2018, London Gatwick (LGW) saw more than 1,000 flights disrupted in the busy leadup to Christmas after multiple reported drone sightings in its vicinity.

This disruption impacted more than 140,000 passengers at a time of year when travel is vital, underlining the seriousness of the issue. easyJet was hit particularly hard, losing £15 million (£19.7 million or \$23.7 million today) after more than 400 flights were canceled, affecting 82,000 passengers. Dublin Airport will hope to avoid ever experiencing such disruption thanks to the new technology.



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## Airways Aviation and Asia Pacific Flight Training Academy announce strategic alliance



With Indian Aviation on an exponential growth trajectory and burgeoning demand for quality pilots, the global aviation education & training group – Airways Aviation Group operating in Europe, Australia, Middle East & Africa and Asia Pacific Flight Training Academy India, announced the coming together of a new strategic alliance partnership.

The Dubai-headquartered Airways Aviation and Hyderabad based Asia Pacific Flight Training Academy Limited (APFT) has signed a new strategic alliance partnership that will provide prospective Indian students & Airline cadets access to a new and innovative Pilot Pathway Program from May 2023.

“It is great to visit India again and I am very impressed at the progress being made” said Romy Hawatt, Airways Aviation Group founder and chairman. “We feel we have found the right organisation to grow and develop our strategic plans. The triple A, Airways Aviation Group are not only the largest global private aviation academy but also have one of the world's largest privately owned training fleets. APFT have been actively seeking international partners with best global standards and practices consistent with the Indian DGCA requirements.”

“We believe we will be able to enhance the standards of training, facilities and our fleet thereby helping India attain her coveted goal of becoming a world class aviation training hub, as envisioned by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India,” said Hemanth D.P., CEO – APFT, an industry veteran and former chief commercial

officer and chief operating officer at GMR Airports. “The Indian aviation industry and the government are focused on

## Kempinski Hotels selects Sabre technology to upgrade customer booking experience

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, has announced an enhanced agreement with Kempinski Hotels, the Europe's oldest luxury hotel company, to enable the luxury hotel chain to upgrade its customer booking experience.

Kempinski Hotels, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2022, launched a contemporary new website, powered by Sabre's state-of-the-art SynXis Custom Booking Engine. Through this innovative solution, Kempinski Hotels has been able to create its own bespoke user design and experience, with features including soft date availability search, upsell capability, and the ability to engage and convert shoppers to bookers using modern ecommerce features such as price comparison and alternate availability.

“We hugely appreciate our ongoing strategic collaboration with Sabre, who we have been working with for over five years,” said Riko van Santen, Chief Information Officer, Kempinski Hotels. “Sabre's advanced technology solutions continue to support our business goals as we enter into our 126th year, by allowing us to streamline operations and improve

developing a robust pipeline of well-trained pilots and other Aviation professionals. It is therefore prudent that Indian flight training organisations (along with their airline counterparts) establish new and robust strategic education & training alliances with reputed, capable & established international partners.”

The new Airways Aviation India office will be located at the GMR Aero Towers along with the APFT office at The Aero City Hyderabad International Airport campus and the two companies plan to start delivering the Pilot Foundation program to prospective Indian aviators from May.

The Airways Aviation/APFT Programme will include several flexible training programmes designed for both student and airline partner needs. These include hybrid programs offering both Indian DGCA and EASA (European) or CASA (Australian), Commercial Pilot Licenses, along with options for Aviation Graduate Degree programs from European and Australian universities. APFT has already purchased three Diamond DA40s, the world's most advanced flight training aircraft, with Jet Fuel powered Continental Mercedes engines.

the guest booking experience.”

Additionally, through the use of Sabre's Data Warehouse solution, Kempinski is able to connect its CRS directly with its Guest Intelligence System, thereby enabling the best-in-class technology solutions to work seamlessly together and allowing Kempinski to build its own internal reports based on the data received.

“Today's guests expect a seamless experience across devices and touchpoints,” said Frank Trampert, senior vice president, global managing director – commercial, Sabre Hospitality. “By utilizing Sabre's technology-leading hospitality solutions, Kempinski Hotels is able to differentiate itself through a more modern booking experience, allowing it to increase conversions and enhance its offering to guests through greater personalization.”



## Amadeus hosts the Tech Shows in Lahore and Islamabad

Amadeus Pakistan recently hosted the Amadeus Tech Show at the Pearl Continental Hotel in Lahore and the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad, which brought together travel industry professionals such as travel agencies, and airlines. The event's main focus was to showcase Amadeus' advanced technological solutions that can automate work processes, enhance efficiency and effectiveness, and enable retail travel players to become online players in the industry.

These events featured product demonstrations, where attendees could see the capabilities of Amadeus products and speak to experts about their various features. Some of the solutions showcased at the event included the Amadeus Online Suite, which is an online platform for travel agencies to improve their online presence and present rich content to their customers. The Amadeus Agency Insight solution was also presented, enabling travel agencies to access real-time productivity data and make better-informed decisions.

The Amadeus Robotics solution was another key solution demonstrated, which allows travel agencies to automate repetitive tasks and improve customer service. The Amadeus Value Hotels solution was presented, which provides travel agencies with access to a wide range of global properties and enables them to price markup of their choice, offering more options to their clients. The NDC-X solution was also demonstrated, allowing travel agencies to access and book content directly from airlines, enabling them to provide more personalized services to their clients.

These events also featured Amadeus fintech partner Abhi, explaining how they collaborated with Amadeus to design different solutions for their customers to improve their financial constraints. Also, top-performing airlines such as Emirates Airlines and Qatar Airways also participated in the event.

The Amadeus Tech Show series is the first of its kind in Pakistan, providing a valuable platform for companies to introduce their high-end offerings to major market trade partners. Amadeus plans to continue the roadshow across Pakistan to other cities such as Peshawar, Multan, Faisalabad, and Sialkot, as well as other cities throughout the year.

Overall, these events too were a success, providing valuable information and inspiration for attendees. These events not only showcased Amadeus' technological solutions but also provided an opportunity for companies to collaborate on new ideas and ways to drive growth in the travel industry.



*Mr. Mir Akbar (3rd-L) with other guests on the occasion of the Amadeus Tech Show held recently at Pearl Continental Hotel Lahore.*



*Mr. Mir Akbar with the guests at the Tech Show held at Marriott Hotel, Islamabad.*



# *Glimpses of Amadeus Tech Show held in Lahore*





# Glimpses of Amadeus Tech Show held in Lahore





# *Glimpses of Amadeus Tech Show held in Islamabad*





# *Glimpses of Amadeus Tech Show held in Islamabad*





# *Glimpses of Amadeus Tech Show held in Islamabad*



## Three-day maritime exhibition, conference concludes

The three-day Pakistan International Maritime Exhibition and Conference (PIMEC) concludes here on Sunday 12 Feb. at the Karachi Expo Centre.

The conference, organised by the Pakistan Navy, began on Feb 10 with the commencement of multinational maritime exercise Aman-2023 which will conclude on Tuesday 14 Feb.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi, Vice Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral Faisal Rasul Lodhi, other senior officers of the Pakistan Navy and representatives of 50 countries participated in the PIMEC.

Speaking as the chief guest at the closing session, Maritime Affairs Minister Syed Faisal Ali Sabzwari highlighted that the navy had been the driving force to spearhead dynamic initiatives in the maritime domain as it rendered invaluable services for the socio-economic uplift of coastal areas.

He underlined that the government was launching new projects for beneficial collaborations and successful maritime business partnerships.

He added that recommendations of the conference would provide guidelines to embark on profitable initiatives for accelerating the development of the maritime sector and conducting the next PIMEC in 2025.

Earlier, Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Mian Zakirullah Jan extended profound appreciation to the visiting delegates, scholars and experts on maritime affairs and the valued exhibitors for their forthcoming participation and dynamic presence during the event.

He also emphasised that Pakistan's ocean-based industry would come together, exchange ideas and create new avenues for the prosperous future of Pakistan's blue economy through the PIMEC.

