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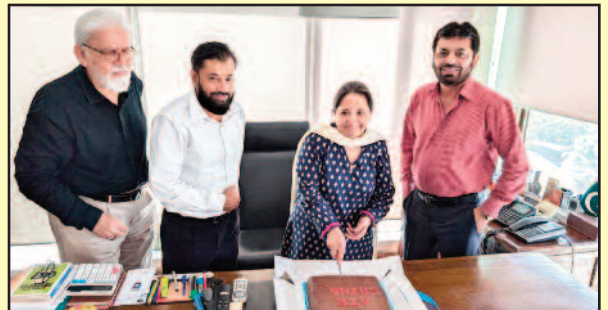
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Picture shows: Mrs. Lubna Imran Peracha, Director – Gul Aviation (CSSA Air China) cutting Eid greeting cake flanked by Mr. Khalid Khan (GM), Mr. Rais Siddiqui (GM-CA-Div.) & Mr. Faisal (Air China).



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PCAA is confident to resume flights to Europe

While the European Union has yet to issue a formal statement in this regard, it seems that Pakistan has remained unable to satisfy the EU Air Safety Committee regarding the latter's concerns pertaining to airline safety measures. As a consequence, local airlines will remain restricted from flying to the region. It may be recalled that, in March, Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority had expressed the hope that PIA would soon be able to resume flights to the UK once the EU Air Safety Committee completed its review in May.

The CAA had been confident that it would pass the scrutiny and that the airline would be allowed to resume flights to Europe, which have remained suspended for four years since the PTI aviation minister, Ghulam Sarwar Khan, made a shocking statement about airline pilots possessing 'dubious' licences. The former minister's remarks had drawn condemnation, but while he was roundly criticised for 'exaggerating' the figures and 'misrepresenting' the reality of the situation, successive governments since then have remained unable to convince the EU authorities otherwise.

It is, more than anything, the loss of Pakistani travellers that they remain unable to avail the facility of flying directly to Europe on a local airline. The connecting flights they are right now forced to take due to the ban result in an additional burden in terms of the extra money and time they have to expend in order to make it to their destinations.

It is the CAA's responsibility to allay the concerns that have been raised regarding its staffing issues and adherence to safety protocols. And while it appears that it is making a sincere effort to meet expectations, it is falling short. The government must take measures to provide it with the necessary resources to ensure that the Pakistani aviation sector is operating in compliance with European safety standards. PIA has been anxious to take off: for example, the CEO of the national flag carrier had been hopeful of resuming biweekly flights to Paris in June or July. However, because the CAA seemingly fell slightly short, those plans will now have to wait. The Authority is more than capable: it is staffed with able professionals who know what they must do. It just needs to make a final, concerted push and clear the finishing line.

New Gwadar Inter'l Airport (NGIAP) achieves important milestone



The Flight Calibration and Flight Procedure Design milestone for the New Gwadar International Airport has been successfully achieved today with the successful test landing of the Calibration Aircraft on the newly constructed runway. The Calibration Aircraft was welcomed to the airport with a customary water cannon salute by the Rescue and Fire Fighting Services department of PCAA. This significant accomplishment is the result of the collaborative efforts of both the Chinese and Pakistani Project Teams. The airport is projected to be completed and operational in the fourth quarter of this year. The progress made in bringing this project from its initial stages to this point would not have been possible without the dedicated work of the Chinese Project Team, led by Mr. Ding Kan PD-CACC, Mr. Zhu Zheng Chief Supervisor-CACC, Mr. Liao Jianxin,

Project Coordinator-CACC, Mr. Hu Xiaohe PM-BUGG, and Mr. Dai Chunzhuang-PM-CRBEG. The Pakistani project team, under the leadership of Mr. Sadiq Ur Rehman, Dy. DG Airport Services/Ex-PD NGIAP, Engr. Faiz Ullah Khattak, Project Director, PCAA, Engr. Ghulam Mujtaba, Dy. Project Director PCAA, and Mr. Aamir Ali Hashmi, Project Coordinator, PCAA, also deserves recognition for their efforts. Additionally, the Technical Directorates of PCAA and the Flight Inspection Unit (FIU) have played a crucial role in achieving this milestone within a short timeframe.

The completion of the New Gwadar International Airport is expected to have a transformative impact on the development of Gwadar and its surrounding areas, as well as improve the lives of the people of Balochistan Province and the Coastal Region.





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PCAA signs contract for reconstruction of JIAP's main runway

The contract was signed in a ceremony held at the PCAA Headquarters by the Director Planning and Development, PCAA, and Director of Umar Jan and Company.

The reconstruction of main runway, starting soon after Eid, will enhance airside infrastructure bringing about significant advantages. The advantages include the ability to seamlessly accommodate wide body aircraft up to category 4F (including A380), improved safety, reliability, and the capacity to handle the growing passenger and aircraft traffic. This upgrade is expected to attract both domestic and international airlines to operate at JIAP in the future. Upon completion of the upgrade, it will feature the latest energy-efficient LED CAT-I Airfield Lighting System with Runway Centreline Lights.

The upgrade project also includes extension of runway by 1000 feet making it 11500 feet. Reconstruction of taxiways and overruns at both ends, and asphaltic overlay of four taxi links near 07L end. The upgrade also includes installation of control and monitoring system of the proposed energy efficient LED type CAT-I AFL System in the control tower.



The ICAO-ICVM Team visits Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority Headquarters to gain insight into follow-up activities, flight standard etc.

Pakistan launches satellite to boost internet connectivity

Pakistan launched a multi-mission communication satellite - PakSat-MM1 - to improve internet connectivity, from XiChang Satellite Launch Centre in China, the Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) announced on Thursday, 30 May.

The achievement, coming on the heels of the country's maiden iCube Qamar lunar mission launched earlier this month, drew congratulatory messages from Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other officials for the nation.

Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Minister Ahsan Iqbal witnessed the launch and could be seen capturing the liftoff with his mobile phone.

PakSat-MM1 has been jointly designed and developed by Suparco and the China Great Wall Industry Corporation.

This is a geostationary satellite based on advanced communication technologies that will enhance the satellite-based communication services of Pakistan and fulfil the needs of commercial as well as government users.

"High Throughput System (HTS) technology onboard PakSat-MM1 will substantially boost connectivity to the last mile and will reshape the future of satellite communication in Pakistan. This will be the key to connect the unconnected with the rest of the country," Suparco said.

"PakSat-MM1 will ensure affordable

bandwidth with higher reach within the country. Sectors such as e-commerce, telemedicine, e-governance, Pak SBAS svc and many others will be able to grow," Suparco said in its statement.

It said PakSat-MM1 would also have Pakistan Space Based Augmentation System (Pak-SBAS) payload which would provide the integrity-based positioning, navigation, and timing (PNT) services making Pakistan the 11th country in the world that would launch its own SBAS besides the USA, Russia, China, Japan, Europe, India, South Korea, Australia, Nigeria and Algeria.

"It is also a testament to the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and the Peoples Republic of China," it said.

Suparco Chairman Mohammad Yousaf Khan appreciated the efforts of engineers from both countries for the successful completion of the project. With control stations at Lahore and Karachi, the 5-tonne satellite has a design life of 15 years with a coverage area stretching from Pakistan to the Indian Ocean, the Middle East and parts of Africa and Europe. In Reels posted on social media, Mr Iqbal while congratulating both Pakistani and Chinese engineers said, "The satellite will provide Pakistan with much needed enhanced connectivity - another important milestone in Pakistan's space programme."

Soon Pakistan will launch satellites on made-in-Pakistan rockets."

IATA urges Pakistan to release blocked airlines funds

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) on Tuesday, 04 June urged Pakistan and Bangladesh to remove barriers to airlines repatriating ticket revenues after Nigeria released the vast majority of blocked funds.



According to the world trade body, Pakistan and Bangladesh collectively owe \$731 million out of a global total of \$1.8 billion in blocked airline funds. Several countries have encountered difficulties repatriating funds due to falls in the value of their currencies, a lack of US dollars, or red tape.

"We are encouraging them to prioritise the airlines' money because this is very important for their economic and also airline activities," said Xie Xingquan, IATA's regional vice-president for North Asia. In Pakistan, the main problem is delays over requirements for airlines to submit audit and tax exemption certificates, he said. "In Bangladesh, I think the key issue is they just lack the US dollars for foreign currencies," said Xie.

Nigeria has cleared 98 per cent of blocked funds which in June 2023 amounted to \$850m, IATA said on Sunday, 02 June.

Egypt also approved the clearance of its blocked funds, IATA said, which combined with Nigeria helped reduce the total backlog by some 28pc since December last year. Lebanon, Ethiopia and Algeria are among the other countries that have yet to release funds owed to airlines, according to IATA.



A rocket carrying the communication satellite PakSat-MM1 lifts off from China's XiChang Satellite Launch Centre, on Thursday, 30 May.

Astronaut who took 'Earthrise' photo dies in plane crash

William Anders, the former US astronaut who took the historic "Earthrise" photo from space over 55 years ago, died in a plane crash on Friday, 07 June at the age of 90, his family said.

Anders had been piloting a small plane which crashed off the coast of Washington state on Friday, 07 June morning, his son told US media. Anders was alone in the plane. His body was later recovered by a dive team, The Seattle Times reported, quoting a Coast Guard spokesperson.

A member of the Apollo 8 mission in December 1968, Anders became one of the first humans to orbit the Moon, along with fellow Americans Frank Borman and James Lovell. The crew circled the Moon 10 times without landing, before successfully returning to Earth on Dec 27, 1968. On one of the lunar orbits, Anders captured a photo of the bright blue Earth against the vast darkness of space, with the Moon's cratered surface in the foreground.

"We'd been going backwards and upside down, didn't really see the Earth or the Sun, and when we rolled around and came around and saw the first Earthrise," he said in a 1997 Nasa

oral history interview. "(T)hat certainly was, by far, the most impressive thing. To see this very delicate, colorful orb which to me looked like a Christmas tree ornament coming up over this very stark, ugly lunar landscape."

The "Earthrise" photo is frequently listed in roundups of key historical images, and was included in Life Magazine's book "100 Photographs that Changed The World." An original version of the photo sold at a Copenhagen auction in 2022 for 11,800 euros.

"In 1968, during Apollo 8, Bill Anders offered to humanity among the deepest of gifts an astronaut can give," Nasa chief Bill Nelson wrote on social media platform X.

"He traveled to the threshold of the Moon and helped all of us see something else: ourselves. He embodied the lessons and the purpose of exploration. We will miss him," Nelson added.

The San Juan County Sheriff's Office in Washington state said in a statement that local authorities received a report around noon on Friday, 07 June that "an older model plane was flying from north to south then went into the water and sunk."

Inquiry ordered after ASF cuts woman pilgrim's hair over suspicion



The Ministry of Aviation has ordered an inquiry into an incident in which staff of the Airport Security Force (ASF) had cut the hair of a woman pilgrim over some suspicion at Karachi airport on Saturday, 1st June.

The Aviation Division, through an order issued from Islamabad, formed a board of inquiry (BoI) to investigate and ascertain the facts of the case, examine established procedures and protocols for passenger screening and scanning at the airport, and examine the responsibilities of government entities associated with passenger screening and scanning.

It said: "An incident was reported on June 1, 2024, where ASF officials, during a search at international departures at Jinnah International Airport Karachi, stopped a family consisting of Ms Seema Bano and her husband, Muhammad Shafi Ahmed, who were travelling for Haj via flight SV-701."

It said that while the Anti-Narcotics Force had cleared Ms Bano, ASF staff raised suspicions and cut her hair.

"After scanning, she was cleared to board [the flight]," the order stated. "Therefore, it is considered necessary to inquire into this matter to ascertain the facts of the incident and fix responsibility."

The order said that the aviation secretary had constituted a four-member board of inquiry and asked it to finalise its report within two working days. The BoI has been asked to ascertain whether the action taken by ASF officials was in line with established protocols or if they transgressed their authority and to fix responsibility if any.



