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## Senate body wants 82 pilots back on the job

A Senate committee has directed the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to restore 82 pilots, who were suspended over alleged unfair practices during their licensing exams.

The aviation regulator has been ordered to implement the decision within 15 days and furnish a report.

A meeting of the Senate Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges was held on Tuesday 05 Dec. in Parliament House.

The meeting, chaired by Senator Mohammad Tahir Bizenjo, was told that the CAA director general gave 'false assurances' to a Senate sub-committee, obstructed members in the discharge of their duties and didn't implement the house decisions.

The sub-committee of the Standing Committee on Aviation, headed by Senator Saleem Mandviwala, was formed to look into the pilots' licensing issues.

During the sub-committee's meeting in May, the CAA DG said there were issues concerning the licences of 262 pilots, which caused problems at the international level.

Following an investigation, 180 pilots were cleared, while the remaining 82 faced issues. Of them, the licences of 50 were cancelled on the federal cabinet's directive, and 32 pilots were suspended.

The issue stemmed from the former aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan's statement in the National Assembly in June 2020, where he claimed that investigations found that more than 260 of the country's 860 active pilots had either fake licences or cheated in their exams.

On Tuesday, 05 Dec. Senator Mandviwala, a member of the privileges committee, told the meeting that the sub-committee was overseeing the resolution of the licensing issue.

Despite assurances given in the meetings, the CAA DG is 'hesitant' in implementing the sub-committee's.

The committee issued directives to the CAA and deferred the matter for two weeks.

The privileges committee was also briefed on the motion, moved by Senators Naseebullah Bazai and Sardar Muhammad Shafiq Tareen, against the National Bank of Pakistan president for not attending the meeting scheduled to be held in the bank's Karachi office despite being present in the same building.

Rehmat Hasnie, the NBP president, who also attended the meeting, submitted a written apology for his misconduct which

was accepted by the committee.

Further deliberation on the matter was deferred until the next meeting.

## PIA, CAA directed to submit report on ATR planes operational life

The Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court (SAC) has directed the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to submit a report on the operational life of ATR aircraft on the Gilgit Islamabad route and the reasons behind technical faults in these flights.

Chief Justice of SAC Sardar Muhammad Shamim Khan issued the directives, while presiding over a suomoto hearing related to PIA's ATR flights on the Gilgit Islamabad route.

The people of GB pleaded that the operational life of PIA's ATR planes had expired, posing an extreme risk, with frequent technical faults causing delays at Gilgit Airport.

They highlighted incidents where CAA had grounded ATR flights, and two ATR aircraft had crashed in hilly areas, resulting in loss of lives.

In September, Chief Justice Shamim Khan took suomoto notice of the case, and in compliance with court orders, PIA's chief technical officer, chief commercial officer and CAA's controller (North) appeared before the court on Wednesday, 22 Nov.

PIA's chief technical officer told the court that ATR planes, purchased in 2006, are supposed to complete 70 thousand flight cycles, of which only half have been completed.

Chief Justice Shamim Khan asked, 'Then why are technical faults emerging in ATR flights?' The CAA representative told court that the authority has already prepared a feasibility report for a new airport at Sultanabad area of Gilgit.

Expressing dissatisfaction, Chief Justice Shamim Khan rejected it and ordered a new submission for the next hearing.



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# Aviation firms term new policy 'catastrophic'

The Aircraft Owners and Operators Association of Pakistan (AOOA) on Tuesday 05 Dec. rejected the doubling of security deposit and other charges under the Aviation Policy 2023 saying the move would prove catastrophic for the already struggling aviation industry.

The association in a press statement said the sharp increase in security deposits, which are Rs10 million now, would discourage fresh investments as many aviation companies are planning to shift their businesses abroad due to new policy restrictions.

The association regretted that the general aviation businesses were already on the brink of closure and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) wanted them to double the money in the name of security deposits.

At a time when the economy is slowing down, the PCAA should not only come up with investor-friendly policies but also announce incentives to facilitate the existing players operating in tough conditions by extending relief in the form of reduction in security deposits and other charges, the association suggested. The association recalled that since the introduction of aviation policies in 2015 and 2019, seven out of 16 flying schools and many aviation companies have closed their businesses, adding that the new policy would also be a big failure for aviation businesses.

After the implementation of the new policy this year, one major aviation company has announced selling out its three aircraft besides laying off 30 per cent of its employees.

The age restriction for importing aircraft was introduced in 2015, and from that time onwards the aviation industry is in decline.

'Age restrictions on aircraft even do not apply in Europe or North America, but our National Aviation Policy is sending us to the moon as if we are running NASA here,' the association remarked. Whatever good has been added to the policy becomes null and void with exorbitant security deposits and age restrictions on aircraft import.

It deplored that the stakeholders were never taken on board in the policy formation process and their input was ignored as was done in 2015 and 2019.

It added that Pakistan is the only country where the aviation industry is run by bureaucrats having no aviation experience and inputs from parlia-

ment and aviation stakeholders are given no importance giving way to autocracy destroying an important economic sector.



Students viewing an exhibition of plane models at Air University on Tuesday, held to coincide with International Civil Aviation Day, observed on Dec 5.

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## Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority holds 40th session of the e-kacheri

The 40th session of the e-kacheri took place at the Civil Aviation Headquarters in Karachi, with the Director General presiding over the meeting. The Additional Director General, Deputy Director General Regulatory, Deputy Director General Airport Services, and the Deputy Director General Works and Development, along with Directors from various key Directorates, were also present. The session was dominated by complaints related to airlines, both foreign and local. These complaints included issues such as passenger off-loading, ticket refunds/compensation, staff misbehavior, and missing or damaged luggage. The DGCAA while addressing these grievances requested further details from passengers via email to resolve issues quickly.

Additionally, inquiries were made about the closure of Peshawar Airport, as well as the non-operational status of DG Khan and Saidu Sharif Airports. The DGCAA informed that it would be at least 6 months before any dates for Peshawar Airport's runway reconstruction and closure could be provided. Regarding Dera Ghazi Khan and Saidu Sharif Airports, the DG CAA explained that these airports are operational, but airlines do not find them destinations financially viable.

The national carrier PIA had previously operated flights to these airports but could not sustain them due to insufficient passenger load, the DG added. The DG CAA also addressed instances of misbehavior with passengers at Multan Airport, urging affected passengers to provide specific details like date and time of these occurrences to help trace and hold the individuals involved accountable. The DG CAA emphasized that any staff found guilty of misbehaving with passengers at the airport would be reported at the highest level. In response to an inquiry, the DG CAA issued strict instructions to implement the Government's minimum wage policy, warning that non-compliance would result in companies being blacklisted. In response to a repeated complaint from an aggrieved whose relative was imprisoned overseas for carrying medicine deemed contraband item by the destination country, the Director General ordered a prompt resolution by ordering to provide a detailed report to the com-

plainant. The DG CAA believed that the report could have legal significance in helping the aggrieved party secure the passenger's release, as the report indicated that the passenger had been entrapped by a now-dismissed CAA employee.

Today's other queries included horticulture improvements at Jinnah International Airport, the absence of Egypt Air operations in Pakistan, the availability of Ethiopian Airline for travel to Africa, the

presence of a radio cab company at Islamabad Airport, the designation status of Aerial and FlyJinnah for UAE operations, and the installation of direction signs for a facsimile facility at Islamabad Airport. The DG CAA concluded by expressing gratitude to passengers and the public for using the platform to contact the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority and reaffirmed the authority's commitment to facilitating passengers and addressing their grievances.



## SHC issues notices to Govt. against proposed PIA privatisation

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Tuesday 05 Dec. issued notices to the ministries of law, aviation and finance and others on a petition filed against the proposed privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation.

A two-judge bench, headed by acting Chief Justice Ageel Ahmed Abbasi, also put the deputy attorney general on notice for Dec 21 and directed respondents to file replies before the next hearing.

Citing secretaries of the three ministries as well as executive director of Ernest & Young, the firm reportedly being hired as financial adviser for the privatisation, as respondents, regular lit-

vided that sub-sections 1 and 2 of Section 230 of Elections Act shall not apply where the caretaker government has to take actions or decisions regarding existing bilateral or multilateral agreements or the projects already initiated under the Public Private Partnership Authority Act, 2017, the Inter Government Commercial Transactions Act, 2022, and the Privatisation Commission Ordinance, 2000, in respect of the privatisation of PIAC, which was a public limited company.

The petitioner also impugned the vires of the amendment in Section 3(3) of the PIAC (Conversion) Act, 2016, whereby the federal government may, during the validity period and by notifi-



igant Samira Mahamadi asked the SHC to declare the proposed privatisation ultra vires to the Constitution.

The petitioner contended that only an elected government could take major policy decisions and all actions taken by the caretaker setup for privatisation of the PIAC be decaled null and void and without lawful authority. The bench nits order noted that the petitioner, who claimed to be a citizen, has filed the petition in public interest.

She has expressed concerns and grievances against the process of privatisation of PIA initiated by the caretaker government, which authority, according to the petitioner, is not vested in terms of Section 230 of the Election Act, 2017, even after its amendment in the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (Conversion) Act, 2023.

The bench further noted that as per the petitioner, the PIAC Act, 2023, pro-

vided that sub-sections 1 and 2 of Section 230 of Elections Act shall not apply where the caretaker government has to take actions or decisions regarding existing bilateral or multilateral agreements or the projects already initiated under the Public Private Partnership Authority Act, 2017, the Inter Government Commercial Transactions Act, 2022, and the Privatisation Commission Ordinance, 2000, in respect of the privatisation of PIAC, which was a public limited company.

The petitioner also impugned the vires of the amendment in Section 3(3) of the PIAC (Conversion) Act, 2016, whereby the federal government may, during the validity period and by notifi-

cation in official gazette, issue fresh shares or cancel any shares as it may deem fit. She asserted such amendment was made in violation of the company law, which authority was not vested with the government whereas the impugned amendment has also been made to facilitate the privatisation of PIAC. The bench in its order also said: 'It has been further argued by the petitioner that since the PIA is not a state-owned asset as it was now a public limited, therefore, the federal government is not empowered to privatise such company in violation of law. Contention raised requires consideration. Let pre-admission notice be issued to the respondents as well as DAG to be served through first three modes for 21.12.2023 to be taken up at 12:00 noon, when reply/comments, if any, shall be filed with advance copy to the petitioner,' the order concluded.

## Saudi fund scoops up 10pc of Heathrow airport

Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund is to buy ten per cent of London's Heathrow airport from Spanish infrastructure giant Ferrovial, whose departure from the hub after almost two decades leaves Qatar as its biggest shareholder.

Ferrovial late on Tuesday 28 Nov. said it was offloading its 25pc stake for nearly 2.4 billion (\$3.0 billion), with the other 15pc going to French private equity group Ardian.

Heathrow, which is one of the world's busiest airports, is owned by the consortium FGP Topco Limited, which going forward is set to be led by Qatar Investment Authority, with an existing 20-pc stake.

Ardian will be the second biggest player, while Riyadh's Public Investment Fund (PIF) will join China Investment Corporation at ten per cent, around the level held by other members of the consortium.

It is yet to be seen if the UK government will intervene in the sale.

The Conservative administration headed by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said it was 'minded' to review the proposed sale of the Telegraph Media Group to an Abu Dhabi-backed investment fund on public interest grounds.

Announcing Ferrovial's exit, the head of its airport business, Luke Bugeja, said in a statement: 'Over the last 17 years, we have been contributing to Heathrow's transformation, together with our fellow shareholders, achieving some excellent milestones throughout our long-term role as investor.

'We are very pleased to have made Heathrow one of the world's most connected airports and the busiest airport in Europe.' The specialist in transport infrastructure management operates a vast portfolio of global assets, including airport interests in Turkey and New York.