He also praised the efforts of the National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) for the successful conduct of the conference.

The conference was attended by a large number of dignitaries from across the globe, officers from the defence forces of Pakistan and friendly countries, academia, media representatives and researchers from local and international think tanks.

Mushahid presents five-point plan for economic uplift

“Other than having blue economy, marine and mineral resources and the

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor [CPEC], building on a strategic partnership between Pakistan, China and Saudi Arabia would also play as a catalyst for an alternative development approach that can help bid goodbye to the International Monetary Fund [IMF],” said Senate's Defence Committee chairman Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed while proposing a five-point action plan to promote blue economy in Pakistan.

Senator Mushahid, who chaired two sessions of the PIMEC, said that it's now clear that Pakistan needed a new development path. He focused on exploring and exploiting marine resources by a strategy for the blue economy, which, according to the World Bank, has resources worth at least \$100 billion.

He said that 50,000 square kilometers were added to Pakistan's continental shelf as an exclusive economic zone in 2015. It is a huge mass of water, almost like a fifth province.

“Added to this maritime economy is the immense mineral wealth, huge reserves of natural gas and 175 billion tons of coal in Tharparkar, all of which cumulatively add up to a hidden wealth of almost a \$1 trillion [one trillion dollars], that has not been tapped at all due to an absence of policy on these areas,” the senator pointed out before calling for an alternative economic uplift strategy through a five-point action plan.

“First, the government should immediately establish a national authority for blue economy to prepare a comprehensive strategy that involves the Pakistan Navy, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs and the private sector as principal stakeholders.

“Second, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs should have a secretary from the Pakistan Navy, like the Ministry of Defence has a secretary from the Pakistan Army. It will make the Ministry of Maritime Affairs a proactive and pivotal player in the blue economy.

“Third, a special non-governmental task force, comprising experts, academics, think tanks and relevant private sectors, should be established for devising a work plan in 2023 for promoting awareness



A hovercraft takes part in an assault drill at the multinational maritime exercise Aman-2023 in Karachi on Sunday 12 Feb.

about the blue economy amongst opinion leaders and relevant stakeholders.

“Fourth, as part of an alternative economic development strategy for Pakistan, develop a linkage between the blue economy, marine and mineral resources, CPEC and TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India) besides developing triangular relationship between Pakistan, China and Saudi Arabia, so that energy security becomes a key pillar of the blue economy framework.

“Fifth, media mobilisation was a force multiplier for promoting the blue economy and in this regard, media workshops should be organised in Gwadar, Ormara, Ketji Bandar and Karachi, so that sea blindness ends with an awareness of the future potential of the blue economy,” said the senator while concluding that adoption of this blueprint for the blue economy would help Pakistan stand on its own feet and bid goodbye to the IMF.

“We have gone to the IMF 23 times in 60 years and this is a tried, tested and failed formula,” he concluded.

### Aman-23 activities

In tandem with various activities of exercise Aman-23, a maritime counterterrorism demonstration was held at PNS Qasim, Manora on Sunday 12 Feb.

Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori was the chief guest and appreciated the efforts of the navy in conducting the multinational maritime exercise in a befitting manner.

A large number of observers, foreign diplomats, personnel from the participating navies, government officials/civil dignitaries and senior officials of armed forces of Pakistan witnessed the counter terrorism demonstration.





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## Forex firms ` depositing \$10m in banks daily `

The uncapping of the dollar rate has started yielding positive results with panic selling of export proceeds gathering pace in the last three days.

Meanwhile, exchange companies have also begun depositing up to \$10 million a day in banks.

Sources in exchange companies and banks said liquidity has improved substantially due to the inflow of export proceeds, higher remittances and elimination of speculative trading.

Exporters who were previously reluctant to sell their holdings have finally realised that the dollar's speculative level is coming down.

The price of the greenback touched Rs277 in the interbank market and Rs283 in the open market.

However, higher inflows in both banking and open markets got rid of the speculative prices.

“Exporters fear that a further decline in dollar prices could cost them billions. It resulted in panic selling of export proceeds,” said Atif Ahmed, a currency dealer working in the interbank market.

The exact amount of dollars that exporters are keeping abroad is unknown. Under the law, they have to surrender dollar proceeds within six months of exports.

The currency market hoped that talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) would be successful, leading to the inflow of dollars.

“For the last one week, we have been depositing on average \$10m to banks every day,” said Zafar Paracha, general secretary of the Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan (ECAP).

Exchange firms were “dry” before the uncapping of the exchange rate. That's because the managed exchange rate created a huge gap between the interbank and open market dollar rates, paving the way for a strong black market. The illegal market offered higher than the official dollar price and drained hundreds of millions dollars to the undocumented segment. A big share of it was smuggled into Afghanistan.

“Demand in the open market vanished as 90 per cent of the open market consists of sellers as only 10pc clients are buying dollars,” said Mr Paracha.

Buyers in the open market were mostly those people who were doing illegal dollar trading. “They were buying from us and selling the dollars to the grey market,” he said.

Remittances have also started increasing in banks and exchange companies as a direct result of the uncapping of the exchange rate.

“The uncapping was a vital decision... it was the only solution to eliminate the speculative forces causing an artificial hike in dollar prices and massive smuggling,” said Mr Paracha.

Bankers said foreign investment in government papers will also begin as nowhere in the world are such high rates available. The government offers about 17.9pc on treasury bills and Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs).

## Azerbaijani delegation visits historical sites



A seven-member delegation from Azerbaijan is on a seven-day visit to the city.

It visited archaeological and historical sites in the Walled City of Lahore, including Shahi Hamam, Wazir Khan Mosque, Faqir Khana Museum, Lahore Fort and Shahi Mosque.

The visiting delegation took interest in renovation work of Sheesh Mahal, mural wall and rehabilitation work of other historical sites.

The visit is being managed through cooperation of the Pakistan Embassy in Baku.

The NGO Artishok from Baku is organising culinary events and festivals for promoting the national cuisine culture and tourism sectors in Azerbaijan and its friendly countries.

The cultural group has been holding events promoting Pakistani cuisines at international level.

## \$1bn deal signed with Uzbekistan to boost trade

Pakistan and Uzbekistan have signed an agreement to increase bilateral trade by almost \$1 billion, the finance ministry said on Friday 24 Feb.

The trade agreement was inked at the conclusion of the 8th Session of Pakistan-Uzbekistan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade-Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation held in Tashkent.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar headed Pakistan's delegation.

An official announcement of the finance ministry said that the most important outcome of the IGC was the signing of the \$1bn trade agreement, which will encourage the exchange of goods and services and will also ease the transit process.

The meeting mainly focused on bilateral economic cooperation in various sectors including commerce and trade, banking, industries and production, investment, textile industry, energy, oil and natural resources, transportation and communication, agriculture and tourism and culture development.

The Uzbek side noted the continuous efforts to encourage closer ties, especially in the fields of trade, transport, banking and agriculture.

Mr Dar appreciated the deeper interests shown by the Uzbek side in strengthening the relationship and lauded progress already made in the field of transport, trade.

The minister welcomed Uzbekistan to explore the areas of automobiles, information technology and natural minerals.

Both sides emphasised the huge untapped potential in investment cooperation and bilateral trade. Furthermore, the IGC recognised the importance of closer collaboration to bring sustainable development through technology, innovation, and economic partnership.

The IGC aims at increasing economic diversification, sustainable growth, building supply chain resilience, and robust regulatory environment.

The commission expressed satisfaction on the bilateral trade volume between the two countries and desired to enhance it further in the future.





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## Roadmap to reduce distortions in economy unveiled

The World Bank, in its latest report, has observed that Pakistan's inability to allocate all its talent and resources to the most productive uses has stunted the economic growth.

Pakistan's economy can grow sustainably only if the country introduces productivity enhancing reforms that facilitate a better allocation of resources into more dynamic activities, and of talent to more productive uses, according to the World Bank report, "From Swimming in Sand to High and Sustainable Growth", released on Friday 10 Feb.

