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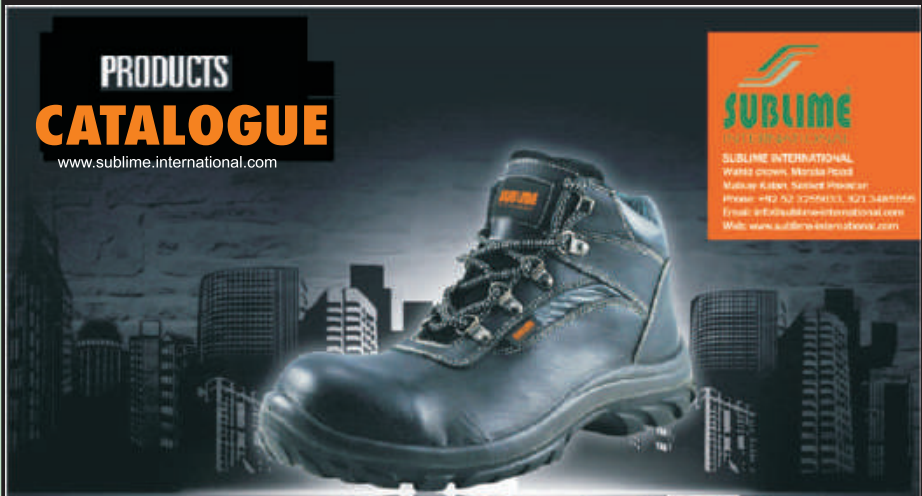
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## Minister sees PIA recapturing UK destinations very soon

Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique on Friday 21 July expressed the hope that the loss-making PIA would be able to resume its flights to the UK in the next three months, following which flights to EU countries and the US would also be restored.

The minister made this announcement on the floor of the National Assembly while responding to a calling attention notice of (JI) MNA Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali regarding the government's decision to outsource Islamabad International Airport.

Mr Rafique said that with the "historic legislation" done by the assembly on July 20, the last obstacle in the way of the resumption of the PIA flights to the UK had been removed.

The National Assembly had passed the Pakistan Airports Authority Bill, 2022, and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Bill, 2022, to bifurcate the role of the Civil Aviation Authority — one for regulating civil aviation activities in the country and the other for providing civil aviation services and developing aviation infrastructure.

The minister recalled that the UK and European countries had banned the PIA flights following the "foolish statement" by his predecessor, adding that the national carrier had been facing a loss of Rs70 billion annually due to the suspension of the flights.

In July 2020, the then aviation minister, Ghulam Sarwar Khan, had stated on the floor of the assembly that some 40 per cent Pakistani pilots possessed "dubious or fake licenses".

While stressing the need for restructuring and privatisation of PIA, Mr Rafique said, "This is very good news for overseas Pakistanis [that] in the next three months, at least flights to the UK will resume. After that [flights to] the EU and America will also resume.

"My colleagues know me. I was against privatisation. But even a person like me has now realised that if PIA [which is] facing a loss of Rs80 billion this year remains as it is, its loss will balloon to Rs259bn by the year 2030.

"Can Pakistan afford this? No, it can't. So what should be done? What South African airlines and Air India had



done," he said, citing that Tata Group in India had recently placed an order for acquiring 450 aircraft for Air India. On the other hand, he said, PIA only had some 27 or 28 operational aircraft. With this fleet, he said, they could not compete with powerful airlines of Gulf countries.

The minister was of the opinion that it was not the state's job to run airlines. The state, he said, could only ensure that no PIA employee should be rendered jobless.

Mr Rafique also disclosed a plan to convert PIA into a holding company. He said Rs742bn loan liability and all the

properties owned by PIA would be transferred to this company. At the same time, the minister warned that if PIA was not restructured, it could face a shutdown in the next one and a half years.

Outsourcing for 15 years

The aviation minister forcefully defended the government's move to outsource the country's three major airports, explaining that Islamabad's airport would be outsourced for 15 years.

"The navigational services and runway operations will not be outsourced. The CAA will continue to do it," he said while assuring the house that no employee of the CAA would be rendered jobless.

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), a World Bank offshoot, was the government's consultant on the matter, he said, disclosing that some 12 to 13 companies had shown interest in taking over the Islamabad airport.

He reiterated that outsourcing didn't mean that the airport was being sold or mortgaged, or that anyone would be made jobless.



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## Islamabad airport to be outsourced by Aug 12

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has told the stakeholders to finalise formalities to outsource the operations of Islamabad International Airport (IIA) by August 12, the final day of the incumbent government's term, according to sources.

The minister chaired a meeting of the steering committee for assessing the progress of airport operations outsourcing on Saturday 15 July.

A source privy to the meeting told media that the committee has given explicit instructions to complete the necessary procedures for IIA outsourcing as a priority.

An official announcement issued after the meeting said World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC), the transaction adviser for the outsourcing, briefed the meeting on the progress. The meeting agreed to fast-track IIA's outsourcing to improve service delivery in line with best industry practices.

The IFC also gave a presentation to the committee which also took decisions on the future roadmap of outsourcing IIA operations. The government, faced with a dearth of forex reserves, has been pushing for outsourcing the operations of major airports. The finance minister has already convened multiple meetings of the committee formed to engage foreign operators for outsourcing.

On March 31, the Economic Coordination Committee decided to kick off the 25-year outsourcing of operations and land assets at Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi airports. Their operations will be run through a public-private partnership to generate foreign exchange.

In the meeting on 15 July, Mr Dar also gave a deadline to departments concerned for finalising amendments to civil aviation laws and a plan for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) restructuring.

The amendments are being made to segregate the functions of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, PIA and Airports

Security Force. The objective is to eliminate overlapping responsibilities of these organisations by enacting ordinances.

The minister emphasised getting amendments approved by the parliament before the end of July. This timeline is crucial as it would allow global aviation regulators to dispatch inspectors in August for an on-ground assessment of operational systems and standards necessary to restore PIA's flights to the US, UK and Europe. Failure to meet this deadline would result in a year-long delay before the inspections can take place.

PIA's flights to these destinations have been suspended since 2020 following a controversy surrounding pilots' professional degrees and other aircraft safety standards. The meeting chaired by the finance minister was also attended by Federal Minister for Aviation and Railways Saad Rafique, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance Tariq Bajwa, the Aviation Division secretary, Public Private Partnership Authority CEO, PCAA director general, IFC representatives and other government officials.

## CAA employees protest against outsourcing of major airports

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority employees staged a protest by putting on black armbands at several airports on 2 August against the government's decision to outsource the operations and land assets of three significant airports.

However, the protesters didn't disrupt their work during the protest. "We will carry out a procession on Thursday 1st August against the government's decision to outsource the operations," said one of the protesters in Islamabad.

The outsourcing of operations and land assets at three major airports to be run through a public-private partnership, a move to generate foreign exchange reserves.

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) had also informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Aviation that the government started a process to outsource the management and operations of the airports in Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore to generate foreign exchange reserves for its faltering economy.

The committee, however, clarified that PCAA was not selling the airports; they were only handing over the operation and management controls for a period of time.

CAA employees on Wednesday 2

August staged protests at the airports of Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Sukkur, Gilgit, Multan, Rahim Yar Khan, and Skardu.

The protesters carried banners and placards, shouting slogans against outsourcing and demanding the withdrawal of the decision.

Recently, Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique emphasised the importance of encouraging the private sector to carry out business responsibilities while the government focuses on regulatory responsibilities.

"The federal government has decided to outsource three airports — Lahore, Karachi, and Islamabad," he said.

"Outsourcing does not mean privatisation... These airports will be handed over to international operators for a certain period, a practice followed by other countries worldwide. Once that period ends, the airports will be returned to Pakistan with all the value addition done by the companies."

Mr Rafique had assured during a press conference in Lahore that no CAA employee would lose their job, but "adjustments" would be made without affecting their salaries or perks.

### Demonstration in Lahore

At the Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, the CAA officials, on

the call of the Akai and Jaca unions, staged a protest against the PMLN-led federal coalition government's decision of the outsourcing.

Speaking at the demonstration, Akai Union chief Ayaz Butt said the employees would not let the government execute its agenda of outsourcing. He stated that it was due to the employees' hard work that the CAA was earning a profit, and they would not allow the government to outsource its (CAA's) land worth billions of rupees for its vested interests.

He urged the judiciary and the army chief to intervene and stop this outsourcing of assets at the airports, as this agreement might be detrimental to the defence of the country. The CAA staff stated that the protests would continue until the government withdrew its controversial decision.

### Protest in Karachi

In Karachi, where the CAA is headquartered, CAA employees wore black armbands and installed banners inscribed with slogans against proposed privatisation in the name of outsourcing of Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore airports.

A CAA employee told media that a vigorous campaign would be launched after Ashura and three big demonstrations would be held, first in Islamabad on Aug 1, then in Lahore on Aug 8, and finally in Karachi on Aug 17.

"We are planning to move courts against the proposed outsourcing," said the employee, who said both officers and workers are united against the privatisation.



## Spurring growth through connectivity

The official inauguration of the refueling facility at Skardu International Airport marks a significant milestone in the development of regional and international connectivity. DGCAA Khaqan Murtaza, AVM Muhammad Amir Hayat CEO PIA and Syed Taha, MD and CEO PSO spoke in the ceremony held at the airport.

Director General CAA Khaqan Murtaza speaking on the occasion said, the alliance between two national flag carriers, facilitated by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), has contributed to the enhancement of operational efficiency at the airport. DG CAA expressed his gratitude to Pakistan State Oil (PSO) for their continuous support and commitment to delivering unparalleled products and services for the aviation industry. He said, this facility not only benefits the airport but also provides a hassle-free experience for airlines operating in the region.

Air Vice Marshall Muhammad Amir Hayat, the CEO of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), highlighted the importance of this facilitation by CAA and

PSO, as PIA becomes the first airline to operate an international flight to Skardu. He said, this development opens up new opportunities for trade and tourism in the region.

Syed Taha, the MD and CEO of PSO, conveyed his appreciation to CAA for its unwavering support throughout their incredible journey spanning four decades. MrTaha added, the collaboration between CAA and PSO has contributed to the growth and development of Skardu Airport, positioning it as an international gateway in northern Pakistan. A commemorative plaque and tree-planting ceremony was also part of the day's proceedings.

Skardu Airport, with its ability to accommodate large aircraft, is now ready to receive its first international flight on 14 August 2023. This milestone will not only boost regional and international connectivity but also strengthen Skardu's position as a key trade and transportation hub, as well as a popular tourist destination in the world.

## Skardu Airport starts operating international flights

Skardu international airport received its first international flight from Dubai on 14 August. The flight was welcomed with a traditional water cannon salute. Upon arrival, the first ever international flight was welcomed by Adl.DG CAA, CEO PIAC, Dir. APS and other PCAA and PIA officials. This is indeed a momentous occasion for an airport considering its unique location 7500 ft above sea level. This achievement marks a major breakthrough in improving airport travel accessibility for the region. This will provide additional opportunities for travelers to visit this beautiful region and further strengthen the air connectivity between the two destinations. This development will not only benefit tourists and travelers but also have a positive impact on the local economy. Skardu and its surrounding areas are known for their stunning landscapes and natural beauty, so improved accessibility will undoubtedly attract more visitors. The plane landed at 08:33am with 79 passengers on-board. It later took off for Islamabad at 10:43am.



## Govt speeds up outsourcing of KPT terminal

The government set up a five-member committee on Thursday to negotiate commercial terms with the United Arab Emirates for outsourcing the bulk and general cargo terminal and associated infrastructure at Karachi Port's east wharf to a UAE-based port operator through government-to-government negotiations without any bidding for competition or price discovery.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions presided over by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar.

The price negotiation committee — led by Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Faisal Subzwari and also comprising the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) chairman and three general managers — will immediately start negotiations with the Abu Dhabi Ports (ADP) on Friday 4 August in an attempt to sign an agreement and complete the transaction before the government completes its term in about 10 days.

The meeting was informed that the cabinet transactions committee on July 24 approved the recommendations of the Framework Agreement Committee and the consequent G2G draft Framework Agreement for the ratification of the federal cabinet. The cabinet later ratified the decision, and the agreement was then signed electronically by the representatives of the Pakistan and UAE governments.

In light of Section 4(2) of the Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions Act, 2022, the next steps were to decide on a price discovery mechanism, frame a commercial agreement and form a committee to negotiate terms, conditions comparison mechanism for price discovery and place its recommendations before the transactions committee for approval.

The KPT also suggested some yardsticks for valuation and price discovery, including the terms of agreement, construction and reconstruction cost of the terminal, its life span, maximum capacity for cargo handling, length of quay wall, per-tonne royalty, land rent per metre, storage charges, upfront payment, and quantum

and type of investment.

Thus, the cabinet transactions committee approved the price discovery mechanism suggested by the KPT and formed Mr Subzwari-led panel.

## Aviation Day 2023 kicks off



Aviation Day 19 August 2023, a signature conference for the global aviation industry, kicked off in Hong Kong. Co-hosted by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA), the two-day event held at AsiaWorld Expo was attended by more than 1,000 aviation industry professionals from around the world.

Paul Chan, Financial Secretary of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) Government; Jack So, Chairman of Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK); Willie Walsh, Director General of IATA; Fred Lam, Chief Executive Officer of AAHK; Wan Xiangdong, Chief Pilot of the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC); Lam Sai-hung, Secretary for Transport and Logistics; Victor Liu, Director-General of Civil Aviation of Civil Aviation Department; and airline representatives attended the kick-off ceremony.