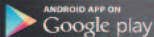
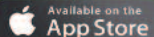
A Nov 21, 1968, file photo shows the Apollo 8 crew (left to right) - Commander Frank Borman, lunar module pilot William Anders, and command module pilot James Lovell in front of the Apollo mission's simulator during training.

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20 passengers in intensive care after turbulent flight



The Singapore Airlines Boeing 777-300ER airplane, which was headed to Singapore from London before making an emergency landing in Bangkok due to severe turbulence, is seen on the tarmac at Suvarnabhumi International Airport in Bangkok on May 22, 2024.

Twenty people landed up in intensive care units in Bangkok's hospitals on Wednesday, 22 May after a terrifying 'high-altitude plunge' on a flight from London to Singapore. An elderly passenger died and over 100 people sustained injuries.

Singapore Airlines flight 'SQ321' hit "sudden extreme turbulence" over Myanmar (10 hours into its journey to Singapore), abruptly 'rising' and 'plunging' several times.

One passenger stated people were 'thrown around the cabin' (so violently) that they put dents in the ceiling during the drama at 11,300 metres (37,000 feet). This left dozens with head injuries.

Photographs from inside the plane portray that the cabin was in chaos, strewn with food, drinks bottles, luggage and with oxygen masks dangling from the aircraft ceiling. The plane, which was carrying 211 passengers and 18 crew members, made an emergency landing at Bangkok's

Suvarnabhumi Airport. Medical staff used gurneys to ferry the injured to ambulances waiting on the tarmac.

"I was flung up to the roof and then as the plane dropped forward so did I" one passenger told Australian media upon arrival in Sydney. "I then hit the floor quite hard and all the breakfast items and glass flew forward as well.

"The poor crew was preparing breakfast for everyone, so they got the worst injuries."

A 73-year-old British male died and 104 people were injured. A hospital in Bangkok stated that its staff were either treating or had treated, 85 of those injured including 20 people who were taken to intensive care units.

The 20 who wound up in intensive care were from Australia, Britain, Hong Kong, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the Philippines, according to the Samitivej Hospital without specifying how many were passengers or crew.



Passengers of Singapore Airlines flight SQ321 from London to Singapore, which made an emergency landing in Bangkok, greet family members upon arrival at Changi Airport in Singapore on May 22, 2024.

12 hurt as another flight hits turbulence

Nearly a week after a Singapore Airlines flight from Heathrow airport hit severe turbulence over the Indian Ocean leaving at least one British passenger dead and 20 others injured, six crew members and six passengers travelling on a Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Ireland suffered injuries during a bout of turbulence on Sunday, 26 May.

However, the flight (QR017), a Boeing 787 Dreamliner, landed shortly before 1pm, Dublin Airport said, adding that the plane



At least 12 people were injured after a Qatar Airways carrier hit turbulence while flying from Doha, Qatar to Dublin, Ireland.

landed safely and as scheduled.

"Upon landing, the aircraft was met by emergency services, including airport police and our fire and rescue department, due to six passengers and six crew [12 total] on board reporting injuries after the aircraft experienced turbulence while airborne over Turkiye," the airport authorities explained in a statement. Irish broadcaster RTE, citing passengers arriving at the airport, said the incident lasted less than 20 seconds and occurred during food service.

Qatar Airways said in a statement that a "small number" of passengers and crew sustained minor injuries during the flight and were receiving medical attention.

The airline did not directly comment on the turbulence, but said the matter is subject to an internal investigation. Turbulence-related airline accidents are the most common type, according to a 2021 study by the US National Transportation Safety Board.

From 2009 through 2018, the US agency found that turbulence accounted for more than a third of reported airline accidents and most resulted in one or more serious injuries, but no aircraft damage.

Codeshare and frequent flyer benefits

The UAE national airline Etihad Airways and Egypt's flag carrier Egyptair have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to expand their codeshare agreement, offering customers access to more destinations across their networks and enhancing frequent flyer benefits. This comes a week after Etihad Airways signed an MoU with Royal Air Maroc, another North African carrier.

Strengthening commercial ties

The MoU, signed by the CEOs of both airlines, was announced on June 11, 2024. It paves the way for extended codeshares and frequent flyer cooperation between the two national carriers. Through the agreement, Etihad and Egyptair aim to enhance their commercial and operational ties to provide their customers with wider choices, higher-quality services, and increased value.

According to Etihad CEO Antonioaldo Neves, the collaboration will provide more opportunities for seamless travel for Etihad and Egyptair customers across their international networks. It also lays the foundation for enhanced cooperation across the airlines' frequent flyer programs, enabling them to unlock opportunities in joint marketing campaigns and promotions designed to reward customers. Egyptair Chairman and CEO Yehia Zakaria added,

"This MoU strengthens our strategic partnership with Etihad Airways and underscores our commitment to providing our valued customers with a seamless travel experience and access to a wider network.

I am confident that this partnership with Etihad Airways will not only benefit our passengers but also foster a stronger relationship between Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. We look forward to a successful collaboration, soaring to new heights together."

The existing codeshare agreement enhances connectivity between Egypt and the United Arab Emirates and gives customers access to more destinations beyond their respective hubs in Cairo and Abu Dhabi. The two carriers will extend the codeshare partnership, giving Egyptair travelers access to more destinations across Etihad's network and several existing cities in Asia and Australia.



Islamabad airport operations to be outsourced first

The government has made privatisation its key priority, and, in this regard, the Islamabad International Airport will be outsourced first.

In his budget speech, Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb said the government should not be in business. "The prime minister strongly believes in reducing government interference in the commercial space and promoting the private sector; that is why we have made privatisation a key priority."

The government will not only accelerate the ongoing privatisation of institutions like the Pakistan International Airport (PIA), the Roosevelt Hotel, the House Building Finance Corporation, and First Women's Bank, but will also launch a concrete programme offering other state-owned

enterprises (SOEs) for private sector investment.

In the coming years, special attention will be given to the transfer of ownership and management of energy, financial, and industrial SOEs to the private sector.

In this context, he also shared details regarding the privatisation of PIA, which started in November 2023 with the appointment of financial advisor Ernst & Young. The current government sped up the process, and in March 2024, the PIA Holding Company was formed.

Afterwards, a liability of Rs622 billion was transferred from the privatisation commission. The commission has invited expressions of interest through advertisements in national and foreign newspapers for the privatisation of PIA in April 2024.



This 2018 file photo shows the entrance of the Islamabad International Airport (IIA).



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Climate change and air travel

With recent incidents of extreme turbulence faced by airplanes, and climate change being cited as the main reason, news reports indicate how change in climate conditions, especially heat waves, have a deadly effect on air travel. Hotter days are worse for flying and hotter climate conditions in various regions of the world can lead to difficulty in flying an aircraft. So if climate change is disrupting air travel, it is clearly unpleasant news for an industry that is set to reach 9.7 billion global passenger traffic by the end of the year.

The recent incidents of severe turbulence that struck Qatar Airways and Singapore Airlines flights are two examples of how climate change is a possible threat to flights due to hotter temperatures at ground level, making it difficult for airplanes to gain enough lift to take flight.

In the past, as per the US Federal Aviation Administration, 163 passengers and crew on US flights have been seriously injured by turbulence between 2009 and 2022. As per the FAA, more than 2.9 million people fly in the US every day. As many as 12 people were injured after a Qatar Airways flight from Doha to Dublin was hit with turbulence while flying over Turkey in May. Six passengers and six crew members were injured, eight of whom were taken to the hospital after

assessment. Severe turbulence also struck a Singapore Airlines flight recently, resulting in the death of one person and leaving more than 100 others injured. Some 48 people are still hospitalised.

Meteorologists and aviation analysts suggest these turbulence encounters have been increasing over the years and have potential impact on flying conditions.

Last year, scientists from the University of Reading in the UK reported that severe turbulence had risen by 55% between 1979 and 2020 on the frequently used north Atlantic route. They attributed this increase to changes in high altitude wind speeds caused by warmer air from carbon emissions.

This year, too, as per University of Reading professor Paul Williams, “Turbulence on flights can be caused by storms, mountains, and strong air currents called jet streams. In the case of clear air turbulence, it can be difficult to avoid because it doesn’t show up on the weather radar in the flight deck. The last fatality caused by clear-air turbulence on a commercial flight occurred on December 28, 1997, on a United Airlines flight from Tokyo to Honolulu.”

As strong evidence that turbulence is increasing because of climate change, Williams says, “We recently discovered that severe clear-air turbulence in the north Atlantic has

increased by 55% since 1979. Our latest future projections indicate a doubling or trebling of severe turbulence in the jet streams in the coming decades, if climate continues as we expect.”

Even US transportation secretary Pete Buttigieg commented there are indications that turbulence is up by about 15%, an increase he attributed to climate change. “The reality is, the effects of climate change are already upon us in terms of our transportation,” Buttigieg said in a news interview recently. Even if incidents like the one on Singapore Airlines are a rarity, the country is gearing up for a changing climate.

Hotter climes can easily cause weight restrictions for flight take-off – which also means limited passengers seating, luggage, cargo, and even fuel.

While the year 2024 is off to a strong start despite economic and geopolitical uncertainties, it is the busiest election year ever, and a reason to see aviation as a catalyst for growth.

It is currently difficult to reduce emissions from the aviation sector, and flying less could possibly be the only way to reduce emissions, but an estimate of passengers flying every year is huge. For instance, reports claim that in 2022, 917 million passengers took over 15 million US-based flights—an average of more than 42,000 flights per day.



Meteorologists and aviation analysts suggest these turbulence encounters have been increasing over the years and have potential impact on flying conditions.

Qatar Airways named world's best airline for 2024

AirlineRatings.com, the world's only safety and product rating website has announced Qatar Airways as its Airline of the Year for 2024.

Qatar Airways nudged out previous winners Air New Zealand as well as Korean Air, Cathay Pacific Airways and Emirates for the top spot.

The AirlineRatings.com Airline Excellence Awards, judged by five editors with over 100 years of industry experience, combines major safety and government audits, with 12 key criteria that include: fleet age, passenger reviews, profitability, safety rating, product rating, innovation and forward fleet orders.

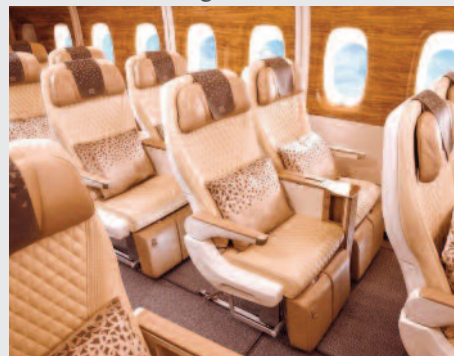
AirlineRatings.com Editor-in-Chief Geoffrey Thomas said: "In our objective analysis Qatar Airways came out number one in many key areas although it was a very close scoring for the top ten."

"The passenger reviews however scored Qatar Airways ahead of all airlines and its consistency and high standard of service delivery came through in the feedback," said Mr Thomas.

The Top 25 premium airlines are Qatar Airways, Korean Air, Cathay Pacific Airways, Air New Zealand, Emirates, Air France / KLM, All Nippon Airways, Etihad Airways, Qantas, Virgin Australia / Atlantic, Vietnam Airlines, Singapore Airlines, EVA Air, TAP Portugal, JAL, Finnair, Hawaiian, Alaska Airlines, Lufthansa / Swiss, Turkish Airlines, IGA Group (British Airways & Iberia) Air Canada, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines and American Airlines.

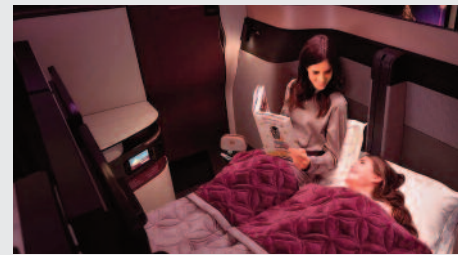
Qatar Airways picked up Best Business Class for the fifth year running and Best Catering and Air New Zealand won Best Economy Class.

Singapore Airlines won Best First Class, while Virgin Australia won Best Cabin Crew. Best-In-Flight Entertainment and



Best Premium Economy went to Emirates, while Qantas picked up Best Lounges. Etihad Airways picked up Best Environmental Airline for the third year running.