The report presents a roadmap to reduce distortions in the economy that are currently acting as a deterrent to productivity growth. Critical reforms include: harmonizing direct taxes across sectors, so that more resources flow into dynamic tradable sectors like manufacturing and tradable services, instead of real estate and non-tradables; reduce the anti-export bias of trade policy by lowering import duties and reversing the anti-diversification bias of export incentives.

"Pakistan's economy is at a critical stage. It could be a turning point where long-term structural imbalances that have prevented sustainable growth for too long ought to be addressed urgently. The report puts forward a series of policy recommendations to achieve this in a sequenced way," said Gonzalo J. Varela, senior economist and co-author of the report.

"First, reduce distortions that misallocate resources and talent. Second, support growth of firms through smart interventions, rather than through blanket subsidies. Third, create a positive, dynamic loop between evidence and policymaking, strengthening feasibility analysis of publicly funded projects or programmes," the World Bank official said.

### Positive impact on productivity

The report urges Pakistan to maximise positive impact on businesses and productivity across the board by: reducing regulatory complexity; harmonizing the general sales tax (GST) across provinces; reforming investment laws to attract more foreign direct investment; and upgrading insolvency laws to reduce the costs of liquidating non-viable firms.

The report focused on how Pakistan has performed in three areas that are at the core of the growth process: productivity, growth of firms and investment, and female labour force participation.



*Pakistan displays far lower female labour force participation rates than expected for a country at its level of development, according to the World Bank.*

It presents new evidence on firms' productivity dynamics across different sectors of the economy, the patterns of firms' growth and investment, and the allocation of female talent.

### Women's participation

Productivity is further affected by the fact that Pakistan does not tap into all of its talent. "Women in Pakistan have made progress in educational attainment, but this accumulated human capital is underused because of constraints they face to participate in the labour force," said World Bank Country Director for Pakistan, Najy Benhassine.

Pakistan displays far lower female labor force participation rates than expected for a country at its level of development. Pakistan can accrue GDP gains ranging between 5pc and 23pc by closing the female employment gap relative to its peers, depending on the extent of implementation of complementary labor market policies.

About 7.3m new jobs would be created if Pakistan were to close its female employment gap with Bangladesh.

The report pointed out that aggregate productivity in Pakistan has been stagnant or declining during the past decade, mostly driven by firms and farms becoming less productive over time. The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the decline in firms' productivity, with a contraction of 23 per cent in 2020.

In the agriculture sector, focusing on Pakistan's main crops, while yields have grown over the past decades, this has been due to a more intensive use of inputs. At the same time, total factor productivity has been falling for most crops, although, in this case, with provincial heterogeneity: Punjab and Sindh have been relatively good performers, compared with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa or Balochistan.

Crop productivity in Pakistan is highly susceptible to elevated temperatures and rainfall variations,

putting the crop segment at severe risk due to climate change.

### 'Zombies'

Part of the borrowing of the government that crowds out private investment is used to support firms that may be unviable without state support.

Pakistan exhibits a relatively large share of firms known as 'zombies', that is, firms that are loss-making for at least three consecutive years state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and family-owned domestic firms are more likely to be zombie firms, according to this definition, and to display low investment rates.

To increase investment rates and bring in large firms that could add dynamism to markets, the country could leverage its untapped FDI potential – estimated at \$2.8 billion annually.

Pakistan's untapped FDI potential is estimated at around \$2.8bn a year. Tapping that potential would lead to more than doubling current inflow levels.

## Power subsidy withdrawal to hit exports

Textile exporters have expressed apprehension that the textile industry would be on the verge of collapse in case the government withdraws the Regionally Competitive Energy Tariff (RCET) of Rs19.99/kWh.

"We are of the view that in case the government withdraws the power subsidy, the textile industry may face complete closure," All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) Chairman (North Zone) Hamid Zaman feared while speaking to journalists at a press conference recently.

Mr Zaman said the country's balance of payments crisis would further deteriorate as the withdrawal of RCET would result in a \$10 billion per annum export loss. It would also lead to disruptions in the investment plan of the industry for setting up 1,000 garment units to create millions of new jobs, he added.

"Punjab is the hub of textile industry and closure of large-scale production units would render seven million textile workers jobless", he warned.



## Textile exports fall for fifth consecutive month

The exports of textile and clothing fell 14.83 per cent in January to \$1.32 billion compared to \$1.55bn in the same month last year, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed on Friday 17 Feb.

The overall export proceeds shrank for the fifth consecutive month in a row. The drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the export target this fiscal year leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of the country.

The drop in textile and clothing exports is gaining momentum over the past five months owing to multiple factors including high energy costs, stuck-up refunds and a slump in global demands despite the massive depreciation of the rupee.

Exporters believe that one of the main reasons behind falling exports was the exchange rate instability. The discontinuation of duty drawbacks on local taxes and levies by the government has also created liquidity issues for the export sector.

As part of the agreement with the IMF, the government has announced discontinuing subsidies on energy from March for the export sector. The piling of containers at ports is also contributing to the decline in exports.

No official statement was issued from the commerce ministry to explain the reasons for the decline in export proceeds. Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar since taking responsibility for the ministry has constantly been on foreign tours.

The PBS data showed the exports of readymade garments recorded 11.47pc negative growth in value in January but grew by 32.26pc in quantity, while knitwear dipped 13.10pc in value and 13.54pc in quantity, bedwear posted a negative growth of 20.05pc in value and 15.83pc in quantity.

However, towel exports slightly increased by 0.08pc in value and 3.82pc in quantity, whereas those of cotton cloth dipped by 26.70pc in value and 30.86pc in quantity. Among primary commodities, cotton yarn exports declined by 12.34pc, while yarn other than cotton by 40.08pc.

## South Korea willing to enhance ties with Pakistan in tourism, trade: ex-envoy

Korea is willing to enhance relations with Pakistan in trade and tourism as the country boasts Buddhist sites that can attract religious tourists and also offers opportunities to the Korean business community.

This was stated by Dr Song Jong-hwan, who is a chair professor at Kyungnam University and a former Korean ambassador to Pakistan, while talking to journalists at the ancient site of Sirkap on Sunday 19 Feb.

Dr Song Jong-hwan is leading a 26-member business-tourism delegation to Pakistan comprising representatives from academia, tourism and the prominent industry sector. The delegation is on a week-long visit to explore tourism and investment potential for Korean investors.

On Sunday 19 Feb., it visited Taxila museum, Dharmarajika and Sirkap and took keen interest in Buddhist sites.

Dr Song said there were ample opportunities of cooperation in the cultural and religious tourism sectors, adding that Pakistan is a land of opportunities and South Korean firms can invest in the diverse industrial sector.

The former envoy said hydroelectricity companies were expanding their businesses to Pakistan. Currently, there are more than 10,000 workers from Pakistan in Korea, and this year the annual employment quota for workers from Pakistan has been increased to 2,500 per year.

He said by the end of November 2022, the number of Pakistani workers who entered Korea through the Employment Permit System has exceeded 1,600, adding that as 2023 is set to mark the 40th anniversary of South Korea-Pakistan diplomatic ties, Buddhism was a medium that can further develop the relationship between both countries.

He said that the Buddhist community of Korea is eager to establish a Gandhara Cultural Research Centre in Pakistan, with the goal of expanding it into a university, specialising in the Buddhist historic sites of Pakistan.

"I will continue to work as a goodwill

ambassador for Pakistan after my departure. I will continue to make efforts to encourage greater cooperation between our two countries in trade, investment, industry and culture. I will continue to support Pakistan by presenting a positive image of this wonderful country at various forums," he added.

Kang Chang Kook, former professor at Daejeon Institute of Science and Technology said that the two countries are actively pursuing cooperation in the areas of national defence, education and tourism. He added that Seoul would like to uplift its ties with Islamabad to a higher level through increasing cooperation at multipurpose sectors to maximise investment opportunities.

He said in 2019, over 60-member delegation of Korean Buddhist pilgrims led by Ven Wonhaeng, president of Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, visited Pakistan, adding that such religious tours to Pakistan would further strengthen cultural ties between two countries.