In his welcome address, Paul Chan, Financial Secretary of HKSAR Government said, "The future is bright for Hong Kong as an aviation hub, and this is manifested not just in the sunny economic outlook of the Greater Bay Area, but also a flurry of far-sighted infrastructural developments. The Government, together with the Airport Authority, are transforming our airport into an "Airport City", under which the HKIA will be developed into a node of various economic activities with aviation as its core business, making our airport a new engine which will propel the growth of Hong Kong and the GBA as a whole. The Government is also striving to establish

Hong Kong as an aircraft leasing and services hub by providing tax concessions so as to attract more aircraft leasing companies to come to Hong Kong; and supporting manpower training for the aviation industry as well as welcoming talents from abroad with expertise and experience in the industry to join us."

Jack So, Chairman of AAHK, remarked, "It is my great pleasure to welcome industry participants from all over the world to this event. Like the rest of the world, Hong Kong airport has had three difficult years because of the pandemic. We kept our confidence not only in keeping the airport open, but also building for the future with our Three-runway System expansion project. With the expansion, HKIA's capacity will be increased by 50%, ready to serve up to 120 million passengers and 10 million tonnes of cargo annually."

Wan Xiangdong, Chief Pilot of CAAC, also gave the keynote speech of the conference.

Aviation Day 2023 features speeches and panel discussions by some of the industry's top leaders, sharing insight on topics including new opportunities for air travel and air cargo in the Greater Bay Area, new technology trends in the aviation industry, and more. One of the highlights is a tour of HKIA during which the airport's new facilities, services, technologies and latest developments.

## Pandemonium at Paris airport

With just one year to go before Paris hosts the Olympic Games one of the city's airports suffered an unprecedented breakdown on Thursday 3 August that led to a mountain of luggage piling up and delayed flights.

A breakdown in the luggage-sorting equipment at terminal four of Orly airport meant that baggage had to be handled by hand. That resulted in many flights leaving late and without the luggage of their passengers on board, according to the airport operator and airlines. According to Marc Rochet, head of the French Bee and Air Caraïbes airlines using the affected terminal, flights took off with delays between one and three hours — and without luggage that had been checked in.

"We didn't have another option, otherwise the whole system would be blocked," he said. Passengers' luggage would be flown on to them on following flights. Airport operator ADP estimated 10,000 passengers on 40 flights were affected, but said that the reason for the breakdown had not been determined.

It was trying to adapt by having planes use other terminals at the airport or use Paris Charles de Gaulle airport.



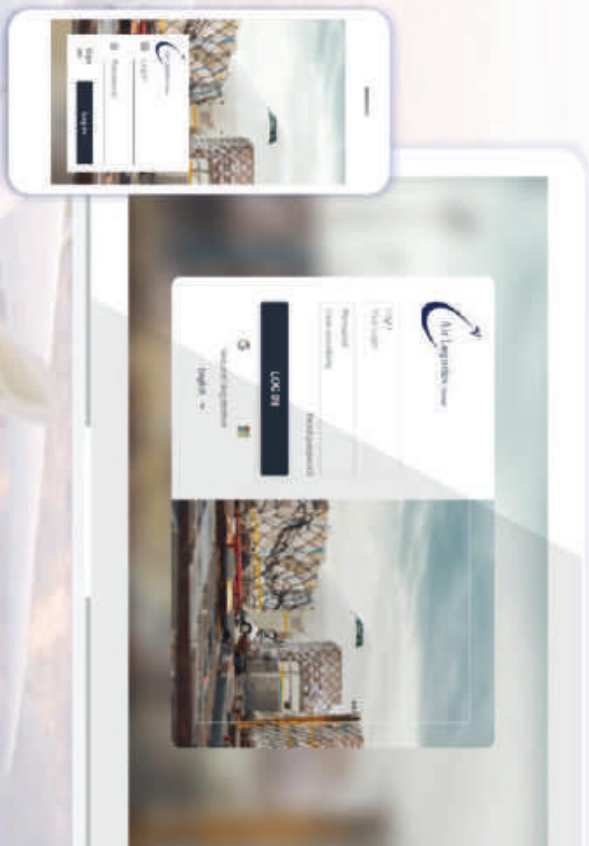
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## Jazeera Airways first flight arrives from Kuwait

Jazeera Airways' first flight arrived at Islamabad International Airport (IIAP) from Kuwait on Wednesday 12 July, commencing a new chapter in the airline's operations.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority said the Kuwaiti airline's flight J9-511 had 163 passengers onboard when it landed at IIAP around 4.3

Jazeera Airways will operate two weekly flights — one on Wednesday and the other on Saturday.

The arrival of Jazeera Airways flight in Pakistan is expected to enhance travel options for passengers seeking affordable and efficient air travel between the two nations.

Jazeera Airways is a Kuwaiti low-cost airline with its head office on the grounds of Kuwait International Airport in the Al Farwaniyah governorate.

It operates scheduled services in the Middle East, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Europe. Its main base is Kuwait International.

## Oman CAA security team visits Pakistan

A delegation of the Oman Civil Aviation Authority arrived in Pakistan on 17 July on a four-day visit to review security measures in place at airports.

On arrival at the Lahore Airport, the Omani delegation was welcomed by the airport manager and security directorate officers. A spokesman for the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority said that the delegation, led by Ayub Hilal Al-Frai, was briefed about security measures related to passengers and goods at Allama Iqbal International Airport.

The Omani CAA delegation will also visit Islamabad International Airport after the Lahore airport visit. During the visit to the Lahore Airport, the Omani team was informed about security related to the airport, aircraft and cargo, the spokesman said.

He said that the purpose of the visit was to review the security provided to direct flights to Oman at both airports. The Omani delegation inspected airlines, Airport Security Force, ground handlers and catering security measures at the Lahore Airport.

The spokesman said that these visits were in accordance with the International Aviation Cooperation standards laid by ICAO.

## Emirates celebrates 20 years of flights to New Zealand

The service to Auckland is the longest within the Emirates route network, clocking in at 14,000 km.

The 20th anniversary of Emirates flying to New Zealand, since the 2nd of August 2003, when the carrier inaugurated flights to Auckland. Two flights were carried out, one using a Boeing 777-300ER, which connected Auckland via Sydney, and the second service was via Melbourne using an Airbus A330.

### Two decades of service

Since the double inaugural flights, Emirates has remained dedicated to New Zealand and has grown its presence significantly. In October 2003, Emirates began operating flights to Auckland via Brisbane, and in July 2004, the airline began operating flights to its second destination within New Zealand - Christchurch, which was connected via Melbourne.

Over the two decades, Emirates has carried over 16 million passengers across 49,000 flights to Auckland and Christchurch. The carrier heavily deploys its Airbus A380 to the New Zealand market, and the aircraft type has been used to serve Auckland since 2009 and Christchurch since 2016.

Dubai to Auckland remains the longest route within the airline's route network, covering 14,000 km. Additionally, New Zealand is the only market that sees the airline deploy premium economy seats across all its services, and Emirates offers the only option to fly Trans-Tasman onboard an A380.

Divisional Vice President for Australasia at Emirates, Barry Brown, said,

"As demand continues to grow, we look forward to continuing and growing our services to New Zealand, offering those travelling to the country a chance to experience our world-class product, and delivering substantial benefits to the economy through travel connections, cargo and inbound seats."

### Heavy cargo presence

The airline's cargo division, Emirates



SkyCargo, is a critical contributor to New Zealand's local economy and has a significant operational presence in the country. Primarily, SkyCargo exports products such as meat, fruits, seafood, and medical equipment from New Zealand. Additionally, Emirates continued its cargo services to New Zealand during the COVID-19 pandemic when several other international airlines had suspended operations.

Cargo service to New Zealand remained operational during the pandemic, with Emirates operating Boeing 777-300ER flights to Auckland via, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. During the period, Emirates carried almost 17,700 tonnes of vaccines and essential medical equipment into New Zealand.

### Brown commented,

"We're immensely proud of the work we've done in New Zealand during this time, exporting the country's vast bounty of home-grown produce to the rest of the world and, critically, keeping New Zealand globally connected during the COVID-19 pandemic."

### The service today

Today, Emirates operates one daily service each to Auckland and Christchurch (via Sydney), using the Airbus A380 equipped with the carrier's premium economy seats which recently celebrated its first year in service.

Flight EK-448 is a direct flight to Auckland, which has a departure time of 10:25 from Dubai International Airport (DXB) and arrives a day later at 09:50 in Auckland Airport (AKL), with a flight time of 15 hours and 50 minutes. The return service EK-449 departs at 20:30 from AKL and, after a flight time of 17 hours and 5 minutes, lands back in DXB at 05:35 the next day.

## DHL Express to invest US\$192 million in aircraft maintenance facility at CVG Airport



**D**HL Express has announced a significant investment of US\$192 million to construct an aircraft maintenance facility at Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG). The purpose of this facility is to support the growth of its expanding fleet at its primary U.S. air hub.

The Kentucky Economic Development Finance Authority has given its approval for US\$1 million in incentives for the 305,000-ft<sup>2</sup> maintenance facility. It will encompass dedicated space for aircraft parts storage, three maintenance parking gates and eight new aircraft gates.

The new maintenance centre will be situated adjacent to DHL's existing cargo operations on 50 additional acres leased from the airport. The facility will accommodate two Boeing 777 wide-body freighters side by side. The company aims to complete the project by the end of 2025.

CVG Airport serves as the central connection point for DHL's express network to the rest of the world. With a fleet of 60 aircraft, DHL operates 130 daily flights. The facility is also crucial for partner airlines and joint venture Polar Air. Currently, the super-hub spans 194 acres, featuring 67 aircraft parking gates and 6.4 million-ft<sup>2</sup> of ramp area. Annually, it processes approximately 50 million international shipments destined for the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Latin America.

In recent years, DHL has invested over US\$250 million in hub upgrades since 2015, focusing on aircraft handling equipment, auto-sort systems and renovated interior sections. The company also operates hubs in Germany and Hong

Kong.

Currently, DHL Express conducts some of its repairs on the tarmac at CVG. However, larger tasks are outsourced to FEAM Aero, which is in the process of constructing a second maintenance hangar. This expansion initiative aims to provide sheltered line maintenance activities for DHL's fleet of Boeing 737, 767, and 777 aircraft. A combination of in-house and FEAM technicians will be responsible for maintaining the fleet.

## FBR freezes PIA's bank accounts over unpaid taxes

**T**he Federal Board of Revenue has frozen Pakistan International Airlines' bank accounts over non-payment of taxes, a PIA spokesman said on 26 July.

The airline's management was in contact with the FBR, the spokesman, Abdullah Hafeez Khan, said and hoped that the accounts would be unblocked soon.

He insisted that flight operations and other activities of PIA were continuing as usual despite the blocking of its accounts.

According to sources, PIA owed about Rs2.8 billion to the FBR in taxes. However, the airline claims its dues amount to around Rs1.3bn.

PIA officers reject restructuring

Meanwhile, the PIA officers' association has rejected the proposed restructuring of the airline and demanded an immediate increase in the salary of all employees.

In a meeting headed by its president Aqeel Siddiqui on Wednesday 26 July, the association reviewed the decisions of the PIA's board of directors and rejected the proposed restructuring of the organisation, it said in a statement.

Safdar Anjum, general secretary of the association, said the meeting had rejected the proposed splitting of the airline into two parts.

The meeting also demanded an urgent increase in PIA employees' salaries and formed a committee, headed by Mr Anjum, to contact all stakeholders to prepare a future action plan, it said.

The government has formed a committee headed by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to present a workable solution to restructure the airline.

The committee also comprised Aviation Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique, Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Government Effectiveness Jahanzeb Khan and the aviation secretary.

## CAA staff told to submit concerns in writing

**R**epresentatives of the Civil Aviation Authority employees have refused to call off their ongoing protest against the outsourcing of major airports.

Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique held a meeting with them at the Mayo Garden here on Sunday 30 July and asked them to submit their concerns in writing on Tuesday 1st August to the cabinet committee on airports outsourcing and representatives of the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the organisation giving consultancy to the government on the outsourcing plan.

During the meeting, which was also attended by the aviation ministry secretary and the director general, the minister briefed the unions' representatives on the outsourcing plan.

A CAA staff representative told media the minister had asked them to submit their concerns to the committee.

He said a committee headed by the aviation secretary had also been constituted to deal with the issue.

The CAA employees have been protesting against the aviation bill-2022 passed by the National Assembly recently, bifurcating role of the authority — one for regulating civil aviation activities in the country and the other for providing civil aviation services and developing aviation infrastructure.

The employees rejected the bill and outsourcing of the country's three major airports— Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad.

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## **Etihad Airways' second Airbus A380 begins service to London-Heathrow**



**E**tihad Airways has returned a second Airbus A380 to its active fleet, with the double-decker jet now flying to one of London's busiest airports.

The superjumbo, registered A6-API, departed for its first flight to London-Heathrow Airport (LHR) at 2:27 am local time (UTC +4) on July 27, 2023, and arrived the same day on Etihad Airways flight EY11 at 6:34 am local time (UTC +1). The aircraft is the second A380 to be returned to service by the airline since it grounded the type in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

On its return journey to Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) on flight EY12, the aircraft took off from LHR at 10:27 am local time (UTC +1), arriving at the United Arab Emirates (UAE) capital at 7:41 pm local time (UTC +4).

On August 1, 2023, Etihad Airways scheduled A6-API to fly the EY19 and EY20 itineraries, meaning that the Airbus A380 departed AUH several hours later compared to EY11 and will return to the airline's hub airport in UAE in the early hours of August 2, 2023.

Meanwhile, the carrier's other active Airbus A380, registered as A6-APG, has been operating flight EY11 from AUH to LHR and the return journey, EY12, since Etihad Airways officially resumed service with the A380 on July 25, 2023.

The only exception was July 27, 2023, when A6-APG returned to AUH on flight EY18.

Etihad Airways A380 technical problem

However, the return of the type was soured when A6-APG encountered a technical problem, temporarily removing the aircraft from active service.

After returning to AUH on July 27, 2023, on the following day, the A380 completed eight test flights that lasted no longer than 30 minutes, according to flightradar24.com data.