Excellence in Long Haul travel: Middle East – Qatar Airways, North Asia – Korean Air, Europe – Air France, North America – Air Canada, South America – Latam, Southern Europe – Turkish Airlines, South-East Asia – Cathay Pacific Airways and



Australia/Pacific – Air New Zealand.

Best Regional Airline was Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA).

AirlineRatings.com's Best Low-Cost Airlines are; Americas – Southwest, Middle




East – Fly Dubai, Asia – AirAsia Group, Australia/Pacific – Jetstar Group and Europe – easyJet.

Vietjet picked up two awards; Best Ultra Low-Cost Airline and Best Low-Cost Airline Onboard Hospitality which recognize the amazing value of its onboard offering.


AirlineRatings also announced its Top 25 Best Low-Cost Airlines which are in alphabetical order: AirAsia Group, Air Baltic, Air Canada Rouge, Cebu Pacific, easyjet, Eurowings, FlyDubai, FlyNAS, GOL, Jetblue, Jet2, Jetstar Group, Jeju air, Norwegian, Peach, Ryanair, Scoot, Spicejet, SunCountry, Southwest, Transavia, Vietjet, Volotea, Vueling, WizzAir.


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UK, Schengen states make millions off rejected visas

The United Kingdom and Schengen countries raised millions of pounds and euros in fees from rejected visa applications from Pakistan, new research published this month shows.

The analysis released by Lago Collective, a community of researchers, policymakers and designers, shows that Pakistanis spent £5.3 million on rejected UK visa applications, with close to 40 per cent applications rejected from Pakistan in 2023.

In the same year, around 50pc of Schengen visas from Pakistan were also rejected, with €3.344m spent on applications.

The data was published in collaboration with the EU observer, which reported that EU governments raked in €130m per year in rejected visa application fees, which were dubbed as ‘reverse remittances’.

The analysis compiled by Marta Foresti and Otho Mantegazza at Lago Collective showed that the cost of Schengen visa rejections in 2023 was €130m.

“Visa inequality has very tangible consequences and the world’s poorest pay the price. You can think of the costs of rejected visas as ‘reverse remittances’, money flowing from poor to rich countries,” Foresti said in a statement to media. “We never hear about these costs when discussing aid or migration, it is time to change that.”

“The rejection rate for short-term visa applications from Pakistan is very high, at

approximately 40pc for both Schengen countries and the UK, resulting in very significant costs for all involved. This is surprising given the multiple ties between Pakistan, Europe and the UK.

“Yet the challenges faced by Pakistani nationals to reach Europe through legal means became tragically clear a year ago when hundreds died in the Greece boat capsizes. People have no choice but to resort to dangerous journeys,” Foresti added. Foresti is the founder of Lago Collective and senior visiting fellow, ODI.

The EUobserver report said the total sum is likely to increase in 2024 since the visa application fee to travel to the EU will increase from 80 to 90 for adults on June 11. It also said the UK raised £44m in rejected fees, which are non-refundable regardless of the outcome. African and Asian countries bear 90pc of the costs for rejected Schengen visas.

Writing for LSE blogs last year, Foresti noted, “Visas regimes are not equal or reciprocal. An Italian national can obtain a visa to Sierra Leone on arrival for £30. A Sierra Leonean wishing to travel to Italy for a business meeting must undertake two separate trips to the Italian Consulate in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, over several weeks at eye-watering costs.”

The analysis notes that the visa application fee for short-term Schengen visas is 80 and for the UK equivalent, £100. For UK visa applications, countries with high rejection rates include Nigeria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Algeria — bearing high costs as a result (£5.8m,

£5.3m, 2.3m and 3.6m, respectively).

Visa application fees are increasing, to 90 for Schengen/Europe and £120 for the UK. This will result in significant increases in rejected visas in 2024, further exacerbated by the emphasis on tightening migration in many European countries where elections are taking place.

In a statement, Lago said, “These costs are just the tip of the iceberg: in most cases, applicants pay more than the basic application fee, with private agencies involved in processing visa applications and brokers providing additional services along the way. The costs of not being able to travel for business and leisure also results into significant losses for all those involved.”

Dutch gov't will aim to 'opt out' of EU asylum rules

The incoming Dutch government led by nationalist Geert Wilders’ PVV party will aim to pursue its curbs on immigration by opting out of European

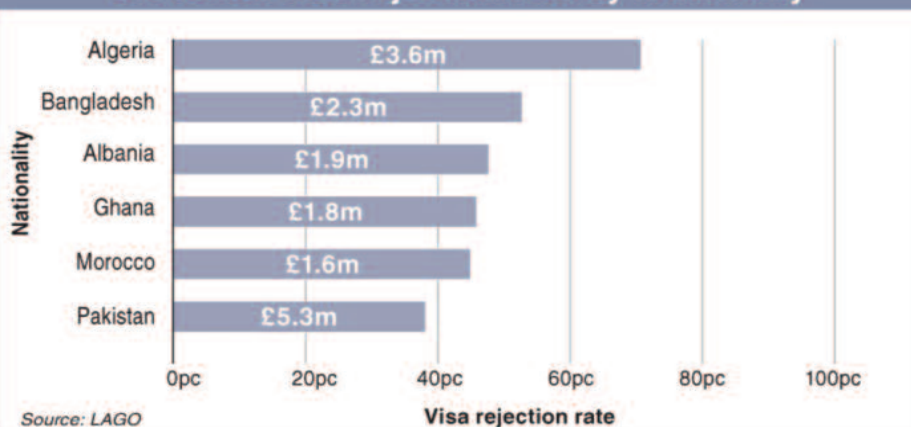


Union migration rules, setting up a clash with Brussels before it has even taken office. In its government plan published on Thursday, 16 May the four-party coalition says it will aim for the “strictest-ever asylum regime” with stronger border controls and harsher rules for asylum seekers who arrive in the Netherlands.

“An opt out clause for European asylum and migration policies will be submitted as soon as possible to the European Commission,” the coalition says in its pact.

Wilders said the plan would make the Netherlands less attractive for asylum seekers, adding that “people in Africa and the Middle East will start thinking they might be better off elsewhere”.

UK visitor visa rejection rate by nationality



This graph shows data for six countries that had the most visa applications rejected. Although Pakistanis have the lowest rejection rate among these countries, the amount recovered from them is higher due to a higher number of applicants.

EgyptAir Cargo starts freighter service from Karachi to Cairo

Egypt Air Cargo has started weekly freighter service from Karachi to Cairo with connections to various global destinations. The inaugural commercial cargo flight started on 4th of June 2024 using Airbus330F aircraft having cargo capacity of 52 to 55 tons.

The service was highly anticipated due to a backlog of cargo at Pakistani airports caused by limited cargo capacity. Ships are currently avoiding the Red Sea due to heightened risks following the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The Egypt air cargo flight launch coincides with the start of the mango season, addressing the increased demand for cargo space as passenger airlines have limited capacity for additional cargo.

The Airlines has plan to increase the frequency of flights to Karachi and also to start from Lahore to Cairo flights very soon.



Group photo of crew taken with Mr. Azhar Zaheer, Manager RAS on the occasion.

Why Emirates is not afraid of new competition in the Middle East

As airlines in the Middle East continue to grow, Emirates President Sir Tim Clark says that the airline is not afraid of new competition as it's been around for nearly four decades and as the global air transport industry is forecasted to continue growing in the coming years.

Growth of the aviation industry

The Middle East has been one of the world's fastest-growing markets, with leading airlines continuing to enhance their services and increase competition in the region.

Despite this, the Emirates President maintains that the airline is not afraid of new competition, as he sees real growth in the UAE and surrounding areas despite the troubles faced in the industry.

Responding to questions at the 80th IATA Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Dubai, Sir Tim Clark said,

“We have about 4.5 billion passengers traveling in the year, and it's still forecasted to double in ten years. So if you look at the amount of money that has been invested in this part of the world, like what is going on in Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Dubai, and other parts of the world, there is real growth, despite the troubled world we live in.”

Sir Tim Clark has been with Emirates since its founding in 1985, later becoming its president in 2003. He has played a monumental role in transforming Emirates into the leading global carrier it is today. Since then, several new airlines, including low-cost carriers, have emerged in the Middle East. Last year, Saudi Arabia announced the launch of a new national



airline, Riyadh Air, which is expected to launch operations in 2025 and serve over 100 destinations by 2030.

Additionally, Sir Tim Clark noted that demand will continue growing, but the biggest single challenge airlines are facing is sustainability. Over the years, Emirates has invested millions in sustainability research and recently expanded Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) opportunities by adding London Heathrow Airport to the destinations where it operates flights using SAF.

The lack of connectivity in Africa

Emirates is one of the leading international carriers between the Middle East and Africa, with over 200 weekly flights to 20 destinations. Despite being home to over 18% of the global population, Africa only contributes about

2.1% of passenger traffic. The International Air Transport Association (IATA) recognizes Africa as a region with immense potential. However, it faces several unique challenges, including the lack of connectivity.

As Sir Tim Clark highlighted, the African air transport industry is severely impacted by the lack of political harmony among governments. Fewer restrictions on air travel and open skies agreements could help unlock the potential of African aviation. According to AFCAC, 37 African



states have signed up for the Single African Air Transport Market (SAATM). This initiative aims to liberalize the African aviation industry but is yet to be fully implemented.

About ten years ago, Emirates was referred to as the national carrier of Africa as it provided easier access to various African destinations via Dubai International Airport (DXB). Today, it remains easier to travel between certain parts of the continent via airports in the Middle East and Europe. However, Emirates sees the potential for growth in various markets.



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T.M Cargo provides end-to-end service



Mr. Masood Ali Siddiqui, Chairman - T.M. Cargo

T.M. Cargo & Logistics, established in 1995 and operational since October 1996, specializes in air, road, and train cargo transport, ensuring door-to-door delivery within 24 hours. This was highlighted by Chairman Mr. Masood Ali Siddiqui in an interview with Flyer International. Renowned as a leading domestic cargo agent, T.M. Cargo exclusively partners with AirSial and Air Blue, while also utilizing other airlines like PIA and Shaheen Air for over 15 years, securing a top position in the industry. Headquartered at Karachi Airport with key offices in Rawalpindi and Lahore, T.M. Cargo operates around 300 nationwide offices staffed by over 800 dedicated employees. The company manages approximately 12 tons of air cargo and 40 tons of road cargo daily, offering door-to-door services.

T.M. Cargo & Logistics excels in handling time-sensitive shipments both domestically and internationally, aiming to provide reliable, cost-effective, and dependable transportation services. Committed to high service standards and quality, the company benchmarks itself against the best in the logistics industry. The experienced team ensures prompt responses and timely deliveries, whether through overnight or overland services, fostering long-term business relationships. Emphasizing teamwork, customer support, and technological upgrades, T.M. Cargo continuously enhances its logistics processes and equipment.

Mr. Masood A. Siddiqui, the Chairman, holds a commerce degree and has extensive experience in the industry. Beginning his career with Travel International Karachi in 1978, he worked with Philippine Airlines and Travel Centre, then joined Saudi Arabian Airlines (GSA) in Riyadh. Returning to Pakistan, he worked with Haleeb Dairies Distribution before establishing Champion Bread in Karachi. Eventually, he entered the aviation sector with Shaheen Airport Services and its subsidiary.



SIAL elects New Vice Chairman



Mr. Faraz Akram Awan has been elected unopposed Vice Chairman of Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) for the year 2024-25. He has been involved with SIAL as a director since its inception. Mr. Faraz Akram Awan is the Partner of Speedy World Wide Logistics, a business he entered in 1997.

Speedy World Wide Logistics was established in 2004 after the dissolution of Speedy Cargo, which was founded in 1990 by the late Mr. Muhammad Akram Awan and his two partners. Following Mr. Akram Awan's death in 2003, the company was rebranded and taken over by Mr. Faraz Akram Awan and his elder brother and Managing Partner, Mr. Waqas Akram Awan.

Under their leadership, the company has excelled in cargo handling services and became an authorized handling agent for dangerous goods by PCCA. Speedy World Wide Logistics is headquartered in Sialkot with branch offices in major cities across Pakistan.