Honorary investment counsellor Mudassar Ali Cheema highlighted that by the end of 2022, the Pakistani community in the Republic of Korea (ROK) stood at approximately 12,440 people, according to the Korea Immigration Service.

He said there were about 408 businessmen, engaged in businesses such as the export of fabrics, blankets, carpets, used machinery, export of used cars and restaurants, surgical equipment, travel agencies, mobile phone shops, heavy machinery and printing.

Mr Cheema was of the view that instead of concentrating on its geo-strategic location, Pakistan needed to push up trade, economic and investment relations through people-to-people contact. There is a need to create favourable conditions for the FDI and connect businesses through organisations and business associations.

"The two countries have the potential to further deepen and expand bilateral cooperation in various areas including trade and investment, on the basis of mutual interest and friendly investment environment," he added.

## Sindh govt to get control of National Museum soon, says minister



National Museum of Pakistan.

**S**indh Culture Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah informed the Sindh Assembly on Friday 24 Feb. that the control of the National Museum was likely to be devolved to the provincial government soon.

While furnishing statement and answers to the lawmakers' written and verbal queries during Question Hour, he said that the museum was established in Karachi in 1969 by the federal government. He said that after the 18th Amendment, the museum was devolved to the province, but the federal culture ministry took the matter to the Supreme Court.

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's parliamentary party leader Khurram Sher Zaman asked the minister if the culture department failed to regain control of the National Museum.

Responding to his question, Minister Sardar Shah said that the then Chief Justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar decided the matter in favour of the federal ministry and it was transferred to the federal government on April 17, 2019.

However, the minister said that the provincial government filed a review petition against the decision and it was still pending disposal in the apex court.

Sardar Shah says current federal govt will not challenge provincial govt's review petition in SC.

He said that now the federal government was not challenging the provincial government's review petition and it was hoped that its control would be devolved to the Sindh government.

In reply to a written question by parliamentary party leader of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan Rana Ansar, Sardar Shah said that Kahu Jo Daro was an archaeological site of Buddhist era, initially stretching over 33 acres.

He said that now the area of the site spread over 23 acres as people had

encroached upon 10 acres.

He said that the department had executed the work on Kahu Jo Daro by installing barbed wires around the site including the cemented pillars for the protection of site.

The culture minister conceded that the site remained completely ignored after first excavation in 1910 when some artefacts were found which were later kept in different museums.

Govt gives stipend to 1,000 artists

The minister said that the provincial government gave stipends to 1,000 poor artists annually.

He said that over 3,000 artists were also given health cards, which they could use in hospitals across the country.

He said that an artist could avail medical treatment facilities to the tune of Rs300,000.

In reply to a question by PTI's Adeeba Hassan, he said that three new libraries had been established in the province during 2015-2016.

He informed the house that the Abdul Aziz Public Library was established at Pano Akil in district Sukkur at the cost of Rs33.469 million, Shaheed Mohatarma Benazir Bhutto Public Library at taluka Garhi Khairo at the cost of Rs33m and Model Library at Orangi Town in Karachi at the cost of Rs25m.

To a supplementary question asked by Ms Hassan, the minister said that there was no registration fee for readers in the libraries. "It is free of cost as we want to promote reading culture," he added.

To a verbal question by PTI's Jamal Siddiqui, he said that there were 36 libraries run by the culture department across the province.

He said that the culture department had moved a summary to the local government department for adopting 55 libraries in different union councils.

In reply to another verbal query by PTI's Dr Seema Zia, the minister said that E-library sections had been set up in as many as 30 libraries. "Besides an E-portal having links of over 100 million books has also been established which can be linked from anywhere," he added.

The minister replied in the negative when Ms Ansar, asked him if the culture department had established art galleries in

the province.

However, he said, the department had established cultural complexes where spaces were allocated for art galleries.

To another question by the MQM-P lawmaker, the minister said that there were 18 functional auditoriums in the province and six of them were air-conditioned.

To an oral query by PTI's Jamal Siddiqui, the minister said that the department did not allocate any additional funds for the maintenance of the auditoriums, adding that the income incurred through commercial programmes held there was used for the maintenance.

## SBP moves to ensure export proceeds realised in time

**F**or ensuring the timely realisation of export proceeds, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has decided to initiate necessary action in all those cases where full or partial proceeds are not realised within the prescribed period.

In a circular issued on Tuesday 14 Feb., the central bank directed banks [authorised dealers] to adopt the following procedure at the time of conversion of export proceeds into rupees.

The banks will compare the weighted average buying rate published by SBP on the date of realisation (i.e. rate-A) with the same rate published by on the last day of the prescribed period, after addition of the grace period (i.e. rate B).

In case rate-A is higher than rate-B, the banks will convert the export proceeds at rate-A, but pay the export proceeds at rate-B to the exporter and will keep the difference amount in a separate account opened by them for the purpose.

A consolidated statement regarding all such differences collected will be submitted by principal offices of the banks to the director Foreign Exchange Operations Department (FEOD), SBP-BSC on weekly basis.

Banks will deposit the said difference with SBP or refund the same to the exporter.

These instructions will not be applicable in cases of export bills or export receivables that are discounted by the exporter to the banks.

"These instructions will come into effect as of March 1, 2023," said the SBP circular.



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## Sajal praises projects highlighting Pakistan 'the right way



Pakistani television actor Sajal Aly who stars in the soon-to-be released film *What's Love Got To Do With It?* said it is 'the very first project which highlights Pakistan and its Pakistani culture in a very right, very colourful way'.

Speaking to media ahead of the film's UK release, Ms Aly said: 'My character Maymouna is the face of thousands of South Asian girls. She will give strength and confidence to South Asian girls.'

The film is expected to be released in Pakistan very soon.

Ms Aly plays the character of Maymouna, a girl based in Lahore who is introduced to the main character, London-based Kaz, in an arranged marriage set-up. The film is billed as a romcom and shows a British Pakistani family's journey as they try to set their son up with a suitable match. Though the story is told with humour, it also touches on a deeper theme of family conflicts.

It's not just a romcom, it's a lot more than that. It's a film that will make you cry, happy and sad. You will laugh but when you go back home you will definitely go and hug your loved ones.

Ms Aly said her character Maymouna's 'wildness and craziness' is something she can relate to.

We all have it; we try to hide that part because we fear what if people judge us but we all feel that way.

She praised the director, Indian filmmaker Shekhar Kapur, as 'one of the best directors we have in this world'. 'I tell you, he is just amazing. Whatever he

makes, no matter which country's story he is telling, he will do well. He has done justice to this script.

When asked how selective she is about choosing scripts that portray strong women, Ms Aly said: 'I'm lucky I get good scripts. I also intentionally choose scripts where women are not portrayed as weak.'

With success there is a pressure and a responsibility on me to do that.

Whatever power I hold, small or big, my influence cannot be restricted to TV or

## Shadikhel wins 18th Cholistan Desert Rally

After several years of hard work and participation, Faisal Shadikhel was crowned champion of the 18th Cholistan Desert Rally on Sunday 12 Feb. at Derawar Fort, 70 kilometres from Bahawalpur. The event saw security failings on the race course, resulting in a collision between a racing driver's vehicle and a carry van, injuring the wagon's four passengers.

Previously, Nadir Magsi and Sahibzada Sultan had won the rally.

Both Mr Magsi and Mr Sultan participated in the 18th desert rally, but they both lost after the fuel pump of the vehicle of Mr Magsi developed a fault during the first round of the prepared category on Friday 10 Feb. Mr Sultan was prominent in Friday's first round, but on Sunday 12 Feb., he could not put up the expected show. Dawn learnt that Mr Magsi had been participating in the Desert Rally since 2006 and had been its champion 10 times.

Zain Mahmood Chaudhry came in second place. Shadikhel completed the 235-kilometre journey in 3:59:3 hours, while Mr. Chaudhry completed the journey in 3:59:9. Asif Fazal Chaudhry stood third with 4:00:4 hours of coverage.