It was not immediately clear why the aircraft was pulled out of service and underwent several test flights before

returning to the AUH-LHR route on July 29, 2023. Notably, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), which is the state design authority, issued two recent Airworthiness Directives (AD) related to potential issues stemming from long-term storage.

In May 2023, one AD warned that certain wing spar areas of the A380 could crack faster than expected if the aircraft is stored in "severe environmental conditions". As such, EASA revised the inspection times to include Factored time on ground (FTOG).

A month later, another AD issued by EASA stated that "during a regular walk-around inspection of a stored A380 aeroplane", the left-hand body landing gear (BLG) rear axle had ruptured. The agency told airlines that before returning A380s to service they would need to replace the affected BLG rear axles "with a serviceable part"

***Etihad Airways is coming to Boston, its fourth destination in the United States***



**F**our weekly flights from Abu Dhabi to the vibrant American city starting March 31, 2024

Boston becomes the airline's fourth destination in the United States, joining Chicago, New York and Washington, along with services to Toronto in Canada.

Exciting opportunities for American travellers to explore Abu Dhabi's cultural treasures and hospitality.

Etihad Airways has announced its new destination in the United States, with four weekly flights to Boston commencing on March 31, 2024. This addition connects one of the United States' most vibrant and dynamic cities to the

ever-expanding Etihad network.

This will be Etihad's fourth US gateway, complementing services to Chicago, New York, and Washington, along with flights to Toronto in Canada.

Etihad will operate flights to Boston four times a week on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, utilizing its state-of-the-art Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner.

***Japan grounds MV-22 Osprey fleet in response to safety concerns***



*Japan Ground Self-Defense Force*

**J**apan's Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) proactively suspended flights of its MV-22 Osprey fleet following a recent US military report highlighting potential mechanical issues.

The decision to ground the Ospreys came after the release of a Marine Corps report on July 21, which investigated the cause of an Osprey crash in California in June 2022. All five US service members on board lost their lives in the incident.

The investigation revealed that the accident was a result of the pilots losing control due to an unintentional clutch disengagement, followed by a sudden, hard clutch engagement. This unexpected mechanical failure has prompted urgent action to replace relevant components before they reach a predetermined flight hour threshold.

The report recommended the replacement of specific parts to mitigate the risk of accidents, leading to the grounding of 14 tiltrotor transport aircraft at the JGSDF's Kisarazu camp in Chiba Prefecture on July 22, 2023.

Japan's Defense Ministry officials have confirmed that they will conduct a thorough assessment of safety measures and implement necessary improvements before allowing the MV-22 Ospreys to resume operations.

## Lufthansa in-flight service: more choice, more entertainment, more sustainability



Lufthansa's in-flight service is being expanded and will offer more choice, entertainment and sustainability in the future. Starting in mid-August, Business Class passengers on long-haul flights from Germany will be able to choose from a wider selection of main dishes as early as one month and up to 24 hours before departure.

A total of six different regional and seasonal menus will be available for pre-selection. This makes for a relaxed flight and at the same time helps optimize food use and further reduce waste.

As early as 1 August, Lufthansa will be offering an expanded range of hot beverages in its Onboard Delights Service on European flights. A new, sustainable reusable cup made of recyclable plastic will be used, replacing the previous disposable cup with a plastic lid. In addition to high-quality, instant coffee specialties such as latte macchiato, three tea variants and hot chocolate will also be available for purchase in the new cup going forward. The passenger airlines of the Lufthansa Group have set themselves the goal of completely eliminating single-use plastic and single-use aluminum on board by 2025.

Another new feature on board Lufthansa long-haul flights is an expanded entertainment offering for kids and teens. In the future, the airline's "e-journals" media library will offer young passengers an expanded age-appropriate reading selection in the Children's Media

Box. It includes a wide range of journals and magazines in various languages that can be downloaded free of charge. Coloring pages are also available

for the youngest passengers to help time waiting at the gate and their stay on board fly by. The new children's podcasts, which are now available free of charge in the FlyNet portal on short- and medium-haul flights, also contribute to this. The in-flight entertainment program for children has also been expanded for the summer months. More than 50 films and TV programs, as well as many audio programs, are available for young passengers on long-haul flights. Especially during the vacation season, children's TV programs and audio books can be accessed free of charge via QR codes at the Lufthansa gates and playgrounds in Terminal 2 in Munich and Terminal 1 in Frankfurt.

## Pakistan International Airlines flights to U.K. on the horizon

After three years of suspending the services, Pakistan International Airlines is expected to resume services to the U.K. in the coming three months according to Khawaja Saad Rafique, the aviation minister.

In addition, the airline is paving the way to resume flights to Europe after European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) passed PIA's remote audit. EASA's staff will go to Pakistan in September to conduct a physical audit of the airline and the country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). However, there is no sign of lifting the restrictions from the U.S. FAA thus far. PIA ceased flight operations to the U.S. in 2017.

The country's flag carrier was banned from flying to the U.K., the European Union and the U.S. since the plane crash in 2020. The deadly accident left 97 people dead. The report of the incident unveiled 262 pilots in the country had dodged the examination and 141 PIA pilots involved in the scandal.

"God willing, the PIA flights will resume at least to the U.K. in three months, and, later, flights to Europe and America will resume," Rafique said.

The resumption could be a shot in the arm as the U.K. and Europe contributed 37% of its revenue. Rafique said the carrier had been facing a loss of Rs70 billion (\$436 million) annually due to the suspension of the flights.

Meanwhile, PIA needs to keep the

current slot at London's Heathrow Airport for the future. The airport requires the airline to use at least 70% of the time. The report has revealed the airline has leased its slot to Vietnam Airlines and Kuwait Airways. As a result of the fake license incident, the airline needs to be restructured and requires billions of dollars in investment to avoid closure.

### Future of the Airline

Rafique implied that privatization could be the answer to PIA, citing that Air India had recently placed an order for acquiring 450 aircraft. PIA couldn't compete with other neighboring rivals with the current fleet of 27 or 28 operational aircraft. According to the carrier, the airline owns a fleet of 30 aircraft, operating regional services, such as Qatar, Malaysia and the Canadian city of Toronto.

The airline is facing a loss of Rs80 billion this year. Earlier this year, the cash-strapped airline's flight was blocked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport over a debt.

Meanwhile, the government is trying to outsource the operations of Islamabad International Airport by Aug.12. Islamabad is set to be the first airport to outsource in the country and is expected to be outsourced for 15 years. Afterward, Karachi and Lahore Airport will follow in Islamabad's footsteps.

The government said the navigational services and runway operations will not be outsourced. CAA will continue to provide the services.



## Cathay Pacific sending more Airbus A350s to Perth



As Cathay Pacific slowly regains lost ground it is adding extra flights between Hong Kong and Perth in Western Australia.

While most of the world's major airlines are nearing pre-pandemic capacity, there are still some others with a very long way to go to reach full recovery. Often it is airlines that don't have a domestic market to cushion the international border closures, such as Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific, which suffered the most.

### Recovery is starting from a long way back

Before Covid arrived Cathay Pacific was already suffering from one external shock that was decimating passenger numbers, which was the student riots that besieged the Hong Kong International Airport (HKG) in 2019. The reopening of travel in China earlier this year was a proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, but the once vibrant and growing airline is starting the recovery from a long way back.

A quick look at the airline's June traffic statistics illustrates the current starting point. They show that in June, Cathay Pacific (Cathay) carried 1.55 million passengers at a passenger load factor of 88%, a significant increase from the 150,000 at 67% in June last year. However, in June 2019, Cathay carried 3.1 million passengers at 87%, which highlights that it is only halfway toward full recovery.

The airline is adding or resuming routes as quickly as possible, and this month it announced additional flights between Hong Kong and Perth, the capital of Western Australia and a popular source of two-way traffic. Currently, Cathay is operating three flights per week departing Hong Kong International on Tuesday, Friday and Saturday with an Airbus A350-900.

On Saturday, flight CX171 left Hong Kong at 15:12 and, after a 6:46 hour flight, landed in Perth at 21:58. The operating aircraft was a 2021 Airbus A350-900, registration B-LQC and MSN 359, which was on the ground in Perth for two hours.

After departing Perth Airport (PER) at 23:58, it arrived at Hong Kong International at 07:23 on Sunday morning.

From December 6th, the route will operate five times weekly, with a flight from Hong Kong on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The return flight is scheduled to depart Perth at 00:10 the following day and arrive in Hong Kong at 07:40.

### An important win for Perth

Perth Airport Acting CEO Kate Holsgrove said that exports of fresh produce from Western Australia, business travelers, students, tourists and those visiting family and friends are key focus markets between Perth and Hong Kong.

She also said this is another significant step forward in WA's international aviation recovery, adding:

"Cathay Pacific has excellent connections throughout North Asia, including mainland China, South Korea and Japan as well as options through to the USA and Canada, offering West Australians access to a range of travel destinations.

"Cathay Pacific's increased services will bring an additional 58,240 seats into the Perth market. Cargo capacity on commercial air services is crucial for local exporters and the additional services also provide more than 4,500 tonnes of additional cargo capacity between Perth and Hong Kong/North Asia."

Discover more aviation news for Australia and Oceania here

The A350-900 used on the Hong Kong - Perth route is configured in a three-class layout of 280 seats, including 38 lie-flat business class seats, 28 in premium economy and 214 economy seats. Fleet data from ch-aviation.com shows that Cathay has 28 A350-900s and 18 A350-1000s which it uses on long-haul flights.

## China Airlines and Philippine Airlines adding more codeshare routes

China Airlines, the Taiwan-based carrier, has announced an expansion of its codesharing agreement with Philippine Airlines taking advantage of the strong



post-COVID travel market between Taiwan and the Philippines.

The new additions include Taipei-Cebu and Kaohsiung-Manila routes operated by China Airlines as well as connecting flights to regional Filipino destinations. The two airlines will work closely together to expand both their local and transit market in order to provide travelers with more comprehensive and convenient flying options.

China Airlines and Philippine Airlines have long operated the existing Taipei-Manila route as a codeshare flight. The new codeshare flights now being added include the Taipei-Cebu route (CI705/706) with five flights a week, the Kaohsiung-Manila route (CI711/712) with four flights a week, along with the Manila-Cebu, Manila-Davao, Manila-Iloilo, Cebu-Davao, and Cebu-Iloilo routes operated by Philippine Airlines.

By the code sharing agreement, China Airlines now offers eight routes that span all the major regional destinations in northern, central, and southern Philippines, making it the Taiwanese carrier with the most comprehensive network in the country. Travelers can now easily transit through destinations operated by China Airlines to Davao, the third largest city in the Philippines, Iloilo, and other destinations. Travelers departing from the Philippines can also take advantage of the convenience offered by Taiwan as a transit hub on their way to major European and American cities.

China Airlines' active expansion of its Southeast Asia network now covers 15 destinations including new services to Cebu, Danang, and Chiang Mai. More than 150 round-trip flights are now made each week. Additional destinations and services have also been added to the network through codesharing with other airlines, including: partnering with Garuda Indonesia on the Taipei to Singapore and Bali routes, as well as from Jakarta and Bali to Sydney and Melbourne in Australia. A codeshare with Bangkok Airways provides connecting flights from Chiang Mai to popular holiday destinations Koh Samui and Phuket. These agreements offer business, tourism, and transit travelers more flexibility on flights between Taiwan, Indonesia, and Thailand.



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## Bear escapes from cargo container during Iraqi Airways flight



Controversy over pets on flights resurfaces as a bear escapes from its crate in the cargo hold of an Iraqi Airways flight from Baghdad to Dubai.

The airline coordinated with UAE authorities to sedate and remove the bear, causing delays and disruptions, leading to the postponement of a return flight.

Iraqi Airways apologizes for the incident and attributes the delay to circumstances beyond their control, but does not disclose the purpose of the bear's journey or further details about the incident.

The controversy surrounding the carriage of animals on commercial flights has quietened down lately. Arguably, with unruly passengers and the pandemic, there are bigger fish to fry. But the disputed matter of pets traveling on commercial flights has reared its head again with news that a bear being transported on a passenger flight managed to break free from its crate within the cargo hold, causing a series of delays and disruptions on Friday 4 August.

The escape

On Friday 4 August morning, Iraqi Airways flight 123 between Baghdad International Airport (BGW) and Dubai International Airport (DXB), operated by a Boeing 737-800, had some special cargo onboard. Upon the aircraft's arrival in Dubai, it was revealed that the bear had escaped its shipping crate.

This led the Iraqi Airways flight crew to coordinate with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) authorities to sedate the bear and extract it from the aircraft with the assistance of a specialized team dispatched by the UAE authorities.

A video posted to YouTube taken by a ground crew staff circulated on social

media. In the clip, the bear can be seen roaming around the cargo hold of the Iraqi Airways 737. The bear even comes up to one of the staff members as they rub the bear's head.

In an apology posted to its Facebook page Iraqi Airways stated,

"The administration of the company apologizes to the dear travelers of the flight from Baghdad International Airport to Dubai Airport... for reasons beyond the control of the company, regarding a shipment in the cargo hold (a bear)."

Further delays

The unexpected turn of events led to the postponement of a subsequent return flight from Dubai to Baghdad. Iraqi Airways flight 124 between Dubai and Baghdad was delayed three hours and thirty minutes, departing at 17:45 and arriving at 18:50.

In an official statement published on its website, Iraqi Airways expressed regret for the situation, accrediting the delay to circumstances beyond their control.

The airlines said the bear was being transported in accordance with the international convention governing the trade of endangered species (CITES) and the International Air Transportation Agency (IATA).

With that said, the statement did not reveal the purpose of the bear's journey to the UAE, as the airline refrained from providing further details surrounding the animal's well-being or the specific circumstances surrounding the incident. The statement went on to say that the bear's escape from the container did not result in any damage or injuries.