Mr. Faraz Akram Awan has extensive experience in the cargo business and social work. He was elected as Regional Chairman of ACAAP in 2007-08 and 2 times General Body Member of FPCCI. His father, Mr. M. Akram Awan, was also elected Chairman of ACAAP in 1998, and his brother, Mr. Waqas Akram Awan, served as Senior Vice President of SCCI in 2018-19 and 7 times General Body Member of FPCCI. Mr. Faraz is well-known in Sialkot's social circles and has organized the ACAAP Cricket Gala in Sialkot multiple times.



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Etihad is looking for 1000 new Cabin Crew this year

Etihad Airways needs more cabin crew, so it fittingly decided to launch its global recruitment program on May 31, which also happened to be World Cabin Crew Day. The Middle East carrier has already recruited more than 1,000 cabin attendants this year and announced it is now looking for another 1,000 to join the airline by the end of the year.

Open Days starting in June

Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), is casting its recruitment net far and wide, hosting Open Days from June until the end of the year in 19 locations, including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Athens, Antalya, Malaga, Manchester, Copenhagen, Vienna, Singapore, Nice, Dublin, Amsterdam, Brussels, Dusseldorf, Milan, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Colombo and Jaipur.

Etihad Chief People and Corporate Affairs Officer Dr. Nadia Bastaki said that on this World Cabin Crew Day, the airline is celebrating and recognizing the contribution that the cabin crew makes to the airline's success, adding, "There has never been a better time to enjoy the spirit of Abu Dhabi and all that this fantastic emirate has to offer."

"As Etihad continues to grow, we are looking for exceptional individuals to join our team who share our ambition to become the airline that everyone wants to fly. We're looking for the world's best, who will embrace our passion for growing the airline and share our commitment to providing warm hospitality and a truly remarkable experience for our guests."



It is highly probable that Etihad will be inundated with far more applications than available positions, but that didn't stop the airline from pointing out all the benefits that come with this position. Currently, Etihad's cabin crew team includes people



from 112 nationalities, all based in Abu Dhabi, where they can enjoy some of the world's most beautiful beaches, outdoor adventures in the desert and a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Etihad cabin crew members are provided with a competitive salary, fully

furnished modern accommodation, medical insurance, allowances and access to discounts on shopping, car hire, leisure activities, dining and more, plus excellent travel benefits to an extensive range of destinations.

Six aircraft types and 70+ destinations

Successful applicants will have an abundance of variety ahead, starting with more than 70 destinations across Australia, Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and North America to which they will fly. They will also have the opportunity to work on multiple aircraft, including the Airbus A380 services to London, New York and Paris (from November 1) or on A350s, A320s, A321s and Boeing 787 Dreamliners and 777s.

While Etihad is recruiting cabin crew members, it also offers excellent career progression opportunities, with 31% of cabin crew members promoted within the past 12 months. Some of those were promoted to roles in the corporate division located at the airline's headquarters to positions in network operations, finance, aviation training, marketing, and guest experience.

Etihad is scouring the world for the best talent to join its team, so those who can't make it to an Open Day can register their interest and apply online (careers.etihad.com) to participate in a virtual recruitment process. Candidates can choose their interview date and time to suit their time zone and schedule, and to make it even easier, the airline said that prior experience is not essential.



Helicopter crash kills Raisi: Are sanctions behind Iran's aviation crisis?

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi and Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian were confirmed dead on Monday, 20 May after their helicopter crashed in a mountainous and forested area in the country's East Azerbaijan province amid dense fog. Six other people in the helicopter, including crew members, were also killed.

The United States-manufactured, two-blade Bell 212 that Raisi was travelling in is believed to have been decades old. Foreign sanctions on Iran dating back to the 1979 revolution, and subsequently over its nuclear programme and its backing of the so-called "axis of resistance", have made it difficult for the country to obtain aircraft parts or new aircraft.

Since the first US sanctions on Iran 45 years ago, the Iranian economy has continued to take hits, and its airlines have in particular been impacted.

But Iran's tense geopolitical neighbourhood, and especially its taut relationship with Israel and the US, have also led to deadly errors resulting in the deaths of hundreds of people.

Here is a recap of some of Iran's biggest aviation accidents since 1979, and how sanctions have affected the sector.

Iran's biggest aviation incidents

Between 1979 and 2023, Iran plane crashes have killed more than 2,000 people, according to the Geneva-based Bureau of Aircraft Accident Archives (B3A).

- **January 21, 1980:** A Boeing 727-100 operated by flagbearer Iran Air struck the slope of a mountain in the Alborz range in Tehran, killing all 128 of its occupants. An inoperable instrument landing system (ILS) and limited visibility due to nighttime and weather are believed to have caused the crash. The accident happened soon after Iranian air traffic controllers ended a strike.

- **November 3, 1986:** A Lockheed C-130 Hercules operated by Iran's air force went below the minimum safe altitude of (1,981m) 6,500 feet when the plane struck a mountain slope in the Sistan and Baluchestan province, killing all 103 of its occupants including 96 soldiers. A fault in the altimeter, which is used to measure altitude, might have caused the crash, according to experts.

- **July 13, 1988:** An Airbus A300 operated by Iran Air was hit by missiles fired by the US Navy cruiser USS Vincennes at Qeshm Island after the ship mistook the plane for a military aircraft. This killed all 290 of its occupants in the deadliest aviation accident in Iran's history.



- **February 12, 2002:** A Tupolev TU-154 by Iran Airtour hit a mountain slope in Khorramabad after the crew failed to realise that the plane was off course, killing all 119 occupants including four Spanish citizens. The lack of visibility due to weather was a possible contributing factor.

- **February 19, 2003:** An Ilyushin II-76 operated by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) hit a mountain near the Kerman airport upon landing, killing all 275 people on the plane. The crew started the descent prematurely and went below the minimum safe altitude in poor visibility.

- **July 15, 2009:** A Tupolev TU-154 run by Caspian Airlines crashed into an open field in Qazvin after descending rapidly, killing all 168 people on the plane. The crash was attributed to several technical faults such as damaged engine parts and cut hydraulic and fuel lines.

- **January 8, 2020:** A Boeing 737-800 operated by Ukraine's flagbearer, Ukraine International Airlines, was shot down by two missiles minutes after takeoff in Sabashahrin Tehran, killing 176 people onboard. The government said this was a "human error" after the aircraft was mistaken for a "hostile target".

How have sanctions affected Iran's aviation sector?

Shortly after the imposition of the sanctions in 1979, the aviation sector of Iran was particularly hit hard after the government was unable to import new planes. Iran suffered from a spike in deadly aircraft accidents through the

1980s, 1990s and the early 2000s.

Central to the US sanctions against Iranian aviation is a bar on the country's import of any planes or aircraft equipment built with more than 10 percent US parts. That has effectively ruled out the prospects of Iran buying new Western planes or helicopters, but has also made it hard for Tehran to source the parts it needs for maintenance of its ageing fleets. Some Russian jets also depend on US parts, so sourcing even those is difficult for Iran, despite close ties between Tehran and Moscow, and their shared enmity with Washington.

The US denies that it is responsible for Iran's record of aviation accidents. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Al Jazeera that "every country's government has its own responsibility for ensuring the safety and reliability of its equipment." US sanctions on Iran's aviation sector, the official said, were the consequence of Tehran using aircraft to ferry weapons to armed groups that Washington describes as "terrorists".

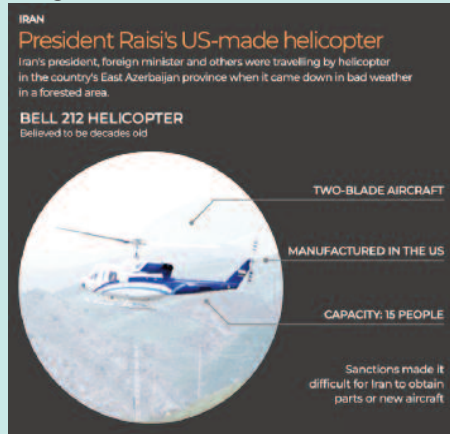
On May 20, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller was also asked, during a regular briefing about comments from former Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif blaming

US sanctions for Raisi's helicopter crash.

"So, first of all, we are not going to apologise for our sanctions regime at all," Miller responded. "Ultimately, it's the Iranian Government that is responsible for the decision to fly a 45-year-old helicopter in what was described as poor weather conditions, not any other actor."

Meanwhile, the result of Iran's failure to ensure maintenance for its aircraft has been telling: As of April 2019, 23 Iranian airlines were operating 156 planes out of a total of 300 in the country, suggesting that almost half of the country's aircraft were unable to fly because of a wait for replacement parts, according to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

The frequent need for repairs has raised plane ticket prices in Iran, and has also placed economic strain on smaller aircraft companies. Aircraft also can not be sent abroad for repair and have to be repaired locally, with limited expert manpower, Mohammad Mohammadi-



Bakhsh, the head of Iran's aviation agency, the Civil Aviation Organization of Iran (CAOI), told Fars news agency in 2022.

In 2015, the Iran nuclear deal called the Joint Comprehensive Plan Of Action (JCPOA) was signed. In it, Iran agreed to halt the production of materials that could be used in manufacturing nuclear weapons. In return, sanctions on its aviation sector were relaxed, enabling it to buy aircraft from foreign manufacturers such as Airbus and Boeing.

However, sanctions were reimposed when the US unilaterally left the nuclear deal under former President Donald Trump, in 2018. And according to the Washington Institute, the brief period when sanctions had been lifted did not help Iran much: Iran ordered more than 200 aircraft from Western firms in those three years, but received only three Airbus jets and 13 ATR turboprops – smaller planes – before Trump slapped sanctions back on.

IATA's Willie Walsh explains why there is no stopping airline industry growth

During a press conference at the IATA AGM, Willie Walsh (IATA's Director General) was asked about the airline's emission reduction regime and if the airline industry should "slam on the

"should be much higher," and increased aviation could bring large economic benefits to Africans. African countries are often very badly interconnected by flights, with many airports more focused on



brakes and stop growth... for emission reduction targets." Walsh dismissed this view as being European-centric and unworkable in the world. Instead, he insisted reducing the carbon footprint was the way to go. Many airlines are already taking measurable steps to reduce their emissions.

IATA says no to limiting growth

Walsh responded to the question of limiting aviation growth, saying, "I don't see that happening." He stated that stopping growth is not the way for the airline industry to reduce emissions. He noted that this is "typically, this debate around limiting growth is a European debate, and it is solely a European debate."

He expanded that the discussion of limiting the growth of the industry does not really exist outside of Europe (and even then only "in certain parts of Europe"). He even went so far as to say, "To discuss this from a European context is quite arrogant, to believe the rest of the world should follow what Europe is doing..."

He pointed to India as a place of large aviation growth and that India is looking to enjoy huge economic benefits from expanding its aviation and connecting the country together. IndiGo is the largest airline in India and has just ordered another 100 aircraft. The main way for Indians to get around India is by train. These trains can take many days to travel from one end of the country to the other (and traveling by road often isn't much better).

Walsh also said that Africa only makes up 2% of airline ridership. He said it

connecting with Europe and the Middle East than with other countries in Africa. Walsh concluded that he didn't see any move to limit growth outside of Europe and noted it was "quite the opposite."

Decarbonizing is the way forward

Walsh stated that the way forward was not to limit growth but to decarbonize the aviation footprint. He said, "The trick of the business is to reduce the carbon footprint of what is going on, and there are so many initiatives." According to the IEA, the aviation industry is responsible for around 2% of the "global energy-related CO2 emissions."

Walsh said these are difficult to



implement, but "the industry, certainly the airline industry, and everyone one around them is single mindedly focused on getting the carbon footprint and decarbonizing what we're doing, at the pace that is manageable."

The airline industry is working in many ways to reduce emissions. Efforts include using cleaner fuel, more efficient aircraft and engines, and even researching the impact of contrails on global warming. More distant goals involve developing hydrogen-powered aircraft (something full of challenges) and even electric aircraft.