In the B class of the prepaid Category, former Balochistan chief minister Jam Kamal was declared first followed by Asad and Shehry. Jam Kamal covered the distance in 4:20:25 hours, Asad 4:20:36 and Shehry 4:27:51.

In the prepared category for women,

film. I have a responsibility to do a lot more.

The film brings together Indian and Pakistani stars, and has been written by Jemima Goldsmith. When asked to comment on the prospect of more Indian and Pakistani stars working together in the future, Ms Aly said: 'We can't work in India, but we are working together internationally. It was a huge deal for me to work with Sri Devi ma'am, it was an honour even for my country.'

Unfortunately, we are trapped by politics and this has put art and artists in a box. 'I hope we can break these walls but even if we can't, we can scale the wall and find a way to work with each other.'

Rshida Sultan was declared first, followed by Mahum Shiraz, while in the stock category, Rubab Hayat, and Dina Rohinton Patel were declared first and second respectively.

In the C class, the winners were: Zaheer, Hammal, and Falak; in the D class, the winners were Shakil, Umer, and Zafar.

In Sunday's second round, 37 racers participated. Among them, Malik Ajmal's vehicle collided with a carry van on the rally track due to the negligence of the security officials along the track.

Rescue 1122 said the carry van abruptly appeared on the rally track while Mr Ajmal was racing on the track at full speed. The collision left four people injured and both vehicles damaged. Rescuers removed both vehicles from the track. Those injured were shifted to the Ahmedpur THQ Hospital in serious condition.

Dr Raheel Siddiqui and Mahmood Chaudhry, rally participants, expressed concern about the security lapses. They said during previous years, there had been complaints about security, but the departments failed to take measures to ensure the race was hassle-free.

There were also complaints that the TDCP's staffers failed to recover the broken vehicles of the participants. A cultural night was held in the desert where singer Ibrarul Haq and local artists performed, followed by a spectacular display of fireworks at the venue.



## Plants, pretty blossoms and creative arrangements add cheer to flower show

The three-day Pakistan Annual Flower Show 2023, organised by the Horticulture Society of Pakistan (HSP) opened on Thursday 23 Feb. at Seaview's A.K. Khan Park Karachi, named after legendary Abdul Karim Khan who founded HSP in 1948 and started the annual Flower Show.

This 72nd edition of the show also celebrates its 75th anniversary.

It won't be wrong to say that citrus fruits stole the show at this year's flower show. There were lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruits of several varieties hanging from their little trees still in the pots to be bought and transplanted into gardens or bigger pots maybe. People interested in buying citrus fruit trees were pleasantly surprised to learn that the fruit can do very well in Karachi.

"Just make sure they get plenty of sunlight and water. But lessen the watering somewhat when the trees are flowering," advised Mohammed Hasaan at the Garden Solutions stall. A medium sized potted Australian lemon tree was selling for Rs3,000 and Rs3,500 while the same growing out of plastic bags and also flowering were available for Rs750 each.

There were plenty of seasonal flowers, such as marigolds, chrysanthemums, violets, daffodils, irises, lilacs and forget-me-nots, displayed here and there as well as selling very well at quite reasonable prices. There were also various roses, anthuriums and other flowers needing care and nurturing selling at not so reasonable prices.

The Orchidium Nursery was only selling pretty orchids. This shade-loving flower only grows well in coconut shells and coal. One small orchid plant was selling at Rs2,500. "People are complaining that they are very expensive but they are all imported," said Saleh Mohammed at the nursery.

A customer, Joyce Arthur, said that she wanted to buy an orchid but was afraid that it wouldn't do well, also not being native to Pakistan. "I need someone to guide me as to how to take care of my orchids because I have not had good experience growing it at home," she said.

Another plant, also not native to this country, were the air plants, not needing watering at all as they absorb moisture from the air. A small air plant fitted inside



*Visitors admire different kinds of flowers and plants at the annual flower show, which opened at A.K. Khan Park on Thursday 23 Feb.*

wind chimes was selling at Rs2,000. "It's a no-pot and no soil plant," said Sahar Ahsan, who sells exotic plants she imports from Thailand and China online.

Another plant that does very well without much moisture is the succulent cactus. There was a huge variety of cacti selling at many stalls from inexpensive tiny cacti to big and expensive ones, too.

One very wise customer also noticed among the plants selling at the stalls that some of them seemed to have been replanted in new baskets or pots just ahead of the flower show. "Just look at their frizzled leaves. Plants should look fresh and happy but some plants here look sad to me, she said.

Another even wiser customer was there with her granddaughter Barirah pestering her to buy her a lemon plant. The grandmother explained to her granddaughter that they can also buy seeds to plant lemons and grow them at home. Barirah was next seen selecting seeds from a stall selling them.

There were stalls selling herbs and vegetables also. The healthy egg plants resembling boiled eggs growing out of small pots was a happy sight for any kitchen gardener. The Healing Garden stall was also informing about the benefits of herbs such as basil, rosemary, parsley and of vegetables ground underground such as turmeric, ginger, etc.

The Karachi Sogetsu Study Group stall had many beautiful arrangements, but only to admire as none were for sale according to the study group director, Shaheena Zuberi.

Truck art was the theme at the Indus Sogetsu Study Group stall. President Salima Feroze said that they have combined Ikebana and truck art. "So besides having a Japanese touch it also has

our traditional art," she said.

Mohammed Owais at the Sustainable Gardening stall of the Amateur Gardeners' Club had a very interesting stall putting to good use all kinds of scrap very creatively to make garden ornaments, fences, seating, bird houses and what not?

The Ladies Horticulture Club of Karachi was everyone's favourite stall with some very pleasant people both educating you as well as selling you things such as honey, homemade berry, carrot and lime pickles, jams and marmalade made from organically grown fruits. Nothing in their stall had been sprayed with any kind of pesticide and they were also using recycled stuff for the sake of a clean environment. Their edible plants included not just herbs and betel leaves but also flowers.

Fathiya Abdul Qadir, one of the club's members, said it was her job to raise awareness about plants. "Grow your own plants and eat their produce. To keep them safe from getting infected and pests, we water our plants with diluted stale lassi that is extra bitter, onion water, garlic water, soda water, vinegar, neem oil, etc." she said.

There were the ancient little bonsai all looking majestic at the Pakistan Bonsai Society Stall. There were plenty of very beautiful life-size arrangements beckoning visitors at the Gardenia Society. The Ikebana Karachi Chapter too had some very beautiful arrangements where the colourful Japanese umbrellas added so much cheer to the mood of the place.

Many stalls were also selling garden furniture, decorative ornaments such as wind chimes, hanging baskets, decorative pots, pesticides, fertilizers and even artificial flowers.

Earlier, HSP chairman Fahim Siddiqui spoke at length about the important role of horticulture in improving the environment and slowing down the effects of global warming and climate change.

Sardar Yaseen Malik of Indus Hospital Health Network also spoke on the occasion before the distribution of trophies, shields and certificates to winners of the various competitions including best home, office, school, mosque gardens, best arrangements, etc.



## News in Pictures



*Mr. Imran Peracha Chairman Gul Group and his son Mr. Mohaiman Peracha BDM Gul Group celebrate their birthday together on the same day. Photo taken on the occasion.*



*Bukhari group opens its doors, joining hands with GSA of Iraqi Airways M/s Wardah International through Vision Travels (Pvt) Ltd., Exclusive Sales Agents for Iraqi Airways in Islamabad various Dignitaries of the travel trade witness the event.*



## Poet of romance Amjad Islam breathes his last



Parveen Shakir with Amjad Islam Amjad (R) along with their host in Canada in 1984.

Popular Urdu poet and playwright Amjad Islam Amjad died of heart attack on Friday 10 Feb. He was 78.

Born in 1944 in Lahore, Amjad won acclaim as a poet of love and romance. His blank verse had rhythm and flow, interspersed with contemporary diction, but without descending into classicism.

Amjad Islam Amjad developed his own style and took no time in endearing himself to poetry aficionados.