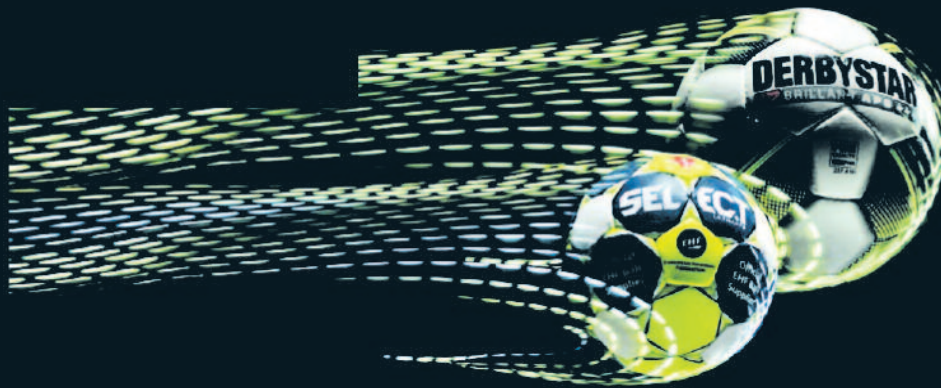
Heathrow was not seen as a core asset by Ferrovial.

It bought its stake in Heathrow in a 2006 takeover and initially held 56pc of the hub, before gradually reducing its interest.

Heathrow recently said it recorded its highest-ever September passenger numbers of more than seven million, which also marked the first time it exceeded pre-pandemic traffic figures.



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# Emirates reveals top in-flight entertainment picks of 2023

As a busy year of international travel draws to a close, the world's largest international airline is revealing how passengers spent their time inflight, delving into data to dissect what exactly Emirates customers watched and listened to on journeys to and from 140 destinations around the world.

## Most watched movies on ice in 2023

Customers craving top notch entertainment are spoilt for choice with Emirates ice, offering more than 6,500 channels of on demand movies, TV shows, music, podcasts, and even live TV to catch the international news and sport. From the expansive 2,000 plus Hollywood and international movies available, and all the best movies of 2023, amongst the most watched movies by Emirates customers around the globe were; visually stunning sci-fi film, *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *Ticket to Paradise* – a rom-com starring George Clooney and Julia Roberts, and the enduringly popular action movie *Top Gun: Maverick*. Long haul customers across the world also settled into box sets of movies, such as *The Lord of the Rings* complete trilogy and all four of the *John Wick* films.

After English language content, the top viewed international movies include two Bollywood action movies, *VikramVedha* and *Bholaa*, the French thriller *La Syndicaliste*, Korean drama *Return to Seoul*, and the 2023 Cannes Palme d'Or winner, *Anatomie d'une chute* from France. Arabic speakers tuned into Emirati film *Khorfakkan* – depicting the 16th century invasion of the city.

Kids and perhaps kids-at-heart, tuned into a myriad of movies with the most popular choices in 2023 noted as *Puss in Boots: The Last Wish*, *Tom & Jerry Cowboy Up!* *Teen Titans Go!* & *DC Superhero Girls* and *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*.

## Most binged box sets and TV on ice in 2023

On long flights, Emirates customers loved to binge a box set, with exceptionally high viewership recorded for all seasons of HBO Max's *Succession* and both seasons of *The White Lotus*. Within the comedy genre, Emirates customers showed a preference for beloved sitcoms – *Friends*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* and *The Big Bang Theory*, while in drama – many

travellers selected two historical dramas *The English*, and *Women of the Movement*, as well as suspense-filled drama *Your Honor* starring Bryan Cranston.

Trending TV in the Kids and Teens section included *Schooled!* – a sitcom set in the 90's and the renowned *SpongeBob SquarePants*, while younger kids tuned into Australia's *Bluey* and *Hey Duggee* and *Supertato* from the UK.

On Emirates ice live TV channels in-

Ed Sheeran's album *Subtract* was also in the top three, but unsurprisingly the top spot was scooped by the indomitable Taylor Swift and her album *Midnights*. Kids couldn't get enough of ice Juniors Music with *Cocomelon*, *Bluey*, *Kidzpop*, and the *Encanto* soundtrack holding the top spots. The most popular playlists on-board Emirates' flights included the *Arijit Singh Playlist*, *ABBA's Timeless Pop Anthems* and the *Best of Fairuz* and



cluding *Sport 24*, *BBC World News*, *CNN* and *Sky News Arabia*, customers tuned into an array of sports and social events including the *Coronation of King Charles III* and *Queen Camilla*, *Formula 1®* races, *NFL Superbowl*, *English Premier League*, *Augusta Masters*, *ICC Cricket World Cup 2023*, *Rugby World Cup 2023*, *Wimbledon*, *DP World Tour* and the *US Open Tennis*. The single most watched sports on Emirates live TV in 2023 was the *ICC Cricket World Cup 2023*.

## The tuneful tastes of Emirates customers in 2023

From a library of over 3,000 albums, more than 500 curated playlists, over 40,000 tracks and more than 4,000 hours of music and podcasts – Emirates' customers showed their sophisticated sides with one of the most popular albums on ice revealed as *Mozart's Chamber Music*.

*Khaleeji Classics*. In *Global Music*, the top trending regions customers accessed were *India*, *Korea* and *Africa*, with the most listened artists places held by *Jimin* from *Korea*, *Burna Boy* from *Nigeria* and *SB19* from the *Philippines*. Some audiophiles went for content beyond music and showed love to the *Rain*, *Sleep & Nature Sounds Playlist* while relaxing at 40,000 feet.

## Emirates customers embrace Happiness & Wellbeing content

Catering to every mood and personality, Emirates ice also provides a dedicated area for *Happiness and Wellbeing* content which is popular with flyers. *Nature relaxation series*' invite audiences on soothing, majestic journeys to natural paradises, and an array of explorative documentaries discover ways to live life to the fullest. Emirates customers in 2023 tuned into *Living Wild: How to Change*

Your Life, a series where Sophie Morgan goes on a road trip across the UK to meet people united by a desire to build new lives around the things they love. Storytelling with Gian Power: What's your life story? also proved popular, as TLC Lions founder, Gian Power dives into the powerful world of storytelling and advises the audience how their personal story can become their greatest strength.

#### ***Finishing 2023 on a high with Emirates ice***

For those jetting off for the holiday season and beyond, Emirates is closing out 2023 with the biggest movies of the year on ice. Customers can enjoy the top grossing box office movie of 2023 – the fantasy-comedy blockbuster Barbie, available in French, German, Italian, Brazilian Portuguese, Japanese, Russian, Arabic and Chinese. Barbie is also available with 'Closed Captions' (CC) and 'Audio Description' (AD), offering accessibility to the visually impaired, with narration that describes what is happening on screen. Emirates offers up to 130 movies with AD and more than 250 with CC.

Action aficionados can catch Mission: Impossible – Dead Reckoning Part One, a high stakes thriller partly filmed in the UAE, available on ice in up to 8 languages, or The Equalizer 3 starring Denzel Washington. Customers can even watch the entire trilogy on ice. Adrenaline enthusiasts will enjoy Gran Turismo, based on the true story of racing driver Jann Mardenborough, a successful gamer who becomes a real-life racer. ice also has an exclusive interview with Jann Mardenborough speaking about the making of the movie in the Emirates World podcast.

#### ***Kicking off world class entertainment on ice in 2024***

Looking ahead to 2024, Emirates customers can expect to see many exciting developments on ice from exclusive new content partnerships to new next-generation inflight entertainment systems that offer memorable cinematic and personalised passenger experiences on the incoming 50-strong fleet of A350s. In January, customers can tune into Expendables, plus the complete box set of all 4 movies, The Creator – a visually impressive sci-fi from the director of Rogue One and the hit kid's movie Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie. In February, ice will have Oppenheimer, the award-winning film from Christopher Nolan, Priscilla – Sofia Coppola's biographical drama about the wife of Elvis Presley, amongst many more additions to the world's largest entertainment library in the sky.

## Turkish Airlines signs 220 aircraft order with Airbus

Türkiye's flag carrier Turkish Airlines has signed an historic deal for 220 aircraft from European aerospace giant Airbus.

The deal, widely tipped to come during the Dubai Airshow, sees the airline sign top for a mixture of single-aisle and wide body airliners.

The iGA Istanbul Airport based airline has ordered 150 Airbus A321neo aircraft and 70 A350s including 5 Freighters. The A350 component consists of 50 A350-900s, 15 A350-1000s and 5 A350Fs.

Announcing the deal Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee, Prof. Dr. Ahmet Bolat said: "This landmark order is more than an expansion; it's a testament to our dedication to innovation, operational excellence, and a sustainable fu-

aircraft is a demonstration of the bold vision by Turkish Airlines. The A350-900, A350-1000, A350F and A321 will all be flagship aircraft in their respective category and efficiency drivers to shape the airline's future and sustainable expansion, with more range, less fuel, noise and emissions and best cabin in class," says Christian Scherer, Airbus Chief Commercial Officer and Head of International.

"The opening into the A350-1000 and the A350F highlights the cross-model value of the A350 family and reinforces our long-lasting partnership with Turkish Airlines and Türkiye's aviation sector. We are proud to accompany Türkiye's connection to the world with our state-of-the-art aircraft."

Together with iGA Istanbul Airport, Turkish Airlines is working to make Is-



ture.

"The addition of these advanced Airbus aircraft to our fleet will not only enhance our operational capabilities but also significantly contribute to our environmental goals. This investment is a crucial milestone in the further evolution of Türkiye's aviation industry.

"By modernising our fleet with more efficient and environmentally friendly aircraft, we are reinforcing our leading position in global aviation and contributing to the nation's prominence as an aviation hub."

The deal forms the backbone of Turkish Airlines expansion plans and the large A321neo component shows its ambitions in the short to medium haul market.

"This order for the latest generation

tanbul a world hub as shown by the fact that it flies to more countries than any other airline and this deal will cement it as one of the worlds largest airlines, it is currently the 8th largest.

Its choice of A350F for its cargo needs is testament to the airliners, which is yet to be certified, credentials as a viable freighter and also its commonality with the A350 airliner making personal selection easier. Both the A321 and A350 offer the best in their class for performance and emissions which helps to reduce operating costs for the airlines.

The deal is also great news for the UK with the wings for all aircraft in the order being built in North Wales as well as the A350s Rolls-Royce Trent XWB Engines which are made in Derby.

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## Navy inducts fifth ATR aircraft in fleet

The induction ceremony of the fifth ATR aircraft of the Pakistan Navy was held at the naval aviation base,

personnel movements.

Later, the naval chief handed over the ATR documents to the vice admiral.



PNS Mehran, here on Tuesday, 05 Dec.

The newly inducted ATR aircraft, acquired from the Pakistan International Airlines, is equipped with day and night flying capability to undertake ferry, logistics support, medical evacuation, general evacuation and training missions.

The navy is in the process of acquiring ATR aircraft from various sources and is modernising them to carry out maritime reconnaissance and antisubmarine warfare missions at sea, said a press release.

Being a commercial aircraft it has very low operating cost as compared to tailor-made military aircraft.

Speaking on the occasion as the chief guest, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf highlighted the importance of the evolving geo-strategic environment in the Indian Ocean region and emphasised the need to have a potent naval force in order to counter emerging challenges.

He underlined the significance of a strong maritime defence for Pakistan and reiterated that induction of modern aircraft will enhance the navy's capability of safeguarding maritime frontiers.

Earlier, during his welcome address, Pakistan Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Mohammad Faisal Abbasi highlighted that the induction of ATR aircraft would ensure sustained operations from western seaboard through regular logistics and

## One of two stranded PIA planes back from Jakarta

PIA got back one of its two aircraft stranded in Indonesia on Tuesday, 05 Dec. night, when Airbus A320 plane landed at Islamabad International Airport.

The Airbus A320, bearing registration number AP-DLG with two pilots and a crew member took off from Jakarta and after refueling from Bangkok and then the aircraft landed at Islamabad around 10:45pm.

Senior officials of PIA management received the aircraft, which has now again become part of the PIA fleet. The other one, an Airbus A320 stranded in Indonesia is expected to reach Pakistan within a couple of weeks.

The PIA had to pay \$26 million to the leasing company, whereas it paid \$13m after which one of the aircraft was released.

## Royal Navy destroyer HMS Diamond shoots down a drone targeting merchant shipping in the Red Sea

A Royal Navy destroyer has shot down a drone targeting merchant shipping in the Red Sea, the Defence Secretary said.

Grant Shapps said on Saturday, 16 Dec. HMS Diamond had shot down the suspected attack drone overnight following a spate of attacks on cargo ships in the region off Arabian Peninsula. The destroyer has been deployed to the Middle East as part of a multinational operation amid concerns over missile attacks from territory held by Houthi rebels in Yemen.