This is not the first time the airline's reputation has taken a hit, as Iraqi Airways has a poor reputation plagued by scandals. In 2020, the Iraqi Civil Aviation Authority

(ICAA) suspended a pilot after he allowed a female model to enter the cockpit mid-flight. Then in July 2018, two Iraqi pilots fought over dinner while flying a Boeing 737 with 160 passengers on board.

## Russia signs new air service agreement with Ethiopia and Tanzania to develop African Aviation



Russia has signed new air service agreements with Ethiopia and Tanzania to develop aviation in Africa. The agreement was signed by Russia's Deputy Minister of Transport Igor Chalik and Ethiopia's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs during the second Russia-Africa summit in St. Petersburg. The two nations had an air communication agreement dated March 26, 1977, which will be terminated under the new deal. The newly signed agreement aims to establish efficient and regular air transport services between Russia and Ethiopia, to boost trade and economic development. Additionally, it includes enacting legislation regarding national carriers, recognition of airworthiness certificates, and cooperation.

## Aercap reports record gains on asset sales

AerCap has reported strong demand for aircraft assets as it reported its highest ever gain on assets sales in its second quarter results. The world's largest aircraft lessor reported a net gain on sale of assets of \$166 million in the quarter ending June 30, 2023, which relates to 52 assets sold for \$818 million. This is a significant increase when compared to the \$35 million net gain made in the same period in 2022, relating to 29 assets sold for \$386 million. AerCap sold 17 aircraft, 29 engines and 13 helicopters during the period with a margin on asset.

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## Saudia group bids farewell to the last group of pilgrims and concludes hajj season 2023

**S**AUDIA Group successfully concluded its Hajj season 2023 operations, highlighted by the high quality of services provided, operational efficiency, and adherence to flight schedules. The last flight, SV5024, departed from Prince Mohammed bin Abdulaziz International Airport in Medina on 3 August, heading to Surabaya City in the Republic of Indonesia, carrying 465 pilgrims who performed Hajj with ease and harmony. SAUDIA (Saudi Arabian Airlines) received the guests in the presence of Mr. Mohammad Baakdah, the Vice President of Ground Operations at SAUDIA, and several other airport officials.

SAUDIA group provided more than one million and 200 thousand seats during the arrival and departure stages for more than 100 scheduled destinations in addition to seasonal destinations. The flights were complemented by high-quality services to enhance pilgrims' travel experience including boarding pass issuance for the departure phase from the originating airport and arranging timely



luggage delivery for group pilgrims to streamline air-port procedures. Furthermore, SAUDIA group ensured the staff to be proficient in the pilgrims' languages to facilitate effective communication and the In-Flight Entertainment systems provided guidance on rituals in various languages spoken by the Hajj pilgrims.

Mr. Mohammed Baakdah emphasized that the success of the Hajj season 2023 operations is due to the unwavering efforts of Group's staff members in serving and accommodating the Hajj pilgrims. This remarkable achievement is also a testament to the firm commitment of our esteemed leadership

in diligently providing all essential resources to streamline the pilgrims' rituals.

It includes proper planning and flawless execution of the flights and all the ground and air services provided. Additionally, it is achieved through fruitful cooperation and coordination with all relevant stakeholders involved in serving pilgrims.

It is worth mentioning that SAUDIA Group has already started planning for Hajj Season 2024 to align with the goals of Saudi Vision 2030. The airline aims to increase the number of destinations to serve and transport more pilgrims. This will be accomplished by leveraging the fleet modernization program currently underway and investing in digital services to facilitate procedures and enhance seamless integration with the various entities involved in pilgrim services. Moreover, SAUDIA Group will continue to collaborate on joint projects with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah and the Pilgrims Experience Program to enrich the travel experience for Hajj pilgrims.

## SWISS to offer free internet chat on all its long-haul flights

**S**WISS customers will newly enjoy free use of the internet for chat services such as WhatsApp on all long-haul flights from next Wednesday 2 August 2023 onwards.

The new facility will be available in all classes of travel, throughout the flight and with no data limit. Passengers wishing to use further internet functions such as surfing, email or social media can choose from two optional additional packages which are available from CHF 25.

Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) will be providing all its long-haul flights with a new free internet service enabling the use of chat apps from next Wednesday 2 August 2023. The new facility will allow passengers in all classes of travel to send and receive free text and picture messages via their smartphone, laptop or tablet throughout their flight. The facility will offer access to all the most popular chat and messenger services such as WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger and Telegram.

SWISS travellers will also be able to use the internet aloft to surf, send and receive emails or visit social media platforms by opting for one of two



supplementary internet packages: 'Wi-Fi 4 Hours', which offers four hours of access for CHF 25, or the CHF 35 'Wi-Fi Premium', which provides such access throughout the flight. Travellers in First Class and HON Circle Members enjoy unlimited internet access throughout their time aloft.

"In offering these new wi-fi options we're taking a big step forward," says SWISS Chief Commercial Officer Tamur Goudarzi Pour. "With our new unlimited free chat facility in all our travel classes, our guests can keep in contact with their families, friends and business partners throughout their flight. Our attractive new

packages for surfing, email and social media also offer unlimited data volumes. So our customers now have even more choice in how they wish to stay in unbounded touch with the world while th

### Unlimited data volumes

All the new services – the free chat option and the supplementary Wi-Fi 4 Hours and Wi-Fi Premium packages – offer unlimited data volumes, enabling even data-heavy content to be easily consumed. Only video streaming services will be deactivated, to ensure that adequate bandwidth is simultaneously available for as many passengers as possible. Videos on social media platforms will be playable, however, and audio streaming, cloud services and VPN services will all be offered. All travellers will also be able to read the digital SWISS Magazine on their device at any time, even without activated internet access. Furthermore, passengers can already register for the 'Travel ID' and 'Miles & More' today to access the new internet service easily and directly in the future and to benefit from various advantages during their journey.

## Explained: the importance of the phonetic alphabet



always pronounced in "group form." That is, two numbers are grouped whenever possible. Flight 3447 would be pronounced as "flight thirty-four forty-seven." When the flight is three numbers, such as 713, the last two numbers are grouped: "Flight seven thirteen." Flight numbers with one or two digits are read normally in the phonetic world outside of aviation. Pilots and controllers will have fun with call signs occasionally. For instance, flight 888 might be referred to as "flight triple eight" by some parties.

Want answers to more key questions in aviation? Check out the rest of our guides here.

The phonetic alphabet and established numerical standards create a universal, intelligible method for pilots and controllers to communicate the world over. Language barriers still exist, but the standard phraseology for letters and numbers significantly aids in creating a shared understanding between the sender and the receiver of a radio message. The result is a safer and more efficient global airspace system for pilots and passengers.

The phonetic alphabet is a staple of aviation. In many ways, aviation and radiotelephony grew together during the World War eras, and radio phonetics and aviation (as well as naval operations) are inextricably linked. The phonetic alphabet is the lifeblood of controller/pilot communications, and every member of the flying community worldwide learns the phonetic alphabet in basic training. Let's talk about the importance of the phonetic alphabet (as well as numbers) to aviation.

### Origin of the phonetic alphabet

The currently used and globally-accepted phonetic alphabet traces its origins back to 1951. As the world emerged from the Second World War, military aviation gave way to civil aviation as the primary source of air traffic. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction with language barriers and the unintelligibility of the phonetics that were carry-overs from wartime. Accordingly, the newly-formed International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) proposed a new universal phonetic alphabet.

Representatives from ICAO worked with the well-known linguistics professor Jean-Paul Vinay from 1948-1949 to form the new phonetic alphabet. The project's goal was to create an alphabet with similar words in the trade languages of the time: English, French, and Spanish. The words used needed to also be "live" in each of the respective languages. ICAO, and the many countries that abide by its standardization, first adopted the Vinay solution in 1951. A few changes were made to the letters C, M, N, U, and X, and by 1956 the alphabet was formed into what is still in use today.

### Numbers

The phonetic alphabet isn't the industry's only linguistic specialty. Some numbers are also pronounced in a way that delineates them from similar-sounding

words. Specifically, three, five, and nine and pronounced "tree," "fife," and "niner." Other numbers are pronounced commonly, but many pilots and controllers (in the US, at least) don't bother with these three special pronunciations because radios transmit more clearly than they did decades ago when the pronunciations were introduced for the sake of clarity.

Flight numbers read over the radio are



<b>A</b> lpha	<b>H</b> otel	<b>O</b> scar	
<b>B</b> ravo	<b>I</b> ndia	<b>P</b> apa	<b>V</b> ictor
<b>C</b> harlie	<b>J</b> uliet	<b>Q</b> uebec	<b>W</b> hiskey
<b>D</b> elta	<b>K</b> ilo	<b>R</b> omeo	<b>X</b> ray
<b>E</b> cho	<b>L</b> ima	<b>S</b> ierra	<b>Y</b> ankee
<b>F</b> oxtrot	<b>M</b> ike	<b>T</b> ango	<b>Z</b> ulu
<b>G</b> olf	<b>N</b> ovember	<b>U</b> niform	



## Everything to know about the Airbus A330 MRTT

An in-depth look at Airbus' militarized A330-200, in-use with militaries all over the world.

The Airbus A330 MRTT is a military aircraft based on a commercial A330-200 platform and has been in service since 2011 with multiple customers worldwide.

The aircraft goes through a specialized conversion process at Airbus' military aircraft facility in Getafe, Spain, where it is equipped with hardware and systems for air-to-air refueling and airlift capabilities.

The A330 MRTT's versatility allows it to be configured for various missions, such as troop transport, medical evacuations, and VIP government transportation. It can also carry up to 111 tonnes of fuel for aerial refueling.

Like the Boeing Poseidon P-8 and KC-46 Pegasus, the Airbus A330 MRTT is a military aircraft based on a commercial aircraft platform. But, unlike these Boeing models, the A330 MRTT's name clearly shows which aircraft family it is based on. This widebody multi-role tanker transport (MRTT) has been in service since 2011 and now officially operates with the militaries of eight countries, as well as NATO's "multinational MRTT fleet." This article will be a deep dive into this militarized Airbus widebody, examining its history, technical specifications, capabilities, and its customers around the world.

### A330 MRTT history

It was back in 2011 that Airbus' military division delivered the very first A330 MRTT to the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). The delivery resulted from an extensive development and test program to produce the world's first certified and flying new-generation tanker/transport aircraft.

Years of hard work preceded the aircraft's entry into service. As noted by FlightGlobal, the program kicked off in 2004 with a contract to convert the RAAF's five A330s into MRTTs. More specifically, the contract was signed on December 20th, 2004, between the government of Australia and Airbus Defence predecessor EADS-CASA. EADS stands for European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company, while Casa stands for Construcciones Aeronáuticas SA. The companies would eventually be regrouped to form Airbus Defence.

Aviation Week notes that the first A330 MRTT, intended for Australia, rolled out of the EADS-CASA facilities in Getafe, Spain, in June 2007. The remaining four aircraft that were part of the initial order were then modified to become MRTTs in Brisbane, Australia, with work conducted by Qantas Defense Services.

The Australians expected to take delivery of the first aircraft in 2008. However, this was pushed back to 2011 due to delays resulting from Australian airworthiness requirements.

Get all the latest aviation news right here on Simple Flying.

### Two 'origins': Purpose-built or converted

With all of this history, it's important to note that each and every Airbus A330 MRTT starts off as a regular Airbus A330-200 before undergoing a specialized conversion process.

As noted by Airbus, the aircraft are produced on the company's commercial airplane final assembly line in Toulouse,

For example, the Spanish Ministry of Defence acquired three Iberia Airbus A330s for conversion to MRTTs. On the other side of the Atlantic, the Brazilian Air Force acquired two ex-Azul Airlines jets for conversion, while the Royal Canadian Air Force has opted to convert two ex-Kuwait Airways A330s.

### Specifications and abilities

Knowing that the A330-200 is the foundation of every A330 MRTT, it's safe to assume that many of its dimensions will be identical to its commercial cousin. This would obviously include the airframe's overall length of 58.82 meters (193 feet) and its wingspan of 60.30 meters (197 feet 10 inches.) However, as noted in the "multi-role tanker transport" name, the MRTT's list of capabilities is undoubtedly much more diverse than a passenger A330-200.

Airbus states that the aircraft can carry a maximum payload of up to 45 tonnes (99,000 lbs). Depending on the seating configuration, this could see up to 300



France. Once their initial build-up is complete, they are flown to Airbus' military aircraft facility in Getafe. At this Spanish facility, A330s are equipped with hardware and systems for their dual roles as air-to-air refueling platforms and airlifters for troops and cargo.

This process means that military customers are even able to secure old passenger airframes from civilian operators to convert into MRTT aircraft.

passengers. However, in a MedEvac cabin layout, this could be different. Airbus offers the example of 40 stretchers, 20 seats for medical staff, and seating for 100 passengers; This would be combined with up to 37 tonnes of cargo in the lower deck.

For an aircraft configured to be full MedEvac, the manufacturer states that the jet can accommodate up to 130 NATO stretchers.

The aircraft's versatility ultimately

means that its configurations will differ wildly between customers and even between different missions. While one MRTT might be mainly focused on transporting troops for deployments, another might be configured for medical evacuations. Others might be set up to be VIP government transports - such as the UK's RAF Voyager "Vespina."

As the Royal Air Force notes, Vespina provides transport for Government Ministers and the Royal Family. Alongside its VIP Role, the aircraft remains certified for its quote-unquote "original use." This includes Air-to-Air Refuelling and personnel transport.

The A330 MRTT's air-to-air refueling capability makes it a crucial part of air force operations that deploy fighters and other military aircraft. Airbus states that one A330 MRTT can support the deployment of four fighter aircraft plus 50 personnel and 12 tonnes of freight (such as luggage, spare parts, and equipment). In this configuration, it would have a range of 5,200 km (3,231 miles),

#### **Aerial refueling versatility**

As a tanker, the A330 MRTT can carry up to 111 tonnes of fuel, which Airbus says is the highest capacity of all tanker aircraft, even when compared to those with additional fuel tanks in the cargo deck.