He made a conscious attempt to make Naghmagi (rhythm) an integral part of his verse. The poet himself used to stress that “my readers remember my blank verses due to rhythm rather than the thought in them”.

In his childhood Amjad aspired to becoming a cricketer, but later literature became his passion. His love for literature started during school days when he was made editor of a school magazine.

His family lived on Fleming Road and he did his matriculation from Muslim Model School. After graduation from Lahore's Islamia College, he chose literature for Master's degree after getting a scholarship and enrolled in the Oriental College, Punjab University. Amjad became the chief editor of the university's literary magazine, Mehwar, when he was doing his master's.

He topped the Punjab University exam and got a gold medal. This distinction got him a teaching job at the MAO College, where he taught from 1970 to 1975.

He served as deputy director of the Punjab Arts Council for four years from 1975 till 1979 and then as director general of Urdu Science Board in 1997.

At the time of his retirement, he was working as the director of Punjab Textbook Board.

### A maestro's tribute

Munir Niazi was effusive in admiration for Amjad's collection, Barzakh, published in 1974: “Amjad's poetry has an ability to move readers with

its modern sensibility and melody.”

He said Amjad's modernism was not simply due to his youth, but owed it to his innate tenderness. “I (Munir) myself carry the same sensibility.”

Amjad wrote in the foreword that the book defined his ideology of poetry, saying that he was wary of both “traditionalists as well as pseudo-revolutionaries”.

He followed the same path in his subsequent works. One should remember that it was the time when both in Pakistan and India left-leaning writers, inspired by Marxism, were on the rise.

He clarified that though his poems reflected his own personal, emotional and political experiences, he was not against subjectivity. He, however, conceded that no writer can attain greatness if he remains indifferent to the aspirations and the angst of his contemporaries.

Aks, his translation of modern Arabic poems published by Masjlis Taraqqi-i-Adab in 1976, included poems by Nizar Qabbani and Mahmoud Darwish.

He also translated poems by black poets from across the world, titled Kalay Logon Ki Roshan Nazmain. The collection carried works by poets from Tanzania, Angola, Mozambique, Ghana, South Africa, Senegal and the USA. It was published in 1980.

His second poetry collection, Satwaan Dar, was published in 1978. In the foreword, he again wrote about his views on poetry and poets.

“Critics have done injustice to poets by labelling them as revolutionary, spiritual, philosophical, psychological or orthodox,” Amjad Islam observed. “To me there are only two types of poets – good poets and bad ones.”

This collection was followed by Fishaar (1982), Barish Ki Awaz (1997), Sahar Aasaar (1998), Phir Yun Huwa (2003), Mohabat Aisa Darya Hai (2004), Yaheen Kaheen (2006) and Hum Uskay Hain, Zara Phir Sey Kehna.

He also published Shehar Dar Shehar, a travelogue, in 1988 about his sojourn to major cities.

Amjad termed himself a socialist-realist writer. He won accolades as a TV playwright as well.

His career started with Ya Naseeb Clinic in 1972. He wrote nine serials, including Samandar, Dehleez and Raat. But the play that made him a household name was Waris. It was telecast from the PTV's Lahore centre in 1979.

The serial turned out to be a trendsetter in the annals of PTV by faithfully portraying Punjab's rural life and contrasting it against the educated urban class.

Many singers gave their voice to Amjad's poems. Some of the famous ones included Mein Teray Sang Kaisay Chaloon Sajna by Noor Jehan, Guzar Gaya Jo Zamana Ussay Bhula He Dou by Hamid Ali Khan, Jo Nah Mil Saka Ussay Bhool Ja by Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Bheer Mein Ik Ajnabi Ka Samna Acha Laga by Ghulam Ali.

Amjad wrote columns for newspapers as well after his retirement.

Funeral prayers were offered at Masjid Chowk, near his residence in the DHA and he was laid to rest in Miani Sahib Graveyard.

Amjad Islam Amjad is survived by wife, a son and two daughters.

## Cultural institutes pay tribute to Zia Mohyeddin

Many cultural institutions have sent their condolence messages on the demise of legendary Zia Mohyeddin.

The Faiz Foundation Trust in its statement says, “It is with great sadness that we learned of the passing of Zia Mohyeddin, a legendary actor and cultural icon who left an indelible mark on the world of Pakistani arts and entertainment. He was a true visionary who inspired countless artists and captivated audiences with his performances. The Faiz Foundation Trust would like to express our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones during this difficult time. May his memory live on through his incredible contributions to the world of performing arts, and may he rest in peace.”

Shakir Ali Museum, the regional office of Pakistan National Council of Arts, says in its statement, “Master thespian and Pakistan's greatest orator, Zia Mohyeddin passes away.

Incharge Shakir Ali museum Lahore Fatima Salman Khan and staff would like to express deepest condolences to his family, friends, and loved ones during this difficult time. May his soul rest in peace.”

Caretaker Punjab Minister for Information and Culture Amir Mir expressed deep sorrow and regret over the death of the icon.

Amir Mir paid tribute to him for his literary services.

## Faiz Festival kicks off at Alhamra



*People of all ages attend the opening ceremony of the Faiz Festival at Alhamra.*

The Alhamra Art Center, Mall Road, is festooned with big flexes bearing Faiz Ahmed Faiz' images and his poetry as the three-day 7th Faiz Festival kicked off on Friday 17 Feb.

The festival is an annual event being organised by the Faiz Foundation Trust in collaboration with the Lahore Arts Council (LAC).

On Friday 17 Feb., there were sitting arrangements on the lawns of Alhamra, the audio recordings, mostly of Nayyara Noor and Abida Parveen, was an added attraction for the visitors. People from different walks of life and age group, especially the youth, could be witnessed attending the festival. There was also a food court for the visitors.

The festival opened with the inaugural ceremony held outside Alhamra Art Gallery along with the inauguration of an exhibition of artworks featuring eight artists from India and Pakistan whose works depicted the current situation of society in both the countries.

Salima Hashmi, speaking on the occasion, said Alhamra reminded her of the personalities such as Abdur Rahman Chughtai, M.D. Taseer, Imtiaz Ali Taj and Faiz Ahmed Faiz as they were the people who strived to give Lahore a rich culture. These people had the realization that cultural rights of the people along with human rights were extremely important.

Danish Hussain, a story teller from India, thanked Faiz Foundation for inviting him and his compatriots to the festival.

Arvinder Chamak, a poet from India who spoke in Punjabi, said the Indian delegation had brought love and peace for Pakistan from across the border. He said Faiz Ahmed Faiz was equally popular in India, as well.

Atul Tiwari, a writer and actor from across the border, said he was participating in the festival for the fifth time.

Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa welcomed the Indian delegation and held Faiz' family in high esteem for holding the festival.

The exhibition titled, 'Tell Us What to Do' at the art gallery was inaugurated by three children and not by delegates or the officials.

Ms Hashmi said since children were our future, she had asked the children to inaugurate the exhibition.

The exhibition has eight artists from India and Pakistan reflecting upon the debilitating human conditions on both sides of the borders in the hope to spread peace, hope and courage.

The title of this group show is borrowed from Faiz's poem: Tum Hi Kaho Kiya Karna Ha? The featured artists include Abdul Hadi, Farida Batool, Gargi Raina, Imran Qureshi, Nalini Malani, Shah Abdullah Alamee, Unum Babar, and Yasir Waqas.

At the opening day of the festival, the Ajoka Theatre staged their famous play, Anhi Mai Da Sufna, written and directed by Shahid Nadeem. It was originally directed by eminent Indian theatre director the late Usha Ganguli who had come to Lahore to work with Ajoka artists. The play was produced by Ajoka's late founder Madeeha Gauhar in 2016 and has since been performed in Lahore, Islamabad, Delhi, Chandigarh and Amritsar. It told the story of Janki and Rangu with a lot of songs, dances and humour in an interesting cinematic style. The set with minimal props relied mainly on an imaginative use of fabric. The cast included Ajoka's Razia Malik, Naseem Abbas, Mohammad Qaiser, Fahad Hashmi, Shehzad Sadiq, Bilal Mughal, Usman Zia, Rabil, Haifa, Sumavia, Rania, Yusra and Anish. The music team included Kanwal Christopher, Anita, Thomas and Asad, while the set and lights was designed by Nadeem Mir.