In a statement, Mr. Shapps said: "Overnight, HMS Diamond shot down a suspected attack drone which was targeting merchant shipping in the Red Sea. One Sea Viper missile was fired and successfully destroyed the target."

"The ship recently arrived in the region to bolster international efforts to maintain maritime security. The recent spate of illegal attacks represent a direct threat to international commerce and maritime security in the Red Sea. The UK remains committed to repelling these attacks to protect the free flow of global trade."



# Emirates Flight Training Academy celebrates graduation of 58 cadet pilots amid global pilot shortage

**58** bright and promising cadet pilots graduated from Emirates Flight Training Academy (EFTA) after months of rigorous training – on the ground and in the skies. EFTA's fourth graduation was yet another milestone for the aviation industry, given the shortage of skilled pilots, and the celebrations were attended by dignitaries, graduates, their families and friends, and the academy's faculty and cadets.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive Emirates Airline & Group presented certificates and welcomed the cadets into the world of aviation. He said: "Emirates Flight Training Academy plays a crucial role in our airline's strategy, nurturing Dubai's vision of being a sustainable aviation hub, attracting top talent globally, and supporting the country's Emiratisation goals. Our cadet pilots fly the Emirates flag globally, represent our nation's aviation ambitions, contribute collectively to the industry's workforce and expand its pilot pipeline. Today, we not only celebrate their individual triumphs but their collective impact. Congratulations to our graduates and I hope to fly with them soon. They will steer our fleet into the future."

Emirates' senior executives, including Adel Al Redha, Chief Operating Officer, Ali Al Soori, Executive Vice President Chairman's Office & Facilities/Projects Management, His Highness Sheikh Majid Al Mualla, Divisional Senior Vice President International Affairs, Oliver Grohmann, Senior Vice President Human Resources, attended the graduation.

EFTA also hosted esteemed guests including H.E. Khalifa Al Zaffin, Executive Chairman, Dubai Aviation City Corporation and H.E. Major General, Ahmad Muhammad Bin Thani, Assistant Commander-in-Chief for Ports Affairs, Dubai Police.

Captain Abdulla Al Hammadi, Divisional Vice President Emirates Flight Training Academy, said:

"Every graduation is a day of celebration for our cadets, their families and the entire EFTA team. Today, our graduates are ready to serve Emirates, the nation and the world of aviation. They have come far, both personally and professionally, since

vering support from our families and the encouragement of our peers. Our time at EFTA has been spent not just learning how to fly. It was also about life skills, attention to detail, communication, remaining calm under pressure and above all, disciplining



they embarked on their journey with us, and have completed one of the most rigorous pilot training courses in the world with resilience and professionalism. Now they're taking the next steps in their career, not just with a pilot's licence but with rich experiences, valuable lessons and most importantly, the drive to persevere. They are the future of aviation."

Fatima Al Ghumlasi, Cadet graduate, addressed the audience on behalf of her class: "Today marks a significant milestone in my personal and professional journey, and I couldn't be happier to stand before you as a proud female Emirati pilot. Today, is not just about the wings I have earned, but the journey I've started.

"And the journey has been worth every moment, thanks to the wisdom shared by our instructors, the unwa-

ving support from our families and the encouragement of our peers."

Two cadets, Ibrahim Al Blooshi and Mayed Mohammed, were lauded for their exceptional achievements and Nouf Hassan was announced as the most diligent cadet.

The graduates completed approximately 113 weeks of training with over 1,100 hours of ground-based and 270 hours of flight training. EFTA currently has over 300 cadets learning at the academy. With the fourth graduation today, EFTA has transformed 162 fresh cadets to become highly skilled aviators for Emirates and the aviation industry.

According to Boeing, the demand for training services has shown significant recovery, however, the global pilot shortage is set to remain a challenge for airlines worldwide. The aircraft manufacturer predicts demand for 649,000 new commercial airline pilots between 2023–2042.



## Tehran lifts visa requirement for 33 countries

Iran said it was lifting visa requirements for 33 countries, including Gulf states like Saudi Arabia with which Tehran had frosty relations for years until a recent rap-



prochement, the Iranian Students News Agency said on Thursday, 14 Dec.

'The ministry of tourism believes that an open-door policy will showcase Iran's determination to engage with different countries of the world,' the semi-official ISNA reported.

The decision will increase to 45 the number of countries or territories whose citizens can visit Iran without needing to obtain a visa, it said.

The move is another step towards thawing relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia in particular after years of tension between the two oil-producing Gulf rivals.

Riyadh and Tehran have aligned themselves with warring parties in Syria, Iraq and Yemen in the past decade. Attacks on Saudi oil infrastructure, which Western officials blame on Iran and its Arab proxy forces, threatened in recent years to send the Middle East into further conflict. Iran denied involvement in those attacks.

## China Airlines scores top awards

China Airlines, the Taiwan based carrier, has been awarded the Global Traveler magazine "Best Airline in North Asia" award. The airline also beat out more than 600 airlines from around the world to be named a "Five Star Global Airline" for eight consecutive years. Other international accolades included "Design Airline of the Year - Asia" from TheDesignAir.

Global Traveler, an American travel magazine read by more than 500,000 people worldwide, held its "20th Anniversary GT Tested Reader Survey Awards" this year. International business and high-end travelers were asked

now all equipped with in-flight Wi-Fi wireless networking. A range of bandwidth plans to enjoy multimedia streaming or web browsing services on their personal mobile devices are available for travelers to purchase via credit card or redeem through their membership miles. The all new A321neo, the mainstay on regional routes in particular, offers complementary Wi-Fi text messaging services for all passengers so important messages are not missed.

TheDesignAir, the well-known international airline design review website, once again named China Airlines "Design Airline of the Year - Asia" and the airline placed fourth



to vote on outstanding performers in the global travel industry. As a long-time winner of the Best Airline in North Asia award, China Airlines was praised by international travelers for its commitment to providing high-quality services that make travelers feel at home on every flight.

China Airlines was named a 2024 Five Star Global Airline by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX) for its commitment to providing travelers with the best cabin services. Travelers rated airlines in five categories: seat comfort, cabin service, food and beverage, entertainment, and Wi-Fi. China Airlines also won the Best Wi-Fi award in Greater China. The airline's next-generation fleets of 777, A350, and A321neo aircraft are

in the Design Airline of the Year award. The A321neo, the mainstay on regional passenger routes, is the latest aircraft to enter service with China Airlines. The aircraft cabin features Oriental aesthetics that link local cultural heritage with natural landscapes and city culture. In the Premium Business Class cabin, serene and reserved palettes cultivate the serene ambiance of forest glades. In Economy Class, bright colours were chosen to create lively urban vibes. Fully-flat Business Class seats as well as spacious and comfortable Economy Class seats are all equipped with 4K high-definition displays. The large 13.3" displays in Economy Class offer an enhanced viewing experience.

## An interview with Chairman, SIAL

# Sialkot International Airport to expand facilities and double its capacity



**S**ialkot International Airport (SIAL) celebrates its 16th anniversary of its operation this month. It started operation in 2007. For the last 16 years its passenger numbers have increased fourfold from 0.1 million to 0.465 million, the cargo movement also has increased three times to 9500 tons. SIAL has plans to expand its infrastructure to extend its terminal building and a new runway to increase the capacity for passengers and airlines. This was stated by the Chairman SIAL, Mr. Sohail Saeed Barlas in a brief interview with the Flyer International.

SIAL is the only privately owned and operated airport in the country serving since 2007, and it hosts eight local and foreign airlines. Presently handles 2500 to 2600 passengers per day. Efforts are being made to increase the number of passengers up to 3000 per day. Expansion of the terminal and new runway will enhance travel experiences through state-of-the-art facilities for passengers and airlines at the airport. It will

open new windows for the eastern and western airlines. “We expect to operate Turkish Airlines, British Airways, Lufthansa, and other airlines of the world. We have a plan to increase the number of passengers and airlines up to double”, said the Chairman.

The Chairman said that the structure of a 5-star hotel 'Ramada Plaza' has been erected, and hopefully, it would be operational by the end of next year. The MoU has signed with a Dubai-based company for MRO to provide aircraft maintenance at the airport. It also has a plan for Flying Club facilities to train new pilots. SIAL has recently installed Solar Panels Power system of 1.8MW in the parking area in addition to 1MW already existing, it will be 2.8MW. It will not only fulfill the requirement of the airport, additional power will go to Wapda by multi-metering to use for night-time at the airport.

Mr. Sohail Saeed Barlas assumed the charge as chairman of SIAL in July 2023.

He joined SIAL at its inception as Director and has been serving as convener of various committees including Finance, Business Development, Audit, and Zakat. It is worth mentioning here that SIAL gives Zakat and distributes it through its directors.

Mr. Sohail Saeed Barlas has done graduation in Textile Technology Engineering and Management from Texas University, USA in 1985. He joined his family business, Vital Private Limited Sialkot in 1986.

Vital Private Limited was established in 1934 by the late chairman Mirza Mohammad Iqbal Barlas. Currently, it manufactures work wear leisurewear and performance wear in its 200,000 square foot facility located in Sialkot and export to Europe and America. Vital boasts a vertically integrated plant that encompasses all stages of production including spinning, weaving, knitting, dyeing and finishing as well as cutting and sewing all of which are carried out in house.

# IATA rolls out new Timatic product

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has rolled out the next generation travel documentation and verification system which supports contactless travel and enhances the passenger experience. To achieve this, Timatic has undergone a complete redesign, setting a new benchmark in travel compliance solutions. Building on the success of its predecessor, TimaticAutoCheck offers a streamlined and interactive experience enabling travelers, airlines and travel professionals to easily access accurate and clearly worded immigration information. The entire document checking process has been automated with tailored instructions for each passenger.

With passenger traffic set to double by 2040, the optimization and enhancement of airport processes will need to continue. Verifying passengers' travel documentation is one of the more time-consuming tasks which will benefit from further automation. Moreover, the new features of TimaticAutoCheck will also play an essential role in supporting the industry in the move towards contactless travel.

IATA's most recent Global Passenger Survey (GPS) revealed that complex visa requirements deter travelers who want a convenient, digital online visa process. Moreover, many are willing to share their travel document information for faster airport immigration procedures.

- 36% of travelers said they have been discouraged from traveling to a particular destination because of the immigration requirements. Process complexity was highlighted as the main deterrent by 49% of travelers, 19% cited costs and 8% privacy concerns.

- Where visas are required, 66% of travelers want to obtain a visa online prior to travel, 20% prefer to go to the consulate or embassy and 14% at the airport.

- 87% of travelers indicated they would share their immigration information to speed up the airport arrival process, representing an increase from the 83% reported in 2022.

"Taking advantage of traveler willingness to use online processes and share information in advance, TimaticAutoCheck enables airlines, ground handlers, departure control systems and travel agents a customer friendly online solution, through which travelers can check that they comply with all immigration requirements before setting off to the airport," said

Frederic Leger, IATA's Senior Vice President Commercial Products and Services.

TimaticAutoCheck can easily be integrated into airline reservation and departure control systems (DCS) as well as distribution systems used by travel agencies and online booking platforms and features the following product enhancements:

- **Simplified Regulatory Content:** TimaticAutoCheck includes simplified and more user-friendly worded travel regulations, making them easier to understand. Travelers no longer need to know terminologies or read through complex

regulations to incorporate the new TimaticAutoCheck into their systems enabling passengers to independently verify their travel documents and compliance status through the various check-in options on offer.

"TimaticAutoCheck represents a further milestone in the pursuit of efficiency and convenience within the travel industry. By effortlessly navigating regulations, travelers can embark on their journeys with confidence and peace of mind. In addition, this innovation also enables airlines, ground handlers and travel agents to enhance customer satisfaction, integrate



regulations as the information is now provided in a concise manner.

- **Interactive Data Driven Approach:** Leveraging the power of data, users will now be guided through each step of the compliance process, ensuring they possess all required documents and meet the entry requirements. Users can input their travel details and receive personalised responses.

- **Practical Recommendations:** TimaticAutoCheck offers more than just information; it provides responses. Whether checking visa requirements, health regulations or entry restrictions, users now receive instructions on how to proceed and comply with regulations so they can promptly address any issues they may encounter.