Operating with different militaries and their respective fighter aircraft, the A330 MRTT can be fitted with different aerial refueling systems. These include: Fuselage Refuelling Unit (FRU)

#### **Under-wing pods**

Or An Aerial Refuelling Boom System (ARBS)

Aircraft such as the A400M or C295 can be refuelled with the A330 MRTT's FRU, while under-wing pods can be used to refuel any NATO or allied probe-equipped receivers such as the Eurofighter, the Tornado, the Jaguar, or the F/A18 Hornet. Finally, the ARBS can be used to refuel aircraft such as the F-16 Fighting Falcon, F-35A Lightning II, or even another A330 MRTT fitted with the proper receptacle.

#### **Orders and deliveries**

Well, Airbus data accurate as of the end of May 31st, 2023, states that 68 A330 MRTTs have been ordered, with 57 now delivered and in operation.

Going by official Airbus data, here are the countries and the number of aircraft ordered at the time of this article's publication:

Australia: 7  
France: 13  
Saudi Arabia: 6

Singapore: 6  
South Korea: 4  
Spain: 3  
United Kingdom: 14  
United Arab Emirates: 5  
NATO - MMF: 10

There are two notes for this list. Firstly, the Western military alliance known as NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has its own fleet of MRTTs as part of its MMF. MMF stands for "multinational MRTT fleet."

As such, while these aircraft may be operated by personnel from specific NATO countries, the aircraft are not attached to a particular country. As noted by the alliance, six NATO Allies pooled their resources to make this initiative possible: Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Norway.

The other thing to highlight is that Canada and Brazil have also acquired aircraft to be converted into A330 MRTTs. However, these jets are mysteriously absent from Airbus Defence's orders and delivery data.

While one explanation could have been that conversions of former passenger aircraft aren't counted, this reasoning fails when we consider the fact that Spain's three ex-Iberia A330s are included in this list. Indeed, Australia's A330 MRTT fleet also includes ex-Qantas A330-200s.

We contacted Airbus Defence about the posted numbers, but the company insists that its data is accurate.

The United States is not a customer

While the A330 MRTT has been chosen by many NATO members and allies of the United States, it shouldn't be surprising that the US military would opt for a homegrown solution instead of this European offering.

This comes in the form of the Boeing KC-46 Pegasus, which, like the A330 MRTT, is a multi-role widebody aircraft capable of transportation and aerial refueling. And, like the A330 MRTT, the aircraft is based on a commercial transport platform, which in this case, is the 767-200.

While the Boeing jet may have fewer customers, the US Air Force's sheer size and operational demands mean that order numbers are well ahead of the A330 MRTT. Three countries (the US, Japan, and Israel) have orders for more than 130 KC-46 Pegasus airframes.

So what do you think of the Airbus A330 MRTT? Have you ever seen one for yourself? Share your experiences by leaving a comment!

## **New British envoy to Pakistan arrives in Islamabad**



The new British high commissioner-designate to Pakistan, Jane Marriott, arrived in the capital on Sunday 30 July to take up her new posting.

In her arrival statement, Ms Marriott pledged to ensure the bilateral relationship between the two countries was green and sustainable. She said she would work hard to expand ties between the United Kingdom (UK) and Pakistan.

"Our friendship stems from our shared history and values, deep people-to-people ties, growing trade links and a renewed development partnership," Jane Marriott said, adding that she was delighted to be in Pakistan, a country that deeply mattered to, and had a longstanding relationship with the UK.

With over 1.6 million people of Pakistani heritage in the United Kingdom making up every part of British society, "we have special and ever-growing special bond", she said.

A British High Commission press release said on Sunday 30 July that Jane Marriott arrived at an important time for UK-Pakistan relations, with a significant uplift in the United Kingdom aid spend in Pakistan focused on strengthening climate resilience and reducing humanitarian risks.

Last month, the UK also launched the new Developing Countries Trading Scheme, which will help Pakistan to boost exports by reducing tariffs and simplifying trade terms.

Jane Marriott joined the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in 2001.

She was previously posted as British high commissioner to Kenya from September 2019 to June 2023, and has served as British ambassador to Yemen.

She has also been posted to the US, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan and headed the UK's Joint International Counter Terrorism Unit.



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## “Chalo Dubai” چلو دبی Professor Safdar Sandal

**B**ack in 1979, a famous Punjabi film produced in Pakistan had the name 'Dubai Chalo' with Ali Ejaz as desirous young man like every youth in Pakistan to go to Dubai for finding 'Qaroon 'skhazana' through manual -work jobs, still attractive for them. The desire however scarcely materialized for all aspirants. But the dialogue of the film 'Dubai Chalo' (let us go to Dubai) became more famous than being materialized. The popular among the joyful people of Pakistan, especially its youth seeking a lucky career by going to Dubai, mattered more. Punjabi films were renowned for their humour and enjoyment, (until the arrival of 'killer-hero', Sultan Rahi when the charm of going to the cinema for the elite class got



that through a common friend an acquaintance was developed by me too with a visitor. It was all that interesting in those times.

During my annual trips of Europe in later years for my export business, and in

two nights intervened which was supposed to be paid by the onward carrying Airline which also included breakfast, meals and sometimes a light entertainment too). Connecting airlines, whose ticket I used to purchase were mostly KLM, Lufthansa, Air France, Alitalia and of course Emirates and Gulf Airlines, besides some others.. This facility came across when returning from Europe or USA too. It happened several times in my travelling life to have a free sojourn. What happened then that we ourselves made this opportunity unavailable to us, because we created an Airport in Sialkot with the result that connecting flights were frequently available because of daily flights from our SIAL airport, without having to stay for one or two days in Dubai. The opportunity



**Dubai**

diminished). I remember a great many people from Indian Punjab also used to come to Lahore to view these full of humour Punjabi films; the immigrant rules were not so stringent, yet. It happened also

my air-ticket had been granted the opportunity to stay in Dubai for one night or two, depending on the availability of the desired next available connecting flight to my destination (a period of one or



**Iqbal talking of the youth**

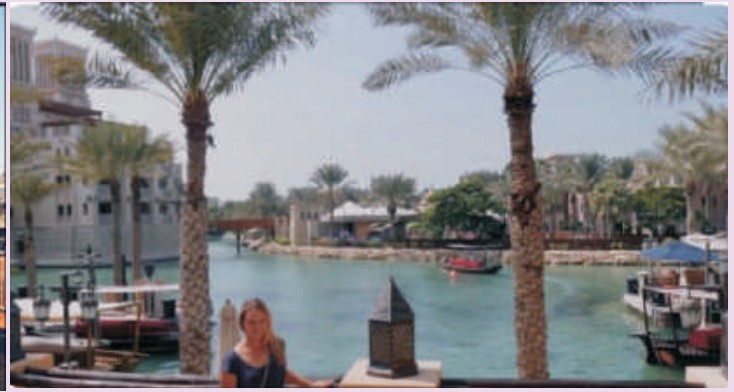
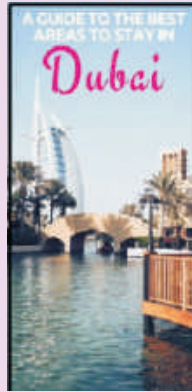
was lost and the charm of free stays disappeared or minimized. The exporter travellers of Sialkot know what I mean. But here definitely, I write so without any rancour because to have an airport in my



**Venezia in Dubai.**

city was above anything else. I myself am one of the builders (Directors) of 'Sialkot International Airport' and I feel proud of it. Rather I had a better reason to say that it is one of the best works I ever did in my life not only for myself, my posterity but for my country too. The same vision and opinion is held by of all the esteemed Directors of the company 'SIAL'.

The businessmen, mainly exporters of Sialkot built this Airport on self-help basis (a maiden attempt because in Pakistan or in the known world, there is no other example of this 'laissez fair' spirit among people to make an international airport with their own hard-earned money, invested in a 'Utopian' way, an activity which is normally to be performed by the State only and above every thing that this novel investment will pay off or not, without being sure that it will be successful or will operate or not? This 'Big Question' awed many people among the investors and more so among other

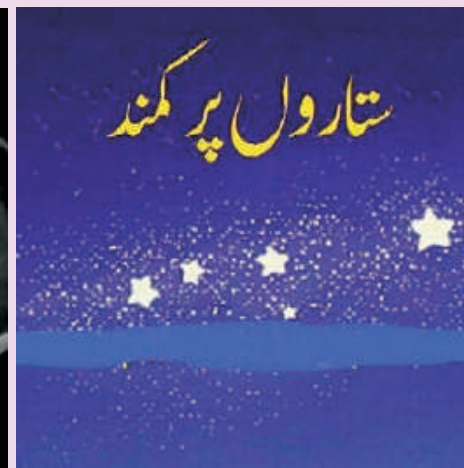
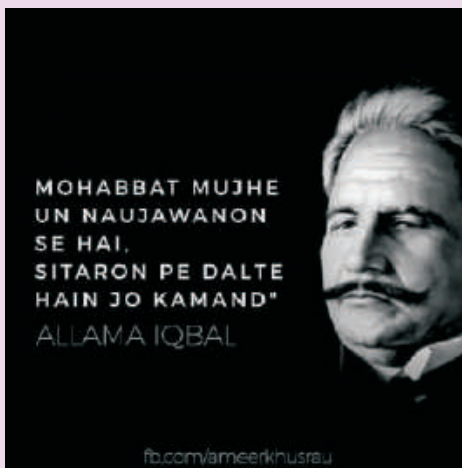


less than a yeoman's job and it has remained so, until this writing and will bring forth more vistas of development in future. The airport is definitely returning much in the economic sector and is a remarkable service to the emolument's social sector. At the same time, I feel much pained when people departing or arriving at our airport (a majority of them is of working class) narrate stories of

airport although responsible people for this 'mean behavior' are not employees of SIAL but are representing respectable posts of the government, till to the last cadre, the loaders. It is a pitiful situation for Directors and the airport staff itself and needs to be corrected for the welfare of all hard working passengers who return home; what to talk of giving a welcome and good service upon to them. It is a wishful desire for all directors and the management staff.

At present from Sialkot airport, we are serving several daily direct flights to Dubai and back. It has thus become country's busiest airport for this sector because it suits the vast majority of travellers coming from adjoining districts, Tehsils and remote villages of Gujrat, Lalamusa, Kharian, Jhelum, Dina, Pindi Bhatian, Pasrur, Norowal and Gujranwala in Punjab and Mirpur district in Azad Kashmir. Many other names of places which may be missing here may kindly be included, as a courtesy to the scribe.

Now the exhorting point of the story is : that 'Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism' (DET) of UAE government has thrilled the blog by unveiling its latest campaign, titled "Chalo Dubai", (as against 'Dubai Chalo' anticipated by the 1979 Pakistani film). 'DET' is meant for Pakistani travellers in particular. For the first time, the campaign exclusively targets this market by featuring actors



commentators or non-investors. In the words of Allama Iqbal, we did put a 'kamand on stars'. There can be no other better example or an 'ideological simile' for this effort of ours, performed by no one else, but by the people of Allama Iqbal's own city Sialkot. What a greater galaxy of tribute can we pay to Iqbal; the renowned 'Poet Philosopher' of the world, who did a great favour to us for being born, brought up in our city and graduated from 'Murray College' Sialkot. It is criminal on the part of people or Google who term him as 'Iqbal Lahori'. Whereas, he is 'Iqbal Sialkoti'. The people of Sialkot feel insulted and injured over this intentionally-maneuvered wrong reportage, depicting a selfish trait of character or a debauching journalism.

The Sialkot airport soon got operative with nearly a daily direct flight to and from Dubai. For the people of Sialkot, it was no

misbehavior meted out to them by the staff of Governmental Departments, employees of the airport till to the loaders who all harass the in-coming and out-going passengers by adopting means for exhorting money from them and to loot them with one or another excuse. This ordeal is also a source of disrepute for the





speaking in Urdu and welcoming Pakistani families to come to Dubai, as part of their 'tourism campaign'. Dubai is definitely the ultimately-superior and attractive family vacation destination, offering world-class accommodations, attractions of sightseeing and a variety of indoor and outdoor activities, fit for families to enjoy. The campaign-videos showcase the city's unique experiences and highlight its affordability and family-friendly environment, making it an ideal holiday destination for Pakistani visitors, especially those with jubilant kids. The theme of the film 'Dubai Chalo' has been fulfilled, albeit 25 years later, in the form of Dubai Government's own fresh initiative and invitation. What a classical form of development it is!!

The excursion is called 'Kids Go Free' initiative that allows families to explore Dubai's diverse attractions, including classic landmarks such as 'Dubai Fountain', 'Al-Burj Khalifa' and LEGOLAND Dubai Park, where there are numerous places which are located at Dubai Parks and Resorts, as well as newer

experiences like the 'Museum of the Future', AYA Universe, and the 'Sky Views Observatory'. Moreover, children can take advantage of 'Complimentary Stays' by dining at a range of beach properties, city hotels such as 'Atlantis', 'The Palm', 'Address Sky View' and 'Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel' and 'Towers' among many others attractions. Dubai offers excellent value-added options for families, making it an ideal choice for a fresh and exciting vacation destinations, found nowhere else or probably at 'Disney Land'..

Talking about the campaign, Bader Ali Habib, Head of South Asia, Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism, said : "Through this campaign, the first to be run in Urdu specifically to target the Pakistani market, we want to showcase Dubai as the ultimate family vacation destination. Our 'Kids Go Free' initiative helps families to explore and experience Dubai's unparalleled offerings, making it more accessible and affordable than ever before. With growing demand for family-friendly experiences among Pakistani travellers, we aim to highlight Dubai's full range of attractions and activities for

families, catering to a diverse range of preferences. We are confident that Dubai will exceed their expectations and provide them with unforgettable memories".