The story of the play was inspired by true stories of the generation dislocated during the 1947 Partition and it was set in 1971 when travel between India and Pakistan was suspended. Old and blind

Janki, living in India, insisted on visiting her native village in Pakistan. Her family found an ingenious way to make an old woman's dream a reality. Interwoven with Mai Janki's story was the story of Ustad Rangu Rangsaaz who stayed back in Lahore at the time of the Partition. He loved his Lahore but also longed to attend her granddaughter's wedding in India. He also crossed in an unusual way. The dreams and reality or imagined journeys of the Mai Janki and Rangu Rangsaaz were the basis of the play. It celebrated the resilience of human spirit in the face of despair and was a tribute to the hopes and desires of the people of South Asia for peace and goodwill.

There was also a musical performance in the evening that featured Shafqat Amanat.

## Afghan refugee offers virtual tours of her homeland



Afghan refugee and activist for women's rights, Fatima Haidari, gives an online virtual tour of Herat from her home in Milan.

Forced to flee by the Taliban, Fatima Haidari now offers virtual tours of Afghanistan from her new home in Italy — with the proceeds funding secret English classes for women there.

From her student flatshare in Milan, Haidari leads cyber-tourists around the western Afghan city of Herat, using Zoom to show them the grand mosque with its glazed tiles, the citadel and the bustling bazaar.

The 24-year-old worked as a tour guide in Herat before fleeing when the Taliban took power in August 2021, and is now studying international politics at Milan's Bocconi university. But she



remains passionate about showing outsiders the beauty of her country, even if few tourists currently dare visit.

“When you hear about Afghanistan, you think of war, terror and bombs,” Haidari told in the little kitchen she shares with four other students.

“I want to show the world the beauty of the country, its culture and its history.” Organised through British tour operator Untamed Borders, the events draw people from Britain to Australia, Germany and India. A third of the money goes towards secret English classes for young women back in Afghanistan.

The Taliban have imposed harsh restrictions on women since returning to power, including closing secondary schools and universities for girls and women.

Haidari herself faced insults after becoming the first female tourist guide in Afghanistan.

Local religious leaders accused her of “doing the devil's work”, particularly when accompanying men, while boys threw stones at her in the street.

Haidari is passionate about education, after battling her whole life for access to books. Growing up in the mountains in the central region of Ghor, the youngest of seven children, her parents made her look after the sheep.

“I would take the sheep out to graze by the river where the boys had school and secretly listen to their lessons,” she recalled.

“As I didn't have a pen, I would write in the sand or in clay.” When she was 10, her impoverished family moved to Herat, where they could not afford to send her to school. For three years she worked at night on home-made items such as traditional clothes, to raise enough money to pay for classes and text books.

She managed to persuade her parents to allow her to go to university in Herat, where she began studying journalism in 2019.

“They wanted me to become a perfect housewife. But I didn't want to follow the same path as my two sisters and face an arranged marriage,” Haidari said. In September last year, she joined around 20 refugee students welcomed by Bocconi University in Milan.

Wearing a black headscarf and leather gilet, jeans tucked into her boots and her laptop in a bag on her back, she looks like any other student on campus. But she never forgets the plight of women back home.

## Once home to civilisations, fabled Antioch left in ruins



*This photograph shows dozens of roof tiles lying on the floor, next to the frame of an ancient building of Antakya, with characters written on their back suggesting they were used during the French mandate over the city.*

The smashed dome of Habib-i-Neccar, the 7th century mosque considered to be Turkiye's oldest, covers rubble that used to be a prayer hall.

Once a home to a myriad of civilisations, the southern city of Antakya lies in ruins after recently 7.8-magnitude quake. Fourteen centuries of history were ravaged in less than two minutes in Antakya, a fabled ancient Greek centre known throughout most of its history as Antioch.

Erected in 638 AD, the Habib-i-Neccar was “the first mosque built within modern-day Turkiye's borders”, according to the government's culture portal. Only its walls have survived, leaving delicate yellow, red and blue paintings and calligraphy exposed to the winter sky.

“A bit of the Prophet's (PBUH) beard was once preserved in a box” at the mosque, said Havva Pamukcu, a 50-year-old woman wearing a headscarf.

“I'm heartbroken,” she said.

11th century church

A few hundred metres away, a Greek Orthodox church erected in the 14th century — and rebuilt in 1870 after another earthquake — is also gone. A white cross that once stood on its pointed roof now lies atop shattered walls and broken pieces of wood.

“All the walls have fallen. We're in despair,” said Sertac Paul Bozkurt, a member of the council managing the church.

Antakya is in Hatay, a province tucked between the Mediterranean Sea and Turkiye's border with Syria.

It was one of the worst affected by the earthquake and its aftershocks, which have claimed more than 35,000 lives across the region.

In the old city, several streets are still inaccessible, blocked by buildings flattened like pancakes and cars trapped under the debris.

Across more than two millennia, the city was home to Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Persian, Arab and Ottoman empires.

It was even placed under a French mandate between the end of the First World War and 1939, when the city became a part of modern-day Turkiye.

A former general of Alexander the Great founded Antioch in 300 BC. The city has suffered several earthquakes — almost one every 100 years — and is no stranger to rebuilding. There were devastating quakes in 37 BC, 115 AD and 458 AD. A quake in AD 526 is thought to have killed 250,000 people. In 1054 AD, 10,000 are thought to have died.

“Antakya is the cradle of several historical events,” said Hakan Mertkan, a doctoral student at the University of Bayreuth in Germany and author of a book on Antakya.

But it's also “a cradle of earthquakes, its soil full of history”, he added.

Turkiye, like Syria, is on one of the world's most active fault lines.

But the region is also “at the centre of much of humanity's shared ancient history”, said Aparna Tandon, senior programme leader at the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property.

The area impacted is home to six Unesco World Heritage Sites.

Like Aleppo in Syria, Turkiye's “crossroads of civilisations” was already “60 per cent destroyed in 1822 after an earthquake”, said Youmna Tabet of the World Heritage Convention.

What look like “simple cracks” to the “layman's eyes” can weaken a monument and cause it to collapse weeks later, said Samir Abdulac, who works at the International Council on Monuments and Sites, which seeks to protect historical places.

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## Flooding, landslips in affected regions hint at geological impact of massive quake



*Tepehan (Turkiye): A view of terrain after a landslide that occurred in the aftermath of the deadly earthquake.*

**T**HE 7.8 magnitude earthquake in Turkiye and Syria, which has claimed over 23,000 lives so far, is producing wider geological implications that may have long term consequences, with flooding and landslips being the most immediate ones.

According to a Guardian report, subsidence has caused flooding, while hillsides are at risk of landslip, which means roads may need to be rerouted and people re-housed.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration defines subsidence as sinking of the ground because of underground material movement, which can be caused by natural events such as earthquakes.

Significant subsidence has occurred in the coastal city of skenderun (Turkiye), which has resulted in flooding, while many hillsides around the country are at a serious risk of landslip. Roads and pipelines may have to be rerouted and people rehomed if the problem increases.

It was also reported that the sea had encroached 200 metres inland in the city, but the actual cause of the subsidence is not yet known.

“Although this very large earthquake produced mostly horizontal movement, it's certainly plausible that there was a fault splay that caused some widespread subsidence like this,” Tim Wright, from the Centre for the Observation and Modelling of Earthquakes, Volcanoes and Tectonics in the UK, told Guardian.

Prof Bruce Malamud, professor of Natural and Environmental Hazards at King's College London, told the Science Media Centre “hazard relief agencies and managers will also be conscious of other natural hazards and multi-hazard cascades.”

In his view, the seismic activity could trigger hundreds, if not thousands, of landslides in the days after the earthquake and subsequent aftershocks.