- **Enhanced Automation:** The latest automation features make self-service check-in even easier. Airlines have the op-

portunity to incorporate the new TimaticAutoCheck into their systems enabling passengers to independently verify their travel documents and compliance status through the various check-in options on offer.

Major DCS providers like Amadeus, Hitit and Sabre, along with various airlines and Star Alliance are already working with IATA to upgrade to the new TimaticAutoCheck, taking the next step towards a seamless travel experience and contactless travel.

Timatic has been providing users with reliable and real time information on the required documentation for international travel since its inception in the 1960s. For this, IATA relies on a variety of sources, including governments, airlines, or airports. The accuracy of this data is key to ensuring that the correct information is provided to airlines and passengers alike. Annually, more than a billion passenger document checks are performed through Timatic.



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Indonesia	Jakarta	<b>CGK</b>
Indonesia	Denpasar	<b>DPS</b>
Indonesia	Surabaya	<b>SUB</b>

Country	City	Airport Code
Australia	Sydney	<b>SYD</b>
Australia	Melbourne	<b>MEL</b>

Country	City	Airport Code
Japan	Narita	<b>NRT</b>
Japan	Haneda	<b>HND</b>

Country	City	Airport Code
Hong Kong	Hong Kong	<b>HKG</b>

Country	City	Airport Code
Singapore	Singapore	<b>SIN</b>

Country	City	Airport Code
China	Guangzhou	<b>CAN</b>

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# Did you know that Etihad allows connecting passengers to book multi-night stopovers in Abu Dhabi?

- Passengers flying Etihad Airways can enjoy a complimentary stay in a three-star hotel for up to two nights during a transit in Abu Dhabi.

- A premium stopover option for passengers who prefer luxury hotels features discounts of up to 40% off Abu Dhabi's exclusive hotels.

- Passengers with 10 to 24-hour connection times can choose from three complimentary hotels accessible with a free bus shuttle near the airport.

## *How Aircraft Propellers Rotate*

The Middle East is one of the most frequent stopovers on intercontinental flights. The location has enabled it to excel in connecting passengers across North America, Europe, Asia, and even Oceania. These long flights often last more than 10 hours; for some passengers, spending a night in transit can be worth it. For passengers flying Etihad Airways, that hotel comes included.

## *Stay for a night, or two.*

Passengers traveling through Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) on Etihad-operated or JetBlue codeshare flights are eligible for the offer. There are multiple options for travelers who want to explore the capital of the United Arab Emirates, depending on time and budget. The largest Emirate, Abu Dhabi, is home to some attractions, including theme parks, the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, a Louvre, city tours, and endless shopping.

## **Have you heard the Simple Flying podcast recently?**

The free stopover package includes a complimentary stay in a three-star hotel for up to two nights. Additional features include complimentary in-room WiFi and 24-hour check-in. To be eligible, one must have a minimum transit time of 24 hours in Abu Dhabi and book through the airline's website at least three days before planning to arrive at the hotel. The free partners include the following:

- Aloft Abu Dhabi
- Centro Al Manhal
- City Seasons Al Hamra Hotel
- Golden Tulip Abu Dhabi Downtown
- Millennium Al Rawdah Hotel
- Premier Inn Abu Dhabi Capital Centre Hotel
- Premier Inn Abu Dhabi International Airport Hotel

- Southern Sun Abu Dhabi
- Traders Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri

Passengers looking for a more upscale alternative are provided with a "Premium stopover" option for a luxury four or five-star hotel. Instead of covering the hotel fees, the airline appears to be subsidizing the cost

- Premier Inn Abu Dhabi Capital Centre Hotel
- Aloft Abu Dhabi

To qualify for the free hotel stay, the flight must cost above \$500 for a one-way trip and \$750 for a return. Passengers must also book at least five days before arrival in



of the hotels, promising discounts of "Up to 40% off Abu Dhabi's most exclusive hotels". The stay can also be extended to four nights and includes a buffet breakfast, WiFi, and 24-hour check-in. Premium partner hotels include the following:

- Aloft Abu Dhabi
- Anantara Eastern Mangroves Abu Dhabi Hotel
- Andaz Capital Gate, Abu Dhabi - a Concept by Hyatt
- Bab Al Qasr Hotel
- Centro Al Manhal
- Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi
- Park Rotana Abu Dhabi
- Premier Inn Abu Dhabi Capital Centre Hotel
- Premier Inn Abu Dhabi International Airport Hotel
- Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri
- Traders Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri

There is a third 'Transit Connect' option for passengers with connection times of less than 24 hours. Passengers in Abu Dhabi with a transit time of 10 – 24 hours can choose one of three complimentary hotels located near Abu Dhabi International Airport and accessible with a free bus shuttle:

- Premier Inn Abu Dhabi International Airport Hotel

Abu Dhabi.

## **The fine print.**

Passengers looking to take advantage of the scheme must have permission to enter the country. This can be done with a pre-arranged visa to enter the UAE or upon arrival for passengers from eligible countries. The hotels do not include complimentary airport transfers, and the offer does not extend to hotel stays in Dubai or any other emirate in the United Arab Emirates. Bookings must be made on Etihad.com by a lead booker at least 21 years old, as direct bookings will not be accepted.

It is possible to add a hotel after purchasing the flight with your last name and reference number. A contact email is provided as well. The website does ask that passengers request any accommodation three days in advance. However, it never hurts to ask if you have an impending Emirates flight within the next three days.

## **Did you know we also have an aviation YouTube channel here?**

For those looking to explore the city without spending the night, you can also use the Abu Dhabi public transport service for free. There are bus stops outside the departures area. The free A19 bus service even directly connects the airport to Yas Island and the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

## Qatar Airways announces generous benefits package for Qatari retirees, including flight discounts

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, announced a special package of benefits for Qatari re-



tiaries holding the official retirement card. This new offering is a tribute to the Qatari retirees for their dedication and service towards their country.

From January 2024, all Qatari retirement card holders will be entitled to discounts on all Qatar Airways flights, with discounts of 25 per cent for First and Business class, and 50 per cent for Economy class tickets to over 170 destinations worldwide.

In addition, Qatari holders of the retirement card will receive a 20 per cent discount on all food and beverage outlets and on some retail shops in Qatar Duty Free.

Qatar Airways Group will work closely with the General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority (GRSIA) in order to ensure that all the proper documentation is met for these packages.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer, Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said: "It is our pleasure to announce this vast and exclusive package of Qatar Airways flights and QDF benefits to local retirees as a tribute to their dedication and years of hard work and service for this country. Additionally, local retirees will also become lifetime Silver status members of the Qatar Airways Privilege Club,

and will be able to enjoy a wonderful range of benefits."

These benefits were announced by Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer during the unveiling of the new Souq Al Matar located at Hamad International Airport.

Director General of the General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority (GRSIA), Mr. Ahmed Bin Ali Al Hammadi, said: "The Qatar Airways Group packages for Qatari retirees is endorsed and directed by the country's Emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, showcasing appreciation and support for the national retirees in honour of their years of services to their country. We thank Qatar Airways for this initiative which underlines its role as our national carrier, one that every Qatari is proud of. We call on all institutions working in the country to propose similar initiatives."

Frequently Asked Questions:

Can the retiree use the discount for family and children when booking?

No, the entitlement will only apply to individual retirees and does not extend to family members.

Is the discount valid or available for all destinations?

Yes, the discount is valid for all destinations on Qatar Airways' network. It cannot be combined with special promotional offers.

Is the discount limited to a number of flights per year?

No, there is no upper limit to the number of flights.

Am I entitled to apply?

Qatar Airways Group will coordinate with State of Qatar's General Retirement and Social Insurance Authority (GRSIA) to assess eligible individuals.

## IATA reports European Air fares rising slower than inflation

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) released data showing that travelers in Europe are benefiting from air fares that are undercutting inflation, as the market continues its post-COVID recovery.

Latest traffic figures show that European carriers sit just 3.6% down on the 2019 peak. Europeans are traveling despite the inflationary environment: In June, average air fares in Europe were around 16% higher than pre-pandemic. However, that is lagging the average consumer prices index for the EU, which in June stood at 20% over pre-pandemic.

"European air travel is continuing to recover strongly and is on track to exceed the 2019 benchmark in 2024. The competitiveness of Europe's air transport market is holding air fare inflation at 16% four percentage points below the rises that we have seen in the broad consumer price index. Considering the extreme volatility of jet fuel prices and increases in workforce salaries this is a significant achievement and stands in contrast to the continually increasing charges being pushed by our infrastructure suppliers," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director General.

Recently the UK CAA approved an increase of 56% to London Heathrow's charges, and an increase of 26% for NATS, the UK's air navigation services provider, despite its service failure this summer. Meanwhile in the Netherlands, Amsterdam's Schiphol airport, which has also suffered service failures, has been granted an increase of 37%.

Regulators play a crucial role in generating

the conditions under which airline competition has been able to thrive. European regulators can take credit for ensuring a light-touch consumer regulation which has enabled airlines to create tremendous consumer choice and flexibility by unbundling the travel package. And the European slot regulation has created a balance between consistent schedules while increasing accessibility for new entrant airlines.

It's equally important for regulators to recognize where they could enhance competitive conditions. Two key areas are:

- Stronger regulation of monopoly infrastructure providers, to bring charges down.
- Reform of consumer protection regulation EU261, to ensure more consistent application of its aims, and a fairer sharing of accountability across the aviation value chain.

"The recovery of Europe's air transport market is bringing with it even more competitive market conditions. Consumers will see that with more routes and more airlines to choose from. In total, last year saw 20 new airlines born in Europe. This is important because a more competitive air transport market will make Europe a more competitive place to do business," said Walsh.

The data was released at the Wings of Change Europe (WOCE) event, held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, with KLM as lead sponsor, on 14-15 November. WOCE is a flagship industry event for Europe, where aviation leaders, regulators, and subject matter experts come together to discuss air transport's top issues.



## Air Europa passengers able to digitally verify passports with Amadeus Travel Ready

New, digital experiences are a top priority for travellers, with the IATA Global Passenger survey finding three quarters would like to use

to match key travel credentials with biometric facial data that will be used for identification at the different airline touchpoints.

said: “We are very excited with this new solution as it aligns perfectly with our innovation strategy.

“We want to deliver the experience our customers anticipate: an easy and smooth journey.

“We are looking for the development of biometrics enrolment capabilities which will truly enhance the experience for both our customers and agents.”

Amadeus Travel Ready is aligned with the IATA One ID initiative, which aims to further streamline passenger journey by promoting advance sharing of information, contactless technologies and biometric options. Francois Blanc, managing director, Traveller ID, Amadeus, said: “The digital verification of travel documents is accelerating, and Amadeus Travel Ready allows carriers to offer an enhanced experience for passengers.

“This is just one example of how Amadeus is able to support the travel industry with innovative, traveller-centric initiatives, utilizing digital identities.”



biometric data over passports and boarding passes.

The study also indicates that travellers are keen to streamline certain processes away from the airport, with check-in and immigration procedures as their top priorities.

This is why Air Europa is deploying Amadeus Travel Ready by Traveller ID, a full suite of innovative products making travel easier by automating and digitising the document verification process.

The technology gives peace of mind for travellers, allowing them to verify the compliance of certain documents before heading to the airport.

International passengers of Air Europa can now use this new feature during the online check-in, through any of their favourite digital channels (mobile or desktop).

Once a passport has been verified, passenger status will automatically be updated within the airline system as ‘Skycleared,’ saving time by speeding the manual document verifications at check-in, bag drop and boarding, and consequently reducing queues.

In the future, Amadeus Travel Ready will not only offer the possibility to Air Europa’s passengers to verify other documents such as visas, but will also facilitate biometric identification processes at the airport via the passengers’ mobiles.

The solution will provide capabilities

Estelle Leray, alliances director and head of customer experience, Air Europa,

## Global air cargo peak season tonnage up 3% on last year

Global air cargo demand has seen a significant recovery from last year’s levels. Combined tonnages for the peak period of October and November are around 3% higher than last year, according to figures released by WorldACD Market Data. Preliminary tonnages for November are up 5% year on year and up

1% on the previous month. The report showed that demand slightly dropped in the first full week of December when compared to the previous week, and overall worldwide prices levelled off. China’s strong export figures largely drove air cargo rates for Asia Pacific exports on the big head-haul export lanes.