Dubai has been crowned as the No.1 global destination in the 'Trip-advisor Traveller's Choice Award 2023' for a second successive year, offering a wide range of world-class attractions that ensure a leisurely and safe experience for the entire family in the city. If you're travelling on a budget, you can now enjoy an unforgettable family gateway for less, as 'Dubai Economy And Tourism' announces their incredible 'Kids Go Free' deals across the destination's top hotels, most eye-catching hotspots and attractions. It can be the best family resort in the world.

World Airlines will fly 4.35 billion passengers this year, close to the 2019 record, as the industry bounces back from the Covid- pandemic, an industry group said. The sector will also be back in the green. Equally the 'Sialkot International Airport' (or its handling company 'SIAL') have also foreseen this as an increasing business avenue.



## Murad launches Story of Indus Civilisation



CM Murad Ali Shah, along with Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab, Culture Minister Sardar Shah, Special Assistant Tariq Hasan and Secretary Aleem Lashari, launches the book on Wednesday 12 July.

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## Pakistan, China to speed up ML-1, SEZs implementation

**P**akistan and China have agreed to fast-track work on the implementation of main line (ML-1) railway project and special economic zones (SEZs).

An agreement in this regard was reached between Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal and National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) Chairman Zheng Shanjie during a meeting held in Beijing on Tuesday 11 July, according to a press release.

The planning minister is on a four-day official visit to China to commemorate 10 years of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). During his visit, the minister co-chaired a special Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting with the NDRC vice chairman, besides holding several meetings with key Chinese officials.

During a one-on-one meeting with the NDRC chairman, the minister conveyed felicitations of Prime Minister



*Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal co-chairs a special Joint Cooperation Committee meeting alongside Cong Liang, vice chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission, on Tuesday 11 July.*

Shehbaz Sharif to Mr Shanjie on assuming his new role and assured him of full support in smooth implementation of CPEC projects.

The NDRC chairman offered to share Chinese expertise and knowledge to enhance Pakistan's export earnings and accelerate SEZs development.

Chinese official offers expertise to enhance Pakistan's export earnings

Both sides decided to hold regular meetings of joint working groups (JWGs) to review ongoing cooperation under the CPEC framework and work closely for the next phase which is much wider in scope and focuses more on industrialisation, agriculture, science and technology and socio-economic development.

PM Shehbaz has already reiterated his full commitment to complete the CPEC projects and in this regard he visited China when he took charge as the prime minister.

Recalling the launch of CPEC a decade ago, the planning minister noted that the development of the corridor had been a remarkable journey. He remarked that since 2013, the relevant institutions from the two sides worked as one team and successfully implemented key energy and physical infrastructure projects, laying a strong foundation for the next phase of CPEC.

The NDRC chairman remarked that China and Pakistan were good friends and partners, adding that despite the vicissitudes of global politics, the two countries have always stood together and extended complete support to each other.

He also appreciated the key role played by Ahsan Iqbal in the development of CPEC. Out of 12 JCC meetings, nine have been co-chaired by Mr Iqbal.

These countries are giving quite a tough time to local exporters.

In case exporters could not tap new markets like Iran, Afghanistan, Malaysia, Egypt and Jordan then exports are unlikely to record any major boost in FY24, he feared.

He said high food inflation has hit the buying power of people and meat consumption is going down. "I observed that the number of animals slaughtered this year during Eidul Azha is lower than last year due to squeezing purchasing power of people," he added.

Contrary to this, the Economic Survey FY23 says that cattle, buffalo and goat production soared to 55.5 million, 45m and 84.7m during FY23 from 51.5m, 42.4m and 80.3m in FY21. Beef and mutton production rose to 2,544,000 tonnes and 799,000 tonnes in FY23 from 2,380,000 and 765,000 tonnes in FY21.



*Migrants sleep on the sidewalk as they wait for their turn to be housed in the Roosevelt Hotel, recently, the building, previously a property of Pakistan International Airlines, has been turned into a migrant reception centre after the Pakistan government leased it out to the New York City administration for three years against \$220m.*

## Record meat exports fetch \$427m in a year

**D**espite surging domestic prices, the country exported record 100,194 tonnes of meat and meat preparations in FY23 exceeding the previous peak of 95,648 tonnes recorded in FY21.

As per data issued by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the country earned foreign exchange of \$427 million in FY23 versus \$331m in FY21. The exporters fetched an average per tonne price (APT) of \$4,258 as compared to \$3,467 in FY21. The exports rose 30pc in quantity and 25pc in value when compared with 76,868 tonnes (\$341m) in FY22 at an APT of \$4,436.

Meat dealers continued to blame higher exports as one of the main reasons for pushing up domestic prices.

As per data from the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), beef with bone (average quality) price is now tagged at Rs600-1,050 per kg against Rs400-700 per kg during June 2021. The national average price of mutton (average quality) swelled to Rs1,400-2,000 per kg from Rs810-1,350 in June 2021.

In the last 12 years, meat-related exports remained in the range of 56,000-85,000 tonnes.

"Linking increase in local meat prices to exports is a misconception created by the market retailers as 100,000 tonnes of exports is just a consumption of 10 days in



*Meat dealers say surging prices amid unprecedented inflation have impacted sales.*

Pakistan," CEO PK Livestock, Saqib Butt told.

The meat exports have reached a saturation point rather than showing any significant jump in the last two years, he said, adding that they can rise manifold if we target Iran and Afghanistan through legal channels.

He said new markets like Egypt have emerged in the last one to two months while exporters are also exploring Jordan and Malaysia.

Mr Butt said Pakistani exporters struggling to compete with African countries as they offer competitive prices for shipments to the Middle East.

He said countries like Somalia, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya have set up slaughterhouses in the Middle East where Pakistan exports 98pc of meat and meat preparations out of its total shipments.



## UAE firm to take over KPT's cargo terminal too

After the transfer of container terminal, the government has decided in principle to hand over the bulk and general cargo terminal at Karachi Port's East Wharf to Abu Dhabi Ports through a government-to-government deal under the Inter-Governmental Commercial Transaction Act, 2022.

To implement the decision, the cabinet committee on inter-governmental commercial transactions (CCoIGCT), led by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, on Wednesday 19 July allowed negotiations on a framework agreement with the UAE and constituted a committee, comprising the secretaries of law and maritime affairs, as well as representatives of the foreign affairs and finance ministries, to finalise a draft framework agreement with the government of UAE.

The CCoIGCT meeting was attended, among others, by Minister for Maritime Affairs Faisal Ali Subzwari, Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar, Power Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik, SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa and SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha briefed the meeting that Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) had forwarded a draft Framework Agreement and Expression of Interest (EOI) to be signed between the AD Port, Government of the United Arab Emirates and Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the 'Development of Bulk and General Cargo Terminal and developing associated infrastructure at East Wharf Karachi Port.

The draft framework agreement, received from MoFA, was sent to KPT for scrutiny. The KPT board recommended to the MOMA to take up the matter further in

accordance with prevailing laws. Simultaneously, the draft framework agreement was also shared with MoFA and the Law Division.

The law ministry did not raise any objection and stated that the maritime affairs ministry should take a decision on administrative aspects.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs "granted NOC from a political point of view".

The meeting was informed that in terms of Section 3 of the Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions Act, "the federal government may enter into an agreement with any state for the purposes" of commercial transactions. These include broad parameters and mechanism for execution of intended commercial transaction.

Under the same act, the cabinet committee had constituted the CCoIGCT and empowered it to authorise negotiations for concluding an agreement with any country, constitute committees and recommend approval of the agreement to the cabinet.

The cabinet committee constituted the CCoIGCT to discuss a framework agreement and commercial terms with the UAE and the AD Ports.

The KPT has already handed over the control of container terminal (berths 6 to 9 at East Wharf) to AD Ports of UAE for 50 years after negotiations for an upfront \$50 million price for existing fixed infrastructure and a \$102m investment in five years for infrastructure development, \$18m royalty and an annual rent of Rs1,100 per square metre — just Rs7 higher than for previous operators of container terminal — without any independent assessment.

## FDI shrinks by a quarter to \$1.46bn

The net foreign direct investment (FDI) dropped 25 per cent to \$1.46 billion in the previous fiscal year, the State Bank reported on Tuesday 18 July, indicating a poor investment environment in the country.

FDI in June more than halved to \$114 million from \$271m in the same month a year ago.

The country, already ignored by foreign investors for the last several years, remained under the grip of intense political and economic uncertainties during the entire fiscal year that ended this June. Successive governments have failed to attract investors despite potential.

The State Bank held back profits of foreign companies operating or sharing in the business in Pakistan. The profits were held back due to poor reserves of the State Bank, but it damaged the country's investment environment.

The data showed that the direct investment inflows also more than halved to \$141.4m in June from \$293.4m in June 2022. Outflows for the month increased to \$27.1m from \$22.3m last year.

Inflows for the entire fiscal year dropped 21pc to \$2.13bn, whereas outflows shrank 11pc to \$675.6m.

The largest investor in Pakistan was China, with \$432m in 2022-23 but was less than \$596m in the previous year. China has been the biggest investor for last many years and the largest trade partner of the country.

Japan was the second biggest investor with \$183m compared to a net outflow of \$10.8m last year. Other investments included \$180m from the United Arab Emirates, \$134m from Switzerland, and \$101m from Hong Kong. Australia noted a net outflow of \$242m in the previous fiscal year.

The FDI was not as significant as remittances and exports but a key segment for the foreign inflows.

The fall in remittances and exports collectively incurred a loss of \$8.4bn to the country.



Last month, Abu Dhabi Ports took over control of KPT's container terminal (berths 6 to 9) for 50 years in lieu of \$50 million upfront and \$102m investment in five years for infrastructure development.

## PM urges Balochistan to 'look after' foreign investors

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday 27 July said that the huge mineral and natural resources of Balochistan belong to its people, but stressed that locals must support and take care of foreign investors who were striving for the betterment of the province.

"Balochistan is rich in huge minerals and other natural resources that need to be explored, and the fruits of the area's development should be given to the local people," the prime minister said, adding that the first right on the resources of the province belongs to the local people.

He emphasised that locals must enjoy all the basic facilities in all sectors, including health and education.

While referring to foreign investment and investors, he asked the people to take care of the friends who were making efforts for the betterment of the people of Gwadar. "If we work against them, what will they think about us?" PM Sharif said, directing the relevant authorities to prioritise the security of foreigners.

The prime minister reiterated the government's resolve to develop the Gwadar sea port as one of the best in the world and added that the fate of the people of Balochistan, especially of Gwadar, would be changed through the ongoing development operation across the province.

Speaking at a ceremony to distribute laptops and cheques in Gwadar, the prime minister said that the Chinese were working on various development projects, which were almost abandoned during the era of previous government, which not only halted work on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects but also led to strained relations with friendly countries due to its uncooperative approach and attitude.

However, he said that the coalition government, through hard work, has restored good relations with our friendly countries.

Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir also attended the ceremony, along with other ministers and senior officials.

The prime minister announced that the laptop quota for Balochistan has now been increased to 14 per cent against the province's six per cent population share. He also directed the relevant authorities to further increase the laptop quota to 18 per cent for the next fiscal year.

PM Shehbaz said that the development of Balochistan at par with other provinces was inevitable, which faced 'criminal negligence' during the previous government.



*A Chinese official presents a model aircraft to PM Shehbaz Sharif to mark the completion of airside infrastructure at the Gwadar International Airport, on Thursday 27 July.*

He added that the Gwadar deep sea port would be fully functional by February or March of next year as the dredging of the port channel is under way, and once it's completed, large ships would be able to anchor at Gwadar, which ranks among the world's deepest ports.

The premier said that after being elected the prime minister for the third time in 2013, Nawaz Sharif planned and launched multiple projects in power, infrastructure, and other sectors in Gwadar.

However, PM Shehbaz lamented that when he visited as prime minister last year, he was shocked to note that the previous government had abandoned work on all ongoing projects in the city.

He said that despite 15 months of challenging times, the coalition government managed to lay the foundation of development and prosperity in the country, especially in Balochistan.

He said the draft of the Gwadar port was one of the deepest among the world's top ports; however, dredging of the port, which is a continuous process to prevent accumulating silt, was not ensured by the previous government.

Now the current government has initiated the dredging process, which will be completed by February next year, he informed.

He said that in the five years from 2017 to 2022, only 100,000 tonnes of goods could arrive here, while goods of over 600,000 tonnes arrived at the Gwadar Port during the 15 months of the incumbent government.

During his visit to Gwadar, the prime minister inaugurated multiple development projects, which he said were conceived during Nawaz Sharif's tenure

but were put on the backburner.

He told the newsmen that he had inaugurated a clean drinking water project, also launched by Nawaz Sharif in 2015 but faced an unnecessary delay since then.



*The PM Secretariat has been illuminated in the colours of Pakistani and Chinese flags in Islamabad on Friday 28 July. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project under the Belt and Road Initiative.*



*The super moon rises over the Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque, on Wednesday 2 August.*

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## CPEC moves into second phase

China and Pakistan decided to accelerate the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, hailing the progress on development initiatives in the decade since the project's launch in 2013.

In a special ceremony held to commemorate 10 years of CPEC on Monday 31 July, six new documents were signed for joint cooperation. The celebrations, however, were kept simple out of respect for the victims of the Bajaur terrorist attack.

Earlier in the day, Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng, who is on an official visit to attend the celebrations as a special representative of President Xi Jinping, was conferred with the Hilal-i-Pakistan award. He also met President Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

In the ceremony held at the Prime Minister House, officials from both countries signed an agreement on the Joint Cooperation Committee on CPEC, an MoU on establishing an export exchange mechanism within the framework of CPEC, a protocol of phytosanitary requirements for the export of dry chillies from Pakistan to China and a document on the final report on the feasibility study of the Karakoram Highway Phase-II realignment.