Students of Edhi Institute learn aircraft maintenance

There is a famous proverb about teaching a man to fish being far better than giving a man a fish and feeding him for a day as then you feed him for a lifetime.

Enabling people to earn a decent livelihood has led Faisal Edhi of Edhi Foundation to set up a technical training institution, the Edhi Institute of Science and Technology, which offers free vocational training to whoever is interested in bettering their lives through hard work.

On Wednesday, 12 June just behind Terminal 1 of the Jinnah International Airport, one could find some seven to 10 young men in dark blue overalls with the Edhi logo bent over aeroplane engines of Edhi air ambulances.

Jamil Ahmed from Lyari likes to play football but said that it is only his hobby as he is more serious about becoming a professional technician than a footballer. "I want to be realistic about my future," he told media, adding that with a skill in hand, he could earn a regular income.

The charity has started free technical training courses for those who want to become self-sufficient. Ameer Hussain from Punjab Chowrangi was a Suzuki pickup driver, who heard about the course from his big brother, a male nurse with the Bilquis Edhi Foundation.

"My brother informed me as soon as he heard about this course. In fact, he came home with the forms, which I filled right away and now here I am one month away from earning my diploma," he beamed.

Mohammad Amir grew up at Edhi Centre. "He even overhauls our trucks and generator engines," said Faisal Edhi, while introducing the young man. "Amir is smart and very hardworking. Equipped with

professional training, I see him going far," he said with pride.

Edhi also introduced another auto mechanic working with the Edhi ambulances for some 13 years now, Mohammad Imran Junejo, who also hails from Lyari.

"We only just started work at the institute six months ago. This here is our first batch," he said gesturing at the group of trainees, now entering their final month of training. "It is also new for the Edhi Foundation to enter the education field. And we are happy to see our first batch enter its final month of training now," he said.

"Like here we have linked technical education with aviation. Like automobiles, aeroplanes also have a piston engine that burns fuel. If any of our students want to move towards aviation, we will also support them," he said. Edhi Ambulance Chief Engineer Iftikhar Ahmed was available for guidance on the occasion. "We will impart basic education first before looking at the aptitude of the trainees," he said.

Masood Sayeed, former training head at various vocational institutes such as Aman Foundation, Allied Engineering & Services, Orient Energy Systems, Proton Training Solutions, etc, who is now with the Edhi Institute, said that he also shared Edhi's vision. "I also want to help young people stand on their own two feet and financially support their families," he said.

Currently, the six-month technical training certification and diploma courses being offered by the Edhi Institute include auto mechanics (petrol or diesel), generator mechanics, motorcycle mechanics and the auto electrician's course while there is also a year-long Diploma Information Technology course.

Turkish Airlines mulls branching into manufacturing

As part of its plan to stimulate Türkiye's aeronautical industry and address global chain supply bottlenecks, Turkish Airlines (TK, Istanbul Airport) is looking to grow its aircraft component manufacturing business by sell parts it makes to other carriers, as well as partner with Boeing to domestically produce some seats and engine components, Bloomberg reported.

Turkish Airlines Chairman Ahmet Bolat said that a deal with Boeing would benefit everybody given the American OEM could make use of "Türkiye's potential capacity so that we can provide a reliable source of supply," as the entire industry faces delays and is forced to extend the life of older models.

The carrier is currently negotiating with Boeing for a major aircraft order, which has been rumoured for months, notably since the company announced a deal for 220 Airbus aircraft, with 115 options in December 2023.

"Our talks with Boeing still continue. These orders not only reflect our commitment to modernising our fleet but also strategically secure our growth prospects," Chief Financial Officer Murat Şeker said during the annual investor call earlier this year.

Turkish Airlines currently has outstanding orders for 292 aircraft, namely 194 A321-200NX, fifteen A350-1000s, seventy-one A350-900s, five A350Fs, and seven B787-9s.

While the negotiations with Boeing are advanced, an agreement has not been reached with engine manufacturer CFM International, with the price being a point of dispute, Swiss aviation news outlet AeroTELEGRAPH reported.

Additionally, the B777X is not currently an option for Turkish Airlines, as the carrier has recently ordered the A350. However, it remains open to add this widebody type in the future.



Chief Engineer Iftikhar Ahmed teaches trainees about the aircraft as Faisal Edhi listens to the conversation.



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Turkish Cargo distributes Certificate of Appreciation to Cargo Agents in Karachi



Imran Siddiqui receives award for SGL.



Omer Peracha receiving award for Pioneer Express.



Pic. shows Izhar ul Haq Qamar with ICM award.



Mr. M. Ilyas, Mr. Izhar ul Haq Qamar and Khalid Mir.



Mr. A.S. Azad, Mr. Tariq M. Chaudhry, Mr. Imran Peracha and Mr. M. Sohail.



Mr. Arshad Wali Muhammad flanked by other guests.



Turkish Cargo Certificate of Appreciation distribution ceremony held in Karachi. Group photo of award recipient taken on the occasion with Mr. S. Burak Omeroglu, Vice President (Middle East and South Asia), Mr. Serkan Somnez, Director Cargo (Middle East, Pakistan & Afghanistan), Mr. Sertan Yuce, G.M. (Karachi) and Mr. M. Imran, Cargo Manager (Karachi) of Turkish Airlines.

'Venice is not for sale'

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)



Considered one of the most beautiful cities on the planet earth and further beautified by human effort and engineering, is now drowning due to the human weight of the crowds visiting this marvellous city, as feared by human doctors of geography and nature. This

higher than the desired dwellings and this factor alone had inspired the engineers to carve out water-canals within the city, a marvel of civil engineering, controlling the swelling water so that it recedes back into the sea (the magnificent engineering of the medieval era which it did enclave this

From 1967 onwards, during my business travels abroad, I had been infested with sight-seeing desire alongside. With the same spirit and pursuit, I have been to Venice several



St. Mark's Square

factor may not have come into the minds of the developers of the city Venice. But the fact that the sea level of water has been

port-city of mid-eastern Italian coast, of the 'Adriatic' - (the northern tip of the Mediterranean sea).

times (thrice also accompanied by my family). The joy has been ours alone, to witness the miraculous shape and beauty



Central Canal Road



'Trefl Rialto' Bridge

of the place carved out by nature and human effort... *(One of my Italian customers had advised me to go to Venice, preferably only during the months of October and November, for reasons of subsided human traffic but more so because the tides of the sea become quieter in these months, convenient for sight-seeing, instead of having to tread in waters and to stay afloat).*

Going back to my College days during as early as in the mid and late fifties, the inspiration was also created from inside my College books. The novel and play 'The Merchant of Venice' by William Shakespeare (believed to have been written between 1596 and 1598) was in our syllabus of graduation. A film was also made by Hollywood with this name and also yet another Italian film "Il Ladro di Venetia", with the US title 'The Thief of Venice' (a 1950 film). Both of these films I had the pleasure of seeing in the New Pearl Cinema of Sialkot (the place where 'Punjab College for Boys' is now situated in the heart of the city Sialkot ... *(sweet memories travel with you all your life, so they did with me, very well... many thanks).*

The idea here, has been to bring back the name of 'Venice' for my running article and my corresponding regular visits of the fanciful city in later years, more for sight-seeing than business, has all along dragged me to the present, when I am putting these lines, while sitting beside my office reading-table and thus enjoying the occasions by recollecting the sweet memories of the past and now putting them into words.

News has prompted me to write that 'Venice Administration' has started charging day-trippers a fee for entry, the world's first attempt, aimed at tackling the influx of mass tourism. The attempt is also opposed by the citizens and the protestors are on streets, objecting to treating the historic Italian city as a museum and thus discouraging countless aspiring tourists. Under a trial scheme such as this, visitors exploring Venice for the day have to buy a five-euro ticket, with inspectors carrying out spot checks, mainly at key entry points or wherever they like to do so; this gives a debauching tinge to the romantic city, that Venus is ..

Considered one of the most beautiful cities on the planet, Venice is a top tourist destination – but the truth is that it is drowning under the weight of the crowds. Around 13,000 tickets had been sold until one late morning, the mayor's office said, either purchased online or at the new ticket office at the 'Santa

Lucia' train station. Obviously, this number is going to increase during high season. There are now more tourist beds in Venice than residents with 20 million travellers visiting Venice last year, a city of roughly 50,000 residents.

The 'Venice Access Fee' is initially being introduced for 29 busy days throughout 2024, mostly on weekends from May to July every year. There is no limit to the number of tickets to be issued or be available. Instead, the goal is to try to persuade day-trippers to visit during quieter times. 'I think it's good, because it will perhaps slow down the numbers of tourists in Venice' said Sylvain Pelerine, a French tourist who has been visiting for more than 50 years. Overnight visitors, who already pay a tourist tax, minors under the age of 14 and others who are exempt on various grounds are excluded. But most residents are strongly opposed to the measure; they say it curbs fundamental rights to freedom of movement and civil rights. The control on number of visitors naturally would also cause a decrease in the income of the various local businesses of Venetian people. The measure is supposed to cause a possible decrease in the income of city dwellers and decrease in numerous businesses, small or big, like retail shops, restaurants, coffee houses, ships, Gondola boats and souvenir shops.

Around 300 people protested near the station, holding up placards and signs such as 'Stick to the ticket' and 'Venice is not for sale'.



Gondola rides in the city



Restaurants serving customers, sitting in knee deep sea-water

Xpress Aviation News in Pictures



Mr. Muhammad Ilyas CEO - Xpress Aviation giving keys of Alto Cars to his staff who has completed 15 years of services with Xpress Aviation.



A view of guests attending wedding function of Amber Ilyas daughter of Muhammad Ilyas hosted in Karachi.



Mr. & Mrs. Muhammad Ilyas flank their daughter Amber Ilyas and her groom Faizan Ahmed on the occasion of her Marriage Ceremony.

Falling output hurting mango exports

Due to the impact of climate change and low production, exporters have reduced this year's mango export target to 100,000 tonnes from 125,000 tonnes last year.

Mango production has declined for the third year in a row. Pakistan produces 1.8 million tonnes of the fruit, with the lion's share of 70pc coming from Punjab, followed by Sindh with 29pc and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 1pc.

Due to weather effects, mango production in Punjab is expected to be 35-40pc this year, while less than 20pc in Sindh. As a result, the total production is feared to be reduced by 600,000 tonnes. This estimate was made at the start of production and will likely increase further as the season progresses.

The export of mangoes will commence on May 20. In addition to the traditional markets, the focus will be on the value-added markets of China, America, Turkey, and Japan. Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asian states will also play an important role in achieving the export target of mangoes.

All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed said climate change is having a pronounced negative impact on mango orchards, leading to a significant reduction in production and the non-availability of export-quality mangoes.

He said mango exports this year would fetch \$90 million. The export target for 2023 was 125,000 tonnes, but shipments remained at 100,000 tonnes.

He said this year, the markets of Central Asian countries and Iran would be

stabilised through Afghanistan, while strenuous efforts would be made to enhance the volume of China's market, where exports started last season. He said exporters would also try to increase exports in value-added markets like Australia, Japan, and America. Pakistani mangoes would be promoted in Turkey and Far East countries in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP).

The value-added sector, including mango processing, packaging, and warehousing, with over Rs100bn in investments, is facing problems due to the significant increase in electricity, gas, transportation, garden maintenance, pesticides, and water management costs, making it difficult to compete for exports, he said.

Mr Waheed stated that long winters, rains and hailstorms followed by severe heatwave spells had changed the pattern of agricultural diseases with the season. Besides, there is undoubtedly a lack of serious efforts at the federal and provincial levels to protect the agriculture sector from the effects of climate change, mainly through research enabling the orchards of mangoes and other fruits to develop sufficient endurance to sustain against the harsh weather conditions and reduction in disease resistance.

He said agricultural research centres in the federal and provincial governments must work on an emergency basis to help farmers cope with the effects of climate change. He added that new varieties of mangoes that are compatible with Pakistan's climatic changes are needed.

Imports rise as curbs ease in second half

Imports in the second half of the outgoing fiscal year increased significantly, reflecting the easing of restrictions by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on the International Monetary Fund's directions.