# Rescue on the Sea

by: Zeenat Iqbal

Very little has been written about the ancient coastal people of Lyari – the irrepressible Makranis – who take their name from the Makran coast of Sindh and, Balochistan, which also indicates a common history of the two provinces; the Makran coast constitutes the South-East of Iran and the South-West of Pakistan; a 1,000 km stretch along the Gulf of Oman from RA's (cape) Al-Kuh, Iran (West of Jask), to the Lasbela District of Pakistan (near Karachi). The Makran coast is on the Arabian Sea, to the North-West of Quetta in Balochistan.

The following is a story of one such coastal village:

Children on bare - back camels, watch the sea, its vastness spanning even beyond the grasp of their eyes. Fishermen on the beach watch the sky, like the city dwellers read their newspapers first thing in the morning. Through the knots of their nets hanging on the line, they seem to predict the weather. This exercise determines whether they should take a boat out or not on the deep sea, for their daily expedition to catch fish. The air is filled with the smell of rancid water that is due to the deposits of oil, resulting in decayed and dead sea-life. Music, which is a part of their lives, plays in the background. The sounds are a fusion of musical cultures from the Middle East, Indo-Pakistan and Africa.

The shells on the beach look like the abandoned toenails of the old fishermen, and they are more beautiful there, than on the foot. The broken wings, the sand-logged crabs, a woman's lonely shoe, a rusty toy damaged beyond recognition, the plank or sail from a doomed boat, all lay sprawled on the beach, each with a story behind it, cleansed and sterilized by the salt and iodine in the great hospital of the sea. In the night, the light from the tower was but a spot against the background of the sky and spectacular cliffs.

The weather beaten villager's munched dates from the interior while watching holidaymakers trying to teach their children to swim, like fish to water, amidst the shouts and screams of the children who are already submerged in the waters. The steps of the ladies faltered as they approached the sea, clad in shalwar kameezes filled with the wind, the Shalwar Kameez itself a deterrent for swimming.

The story told here is that of a villager who because of his sharp sense of hearing

helped in the rescue of a drowning man. The villager was alone and as he had no family to fend for, hence he had no responsibilities to drain his energy. Somehow he had also preserved his youth, which he owed to mother nature. Religion that usually comes into the house with the presence of a woman was lacking in his and he was quite oblivious of it.

One evening when it was well after ten and the moon was full with black clouds scudding in ordered masses across the sky, he was still sitting on his wall, all alone. A cool wind suddenly sighed from an unexpected quarter and in its wake was a noise like that from a distant cavalry charge. His razor sharp ears picked up the sound. His brow creased up as his eyes searched the distance. He hobbled to his neighbours house and banged on the door of his traditional mud-hut – the two men, though natural life-guards, knew thoroughly all that was written in the books about rescue on the seas. The coastal blacks were descendants of imported slaves – the fishermen being known as the Meds and the seamen as the Koras – when there was no response; he banged on the door again. A groggy fellow soon appeared. He pointed towards the horizon and mumbled something in the Makranic dialect. The man's eyes tried to see beyond the direction of the location being pointed at. A boat in trouble, he thought aloud. Without wasting any time they woke the other men.

A rule of the sea states, that half the purchase price of the vessel of the sea is given to the rescue party. This prize money was quite a temptation, but since it was always dangerous the case required to be argued, all hands knew that the proposed journey was perilous.

The village women all having gathered on the beach, saw their men disappear, reappear, disappear, reappear and finally disappear into the darkness. They were now a tiny speck in the vast vista of the sea – the ocean that is open to all and merciful to none, that which threatens even when it seems to yield, pitiless always to weaken.

Many of the Makrani women now worked as domestic servants in Karachi; they were also experts in the art of massaging any mother and child after birth. Their traditional long dresses with hand-woven

Embroidery gave them a distinct 'folk'

touch, separating them from the typical Karachiites. The skirt-like look, with its wide circumference, and the loose shalwar could be compared to the costumes of the pathan and Kabuli women.

The men in the rescue boat changed sides, so as not to tip the balance of the boat as the surf sprayed them from head to toe. The taste of salt lingered in their mouths during the voyage. They were not bothered by their appearance. On the contrary, they felt no different from when they started out dry.

Suddenly, a dark object was thrown at them on the crest of a wave. It was a man. They held on to the poor fellow and eventually succeeded in dragging him aboard. Nobody felt sorry that this time, there was no prize. They rowed back to their village.

Couples fought with each other to offer hospitality to this half dead man; and they almost came to blows in their struggle for this visa to heaven.

They fetched a doctor from a nearby village, while the women sat all around him wearing their beads. The doctor was a Karachiite who had been sent to the village to serve them. The doctor prompted the man to speak. The man said, "Mahganj" very faintly. Repeated attempts, received the same response. The diagnosis stated that he was a victim of a traumatic shock and was suffering from amnesia, which meant a loss of memory, if only temporarily.

The Priest, who was also a member of the village council, was also summoned, as was the case in other similar incidents. "What's going on here?" he asked one of the ladies. "A miracle" said all the ladies together. The Makrani women are predominantly Muslim.

The Priest was briefed about the rescue and what followed. Being an elderly fellow, he recalled that a girl by the name of 'Mahganj' had been registered in the mosque some eighteen years ago.

Now, it was easy to put two and two together. The man they found was associated with Mahganj and was discovered as belonging to the same village as her's. He was also supposed to marry her.

Mahganj was the granddaughter of the village tailor. Thus it was decided that the man be taken back to the same village that he originated from. Similar surroundings would help to revive his memory, it was hoped.

A therapist was hired from the city and surely, slowly though, his memory came back in bits and pieces. Mahganj's presence always evoked a response in the man, so strong was the bond of love. His memory did eventually return, which in turn led to their marriage. They led a happy married life.



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# News in Pictures



Celebrating the 124th anniversary of the Connoisseurs Club, with the esteemed presence of Global President Dr. Kashif Moten. A distinguished gathering of diplomats and dignitaries from Pakistan graced the evening, including the Consul Generals of UAE, Malaysia, Russia, Ethiopia, and Mozambique. Notable attendees also included Caretaker Minister Mr. Mubeen Jumani, prominent businessmen such as Mr. Ahmed Chinoy, CEO of Maxims Group Mr. Junaid Abdul Kadir, Mr. Muslim Muhammadi, Mr. Aslam Mianoor, Mr. A. Wahab Sohail Director PCS Logistics and many other respected individuals.



Gul Aviation's ALG staff enjoyed Picnic in Murree on 23, 24 & 25 Dec-2023 on the occasion of its an annual get together with all north branches to spend leisure time to remove stress and get away from the hustle bustle of the routine life.

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# Inflation and its Aftermath

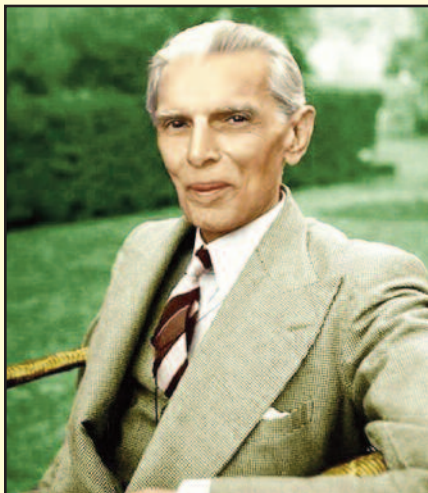
(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

The number of mental health patients is increasing day by day in our country in particular and in the entire world at large, due to the overall worsening economic conditions, human worry, anxiety caused by inflation coupled with unemployment and followed by an unforeseen beggary in human society all over, in some form or another. "Pants need water in some form or another to survive". Prior to these conditions, average Pakistanis had enjoyed a good health, having been accustomed to physical exercises, gaining medals in international sports-events and having a happy normal life during all the years, that followed after independence from the political and ethnical yoke of the



British, termed 'Pirate Islanders'; followed then by Hindu-led economic bourgeois monopoly in trade and commerce who became hoarders of the wealth of the Muslim

inhabitants (past rulers) of the Subcontinent, which was a well thought out social and economic plan, maneuvered by dominant Hindu majority and sponsored by the antagonist British rulers themselves. For decades the country 'Pakistan facing severe hardships continued pacing with the path of progress, facing hardships and pitfalls again caused by imperialist forces exploiting Pak- government's own wrong policies and follies. The tools were the Army Dictators who derailed democracy by revoking constitution and then making one of their own choices. This practice, as a legacy of the faulty past few decades has continued to persist and haunt the political arena of the country, despite the bitter fact



**The Two Remarkable Personalities. We know our Quaid-e-Azam M. Ali Jinnah father of our nation. The Photo at right is of a legendary Mahmud Ahmed, who served two terms of Presidency of Iran. Before that, he was a school teacher and during presidency, he continued with the salary of the teacher. He rejoined his school job after end of his Presidential tenure. He did not make a penny out of his position or loot the wealth of Iran.**



that there is no such provision for such a derailment in the constitution and the least one to have been desired by the founder of Pakistan. On the contrary the institution of Army, whose duty is at best articulated to protect democracy and the constitution as ordained by the father of the nation, has been betrayed till to this day several times.

By-passing cruel facts of history, most Pakistani families are out for fun, holiday and arranged-joint parties, tasting the spirit of customary fanfare with increased visits abroad. All these factors are interconnected. According to international standards, an average Pakistani was reasonably well-off by possessing resources and by living a happy social life albeit, of a mediocrity, to the envy of our other neighboring countries including India, who had lower standards of life. But the benefit they had was that they remained unhindered of political shackles in their democratic process which ensured for them a regular economic growth, the

fruits of which they are reaping now and we the Pakistanis continue to be marred by

inconsistent economic policies and haunted by political ghosts causing unde-



Directors of 'Sialkot International Airport' a project of a successful running in Public Private Sector.

mocratic developments, continuing with a persistent mixture of civil and military rule, called 'Stratocracy' in Political science (like the one we find in Thailand). The aftermath of this rupture in the embryo of systems is soaring of prices of all commodities to the point of height that we are now out for begging of loans from other countries, once despised by the honourable people of Pakistan. Indigenously speaking, life and honour of the citizen has extremely been impaired and mauled over beyond repair; which is the real cause of his depression and weakening of his erstwhile invigorative mental health.

The country Pakistan which was prosperous enough to have reached out to help other countries, for example to West Germany in times of latter's industrial developmental needs in 1950-60s; had always idealized Pakistan as an example with successful developmental policies among the developing world. This is true that Pakistan had not only helped West Germany by giving regular loans but also helped develop it in a very cordial relationship. Pakistan had helped in a few more areas as well including e.g., military, education and infrastructure. Additionally, Pakistani man power helped it grow faster and effectively. The loans given by Pakistan were termed later as 'Aid from the People of Pakistan to the people of West Germany'. This happened with some other developing countries too, where Pakistan offered economic assistance like it did to Germany.