“Hazard managers will also be faced with the relocation of large numbers of

people, and they will need to be aware of where they move these people, not moving them into another hazard-prone area, such as to floods, he said.

Similar changes were also seen in the Turkish town of Gölcük after the 1999 zmit/Kocaeli earthquake, and along the coast following the 2016 Kaikoura earthquake in New Zealand – both of which were also large strike-slip (horizontal movement) earthquakes.

Cloudy weather prevented gathering satellite imagery immediately after the quake, but clearer skies on subsequent days revealed a numbers of landslides and rockfalls across the region.

## Experts discover ancient structures, artefacts away from Mohenjo Daro



*SOME of the newly discovered structures.*

**A** joint team of French archaeologists and local experts have unearthed open drains and structure of houses at Chanhu Jo Daro similar in design to those found in Mohenjo Daro. They also discovered a number of beads and bangles, among various artefacts.

The French mission led by David Sarmiento Castillo and Pakistani experts headed by Zahida Quadri, are busy with excavation work at this Indus Civilisation site situated in Jam Keerio village at a distance of 19 kilometres from Nawabshah.

“The mound of Chanhu Jo Daro is easier to excavate than that of Mohenjo Daro,” said Ms Quadri.

“Mohenjo Daro has stupa and other surfaced structures hence its excavation is not easy but Chanhu Jo Daro has only a mound and its excavation is going on smoothly,” she explained.

She said that fossils of animals had been found during excavation which would help identify the domesticated animals employed by the residents of the

A map produced by the United States Geological Survey suggested that extensive landslip was likely to have occurred in the hilly region north of Gaziantep, which could affect tens of thousands of people.

“Based upon this we are likely to see some landslide fatalities plus substantial numbers of roads blocked by failures. This will impede the rescue work, especially ... in more remote areas,” Dave Petley, an analyst of landslide events, was quoted saying.

Sokagin Sesi Gazetesi, a Turkish media outlet, tweeted a video on Feb 7 showing a landslip on the road between Adana and Gaziantep. This has raised fears regarding rural upland communities, which could be completely devastated by the landslides triggered by the massive earthquake.

ancient town. “It looks Chanhu Jo Daro had remained a centre of export as a huge number of beads found at the site were probably used in jewelry and other ornaments,” said Manzoor Ahmed Kanasaro, director general of culture, tourism, archaeology and antiquity department.

“Discovery of sharp instruments and cutters used for cutting beads indicated that this site had remained a central place of the export of pearls, jewelry and ornaments,” said Kanasaro.

“The structure of houses and uncovered drains are similar to those found at Mohenjo Daro,” said French experts, adding that a huge number of artefacts and bangles worn by women were also found.

Sindh Minister for Culture, Tourism and Archaeology Syed Sardar Ali Shah said that the joint team of French and local archaeologists had found an uncountable number of artefacts at Chanhu Jo Daro.

He said that in addition to ongoing work at Chanhu Jo Daro, Directorate General of Antiquities and Archaeology in collaboration with its foreign partners and Provincial Disaster Management Authority, Auqaf and district administration concerned had in October last year trained a team of 25 individuals recruited from local community to carry out preservation work at Makli necropolis. This team was also working dedicatedly to preserve monuments at Makli necropolis, he said.

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## Leopard captured after six wild hours in residential area



A video grab shows leopard jumps on a wall of a house in DHA in Islamabad.

It took the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board and Capital Development Authority more than five hours to capture a leopard which possibly escaped from a safari park and found itself “trapped” in the Defence Housing Authority (DHA) amid panicked residents.

The IWMB after failing to lure the animal into a cage had to use a tranquiliser around 10pm to sedate the animal after it was confined in a closed space by the volunteers and staffers present on the spot. According to Rina Saeed Khan, who heads the wildlife board, the leopard would be kept at a rescue centre in the Rescue Centre, which used to be the Islamabad zoo. IWMB chief was coordinating with the commissioner by the time this report went to press.

Around 4pm, videos started making rounds on social media showing the feline running around in the housing society. These clips showed the leopard – also panicked – trying to flee the scene, but it ended up running into houses and scaling walls.

The leopard could also be seen attacking an IWMB volunteer twice. Three people got hurt, including two staff members of IWMB, during the entire episode which resulted in the capture of the wild cat. In another video, a man, who came across as a private security member, shot at the leopard without any regard for the safety of people gathered on the site. However, this was denied by the authorities concerned.

### 'Call for Rescue'

At 4:20 pm, the DHA security called the Islamabad Wildlife Management Department to report that a leopard had bit a security guard on the back. By the time the IWMB team reached the housing scheme, Rescue 1122 was already on the ground but it had failed to cordon off the area, said IWMB Rina Saeed Khan. She claimed a lot of TikTokers had gathered around the leopard, dangerously close to the feline despite warnings from the staff of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to stay indoors. “The leopard

attacked because it felt cornered,” Ms Khan said.

Rina Saeed Khan said it was illegal to keep common leopards as pets and action would be taken if it was established that it had an owner.

Initially, IWMB staffer Rizwan Mehboob, who was slightly injured by the feline, suspected that the leopard seemed to have escaped from a nearby farmhouse.

## 173 Gandhara art pieces from museums loaned to China



Apart from life size statues of Siddhartha and Buddha, the artefacts include Greek specimens from the 2nd to 5th century AD collection discovered from Swat, Gandhara and Taxila valleys

The Department of Archaeology and Museums has loaned one of the largest consignments of masterpieces of Gandhara art to China for an exhibition in Beijing.

Comprising 173 masterpieces of Gandhara art from the Peshawar, Swat, Dir, Hund, Taxila, Karachi and Islamabad museums, these artifacts will go on display on Feb 15 at the Palace Museum Forbidden City. The exhibition will run for three months.

The provincial departments of archaeology in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab had provided active support and loaned some of the best specimens of Gandhara art from their collections for the exhibition.

“Dignitaries and top officials from Pakistan will attend the event. Pakistan Embassy in China, Chinese Embassy in Islamabad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan played a key role in materialising this important event. The exhibition will open new vistas of cooperation in the fields of museums and cultural heritage between China and Pakistan,” Deputy Director of the Department of Archaeology and Museums Dr Mehmoodul Hassan said.

He said the Palace Museum was one the most prestigious and largest institutions of China for promotion and preservation of cultural heritage. “Palace

The leopard did not attack as a wild cat would; they usually target the neck of their prey.

This is not the first time common leopards have disrupted life by entering settlements – a result of encroachment into their habitat.

Last year in November, leopards entered several houses in the Saidpur model village in Margalla Hills, spreading panic.

While the villagers said they saw four leopards, IWMB said that leopards were highly territorial, and did not roam in groups like a pride of lions.

Museum will provide cooperation and assistance to its Pakistani counterparts in the fields of archaeological research, conservation of monuments, documentation, and treatment of museum artifacts and scholarships for young Pakistani professionals,” the official elaborated.

Joint projects with Palace Museum in these fields would help in capacity building of the institutions to preserve and promote cultural heritage of the nation, he said.

The last time Pakistan loaned such a huge consignment of ancient artifacts was in 2008. As many as 250 historical items were loaned to Germany. These artifacts were also exhibited in Switzerland and France, before returning home in 2011.

The Chinese had also requested for 250 items; however, Lahore Museum was unable to contribute due to administrative reasons.

Besides life size and small statues of Siddhartha and Buddha, which depict his birth, early palace life and the periods after enlightenment, the artifacts also include Greek specimens from the best 2nd century to 5th century AD collection discovered from Swat, Gandhara and Taxila valleys.

Islamabad Museum has also loaned 10 specimens, including a gold Greek 2nd century bowl.

Dr Hassan told media that the exhibition was part of the 70th anniversary of friendly and diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China. “To ensure befitting participation of Pakistan in the celebrations and to promote its cultural wealth at the international level, the Department of Archaeology and Museums, National Heritage and Culture Division, Islamabad, is arranging this grand exhibition of the Buddhist Art of Gandhara at Palace Museum (Forbidden City), Beijing,” he added.



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