The country's import bill surged to \$17.92bn in January-April compared to \$25.462bn in July-December FY24.

Currency experts said the interbank market was experiencing higher demand for dollars from importers, but the State Bank succeeded in stabilising the exchange rate at the current level. The IMF had demanded easing import curbs before reaching a Staff-Level Agreement to release the final tranche of \$1.1bn under the \$3bn Stand-By Arrangement.

Bankers said imports rose, but restrictions are still in place to bring down the trade deficit and get control over the current account deficit. The average monthly imports rose by \$244m to \$4.481bn in January-April from \$4.237bn in the first half. According to the SBP data, total imports were \$43.353bn in 10MFY24 against exports of \$25.669bn, resulting in a trade deficit of \$17.684bn. During the current fiscal year, exports did not do a miracle to increase dollar inflows, while imports slightly decreased to \$45.7bn.

Exports grew during 10MFY24 mainly due to higher food exports, reaching \$5.963bn compared to \$3.92bn last year, led by rice shipments totalling \$3.063bn.

Pakistan must improve its dollar reserves to meet the estimated \$25bn debt servicing in FY25. Remittances slightly increased by 3.5pc to \$23.8bn during the 10MFY24, while foreign direct investment also noted a nominal increase of 8pc to \$1.45bn.

"The threat over exchange rate under the present poor inflows and reserves could be true in FY25 and the dollar may reach Rs330 as per the estimate of the IMF," said a banker. The financial sector did not take reports of the UAE's \$10bn investment commitment seriously.

"We have seen this kind of promise for billions of dollars in the past, but they never materialised. This \$10bn is also a MoU for Pakistan, and the government is using it to reduce the stress on the external front," said the banker.



Export target has been lowered to 100,000 tonnes this season as shipments started on May 20.

Textiles' export growth slows in April

Textile and clothing exports experienced slower growth for the second month in April, reversing the previous month's double-digit increase.

Exports inched up 0.37 per cent to \$1.24 billion in April, compared to \$1.23 billion in the same month last year, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on Thursday, 16 May. This indicates stagnant orders from international buyers.

On a month-on-month basis, the sector's exports dipped 4.84pc. In 10MFY24, however, textile and clothing exports shrank 0.19pc to \$13.68bn from \$13.71bn in the same month last year.

The decline in growth was attributed to rising production costs due to higher energy prices and a liquidity crunch. The textile industry has warned the government that further decline is likely if their grievances, including pending refunds, are not resolved on priority.

The PBS data showed exports of readymade garments rose 17.73pc by value in April and 19.70pc by quantity, while knitwear grew 1.44pc by value and 59.54pc by quantity. Bedwear posted a negative growth of 7.11pc in value but posted a growth of 1.74pc in quantity.

Towel exports rose 1.45pc in value and 6.25pc in quantity, whereas cotton cloth went down by 7.96pc in value but rose 12.53pc in quantity, respectively. Yarn exports fell by over 15.11pc in April over the same month last year. The exports of made-up articles, excluding towels, increased by 6.01pc, and tents, canvas and tarpaulin went down by 34.66pc in April.

The import of textile machinery declined by 10.45pc in April, indicating that expansion or modernisation projects were not a priority. The import of synthetic fibre increased by 16.47pc, that of synthetic and artificial silk yarn by 30.75pc and other textile items by 85.53pc during the month. The import of raw cotton declined by 60.15pc. However, the import of second-hand clothes posted a growth of 60.90pc.

In the first 10 months of FY24, total exports increased by 9.10pc to \$25.27bn this year against \$23.17bn over the same period last year.

Oil imports

PBS data showed that oil imports dipped by 1.53pc during the first 10 months of FY24 to \$13.76bn from \$13.97bn a year ago.

The import of petroleum products fell by 14.09pc in value and 6.47pc in quantity during July-April. Imports of crude oil increased by 17.38pc in quantity while the value increased by 10.40pc.

Mobile phones

Mobile phone imports surged by

209.07pc to \$1.46bn in 10MFY24 from \$473.28m over the same period last year, representing the largest share of overall machinery import value in the first 10 months of FY24. Other mobile apparatus grew 21.58pc to \$372.12m in 10MFY24 from \$306.07m last year.

Meat shipments fetch record \$431m

The export of meat and meat preparations reached an all-time high of 104,513 tonnes in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, fetching \$431 million at an average per-tonne price of \$4,121.

Before this, meat exports had achieved a record of 100,194 tonnes (\$427m) during FY23, breaking the previous all-time high of 95,648 tonnes (\$331mm) during FY21.

Dealers continued to link higher domestic meat prices to surging exports, followed by animal smuggling to Afghanistan.

According to data from the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), the national average price of beef with bone (average quality) is Rs700-1,250 per kg, compared to Rs600-1,050 in July 2023.

The national average price of mutton (average quality) rose to Rs1,500-2,300 per kg from Rs1,400-2,000 during June 2023.

In the last one year, veal (bachia) meat with and without bones rose to Rs1,200-1,300 and Rs1,500-1,600 per kg from Rs1,000-1,100 and Rs1,200-1,300.

Exploring new markets by the

exporters has paid off in the last two to three years. Meat exports have remained in the range of 56,000-85,000 tonnes for the last 12-14 years.

An exporter said that based on rising annual red meat production as per Economic Survey FY23, retailers continued making a hollow point, blaming 100,000 tonnes of meat exports as one of the main reasons for causing price hikes. This small quantity of meat is consumed locally in less than 15 days.

Exporters have been diversifying their shipments to new markets like China and South Africa for cooked beef, boneless frozen beef, and heat-treated/cooked frozen beef for Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Central Independent Estates, and Iraq.

For example, Organic Meat Company Ltd (OMCL) informed the Pakistan Stock Exchange this month that the first phase of the operational expansion project at the Gadap processing facility in Karachi has been completed. This project entails a 30pc increase in chilled product capacity, thus significantly increasing overall production capacity.



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

Highest monthly jump in three years takes exports to \$2.79bn

Pakistan recorded its highest monthly growth in exports in three years with a jump of almost 19pc in May 2024.

The month-on-month growth rate of 18.76pc in dollar terms was the highest since June 2021, when the exports went up by 63.32pc.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data released on Monday, 03 June exports increased to \$2.79 billion in May, a year-on-year rise of 27.08pc against \$2.19bn in the corresponding month of 2023.

May was also the first month that exports grew after declining for four consecutive months this year.

Exports have been sliding since the start of the year in dollar terms with a growth of -8.38pc, -0.39pc, -7.49pc and -1.06 in April, March, February and January, respectively.

Total exports in the 11 months of fiscal year 2024 July 2023 to May 2024 were \$28.07bn, up by 10.65pc from \$25.36bn over the corresponding period last year.

Trade deficit

According to the data, imports during May stood at \$4.9bn, resulting in a trade deficit of \$2.1bn a paltry year-on-year growth by 0.14pc.

In the 11MFY24, the deficit

narrowed by 15.25pc to \$21.73bn, compared to \$25.64bn in the same period last year.

Rising exports might bring some joy to the government which has set an ambitious target to increase exports to \$100bn by the end of FY28.

The IMF however doesn't share the Commerce Ministry's optimism as its projections for the next five years, during the first review of the previous \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement, were way below the \$100bn mark.

The fund anticipated that Pakistan's exports will gradually increase from \$30.84bn in FY24 to \$32.35bn in FY25, \$34.68bn in FY26, \$37.25bn in FY27 and \$39.46bn in FY28.

The Fund's target appears more realistic as according to the data, exports recorded an average monthly growth of 3.03pc during the 11MFY24 and with just one left before the fiscal year ends, total exports are expected to be around \$30bn.

There has been some positive indication in terms of rebates to taxpayers as the Federal Board of Revenue issued tax refunds/rebates of Rs438.11bn during the 11MFY24 as compared to Rs315.22bn over the corresponding months last year, showing an increase of 38.98pc.

Over 1,700 foreigners apply for adventure tourism in GB

Over 1,700 foreign adventure tourists have applied for permits to climb peaks in Gilgit-Baltistan, with 175 eyeing to scale K2 this summer, according to a top government official.

Meanwhile, an eight-member team of Pakistani and Italian female climbers will start their expedition to summit the world's second-highest peak, K2, this month.

GB Tourism Department Deputy Secretary Sajid Hussain told media that adventure tourism in the region was booming. He added that of the 1,700 foreign climbers who applied, several have been issued permits while the remaining applications were being processed.

"The visa clearance process has also been sped up for foreign climbers, and many will apply for a visa on arrival in Pakistan," he said.

In the summer of 2023, over 2,050 foreign climbers and trekkers, along with around 9,000 tourists, arrived in the region. The influx of tourists earned the region's government Rs450 million in permit fees for climbing.

Female climbers eye K2 summit

The eight-member all-women K2 expedition team included four mountaineers from GB and as many from Italy.

The Pakistani climbers underwent rigorous training in the Alps mountain range in Italy and Rattu ski village in GB.

The expedition has been organised by EvK2CNR, an organisation focusing on research in mountainous areas, with the support of the Italian Alpine Club.

EvK2CNR President Agostino Da Polenza will be the expedition leader, while Pakistani mountaineer Samina Baig will be the climbing leader.

The expedition was launched in Italy recently at a ceremony attended by Italy's federal minister of tourism, Daniela Santanchè, Alpine Club of Italy President Antonio Montani, Mr Polenza, and other guests. An EvK2CNR official told Media that a project launch will also take place on June 18 in Islamabad, after which the team will start the expedition.



Different varieties of mangos are arrayed at a stall at the 56th annual mango exhibition at the Sindh Horticulture Research Institute on the second day of the festival, recently.

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EU pushes to send asylum seekers to third countries

Fifteen EU states want “new ways” to handle irregular migrants, including sending some to third countries, in a demand made as the bloc plots out how to implement a recently adopted overhaul of its asylum rules.

The countries presented their joint stance in a letter dated May 15 to the European Commission, which was made



public on Thursday. It was sent less than a month before European Parliament elections across the 27-nation European Union, in which far-right anti-immigration parties are forecast to make gains.

Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland and Romania signed the letter.

In it, they ask the European Union’s executive arm to “propose new ways and solutions to prevent irregular migration to Europe”. They want the EU to toughen its asylum and migration pact, which introduces tighter border controls and seeks to expedite the deportation of rejected asylum-seekers. The pact, to be operational from 2026, will speed up the vetting of people arriving without documents and establish new border detention centres.

The 15 countries also want to see mechanisms to detect and intercept migrant boats and take them “to a predetermined place of safety in a partner country outside the EU, where durable solutions for those migrants could be found”. They said it should be easier to send asylum seekers to third countries while their requests for protection are assessed.

They cited as a model a controversial deal Italy has struck with Albania, under which thousands of asylum-seekers picked up at sea can be taken to holding camps in the non-EU Balkan country as their cases are processed.

The European Commission said it would study the letter, though a spokeswoman, Anitta Hipper, added that

“all our work and focus is set now on the implementation” of the migration and asylum pact.

EU law says people entering the bloc without documents can be sent to an outside country where they could have requested asylum - so long as that country

is deemed safe and the applicant has a genuine link with it.

That condition differentiates it from a scheme set up by non-EU Britain under which irregular arrivals will be denied the right to request asylum in the UK and sent instead to Rwanda.

Pyramids were built along long-lost Nile branch: scientists



Scientists have discovered a long-buried branch of the Nile river that once flowed alongside more than 30 pyramids in Egypt, potentially solving the mystery of how ancient Egyptians transported the massive stone blocks to build the famous monuments.

The 64-kilometre-long river branch, which ran by the iconic Giza pyramid complex among other wonders, was hidden under desert and farmland for millennia, according to a study revealing the find on Thursday, 16 May.

The existence of the river would explain why the 31 pyramids were built in a chain along a now inhospitable desert strip in the Nile Valley between 4,700 and 3,700 years ago.

The strip near the ancient Egyptian capital of Memphis includes the Great Pyramid of Giza - the only surviving structure of the seven wonders of the ancient world - as well as the Khafre, Cheops and Mykerinos pyramids.

Archaeologists had long thought that ancient Egyptians must have used a nearby waterway to move the giant materials used to build the pyramids.