Germany in return had offered Pakistan to send its workers there. Pakistan was even hesitant and proud enough to send its men in the times of Ayub Khan's government who did not accept the offer considering it a lowly job. The offer of Germany was then utilized by Turkey, another ally of Germany, with the result that we find today that the first largest population of immigrants in Germany consists of Turkish people, who own not only small businesses but we find nearly all the tasty 'Shish Kebab' restaurants spread all over Germany and in surrounding countries too, friendly to Germany. This has caused however, finishing of German origin restaurants of similar nature, for instance the 'Wienerwald' and the like. Turkish immigrants will speak German language to you only without of course having gone to schools to learn German language but surely not a word of English. In the 1960s, West Germany started a prolonged and heavy programme in its industrialization. It has idealized Pakistan and its workers who were there by their own efforts and virtue and who have contributed a lot in its development. The Pakistani workers are renowned for their diligent hard work and Germans consider

them as a hardworking, intelligent and well behaved people (as opposed to the Turkish Immigrants in majority who do not mix up with other people nor do they



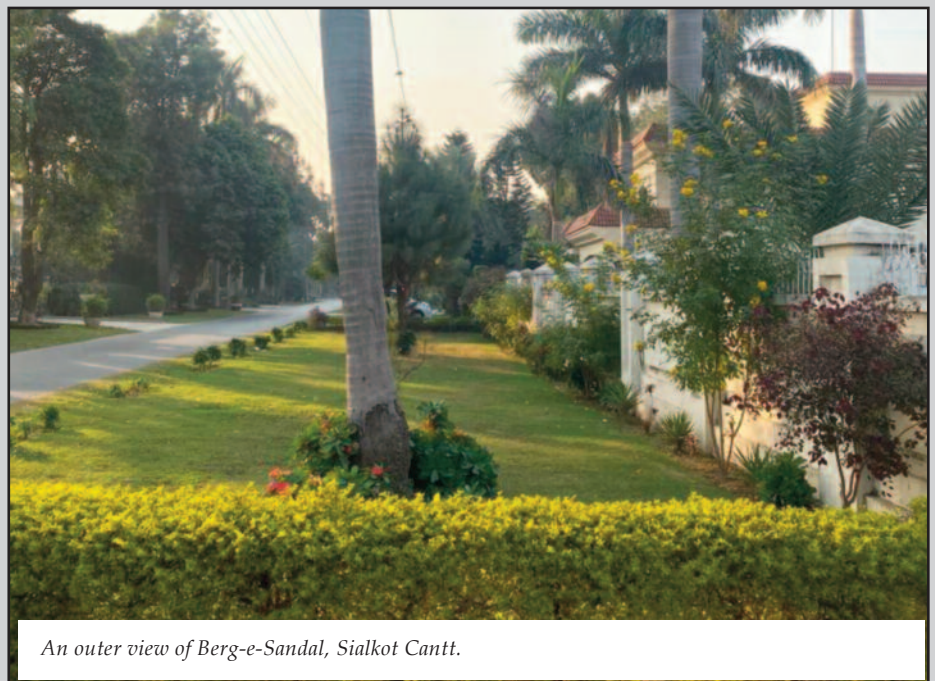
*Chaudry Rehmat Ali (who coined the name of Pakistan in 1933 while in London)*

work in factories). I write these impressions because of my own experiences and contacts with the German businessmen and the common people because of my prolonged business-travels abroad.

Coming back to my country, the name Pakistan was coined by Chaudry Rehmat Ali, a 'Pakistan Movement' activist who lived in London. He in January 1933 had the honour of inventing the name for a country which would come into existence after fifteen years. The great Chaudry had published a pamphlet in London with the name 'Now or Never' meaning thereby that it was the ripe time to create a country with the name

'Pakistan'. Our salutes are to the gentleman, who originally hailed from Hoshiarpur (now East Punjab) and had studied in Jullundur. He belonged to an ordinary village family but all the credit to his genesis for his spiritual inception; he is to be remembered for all times to come.

Owing to the current nose-drive of the economic situation in Pakistan, the scenario continues to deteriorate from depression and related disorders affecting exceedingly 800 people per day. As a result of the recurring waves of inflation unleashed by successive governments in the country, pessimism and despair among the people has grown manifold. The situation continues to deteriorate day by day, with institutions such as PIA, Railways and Steel mills are struggling for survival. The governments seem to lack competence, ability and integrity to cure the ailment of the economic catastrophic situation. It looks ironical to tell that the 'Cantonment Boards' in the cities have increased the house or property taxes by more than 250% in the last six years 6, which is ignominious and smears ridiculous design for average middle class people who usually own houses in these areas and there is no body to ask or check this impertinence of the responsible to come forward to check and rescue the common man who is unfortunate to have resided there and build beautiful houses and made the area adorably beautiful. Is it their fault, melody or a 'Swan Song'?



*An outer view of Berg-e-Sandal, Sialkot Cantt.*

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## Record cotton exports likely this season



Sindh's sole exporter has so far clinched deals for 125,000 cotton bales.

Pakistan has exported at least 125,000 cotton bales this season and the quantum is set to improve further during the current crop season.

The cotton consignments are being destined for China, Vietnam and Indonesia and a significant point is that all these export deals have been clinched by only one cotton ginner from Sindh, Dr Jasso Mal, Dawn has learnt.

It is hoped that a similar quantity of cotton bales will be exported during the remaining period of the season.

Cotton exports could not enter six digits since 2017-18 when the exports stood at 207,424 bales.

The country exported just 4,900 bales in 2022-23, 16,000 bales in 2021-22 and 70,200 bales in 2020-21.

Ginners say a better quality of lint and bullish international markets are attracting foreign buyers towards Pakistani cotton. Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq says that the lack of rains traditional in most of the cotton growing areas helped to improve the crop quality and this was supported by a record devaluation of the rupee making the local cotton cheaper on the world markets.

He says that the cotton exports may have set a record had there not been a drop in the lint yield in Punjab because of a severe whitefly attack, while there were also negative impacts of the environmental pollution.

He urges the government to desist from levying heavy taxes on the textile sector under pressure from the International Monetary Fund as the sector is already reeling under unprecedented gas and electricity tariffs as well as mark-up rates.

He claims that around 60pc of textile mills in the country have become dysfunctional because of the issues and it is feared that the local industry will fail to consume even nine million bales of cotton.



Grandfather sows, grandson reaps.

## Regional exports grow 14pc

Driven by higher shipments to China, the exports to nine regional countries witnessed a year-on-year growth of 14.3 per cent during the first four months of the current fiscal year, showed data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Monday 27 Nov.

The country's exports to Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives rose to \$1.443 billion in July-October from \$1.263bn in the corresponding period last year. In FY23, exports to these regional countries dipped 21.1pc to \$3.331bn over the preceding year.

Almost 61 per cent of Pakistan's regional exports were destined for China and the rest to the remaining eight countries. Exports to China increased 40.36pc to \$952.22m in July October FY24 from \$678.38m over the corresponding months of last year. In FY23, the exports to China declined 27.3pc to \$2.02bn from \$2.78bn in FY22. It was the first decrease in the post-Covid period.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan grew 2.64pc to \$128.53m in July-Oct FY24 from \$176.02m in the same months last year.

A few years ago, Afghanistan was the second major export destination for Pakistan after the United States.

The export figures did not include proceeds materialised through the land routes. No exports were made to Iran on the official channel in the first four months of the current fiscal year.

Most of the trade with Tehran is carried out through informal channels in border areas of Balochistan.

The country's exports to India declined 37pc to \$0.069m in 4MFY24 from \$0.110m in the corresponding months last year. Exports to Bangladesh decreased 34.74pc to \$192.19m from \$294.49m in July October 2022. Exports to Sri Lanka increased by 2.68pc to \$114.47m in 4MFY24 from \$111.48m in the same period last year.

On the other hand, exports to Nepal increased year-on-year by 11.76pc to \$1.14m in 4MFY24.

Shipments to the Maldives increased by 17.49pc to \$3.09m from \$2.63m. No export to Bhutan was recorded in 4MFY24.



## Pakistan, UAE ink MoUs in multiple fields

Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday, 27 Nov. signed multibillion dollars MoUs in Abu Dhabi in a range of areas to boost economic and strategic cooperation between the two countries.

and strategic relations had entered a 'new era of bilateral cooperation'.

Congratulating the people of Pakistan and the UAE, he said foundation of friendship with Pakistan that was laid by Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan in



The signing of MoUs was followed by a meeting of caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Syed Asim Munir with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to strengthen bilateral strategic cooperation.

The two leaders and the COAS witnessed the signing of the MoUs pertaining to investment and cooperation in the sectors of energy, port operations, wastewater treatment, food security, logistics, minerals, and banking and financial services.

These MoUs are expected to unlock multibillion dollars of investment from the UAE into Pakistan and will help realise various initiatives envisioned under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

The caretaker PM termed the signing of MoUs historic that will usher in a new era of Pak-UAE economic partnership.

Earlier, Mr. Kakar reached Abu Dhabi on a three-day trip for bilateral meetings. He will proceed to Kuwait before returning to the UAE to attend the COP28 summit on climate change.

In a video message sent from Abu Dhabi, the PM announced that Pakistan and the UAE had inked multibillion dollar MoUs after which bilateral economic

relations, had been taken forward by his son Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to a new era.

He expressed the hope that the MoUs that were signed by the two countries would turn into tangible projects very soon.

Later, PM Kakar and Gen Munir called on UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the two sides vowed to strengthen bilateral strategic cooperation.

According to the PM Office, the leaders underlined the historic and deep-rooted fraternal ties between the two countries. They reaffirmed the resolve to further strengthen bilateral strategic cooperation and dialogue between Pakistan and the UAE.

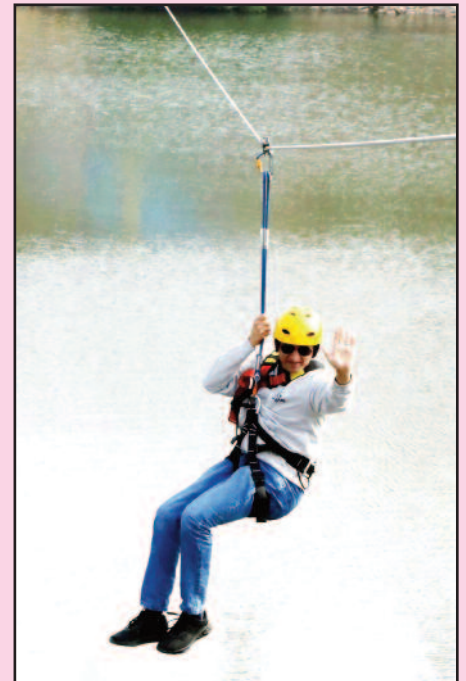
During the meeting, regional and global developments were also discussed with particular reference to the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in occupied Palestine.

Mr. Kakar reiterated Pakistan's support to the UAE's presidency for COP-28, underlining its importance as an opportunity for meaningful progress towards effective and result-oriented global actions in key areas to mitigate climate impact including the establishment of Loss and Damage Fund.

## Mayor Karachi opens zip line in Safari Park

Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday inaugurated a zip line in Safari Park on Sunday 26 Nov.

The zip line is a long thick metal wire attached between two points that one can move along quickly while hanging from a small wheel usually for entertainment.



Speaking at the inaugural ceremony, the mayor said that horse riding would be started soon in Safari Park, where the city's first Dino Safari Park was built.

The mayor said Safari Park was once in a state of disrepair and in 2015-16 law enforcement agencies had carried out raids inside the public facility and recovered 'a lot of things'.

The PPP government started development works in seven districts of Karachi and a week ago a major park in district Central was inaugurated, he said.

He said that a day ago he opened the state-of-the-art Star Sports Complex in Sherpao Colony in Landhi and the KMC was going to build five more playgrounds and parks in the city.

These efforts were being made in order to provide recreational facilities to citizens in a peaceful environment, he said.

## Chaukhandi graveyard to undergo monumental uplift

Caretaker Chief Minister retired Justice Maqbool Bagar on Wednesday directed the culture department to ensure preservation and beautification of the historical Chaukhandi graveyard by bringing stones from Jungshahi for the compound wall, benches and other related monuments in the cemetery.

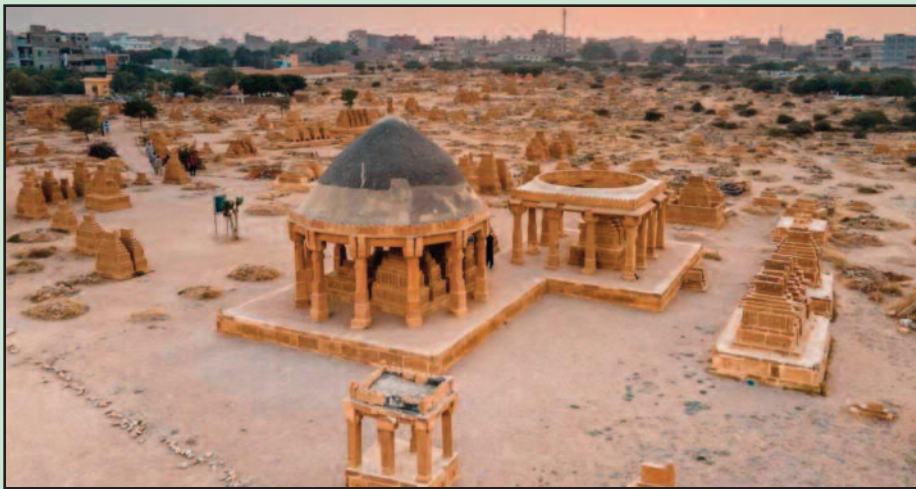
According to a CM House spokesperson, the chief minister was presiding over a follow-up meeting on the beautification of Sharea Faisal and the Chaukhandi graveyard.

wall of the graveyard and the construction of benches, and other related monuments.