PM Shehbaz and Chinese Vice-Premier Lifeng witnessed the signing ceremony.

An MoU on the industrial workers exchange programme as well as minutes of the 21st conference of the ML-1 project's technical committee were also signed.

In his remarks at the ceremony, the prime minister recalled that 10 years ago, CPEC was started after then prime minister Nawaz and President Xi Jinping signed the agreements and its implementation started swiftly.

"We can claim that under CPEC, over \$25 billion were invested in power, road, hydel and public transport. Now we are entering the second phase," said Mr Sharif.

"Today, we signed certain important documents which will further enhance cooperation and undertake the second phase of CPEC under a new model."

The second phase would include B2B investment in agriculture and information technology to enable Pakistan to export its products according to Chinese standards and requirements.

Highlighting the importance of ML-1 — the main railway track connecting Karachi to Peshawar — and Karachi Circular Railway, the PM hoped both projects would be successfully executed



**President Dr Arif Alvi confers Hilal-i-Pakistan on Vice Premier of the State Council of China, He Lifeng, during a special investiture ceremony at the Aiwan-i-Sadr in the capital, on Monday.**

to help Pakistan "stand on its own feet through the hard work and untiring efforts of both countries".

Later, the prime minister hosted a luncheon in honour of Mr Lifeng and his delegation.

### PM meets Chinese vice premier

In their meeting before the ceremony, the prime minister and the Chinese vice premier expressed satisfaction with the steady development of CPEC projects and agreed on its centrality for Pakistan's socio-economic development, according to a PM Office statement.

The meeting discussed bilateral ties, including CPEC, as both sides expressed firm commitment to continue working together for realising the shared objectives of CPEC.

It was agreed that the 10th anniversary of CPEC was a fresh starting point to further expand the project as envisaged by the leadership of the two countries.

The two leaders exchanged views on several aspects of the bilateral relationship including CPEC and bilateral economic and financial cooperation.

The prime minister said China and Pakistan were strategic partners and trusted friends who have always stood by each other in difficult times, as evidenced by Chinese support to Pakistan in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic and the devastating floods last year.

In his remarks, Mr Lifeng conveyed President Jinping's message of China's firm support for Pakistan's prosperity and development.

Mr Lifeng underlined that the Pakistan-China friendship was unique and had withstood the test of time. He reiterated that as an iron brother and strategic partner, China would continue its economic and financial support to

Pakistan. President confers Hilal-i-Pakistan

President Alvi conferred the Hilal-i-Pakistan award upon Mr Lifeng in recognition of his contribution to the Pakistan-China friendship and the promotion of CPEC.

The award — given to Pakistanis and foreign nationals to recognise their contribution towards Pakistan's national interests — was conferred in a special investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-i-Sadr. It was attended by PM Shehbaz, services chiefs, the National Assembly speaker, the Senate chairman, federal ministers and parliamentarians.

Following the ceremony, Mr Lifeng held delegation-level talks with President Alvi.

The two leaders agreed that CPEC significantly transformed Pakistan's socio-economic and infrastructural landscape. Mr Lifeng said the project was now poised to further increase Pakistan's economic connectivity in the entire region and beyond.

President Alvi said the occasion called for enhanced Chinese investment in various sectors, particularly in the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to further strengthen bilateral economic cooperation. The president also thanked China for "its principled stance" on the India-held Kashmir and also for Beijing's financial support to Pakistan in difficult times.

### Simple celebrations

The celebrations on Monday 31 July were kept simple to mourn those who lost their lives in the terrorist attack in Bajaur on Sunday 30 July.

An official statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said a cultural show, scheduled to take place as part of the celebrations, has been cancelled on the prime minister's directions.

PM Sharif said the entire nation was in a state of mourning, hence, the cultural show should not be held, the statement added.

### Renminbi to become parallel currency

The Bank of China (BOC) also opened its second branch in Islamabad on Monday 31 July.

Addressing the opening ceremony, Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Ishaq Dar said the renminbi would soon become an internationally adopted parallel currency.

The renminbi was going to be internationalised as five countries have already formalised the currency and more countries were planning to do so, the finance minister added. He said it would become a parallel internationally acceptable currency.

## Indus Motor signs export agreement with Egypt

**A**s the automobile sector ended FY23 with a 50 per cent dip in year-on-year sales, Indus Motor Company (IMC) said it has signed an agreement with Toyota Egypt to export “high-quality products” from July.

A press release issued by the company on Tuesday 11 July did not specify the nature of the products which will be exported.

The first consignment “will mark the beginning of an era” from an export point of view by an original equipment manufacturer in Pakistan, the company said.

In a ceremony held at the company's plant at Port Qasim, IMC Chief Executive Ali Asghar Jamali said the move will bolster connectivity between Africa and Pakistan and boost trade links under the government's 'Look Africa' policy.

Sales fall to 14-year low

The automobile sector had a forgetful year in 2023 when its sales slumped by more than half compared to the preceding year.

Automobile sales fall to 14-year low

The FY23 ended on a negative note with a whopping drop of 55pc in the sales of cars, light commercial vehicles, jeeps and vans from 279,267 units in FY22 to 126,879 units.

The sales were the lowest since FY09, Arif Habib Limited (AHL) said, quoting the figures released by the Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA).

The dip was despite a 10 per cent month-on-month increase from 5,464 units in May to 6,034 in June. The number was 79pc lower than 23,379 units during the same month in 2022.

The sale of two-wheelers plummeted by 34pc to 1.16m units in FY23 from 1.78m in FY22, while trucks' sales plunged by 45pc from 5,802 to 3,182 units, followed by a six per cent drop in bus sales from 696 to 654 units.

Tractor sales came down by 48pc from 58,947 to 30,942 units while 52pc

fewer three-wheelers were sold — from 40,098 units to 19,066 units.

Pak Suzuki Motor Company Limited sold 2pc more units — 3,009 — in June 2023 as compared to 2,958 in May 2023. Year-on-year June 2023 sales showed a drop of 81pc compared to 16,009 units in 2022.

PSMCL's total sales in FY23 fell by 57pc from 150,279 units in FY22 to 65,363 units.

The sales of Indus Motor Company, the assembler of Toyota vehicles, increased by 7pc month-on-month in June 2023 — from 1,718 in May to 1,846 units in June.

A 57pc drop in sales of Honda Atlas Cars Limited was recorded in FY23 — from 39,452 units in FY22 to 16,879 units.

In June, the sales soared to 307 units compared to just 87 in May. However, in June 2023, sales were 92pc lower than in June 2022.

As Japanese car assemblers saw their sales plummet, their Korean counterparts also suffered similar dips. Hyundai Nishat suffered a year-on-year fall of 26pc from 13,132 units in FY22 to 9,688 units.

The company's month-on-month sales grew by 11pc in June 2023, from 503 to 558 units, but faced a 70pc year-on-year drop compared to the sale of 1,871 units in June 2022.

Sazgar Engineering sold 1,827 units in FY23, down from 467 units in FY22.

Top Line Securities' Sunny Kumar said the non-availability of CKDs, escalating car prices, expensive auto financing, rising interest rates and low purchasing power of consumers were the primary reasons for the decline in sales.

He said the improvement in sales during June 2023 was due to the availability of CKD parts.

He said tractor sales were also hit by floods, plant shutdowns, lower buying power and higher prices.

Mr Kumar added bus sales were down primarily due to a drop in transportation activity and a slowdown in the overall economy.

## Export orders for lint start pouring in

**F**ederal and Punjab authorities discuss measures to ensure that cotton growers get the support price as the country secures the first white lint export orders for the new crop.

Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi chaired a meeting on Tuesday 11 July to deliberate on measures to ensure that growers receive the fixed support price of Rs8,500 per maund for their crop.

The meeting was attended by chairman FBR, group leader of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) Gohar Ejaz, Fuad Mukhtar, Anwar Ghani, and senior officials from the finance ministry. Details of the meeting were not shared with the media.

The CM had earlier in the day advised the cotton growers not to undersell their crop and emphasised that the government is committed to ensuring the sale of cotton at a minimum rate of Rs8,500 per maund.

He said the farmers would receive full value for their produce and directed the commissioners and deputy commissioners to enforce this rate in their respective areas.

Dr Jassomal Lemani, former chairman of the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association, says he has sold 5,000 bales of cotton to importers in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Last year, a total of 16,000 bales of cotton had been exported.

Dr Jassomal says that he has fetched between Rs18,500 and Rs17,500 per 40kg rates for his exports and expects that the shipment of these contracts will commence in the first or second week of August. He says that more export agreements are also expected to be made by the ginners in the coming days.

Cotton Ginners Forum chairman Ihsan-ul-Haq says that due to favourable temperatures during the cotton sowing and picking seasons in coastal areas of Sindh this year, cotton quality has significantly improved to meet international standards. As a result, Pakistan has started receiving early orders for cotton exports, and it is anticipated that record-breaking cotton exports may be achieved in the current year, he hopes.

He says that due to the delay in cotton procurement by ginners, there has been a rapid increase in cotton prices and consequently, the price of cotton reached Rs17,500 per maund in Punjab, and Rs17,000 per maund in Sindh.



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## Ethiopian embassy launches Green Legacy Initiative

The Embassy of Ethiopia on Wednesday 2 August launched the Green Legacy Initiative designed to address climate-related issues, reduce poverty, preserve environment and ensure sustainable development.

The embassy held a tree plantation ceremony on the premises of the Ethiopian embassy which was attended by Minister of Aviation and Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique, Minister of Narcotics Control Nawabzada Shazain Bugti, Special Adviser to the Prime Minister Romina Khurshid Alam, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, representatives of diplomatic corps, senior officers from the climate change ministry, religious leaders, youth association and media outlets.

During the event, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the FDRE Jemal Beker Abdula explained that the initiative was a brainchild of Ethiopian Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed. Federal ministers and business representatives planted diverse species of trees, including Jacaranda, Avocado, Pine, Olive, Terminalia, and Ficus carica, among others.

Speaking at the ceremony, Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula praised the leadership of Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed and commended the Green Legacy Initiative for its significant impact in addressing climate challenges, conserving the environment, generating employment opportunities and ensuring food security in Ethiopia.

He said 25 billion seedlings of trees, fruits and cattle feed were planted during the first phase of the Green Legacy Initiative which was launched by Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed in 2019.

On July 17, 2023, the second phase commenced under the theme 'Let's plant our future today', aiming to plant another 25 billion seedlings across Ethiopia.

Notably, he said the FDRE achieved a remarkable feat on July 17, 2023, by planting over 550 million seedlings in one

day, which was an accomplishment that garnered immense support from more than 32 million people of Ethiopia participating in the initiative this year.

The ambassador said this far-reaching initiative had also made significant strides in job creation, contributing to over one million jobs in Ethiopia, while the number of nurseries in the country surged to 145,000 under the initiative.

Beyond national borders, he said the Green Legacy Initiative earned recognition at the international and regional levels, inspiring neighbouring countries to undertake massive tree plantation campaigns to shield the African continent from the adverse impacts of climate change.

Highlighting the global nature of climate change and the necessity for cooperation among nations, Jemal Beker expressed Ethiopia's willingness to share its experiences, knowledge and skills with Pakistan.

He said the Green Legacy Initiative exemplified a collective effort toward environmental conservation and served as a testament to Ethiopia's commitment to combat climate change and foster a sustainable future for generations to come.

Minister for Aviation and Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique extended gratitude to the FDRE government for supporting Pakistan in carrying out flood-relief activities in the recent past. He welcomed the Green Legacy Initiative in Pakistan and vowed cooperation with the FDRE government in this regard.

The minister appreciated Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed and stressed on taking measures to strengthen people-to-people relations between the two countries especially through cooperation in the aviation sector.

Former ICCI president and Africa-Pakistan Association President Zafar Bakhtawari also lauded the FDRE government for its resolve to strengthen bilateral relations between the two countries and urged the business community in Pakistan to support such an initiative.

## Monks impressed by Takht Bhai heritage site



*A Buddhist monk takes pictures during a visit to Peshawar Museum on Thursday 13 July.*

The members of a high level delegation consisting of Buddhist monks and diplomats showed keen interest the world heritage site of Takht Bhai in Mardan district and colonial-era Peshawar Museum during visit on Thursday 13 July.

The members of the delegation included monks and diplomats from South Korea, Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Cambodia and Nepal.

The director of archaeology and museums, Abdul Samad Khan, briefed the delegation about the significance of world heritage site of Takht Bhai and nearby Sahr-i-Bahloul. The members of the delegation also went around the primitive Buddhist monastery in Takht Bhai. They were impressed by its historical significance and conservation work.

They also took keen interest in monastic complexes of Takht Bhai that are spectacularly positioned on various hilltops ranging from 36.6 meters to 152.4 meters height with a covered area of about 33 hectares.

The delegation was informed that Takht Bhai monastery was in continuous use till 7th century (CE), composed of an assemblage of buildings constructed of stone on Gandhara pattern in diaper style using local dressed and semi-dressed stone blocks set in a lime and mud mortar.

Later, the delegation visited Peshawar Museum. It is the lone Gandhara Art Museum in world. The members of the delegation visited its different sections and galleries.

The main hall of Peshawar Museum was constructed in 1906 in memory of Queen Victoria where Buddha Gallery with statues of Lord Buddha and Buddha Savatta Gallery showcase his princely life. The tourists also took interest in rare antiques, artefacts, coins, swords, guns and other antiquities at the museum.

**Important for Health**

## Hotels required to mention nutrition information on food items

The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has directed all fast food restaurants and hotels of the province to clearly mention nutrition information on the packaging of the food items for the consumers to know what they are eating.

The PFA has set a deadline of December 2023 to implement the revised limits of trans fatty acid 2 gram per 100 gram in every food item, media has learnt.