“But nobody was certain of the location, the shape, the size or proximity of this mega waterway to the actual pyramids site,” lead study author Eman Ghoneim of the University of North Carolina Wilmington in the United States said.

The international team of researchers used radar satellite imagery to map the river branch, which they called Ahramat - “pyramids” in Arabic. Radar gave them the “unique ability to penetrate the sand surface and produce images of hidden features including buried rivers and ancient structures,” Ghoneim said.

Surveys in the field and cores of sediment from the site confirmed the presence of the river, according to the study in the journal *Communications Earth & Environment*.

'Need to cut reliance on foreign AI solutions'

“Without developing local AI capabilities, Pakistan may become increasingly dependent on foreign AI solutions,” said ByeongJo Kong, Digital Technology Specialist (Data Analytics & Big Data) at the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in response to an emailed query.

This dependency not only incurs higher costs but could also place critical infrastructure and systems under the control of foreign entities, creating potential economic and security vulnerabilities, he explained.

AI should be built to address the country's specific needs and challenges, said Fatima Yasmin, the Vice-President for Sectors and Themes of the Asian Development Bank. The first wave of AI may increase the gap between countries. This is what appears to be happening in Pakistan, which is lagging behind its peers in AI adoption

Lessons from India

In India, AI has found its way to several applications. For example, in Tamil Nadu, army-grade AI surveillance is being used to prevent elephant deaths on railway tracks. AI cameras have been installed on 12 towers along two key rail tracks, which alert forest and railway authorities that elephants are within 100 feet of the tracks. So far, it has detected nearly 400 instances of elephants approaching railway tracks. Given its success, Tamil Nadu plans to expand the AI-based system to other vulnerable areas across the state.

Another example is Kissan GPT in India, a chatbot introduced to assist farmers regardless of their literacy levels. The chatbot allows farmers to speak on their mobile phones for their queries and understands Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi, among other languages. It responds with in-depth answers.

India is going to be a major player as a producer and consumer of AI, says Ozzeir Khan, Director, Digital Innovation and Architecture at ADB's Information Technology Department. Such uses of AI can be adopted for Pakistan.

OLAM International, a major agribusiness company, uses AI in the Philippines to streamline rice processing

and distribution. It's as simple as uploading a picture of the crop; AI assesses aspects of its quality and connects farmers to buyers, he says. Applications like these can help address Pakistan's arthi challenges.



Singapore has bought up to S\$500 million of graphics processing units, which are crucial for developing AI apps, even though they have no use for it at the moment, he adds. “They [Singapore] are hoarding it. Now, in Pakistan, where there are challenges, is the government making such AI investments?”

A widening gap

Mr Kong elaborated on the impact of the widening AI gap, which could be especially significant for countries that have not yet prioritised AI investments. AI has the potential to boost economic growth and productivity substantially. By automating processes and enhancing efficiency in manufacturing, healthcare, and services, AI can drive innovation and competitiveness.

Pakistan faces a Catch-22 situation in terms of an ill-equipped workforce. Countries with robust AI strategies are creating educational and professional development programs to train specialists in AI, says Mr Kong. The absence of such initiatives in Pakistan means it is not only missing the opportunity to advance its own technological capabilities but also facing a brain drain, further depleting the country's potential to catch up.

It is crucial for the government to consider these implications seriously and to begin integrating AI strategies into its national development plans. This would involve not only investments in technology but also in building the infrastructure and educational systems

necessary to support such advancements, he adds.

Avoiding 'copy-paste'

However, adopting 'copy-paste' AI technologies that aren't adapted to Pakistan's unique needs poses various risks and can be problematic in several ways, he cautions.

Imported AI solutions may not address local languages, infrastructure constraints, or cultural nuances, leading to inefficiencies and biases. For example, AI technologies developed for other regions may not effectively serve Pakistan's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape, excluding certain population groups from benefiting from AI advancements.

The other potential problem is the difference in cultures between the West and the East. Implementing AI systems that are not designed with local laws and societal norms in mind poses significant risks associated with data privacy and security.

Such challenges extend to the agriculture sector as well. If Pakistan were to import an AI-based agricultural monitoring system designed for a different climate and crop type, it might provide inaccurate predictions for the country's agricultural environment, which could result in misguided government interventions and economic losses.

To mitigate these risks, Pakistan should either develop its own AI solutions or fine-tune imported solutions to meet its specific needs, Mr Kong suggests. Investing in local research, establishing partnerships, and creating a national AI strategy will help ensure that the technology serves according to local relevance while empowering domestic capacity.

In an era dominated by technological advances, AI stands out as a transformative force reshaping industries and societies. As India rapidly emerges as a major player, Pakistan finds itself at a critical juncture. “Without a national framework and strategy for AI, Pakistan will miss out on opportunities as well as means for keeping people safe,” says Mr Khan.



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Sirbaz summits Everest sans supplementary oxygen

Climber Sirbaz Khan has summited Mount Everest, the world's highest peak at 8,849 metres, without using supplementary oxygen, becoming the first and only Pakistani to have conquered 11 eight-thousanders.



According to expedition officials, Sirbaz Khan has also scaled 13 mountains above 8,000m with supplementary oxygen, including Everest last year.

Sirbaz reached the summit of Everest at 12:30pm (Pakistan time) on Tuesday, 21 May. He was part of a team of the Imagine Nepal 2024 Everest Expedition comprising 14 international climbers and 18 Sherpas.

The officials said the climbers started descending from the top after the successful summit.

Before the summit Sirbaz Khan, in a post on his official Facebook page, said: "Spring of 2024 means that my incredible journey with Serena Hotels has reached the milestone of five years. In these five wonderful years, I got the opportunity to

raise Serena's flag on some of the highest peaks in the world."

He added: "Together, we worked for adventure diplomacy and for the promotion of tourism and hospitality through multiple initiatives. "I thank Serena Hotels for their consistent support over the years and look forward to many more years of meaningful collaboration."

Mountaineers, civil society members, social media activists and politicians congratulated Sirbaz Khan on his achievement. In a statement, Alpine Club of Pakistan Secretary Karrar Haidri also congratulated Sirbaz on summiting Everest.

Sirbaz Khan, 34, hailing from the Aliabad area of Hunza in Gilgit-Baltistan, began his climbing career in 2016.

In 2019, he became the first Pakistani to have summited Mount Lhotse, the world's fourth-highest peak at 8,516m, in Nepal, without supplementary oxygen.

He summited Nanga Parbat (8,125m) in 2017, K-2 (8,611m) in 2018, Broad Peak (8,163m) in 2019, Gasherbrum-I (8,080m) in 2022, and Anapurna (8,091m), Everest (8,848m) with supplement oxygen, Gasherbrum-II (8,035m) and Cho Oyu (8,201m) in China's Tibet in 2023.

On four of these expeditions, he had been accompanied by late Mohammad Ali Sadpara. Sirbaz is aiming to become the first Pakistani to climb all 14 of the world's highest peaks.

Maldives to ban Israeli tourists

The Indian Ocean nation of the Maldives will ban Israelis from the luxury tourist hot spot, the office of the president said on Sunday, 09 June announcing a national rally in "solidarity with Palestine".



The Maldives, a tiny Islamic republic of more than 1,000 strategically located coral islets, is known for its secluded sandy white beaches, shallow turquoise lagoons and Robinson Crusoe-style getaways.

President Mohamed Muizzu has "resolved to impose a ban on Israeli passports," a spokesman for his office said in a statement, without giving details of when the new law would take effect.

Muizzu also announced a national fundraising campaign called "Maldivians in Solidarity with Palestine".

The Maldives had lifted a previous ban on Israeli tourists in the early 1990s and moved to restore relations in 2010. However, normalisation attempts were scuttled following the toppling of President Mohamed Nasheed in February 2012.

Opposition parties and government allies in the Maldives have been putting pressure on Muizzu to ban Israelis, as a sign of protest against the Gaza attack.

Official data showed the number of Israelis visiting the Maldives dropped to 528 in the first four months of this year, down 88 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year.

In response to the ban, a spokesman for the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs urged citizens to avoid travel to the Maldives.



A massive container vessel named CV MSC ANNA, measuring 400 metres in length and with a capacity of 19,368 TEUs, docked at Hutchison Ports Pakistan (HPP) recently, the port had berthed ships with capacities up to 14,000 TEUs and lengths of 366 metres. HPP Chief Executive CS Kim has said the arrival of large vessels not only reduces shipping costs but also significantly boosts government revenue.

A harvest fit for a king

“Birds are the first to learn that mangoes are ready for harvest,” Mir Shah Mohammad Talpur says, picking up a mango that has been bitten by a bird.

Strolling under the huge canopy of one of the oldest trees in his over 450-plus acres of orchards, Mir remarks that the size of a tree’s canopy is a good indicator of how large its root zone would be. “A mango tree protects its roots first,” he explains.

Even in the shade, it is sizzling hot. Labourers, some as young as 12, are busy handling the harvest, while others are preparing wooden boxes (known locally as bardana) and stuffing them with mangoes. Harvesting on Mir’s farm has been underway since the first week of June.

Mango picking is a conventional affair at old-school orchards like Mir’s; workers scale trees, pluck the unripe fruit and throw it to their colleagues on the ground.

Only few growers have adopted progressive farming in Sindh so far.

June coincides with picking season, primarily for the Sindhri variety.

This year’s season witnessed some variations in weather, which delayed flowering and fruiting amid extended periods of colder weather. Now, picking seasons is at its peak, though there will be a lull during the Eid holidays.

“Once the fruit starts falling from a branch, it marks the ripening. We say shaakh aa gae [the branch has arrived]. It is the stone that matures first in the mango,” says Talpur.

“The Sindhri harvested in Naukot and the ones we here have are visibly different, both in look and shape,” says Kewal Kohli, who hails from Nagarparkar.

Picking all the fruit from a 150-acre portion of Mir’s farm will take Kewal and his team around 25 days, since the crop yield is good. In Naukot, his team had picked Sindhri and Dussehri from 400 acres over a period of 20 days in May.

Some of the workers hail from Punjab’s Seraiki belt. They are known for their command in packaging of fruit and preparing bardana — something local labour is not very adept at. “Once the season finishes here, we will head for Balochistan to handle the apple harvest and then the citrus fruit season awaits us in November. We harvest watermelons in Badin in March-April as well,” says Mohammad Khan, one of the workers from Punjab.

While Sindhri starts appearing on pushcarts in May, it is June that actually heralds the arrival of a fully tasty fruit, according to veteran producer Ghulam Sarwar Abro. “Nature has made June ideal for picking Sindhri as it develops all of its characteristics by then,” says Abro, who owns a progressive mango orchard.

Conventionally, the Mirpurkhas belt reports the first pickings, which heralds the commencement of mango season.

Usually, immature Sindhri is picked first by growers, who harvest it as early as end of April or early May, to capitalise on the market and export the fruit.

Mir, however, doesn’t believe in early picking. His orchard is located in a rural taluka near Hyderabad city. The hub of Sindhri production stretches from here to Mirpurkhas, which has a rich legacy of Sindhri orchards. He doesn’t use tractors to plough the land, for he believes that would kill the roots, and mostly depends on organic matter to meet the needs of soil and trees.

“Leaves falling from trees get mixed with soil and other residuals to become organic matter. Then the fertiliser uptake coupled with irrigation water supplies ensures nutrients,” he points out. “It is said that the old course of the mighty Indus used to pass through this region and has left the soil in this belt very rich and fertile,” Mir says. At any conventional orchard, the height of a mango tree varies between 30ft to 40ft, with thick stems and branches, making picking a difficult task.

This is unlike high-density farms, where the job is easily done. “Yes, we let

out the farm to contractors to reap the harvest. It is now the contractor’s job to arrange labourers for harvest and picking,” Mir insists.

“We take care of fertilisation. Besides, irrigation water supplies is also my responsibility. The contractor can spray pesticides if need be, but this is something we usually cater for,” he says. In Mir’s case, the contractor this year is an Iranian national who is sending most of the consignment to his country.