The CM said that the graveyard area should have vast beautiful sitting places, benches, trees, and lights with effects and a beautiful entrance should be constructed with the Jungshahi stone.

The architects would present a final design plan to the CM to start the work.

The chief minister was told that UNESCO was not declaring the cemetery 'international heritage' because of illegal ongoing burials by locals.



The meeting was held at CM House and was attended among others by Culture Minister Dr. Junaid Shah, Mayor Murtaza Wahab, secretary to CM Raheem Shaikh, culture secretary Khalid Chachar, commissioner Saleem Rajput, architects Ali Naqvi, Arshad Farouqi, Yawar Jilani, Adil Kerai, Hafiz Habib and Kaleem Lashari.

Commissioner Saleem Rajput and deputy commissioner of Malir Saeed Leghari gave a detailed briefing to the chief minister.

They said that the land measuring 30 acres had been identified for a new graveyard so that burials could be carried out there instead of the historical Chaukhandi graveyard.

The CM was told that the Chaukhandi graveyard had 25.04 acres while additional land of 68.34 acres was within the boundary walls, which comes to a total of 93.38 acres.

The CM was told that all the encroachment from the graveyard entrance had been removed and now the land was ready for development.

On the advice of the architects, the CM directed the culture department to arrange stones from Jungshahi for the compound

Sharea Faisal beautification. The chief minister said that the Sharea Faisal beautification project was aimed at enhancing the visual appeal of the road, improving its advertising effectiveness and creating a cohesive urban environment.

He said that the plan would be carried out under the guidelines of design standards, dynamic signage, content rotation, lighting efficiency, maintenance, and community engagement.

The chief minister said that the architects would ensure that signage adhered to a unified design language that complemented the urban landscape.

The chief minister emphasised the need for prioritising standard size with integrating digital technology like LED screens and digital billboards for changing content.

He said that by implementing these guidelines, the signage policy for Sharea Faisal would create an engaging and visually captivating urban environment, enhancing the overall experience for residents and visitors.

The CM pointed out that the look of the road at the airport would improve when the three Falaknaz buildings were renovated.

## Mexico launches glitzy tourist train, ignoring environmental concerns

Mexico's Maya tourist train glided into action, promising prosperity for one of the country's poorest regions, but tainted by allegations of environmental devastation.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador hailed his flagship project as a 'magnum opus' built in 'record time' ahead of the inauguration, during which he boarded one of its green-and-white cars for the train's first run between the colonial city of Campeche and the Caribbean resort of Cancun.

Cancun is Mexico's leading tourist destination and welcomed 34 million foreign visitors between January and October, ac-



ording to official figures. The stretch of rail inaugurated on Friday is the first of seven sections that will cover a total of 1,554 kilometers around the Yucatan Peninsula, an area rich in flora, fauna and archaeological ruins. The others will be operational in the first quarter of 2024.

The route includes parts of the Mayan Riviera, which covers a jungle region considered the second-most important forest reserve in Latin America after the Amazon, as well as cenotes freshwater caves and underground rivers. Activists and environmental organisations said the project caused massive damage to the region's ecosystem, dubbing it an 'ecocide,' and succeeded in temporarily halting work through legal appeals.

But Lopez Obrador issued a decree declaring the infrastructure works a matter of 'national security' and construction resumed. Greenpeace and other NGOs have warned that the train threatens to contaminate cenotes and underground rivers in particular.



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## Plan to outsource four recreational resorts in province

Caretaker Chief Minister retired Justice Maqbool Bagar on Saturday 16 Dec. approved the project of outsourcing of four recreational resorts to rehabilitate these facilities.

The recreational resorts are Keenjhar Lake Resort, Haleji Lake Resort, Hawkesbay Resort and Ranikot Guesthouse.

Presiding over the 42nd Public Private Partnership (PPP) Unit Policy Board meeting, the chief minister directed the unit to rehabilitate these facilities, explore their true potential and provide quality entertainment and recreational options under PPP mode.

The meeting was attended by provincial caretaker ministers, Mubeen Jumani, Ishwar Lal and Arshad Wali Mohammad, chief secretary Dr. Fakhre Alam, chairman P&D Shakil Mangnejo, Senior Member Board of Revenue Sindh Zahid Abbasi, NED Vice Chancellor Dr Sarosh Lodhi and others.

The board was informed that the project was about outsourcing of four resorts Keenjhar Lake Resort, Haleji Lake Resort, Hawkesbay Resort and Ranikot Guesthouse -under PPP mode to rehabilitate these facilities.

The board approved the hiring of transaction advisers to conduct detailed feasibility to develop and outsource the project by way of a competitive bidding process.

Nabisar to Vajihar water supply project The meeting participants were told that the project was aimed at supplying 45 cusecs of treated water to IPPs at Thar Block II through a 65km pipeline and storage capacity of 45 days.

'This is the first project of its kind in a PPP mode for a water delivery mechanism,' the meeting was told.

The board was apprised of the provincial cabinet's approval regarding the injection of Rs4.6 billion in the project by way of equity/ sub-debt to help achieve the financial close of the project.

Motor vehicle inspection project The board was informed that the project shall address the long pending issue of inadequate inspection facilities for vehicles in Karachi.

The private party shall establish 32 state-of-the-art vehicle inspection centres catering to light and heavy vehicles with robust enforcement mechanisms.

The board directed to hire transaction



advisers to carry out a detailed feasibility study to develop the project for bidding.

The board was informed that the project was aimed at developing a dedicated state-of-the-art facility for setting up mar-

ble and allied industries which shall not only save the foreign exchange, but also contribute towards the overall economy of the country.

To attract more completion, the board was presented with two revised project structures for the consideration and decision.

The first structure was based on conducting the bidding process based on revenue sharing with the provincial government with demand risk being parked with private parties, which had a way of increasing the prices of the plots.

The second option was based on conducting the bidding based on the development cost of the project with the demand risk being parked with the provincial government.

Considering that the objective of the government is to attract serious industrialists to set up marble industries and not the revenue generation, the board approved the second structure and emphasised that international competitive bidding may be conducted to ensure wider competition.

## Sindhi Culture Day celebrated

Sindhi Culture Day was celebrated with traditional enthusiasm in Karachi and every major city and town of the province on Sunday 03 Dec.

A large number of people, including women and children, converged outside the Karachi Press Club, with some carrying flags of Palestine. They danced to the songs sung by artists, showing longing for Sindh.

This year's theme pertained to expulsion of illegal immigrants from Sindh.

Singers Tufail Sanjrani, Tameer Husain, Deeba Saher, Taj Mastani, Irfan

Samoo, Najaf Ali, Faqir Mohammed Hasan, Marvel, Shahid Bhangwar, Dua Memon, Zoya, Wasim Dahar, Jigar Jalal Chandio sang traditional songs with applause from the attendees.

Special security arrangements were made to avoid any untoward incident. Containers were parked on portions of roads leading to the venue at the KPC to prevent vehicles.

Speaking on the occasion, Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM) chairman Sanan Qureshi said Sindhi culture was all about love, tolerance and hospitality.



Attired in traditional dresses, artists sing and perform on stage to a jam-packed audience during Sindhi Culture Day celebrations, outside the Karachi Press Club on Sunday 03 Dec.

## Women`s contribution to country`s art and culture celebrated

The Tehrik-i-Niswan acknowledged and celebrated the invaluable efforts and contribution of women in promoting art and culture in Pakistan with their latest presentation 'Herstories', staged at the Arts Council of Pakistan here on Friday 08 Dec.

Ahead of the presentation, activist, dancer and founder of Tehrik-i-Niswan Sheema Kermani spoke about the real women being featured in the play. 'They were women who were talented, who worked hard and struggled and succeeded, too, but were not acknowledged for their work,' she said.

'Still they resisted. Some were also strong and defiant but have been forgotten nonetheless. Therefore, there is only history telling you about the stories of men, she pointed out.

'But we give you the stories of the women who saw through men, who may have appreciated them for their looks but not for their brains,' she said.

Thus, using strong script and dialogues along with graceful dance, began 'Herstories'.

The first woman remembered was the bold and beautiful Atiya Fyzee, an intellectual and a writer, who hailed from a very educated and enlightened family. Atiya and her sisters Zohra and Nazli didn't observe the veil. Of the three, Atiya was the most outspoken one, who could speak her mind. And after her younger sister Nazli was married off to a man much older than her, Atiya also spoke against early marriage.

'Herstories' also showed the friendship between Atiya and Allama Iqbal that began when the two often met in London and Ger-

many. Then after returning to India, they kept in touch through letters until 1911. In 1912, Atiya married Samuel Fyzee Rahimin, who was Jewish, but then embraced Islam. She later started writing opinion pieces for magazines.

To improve her Urdu, she sought guidance from an older relative, Maulana Shibli Nomani, who passed away in 1914. Then she learned music, too. Together she and her husband were huge collectors of art and music.

Atiya and Fyzee came to Pakistan on Quaid-i-Azam's invitation. They wanted to setup an art gallery and an institution here for teaching art and music for which the government of Pakistan had given them land where the Arts Council of Pakistan is located presently. But then after the passing away of the Quaid-i-Azam, the couple were driven out of their home here. To make ends meet, they sold their valuables.

Fyzee died in 1964 and Atiya three years after that at the age of 90.

The next story was about Anna Marie Gueizel, better known as Madam Azurie, the daughter of a Jewish German father and an Indian mother. Anna was herself very much into Western ballet until she met Atiya Fyzee, who suggested that she learn Indian classical dance. For this she took on the stage name of Madam Azurie. She found work in Pakistani films, too, but she was not very happy with the standard offerings here so travelled around the world with her dance troupe. Then, she hit bad times after General ZiaulHaq banned dance in Pakistan.

Parveen Qasim was another dancer here who was trained in Kathak dance by her father Muhammad Qasim. She also died in misery after Zia's banning dance.

Mr. and Mrs. Ghanshyam, who were here from India and had opened the Rhythmic Arts Centre here to teach music and dance to children, also had to run for their life back to India. These sad tales were followed by perhaps the saddest of all, the story of a poetess, Sara Shagufta, who, after standing up against all the challenges which came her way, finally lost her mind and committed suicide by throwing herself before a train at the Drigh Road Station in Karachi.

The presentation followed an interactive dialogue between a panel of women, including Kermani, artist and writer Rumana Husain, historian Dr. Huma Ghaffar and social activist Dr. Shahnaz Ahad, and the audience who further delved into why women have been ignored throughout history.



Sheema Kermani's dance students Tabita Simrin Bhatti and Muhammad Asif tell the story of Kathak dancer Parveen Qasim and her father and dance teacher Muhammad Qasim during the event on Friday 08 Dec.



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# Pakistani film In Flames bags top honours at Saudi festival

Pakistani feature film, *In Flames*, has won the best feature film award, the highest honour at the Red Sea International Film Festival.

When the announcement was made at the award ceremony, the cast along with the film producer went to the stage to receive the Yusr gold award, which carries a \$100,000 cash prize their biggest achievement so far for the film that is also the official entry from Pakistan for the Oscars this year.

The second award in Yusr silver category went to an Indian film, *Dear Jassi*, the only Punjabi film screened at the festival. The win by *In Flames* is quite an achievement for the cast, especially the three actors in the main lead, Ramesha Nawal, Omar Javaid and Bakhtawar Mazhar who made their debut with this movie, and script writer Zarrar Kahn who was making his directorial debut.

Producer Shant Joshi, flanked by the entire cast, received the prize.

Two juries, led by jury president Baz Luhrmann, deliberated to finally select winners in 14 categories. Seventeen films in competition as well as 23 shorts were in the running for the coveted awards.

'We were not expecting the win. This is something huge for me as it's my first ever project of any kind.

Baz Luhrmann and all the other jury members praised us all a lot,' said Ramesha while talking to media after receiving the prize.

She said she and others in the team knew their film was good but it was in competition with all the other good movies too such as *In-Sha Allah Boy* and *Tiger Stripes* and winning against all such good movies was an honour.