The FOPL (front-of-pack-labelling) is applicable to all pre-packaged food items along with inclusion of calorie/energy, sodium, fats, sugar and allergen contents on the standard menu of the fast food restaurants, five and four-star hotels and recreation clubs with reference to pre-packaged food items, excluding ingredients/additives, desserts, fried and fast food, sugar/sweetened beverages. The PFA aimed to ban the sale of hydrogenated fats in Punjab that are a major cause for carcinogenicity and cardiovascular diseases, according to sources.

The revised trans-fatty acid limit 2gm/100gm is applicable to table margarine, industrial margarine, margarine spread, shortening, banaspati, bakery fat, biscuit and bread rusk and 5gm/100gm to oils/fats during frying.

The death toll due to cardiovascular diseases in Pakistan is approximately 40pc and as per the World Health Organisation (WHO), trans fatty acid in food is a leading cause of 500,000 deaths per year due to cardiovascular diseases. The PFA had set a deadline of one year for the industry to bring trans-fatty acids percentage to 0.5 and primarily, it was notified as 10pc in the Punjab Pure Food Regulations 2017.

Hydrogenation of palm oil leads to the formation of trans fats—an important cause of cancer, cardiovascular diseases, infertility, memory loss, high blood pressure,

diabetes and obesity. Currently, Pakistan is the only country consuming trans fat at the highest proportion in Asia.

PFA Director General Raja Jahangir Anwar told media that a special implementation committee had been established to implement the FOPL warning and limit trans fatty acid in pre-packaged food items. The committee would submit reports on a daily basis.

Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's Strategic Reforms is launching an awareness campaign for keeping the consumers informed about the calorie

intake, food nutrition value and promoting healthy eating across the country from Aug 14.

The initiative aims at creating awareness among the citizens with regards to food nutrition value across the country and making the restaurants ensure labelling each food item (mentioning the percentage of proteins, fats, oils, carbohydrates as well as total calorie count) to keep the citizens informed and facilitate them in keeping track of the calories consume.

Talking to media, PM's Strategic Reforms head Salman Sufi termed it crucial to educate the people about the impact of their dietary choices on their overall health. He said the issue would hold great significance for the public health and it was essential that the relevant stakeholders should collaborate to stage effective measures to address it.

“A country-wide awareness campaign would be launched on Aug 14 to encourage the citizens to consume proportionate amounts of oil, sodium and fats and promote portion control and moderation in food consumption. The consumers should consume fruit, vegetables, whole grains and healthy products instead of street food. They should keep track of calorie intake in every food item they consume and their daily calorie intake should be kept between 2,000 to 2,500.”

Mr Sufi said the campaigns would also include action like adding a tagline/label on food items specifying the foods that are healthy and the ones having high percentage of trans fat dangerous to health.

He said five and four star restaurants/hotels and international fast-food chains had been engaged for following the pattern of food labeling (calorie count, a percentage of protein fats, carbohydrates etc) to educate the citizens and keep them aware of the calories they were consuming. The labeling would also indicate the adverse effects that might occur on consuming fats/oily foods, he added.

In this regard, Ministry of Health Services Regulations and Coordination, provincial Food Regulatory Authorities, Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA), food manufacturing associations, Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturing Association (PVMA) and food manufacturing companies had been taken onboard to design campaign drives, Mr Sufi added.

## Artists capture fascinating landscapes of Naran on canvas



Artists pose with their paintings in Naran valley.

Artists from across the country attended the fifth annual summer camp and captured on the canvas fascinating landscapes of Naran valley and its surrounding areas.

The annual event was arranged under the auspices of Studio of Ali Sajid (SAS) Peshawar in collaboration with the provincial chapter of National Artists Association of Pakistan (Naap) in Naran.

Around 30 veteran artists and art students participated in the summer camp. Artists using several media including acrylics, water colour, oil colour and drawing were part of the annual event. Delegates from Karachi, Lahore, Kot Radha Kishan, Abbottabad, Faisalabad, Dera Ismail Khan, Chakwal, Peshawar and Charsadda attended the event.

Prof Ali Sajid, provincial chief of artists association, and his group of artists told this scribe that the summer camp had already become a regular feature as most senior, junior and rising artists alongside deserving art students attended the event arranged in the northern areas.

Prof Ali said that the main objective of the event was to motivate young artists and discover and display the charming landscapes of the country to the world as most of their works were based on some basic themes.

“The summer camp includes several activities like on the spot painting, group discussions, workshop, exhibition and photography where senior artists share their knowledge and experiences with junior and rising artists. Art students also learn a lot from such an event. All these activities are then further shaped up for a grand art exhibition, individual art galleries displays and exhibitions in different cities,” he said.

Prof Ali said that participants of the summer camp regretted that KP despite being such a great treasure trove of visual arts did not have its own art gallery though the then provincial government had pledged to set up an art gallery in early



2019 and even funds were allocated for the project but all in vain.

He said that at the camp artists painted areas of Naran Bazaar, Batakundi, Jalhad and Lalusar Lake. He said that senior artists included Ajab Khan, Dr Irshad Maqbool, Arif Ansari, Abbas Kamangar, Nasir Shahzad, Attique Ahmed, Gulraiz, Mohammad Sufyan, Shahzad Siyal, Saeed Nusrat, Ihtisham,

Arshad Rauf, Ali Hasan, Bilal Amjad, Tahir Bilal and Nadir Ali.

Arif Ansari, a senior artist from Karachi, told this scribe that every year artists gathered wonderful images and creative ideas from the annual summer camp.

Saeed Nudrat, another artist, said that Pakistan's northern landscapes were most charming sights on the earth.

## NA passes bill for formation of 'self-sufficient' Gandhara authority

The National Assembly on Tuesday 1st August approved a bill for the establishment of the 'Promotion and Protection of Gandhara Culture Authority Act 2023' to preserve and promote Buddhist sites and tourism.

The proposed authority is the continuation of the 'International Gandhara Symposium' recently organised by the government participated by key Buddhist religious figures from many countries.

The bill presented by Dr Ramesh Vankwani, who is the chairman of the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Gandhara Tourism, stated that the body would be self-sustainable and a fund titled 'Gandhara Fund' would be formed and regulated under its rules.

### Objectives of authority

The objectives of the authority include acquiring, holding and managing movable and immovable property as well as conducting surveys, excavations, and research related to Gandhara artefacts and archaeological sites. It would also develop conservation plans and guidelines for the protection of Gandhara cultural heritage. It would regulate and issue permits for activities related to the excavation, export, or import of Gandhara artefacts. The proposed authority would collaborate with national and international organisations for the preservation and promotion of Gandhara culture.

It would also facilitate tourists, both domestic and international, interested to visit Gandhara heritage sites as well as raise funds through donations, grants, and other means to support its activities.

It would conduct research, studies, and publications on Gandhara culture and history, as well as organise exhibitions, cultural events, and educational programmes to promote Gandhara culture.

It would facilitate capacity-building programmes for professionals engaged in the conservation and management of cultural heritage.

The bill said that all museums, historical sites, historical buildings and places related to Gandhara culture would be facilitated by the authority.

The 'Gandhara diplomacy' would also promote ties with the countries of Far East Asia and facilitate research and academic activities related to Gandhara culture. The authority would establish Gandhara student clubs and societies in universities, colleges and educational institutions across the country, according to the bill.

It would also set up a 'Gandhara Tourism Promotion Centre' and would have the power to issue licence to Gandhara tour operators, hotels and guest houses that will be allowed to host Gandhara tourists. It would also register transporters for the promotion of Gandhara tourism.

The bill highlighted that there would be a Gandhara Heritage and Handicraft Export Centre responsible for patronage and marketing of local handicrafts, especially those related to Gandhara art and culture in the international market.

The National Heritage & Culture Division of the federal government will render necessary support and provide assistance to the authority in the smooth discharge of its functions. The authority would be accountable to the government and comply with all the reporting and auditing requirements as stipulated by the laws and regulations. The authority will prepare an annual report detailing its activities, achievements, financial statements, and future plans, to be submitted to the president and made available to the public.

Its chairman would be appointed by the prime minister for a period of five years and other members would include the heritage division secretary and representatives from all provinces as well as Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir.

## Two Japanese climbers scale Terich Mir



*KENRO Nakajima on the peak of Terich Mir.*

Two Japanese mountaineers scaled Terich Mir, the highest peak of Hindu Kush mountain range, on July 23 (Sunday).

Kenro Nakajima, 38, and Kazuya Hiraide, 44, both photographers by profession, told media here on Sunday 23 July that after their failed attempt in 2019 to scale the peak, they had committed to accomplishing the feat at any cost, and they finally did it.

They said that this time around they took a different path from the base camp to the summit, reaching the top in three days.

They termed the pleasant weather prevailing throughout the climbing days as the major factor contributing to their success.

They recalled that the last time their summit push was hindered by a snowstorm.

The Japanese climbers said that weather was quite clear when they reached the peak (7,708 meters), giving them a wide range of visibility. They said that they started descending after staying there for more than 40 minutes.

The climbers expressed their intention of coming back to Pakistan in future to surmount the peaks of Istoronal and Naushaq having altitudes of more than 7,600 meters, also situated near the Terich Mir.

The two Japanese had scaled Raka Poshi peak in 2019, Shispar in 2017 and KarunKho in 2022 situated in Gilgit-Baltistan.

They noted that the snows and cracks developed in the lower altitude (4,700 meters) of the glacier of Terich Mir during the course of climbing showed its accelerated melting triggered by climate change.

The Japanese climbers asked the mountaineers to come to the Hindu Kush region, which had more than 100 peaks with heights greater than 7,000 meters, while the environment was quite ideal in all respects needed for a climber.

Sahib Alam, the local tour operator and guide, said that the team had accomplished feat through better planning as most expeditions failed while scaling the tricky mountain in the past.



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## World needs to learn from Buddha's message of peace: President Alvi



Buddhist monks attend the Gandhara Symposium in Islamabad on Tuesday 11 July.

President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday 11 July said Pakistan and the world needs to learn from Gautama Buddha's message of peace and compassion as it will promote tolerance in the current era of conflicts and chaos.

"In today's world where hatred is on the rise and increasing polarisation fuelling conflicts, it is time to rediscover the role of cultural diplomacy to promote dialogue among civilisations," the president said while addressing a three-day Gandhara symposium here.

He added that all religions preach peace, coherence and protection of environment that was the responsibility of the humans towards earth.

The objective of the symposium was to explore Pakistan's rich Buddhist legacy and create an enabling environment for Gandhara tourism.

"Gandhara tourism will have a positive impact in Pakistani society too as people change after meeting each other and the message of peace and seeking light from within as preached in Buddhism will influence the people of Pakistan too," Dr Alvi added.

The symposium 'Cultural diplomacy: reviving Gandhara civilisation and Buddhist heritage in Pakistan' has been organised by Prime Minister's Task Force on Gandhara Tourism, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) and the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

While the organisers wanted to play the religious recitation of the Buddhists at the start of the event, only Quran was recited due to the official protocol.

Monks, scholars and historians from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, China, Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam attended the opening day of the symposium.

Pakistani speakers lauded the message of peace and tolerance as given in Buddhism and highlighted the key role played by Gandhara civilisation in the

spread of Buddhism from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia and up to Korea.

Buddhist monks called for relaying the message of peace and cross-cultural harmony across the world. Some of them suggested that Pakistan should establish a Buddhist temple at any Gandhara civilisation site.

Venerable Mideung of Korea said Buddhism reached Korea from Gandhara and all Buddhist art and sculptures had the influence of Gandhara civilisation.

The Korean teams have played a key role in excavations and restorations of Gandhara sites since the mid-1980s.

Most Venerable Anil Sakya, honorary rector World Buddhist University Thailand, lauded Pakistan for holding the Buddhist symposium.

"There is no senior monk in Pakistan but the shadow of the monk is here, and Pakistan should be proud to have the seat of basic knowledge including advanced medical knowledge," Most Venerable Anil Sakya said.

"The concept of cultural diplomacy was started by Ashoka the Great and the soft power has proven to be more powerful than the power of weapons," he said.

The religious heads of Buddhism from several countries suggested that to develop religious tourism Pakistan needed to improve its image issue and one way would be to develop and preserve Gandhara as Pakistani heritage - that gives a message of tolerance and respect for others.

ISSI Director General Sohail Mahmood said Gandhara civilisation served as a melting pot of diverse cultures and civilisations at its time.



Visitors take interest in the handicraft during a Dastkar Mela organized by the Punjab Small industries corporation at a local hotel.

## Trilateral rail link

PAKISTAN has long been striving for greater surface connectivity via rail and road routes to boost trade, tourism and cultural interaction with the Central Asian states. The trilateral protocol signed by Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan yesterday to link Termiz with Kurram via Mazari-Sharif by connecting the Uzbek rail network with Pakistan Railways is also part of that same quest. The project will support passenger travel and freight services. It will significantly contribute to the growth of regional trade and economic development of participating nations by cutting cargo delivery time between Uzbekistan and Pakistan by about five days and slashing goods transportation costs by 40pc. The participating countries have set themselves an ambitious target of completing the scheme by the end of 2027 though. This project is in addition to a more ambitious plan to construct a new 573km trans-Afghan railway track, the roadmap for which has already been signed by the three nations, to link Central Asia with ports on the Arabian Sea. It will allow Central Asian nations to reach the world markets by accessing Pakistan's seaports through the Termiz-Jalalabad-Peshawar route.

The two projects will indeed open up landlocked Central Asia to the world for investment and trade, and help Pakistan access the region's and Russian energy markets. Nevertheless, these plans will remain a pipe dream for as long as Afghanistan the key to the success of any such scheme does not stabilise and security conditions in that war-torn country don't improve.

At the same time, Islamabad also needs to effectively tackle security issues in both Balochistan, which is a vital link to the expansion of CPEC and economic cooperation with Central Asia, and KP.

Yet, the potential of linkages with the Central Asian Republics cannot be exploited fully without involving other South Asian countries, especially India. Only a fully open, secure and cooperative South Asia can guarantee the success of these railway projects.



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