Only some growers have opted for modern farming practices including high-density farming. Fewer still don’t outsource farms to contractors. Sarwar Abro, Babar Ismail and Imdad Nizamani are among those few who sell their fruit themselves in the market. “If we avoid managing our farms we will be causing loss to our economy, fruit and orchards,” Abro says.

Contractors have been dominating the mango landscape for years. Deals will be struck for next year shortly after the current harvest is over. They have the knack to assess how the same orchard will behave production-wise. Some Karachi-based contractors have invested billions of rupees in contracts.

“Contractors have strong links across Pakistan’s markets, staying in touch round the clock to know how the market will behave in the next few hours. A contractor even changes the route of his consignment and diverts it to the destination where, price-wise, the market is going his way,” contends Nizamani, a name to reckon with in mango farming.



Labourers wait to catch mangoes picked by their colleagues, who send down the fruit from their perch in the branches.

Sabre introduces SabreMosaic™, its revolutionary Offer and Order retailing platform for airlines

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology company powering the travel industry, recently introduced SabreMosaic™, a new intelligent, modular and open technology platform – built to transform the way airlines retail. By moving away from the limitations of today’s PNR-driven world to a modern Offer and Order approach, SabreMosaic empowers airlines to deliver a more personalized and dynamic retailing experience, while creating new revenue opportunities.

“Defining and building the next generation of airline retailing solutions has been a significant investment and strategic priority for Sabre, and we are well down this path,” said Kurt Ekert, President & CEO of Sabre. “SabreMosaic is the culmination of our dedication to innovation in airline IT and active collaboration with our airline partners to enable the future of modern retailing. With the success we are already seeing with Sabre’s Retail Intelligence suite of solutions, today’s

announcement marks an important milestone on our path to delivering a fully open, modern and flexible retailing platform.”

Intelligent, modular and open design delivers flexibility and speed to market

Powered by Google’s industry-leading AI capabilities, SabreMosaic enables airlines to dynamically create, sell and deliver an array of personalized content to travelers. The modular, open and cloud-native architecture allows airlines to select the API-based Offer and Order solutions that best meet their needs and create a unique technical blueprint to transform their operations in a way that makes sense for their business.

“Airlines are becoming sophisticated retailers and need the same data-driven insights and AI tools to optimize their businesses and better serve their customers as other consumer services,” said Thomas Kurian, CEO of Google Cloud. “Through our work with Sabre, we are helping airlines harness their data to make faster, more informed decisions that improve operations, personalize marketing, and ultimately increase customer satisfaction.”

Building on the success of Sabre’s Retail Intelligence solutions to airline customers

An end-to-end retailing platform, SabreMosaic encompasses 10 new product suites – from offers and orders to settlement and delivery – as well as Sabre’s existing AI-powered Retail Intelligence solutions such as Air Price IQTM, Ancillary IQTM and Upgrade IQTM and Sabre’s NDC IT solutions.

Built to function in both a PNR-based and an Offer-Order world, these proprietary Retail Intelligence solutions serve as the building blocks of SabreMosaic and are already powering the retailing strategies for several innovative airlines. Aligned with

that keeps a seamless traveler experience at the core,” said Marcial Lapp, Vice President - Revenue Engineering of American Airlines.

“Virgin Australia has been on a mission to reimagine the airline experience and be Australia’s most loved airline. A critical part of this transformation relies on us working with future-focused, ambitious technology partners. Our relationship with Sabre has been key to realizing our vision of modern airline retailing and customer experience, and we’re excited to continue building on this successful partnership,” said David Hogarth, Chief Information Officer of Virgin Australia.

“As we continue to embark on our journey to further modernize our retailing strategies, Air Serbia is proud to partner with Sabre. We are committed to providing real-time content and personalized experiences to our customers, and Sabre’s innovative technology serves as a foundational enabler of our offer and order ecosystem. Sabre solutions empower us to extend our reach to third-party channels including travel agencies and aggregators, ensuring seamless access to our products and services.

Together, we are shaping the future of travel retailing and delivering enhanced value to our passengers,” said Jiri Marek, CEO of Air Serbia.

“We at Oman Air are all about memorable travel experiences and our signature hospitality, and we believe modern, intelligent technology is foundational to delivering on those promises. We look forward to working alongside travel technology innovators like Sabre to shape the future and deliver retail experiences travelers expect,” said Ridha Al Lawati, Acting Vice President – Digital of Oman Air.

SabreMosaic provides holistic Offer Management capabilities that give airlines the ability to intelligently define, manage, and retail airline and third-party content, as well as distribute a broader variety of offers across channels. Sabre’s advanced Order Management capabilities support the management and fulfillment of offers, including the acceptance and settlement of traditional and non-traditional payment types, and provide consistency of the airline brand experience through all customer touchpoints.



IATA’s vision of an entirely Offer- and Order-based approach, SabreMosaic will help airlines transform all aspects of the retailing process.

What SabreMosaic means for airline customers

“As part of our development process, we took a design thinking approach and collaborated with a community of thought leading airlines on SabreMosaic to iterate towards production ready solutions,” said Garry Wiseman, Chief Product & Technology Officer of Sabre. “We are already gaining traction in the marketplace as customers recognize the benefits of utilizing SabreMosaic’s AI-powered modules in their digital experiences.”

“At American, we are putting the customer at the center of everything we do. A big part of our transformation toward convenient, consistent, and connected travel journeys for our customers is the transition to modern technology, including Offer and Order Management solutions. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with Sabre on a proof-of-concept for SabreMosaic



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Immigration dept given three months Rules be amended so women can retain father`s name on CNIC, passport: LHC

The Lahore High Court directed the immigration and passport department to complete within three months its consultative process and amend the rules allowing women to retain the name of their father on the computerised national identity card (CNIC) and the passport, irrespective of their marital status.

Justice Asim Hafeez passed the order on a petition filed by Mehr Bano Langrial, who sought a declaration that a married woman has the right to retain her father`s name on her identity documents, including, but not limited to CNIC and passport, irrespective of her marital status.

Additional Attorney General Mirza Nasar Ahmad told the court that the federal government had no objection to the declaration sought by the petitioner.

Immigration and Passport Additional Director Attaur Rehman said that the consultative process is ongoing and in order to offer such an option to the petitioner/woman, to the extent of her passport, requisite changes are required in the policy/rules. He said the column for the particulars in the passport needed revision and printing, besides sharing of newly-formatted passports with border control authorities of various foreign countries, is imperative, adding that this exercise will consume reasonable time.

In his order, Justice Hafeez observed

that the government in essence acknowledged the right of the women to retain their father`s name on the CNIC and passport, irrespective of their marital status.

However, the judge said such acknowledgement would not affect the government`s policy regarding the format/details of the passports of the children, which shall continue to be issued in accordance with the existing policy.

The judge disposed of the petition with a direction to the immigration and passport department to complete the consultative process and make amendments in the formatting of the passports, giving option to the women to retain their father`s name on CNIC or passport, within three months.

It is pertinent to observe that the government shall ensure data synchronisation in the records of Nadra and immigration and passport department, the judge said in the order issued last week.

It is to mention that as per the Nadra policy, a married woman is free to decide if she wants to retain her father`s name in the `father`s name` column on the CNIC, irrespective of her marital status.

However, the office of the Directorate General of Immigration and Passport requires all married women to have their CNICs updated with their husband`s name in the relevant column in order to obtain a passport.

Ziarat to be turned into major tourist spot: CM

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti has said a comprehensive policy will soon be devised to promote tourism and turn Ziarat into a popular tourist destination.

While chairing a meeting of the Ziarat Development Authority (ZDA) governing body, he said the policy would include steps to highlight the beauty of Ziarat, besides promoting tourism and creating employment opportunities for locals. "Ziarat Valley is a beautiful tourist destination, and it would be developed along modern lines to attract local and foreign tourists," he said.

The development would be done along the model of Murree and Galiyat, famous tourist spots in Punjab and KP, respectively. He said development work would be carried out in consultations with the elected representatives of the district council.

Mr Bugti directed the ZDA project director to visit and review the model of the Galiyat Development Authority for tourism planning. The municipal committee would be provided representation in the ZDA to achieve the objectives, the CM added.

CM Bugti also visited the Quaid-i-Azam Public Library in Ziarat and appreciated the renovation done to restore the century-old library.



A mason repairs Bab-i-Khyber in Jamrud as part of a beautification plan. A gateway of historic Khyber Pass, it was built in 1964 by the then military ruler, Gen Ayub Khan.



Sikh pilgrims arrive in Pakistan via Wagah border crossing from India, on Saturday. About 846 Sikh pilgrims, led by Sardar Gurubachan Singh, crossed into Pakistan to participate in Jor Mela commemorations of Guru Arjan Dev Ji's death anniversary.



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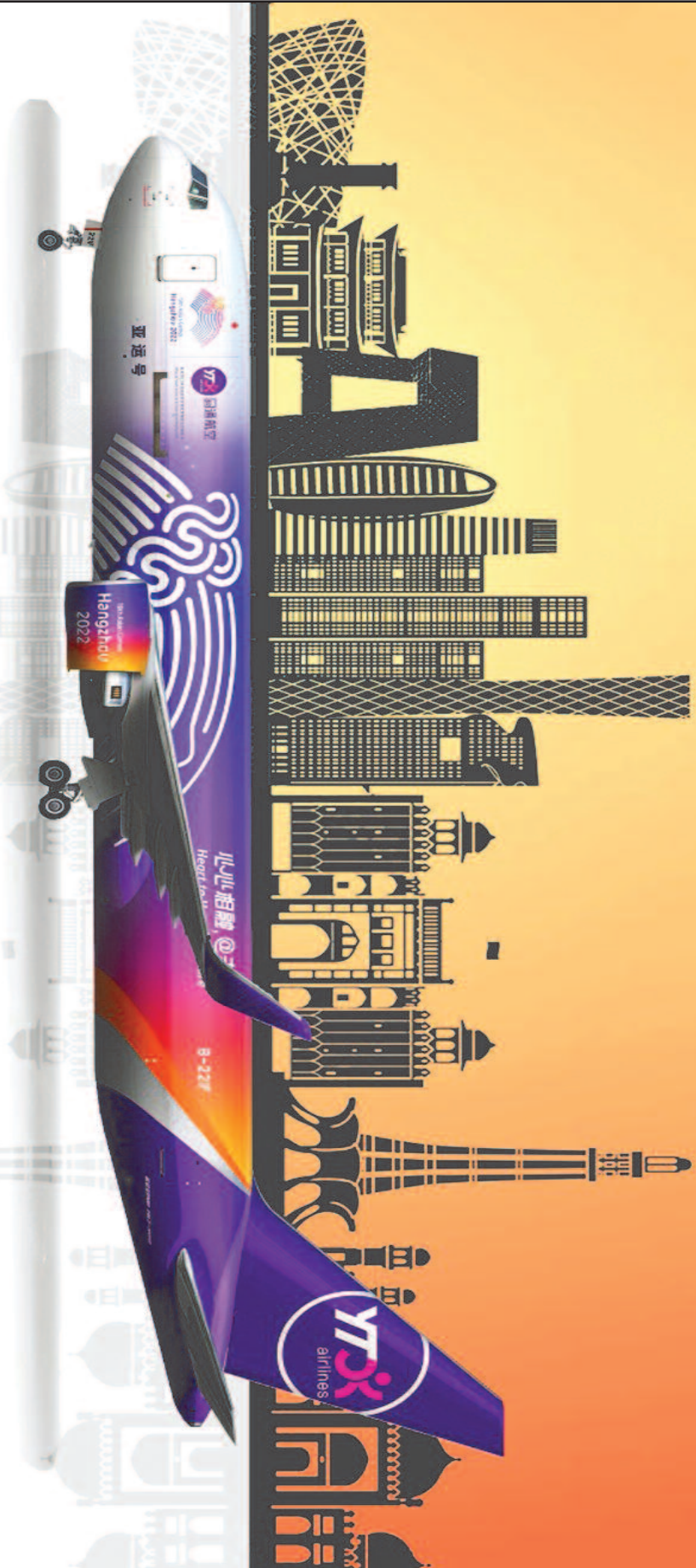


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