'This opens up a flood of opportunities for Pakistani cinema whose path was paved by Joyland. *In Flames* has been officially nominated for the Oscars from Pakistan and we are looking forward to it. More films may come out of Pakistan after our film.

Ramesha told media she was doing BS in Media Sciences at a university in

Karachi and she took a break from education after being selected for the film. She gave online auditions for the role during the Covid lockdown. Before that she had done some theatre with Tehrik-i-Niswaan of Sheema Kermani in Karachi. She is a part of the group of Sheema.

'I was giving auditions for TV dramas in production houses and I asked my friend to send me some audition calls where I saw the casting call for *In Flames*. I was not expecting to get this role for the

into acting and made it big. 'A good story' and 'an interesting character' attracted him to the project.

Being a Punjabi, Omar is looking forward to doing Punjabi films, including those from India, which have quite a following and audience in Canada and the UK besides Pakistan and India.

*In Flames* is a horror drama, with a mother and her daughter at the centre of all the action. The family finds it hard to make ends meet and has inheritance issues after the death of the patriarch of the family.

At the Red Sea film festival, Aseem Chhabra an Indian film critic and author of books on Shashi Kapoor, Irrfan Khan and Priyanka Chopra thinks *In Flames* might have won the coveted award for the horror element in it that got jury's attention.

Chhabra's compatriot, Ajit Rai, another film critic and cultural journalist, says the film won the award for its women centric theme and a story with strong feministic elements. When referred to various other women centric films in the festival that had about 34 films directed by women about the gender issues, he says *In Flames* is different in that the women characters remain victorious in their struggle at the end.

The idea resonated with Bakhtawar Mazhar, who plays the key role of the mother, as she told media that she liked the script more. Its women characters took things in their own hand and survived without any help

from any man.

Jomana Al-Rashid, chairwoman of the Red Sea Film Foundation, in her address, said the festival had celebrated this vibrant global film community together with a goal of bridging cultures and creating new ties.

'We've done that with over 125 films from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Rwanda, Armenia, Malaysia, Pakistan, New Zealand, France, India, Thailand, and many more as well as an industry programme in the Souk with 348 project submissions, and 44 works in progress from more than 26 countries,' she added.



film even after the second audition.

*In Flames* is also the debut feature film of male lead Omar Javaid. 'Zarrar Kahn had watched my short film *Hafiz* and I had watched his short film, *Stray Dogs Come Out at Night*. We connected on Instagram.

'I was in Canada then and he suggested that we should do some project together. I did not believe in his suggestion then, but Zarrar actually made it happen.

Omar is the only Canadian cast member and it was his first time working in Karachi. He has done nine-to-five jobs and opted for a drama course.

Despite his shy demeanor, he jumped

## Pilgrims celebrate Guru Nanak's birth anniversary

The Gurdwara Punja Sahib on Thursday 30 Nov. morning echoed with religious chants of 'Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe Guru Ji Ki Fateh', as pilgrims from across the world poured into the third most sacred place of Sikh religion in Hassanabdal to celebrate the 554th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion.

On this occasion, the Sikh temple was

prepared food and distributed it in the Guru kaLangar.

In the light of the teachings of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, equal treatment for all, regardless of caste or creed, was a central theme, exemplified by the provision of free facilities, including medical aid, meals, and accommodation for the 400 rooms in the Sikh temple.



Devotees recite from the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture at the concluding ceremony of birth anniversary of Guru Granth Nanak Dev at Hassanabdal on Thursday 30 Nov.

decorated with colourful flowers, flags, banners, and posters, and thousands of devotees could be seen praying in the gurdwara's vast courtyard.

Celebrations began early in the morning, with pilgrims cleansing themselves at the holy pond. The anniversary celebration was concluded with the ritual of the 'Bhog' ceremony.

Later, several congregations were held to recall Baba Guru Nanak's message of peace, love, and brotherhood.

Several congregations were held during the day, which recalled Guru Nanak's message of peace, love, and universal brotherhood. Special prayers were offered, and hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib-the Sikh Holy Scripture-were sung.

Pilgrims pledged to comply with the teachings of the guru.

On the concluding day, religious songs, known as kirtan, were sung while free sweets and langar, community lunches, were also offered irrespective of religious orientation. Men, women, and children participated in the karseva as a service to the community, in which they



A view of Gurdwara Punja Sahib in Hassan-Abdal where Sikh pilgrims have gathered to celebrate the 554th birthday anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak.

## Kasur fisherman catches 'river monster'

A local fisherman caught a six-foot long fish weighing about 110kg from the river Sutlej near Kanganpur on Saturday 25 Nov.



The Raho (Rohu) fish caught sells like a hot cake during the winter and is one the delicacies for which the ancient city of Kasur is known for.

The fisherman and his catch remained the talk of the town and people made a video of the big fish and posted it on social media that soon went viral.

The fisherman, however, took the fish to the Lahore market with a hope to earn the maximum price of the big fish.



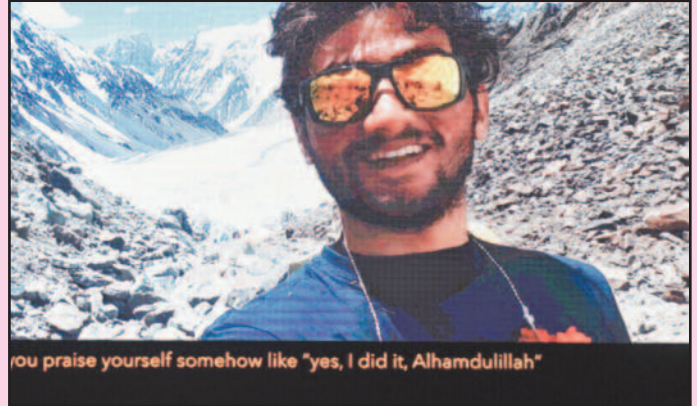
# Painting exhibition, film festival mark International Mountain Day

International Mountain Day was celebrated on Monday, 11 Dec., with events at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) and Serena Hotel. A three-day exhibition of photographs

rarese said.

Samuel Rizk, the country representative of UNDP Pakistan, said mountains and their natives had become more vulnerable in the changing climate.

diplomats, ambassadors of Jordan and Nepal, the high commissioner of Kenya, representatives from the corporate sector, members of the business community and media professionals.



and paintings kicked off at the PNCA in connection with the 13th edition of the Pakistan Mountain Festival the annual flagship event of Devcom-Pakistan to mark the International Mountain Day that falls on December 11 every year.

The exhibition titled 'The Colours of the ICE' included 21 large-sized photos reflecting the colours and textures of the glaciers in the north of Pakistan, 40 photos of the Boltoro cleanup, 12 paintings of the Himalayan Odyssey series by Raja Changez Sultan and some paintings by students.

Italian Ambassador Andreas Ferrarese was the chief guest on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Ferrarese said mountains played a key role on the planet.

He said the Italian government had always been out to support initiatives regarding research, science, conservation and development.

He appreciated the role of the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation, EvK2CNR and the UNDP for their relentless efforts to empower mountain stakeholders to conserve local resources.

'They are the water towers of the world and supply freshwater to an estimated half of humanity.

Mountains are home to an extraordinary range of plants and animals and to many culturally diverse communities with different languages and traditions. From climate regulation and water provisioning services to soil maintenance and conservation, mountains are key to our lives and livelihoods,' Ambassador Fer-

'Mountain regions are complex in their geomorphology and therefore more vulnerable to variations in temperatures and changes in patterns of hydrology. Both have a direct impact on mountain communities, adding fragility to lives already clinging tenuously to ecosystems for sustenance,' he said.

On the other hand, the 9th edition of the International Mountain Film Festival commenced in Serena Hotel under its Adventure Diplomacy initiative.

The event witnessed a significant presence of distinguished dignitaries,

Speaking on the occasion, PIMFF founder Wajahat Malik said: 'This festival is not just about films; it is a platform for encouragement connections, promoting sustainable practices, and inspiring a collective commitment to preserving these natural wonders for generations to come.

In this International Mountain Film Festival, PIMFF is going to showcase 21 films and hold panel discussions on cinematic journey that transcends borders and elevates the human experience in PNCA on December 16 and 17.

## Adviser picked for Roosevelt Hotel

The Privatisation Commission Board (PCB) on Friday 01 Dec., appointed a financial adviser to undertake the leasing process of the Roosevelt Hotel in New York for setting up a joint venture project for prospective mixed-use development.

The Privatisation Commission had invited technical and financial proposals for the appointment of a financial adviser and the last date for the submission of proposals was Nov 8.

Four parties had submitted their proposals. The consortium led by Jones Lang LaSalle Americas Inc (JLL) has been declared the top bidder based on the criterion laid down.

The PCB has formed a negotiating committee and is tasked with concluding the financial services agreement with the top-ranked bidder.

The Roosevelt Hotel is owned by PIA Investments Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd, registered in the British Virgin Islands.

Spreading over 600,000 square feet on Madison Avenue, the Roosevelt Hotel is amongst the elite hotels in Manhattan comprising 19 storeys and 1,025 rooms. Chairing the PCB Board meeting, Caretaker Minister for Privatisation Fawad Hasan Fawad also recommended to seek the delisting of 425MW Nandipur Power Plant and 747MW Guddu Power Plant from the privatization programme by the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation.

The board approved the appointment of a transaction committee to oversee the implementation of the financial services agreement for the PIACL transaction.



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## Crimean treasures return to Kyiv after years of legal battles

Ancient Crimean gold treasures returned to Kyiv on Monday 27 Nov., after being stuck in a Dutch museum for nine years, where they were on show when Russia seized the Black Sea peninsula in 2014.

Ukraine hailed the arrival of the jewels in the midst of the Russian full-scale 2022 invasion as a victory for its 'identity and freedom'.

The Scythian artifacts some around 2,000 years old were on loan to Amster-



dam's Allard Pierson museum when they suddenly were at the centre of a geopolitical crisis following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea.

Years of legal battles ensued, with both Kyiv and Moscow-controlled Crimean museums filing suits that the jewels should be in their hands, before the Dutch Supreme Court ruled this summer they should go to Ukraine. 'After almost 10 years of trials, artefacts from four museums of Crimea returned to Ukraine,' the National Museum of the History of Ukraine (NMHU) said on its website.

'They will be kept in the NMHU until the de-occupation of Crimea,' it added.

Their return comes 21 months into Moscow's offensive, and is a symbolic win for Ukraine, which has repeatedly vowed to retake Crimea.

Ukraine's customs service said the jewels arrived from Amsterdam by truck, equipped with a 'temperature maintenance system, in special trunks'.

It published a video of the truck entering Kyiv's medieval Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra monastery, where it said customs officers will go through the 2,694 kilograms of jewels.

## Iftar added to UNESCO cultural heritage list

The UN cultural agency on Wednesday 06 Dec., recognized Iftar, the meal that breaks the daytime fast during Ramazan, on its list of intangible cultural heritage.

The application for the socio-cultural tradition was jointly submitted by Iran, Turkiye, Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

'Iftar (also called Eftari or Iftor) is observed by Muslims at sunset in the month of

mark Iftar by eating a date accompanied by tea. Recipes for dishes and pastries, however, vary greatly depending on the country. The UN body said, 'Iftar practice is typically transmitted within families, and children and youth are often entrusted with preparing components of traditional meals.'

Italian opera singing Also added to UNESCO list of intangible global heritage is Italian opera singing, an art 'transmitted only orally' between maestro and pupil that attracts students globally.



Ramazan, upon completion of all religious and ceremonial rites,' said UNESCO.

Iftar, which follows the sunset call to prayer during the holy month, is associated with gatherings 'strengthening family and community ties and promoting charity, solidarity and social exchange,' it said.

The age-old traditional Muslim observance was recognised by the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage that has been meeting in Botswana since Monday. In several Muslim countries, it is customary to

'This is an official confirmation of what we already knew: opera singing is a world excellence,' Italy's Culture Minister Gennaro Sangiuliano stated after the UNESCO decision.

Opera originated in Italy, home to Scarlatti and Verdi. It was sung by Italian patriots and some of the world's greatest arias came from the peninsula.

Italian opera is 'a physiologically controlled way of singing that enhances the carrying power of the voice in acoustic spaces such as amphitheatres and churches, UNESCO mentioned.'





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