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SAPS handles Somon Air of Tajikistan

Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS) is a project of Shaheen Foundation, a Welfare Organization of Pakistan Air Force and has the largest setup of providing complete Ground Handling Services at major Airports in Pakistan i.e Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Multan, Quetta, Skardu, Gwader, Faisalabad and Rahim Yar Khan International Airports. It was established in 1982 with the sole aim of providing Safe, Secure, Efficient, Cost Effective and Quality Services to Airlines operating to Pakistan.

In addition to Scheduled Airlines, SAPS also handles Charter / VVIP / Presidential flights and Non-Schedule Carriers operating both Freighters & Passenger Aircraft at Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Multan, Quetta, Faisalabad, Skardu, Gwader & Rahim Yar Khan and at remote Airfields i.e. Nawabshah, Chandana, Mohenjo Daro, Kadanwari etc on need basis. SAPS has a rich experience of over 42 years and Customer Satisfaction is our Paramount Policy. Besides over-flight and landing clearances, SAPS provides Ground Handling Services as per IATA Airport Handling Standards, with full Security measures. Our services include Passenger / Baggage handling, Flight Operations / Dispatch, Load / ULD control, Ramp / Cabin Cleaning, Cargo / Mail handling, Scanning, etc. SAPS, also makes arrangement for Refueling, Catering & Aircraft Maintenance, when required.

In 03 years, 13 Scheduled Airlines Business came to SAPS for Ground Handling. Besides numerous Non-Scheduled businesses also came to SAPS. SAPS looks after entire flight operations very sincerely and renders best Ground Handling Services in a very professional manner, this is achieved by our SAPS team hard work and dedication which includes Director Aviation SF / Executive Director SAPS, Head of Commercial, all GMs, all DGMs and their staff. Their loyalty with SAPS and utmost selfless efforts are very appreciable and encouraging.

On 27th June, 2024, Somon Air of Tajikistan to Islamabad was welcomed and handled by Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS). On this auspicious occasion of inaugural flight of Somon Air of Tajikistan at Islamabad airport was honored by Governor of KPK Mr. Faisal Karim Kundi and the Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan, Mr. Yusuf Sharifzoda. Somon Air will operate weekly flights between Islamabad and Dushanbe, which will promote tourism, culture, interaction of people of both the countries, besides commerce and trades between Pakistan and Tajikistan will grow further. There is also huge potential of cargo between the two countries.

It is because of this consistent loyalty and hard work of all SAPS Employees that after Covid-19, the business of SAPS has grown by more than 300% for which the credit only goes to the entire SAPS Team.



Somon Air of Tajikistan Launches flights from Dushanbe to Islamabad

The first-ever flight of Somon Air, Tajikistan's national airline, successfully landed in Islamabad from Dushanbe on 27th June 2024. The momentous occasion was marked by the arrival of Flight SMR 129 at 11:45 AM, carrying fourteen passengers. As a traditional gesture, Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS) ground handling agent of the airlines in Pakistan arranged a water cannons salute.

To celebrate this milestone, a small but delightful cake-cutting

ceremony took place. Notable figures such as Governor KPK Faisal Karim Kundi and Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan Yusuf Sharifzoda graced the event with their presence.

The Airport Manager, ED SAPS Air Commodore (R) Waseem A. Khan, Captain Saeed Khan Head of Commercial SAPS, and other esteemed dignitaries were also in attendance. Later in the day, Flight SMR 130 departed from Islamabad at approximately 3:30 pm, carrying 52 passengers on board.



Bidders interested, but wary of EU ban on PIA

Pakistan could expect much higher foreign exchange proceeds from the sale of the Roosevelt Hotel - an upscale property in New York's Manhattan district - with an improved mix-use sell-off transaction proposed by US advisers.

But pre-qualified bidders for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) have expressed concerns over the European Union's ban on Pakistani airlines, which could affect the bid price for the national flag carrier that is currently up for sale.

This was the crux of a news briefing on Wednesday, 03 July, led by Privatisation Minister Abdul Aleem Khan and federal secretaries of the privatisation division and privatisation commission, Jawad Paul and Usman Bajwa, respectively.

Mr Bajwa said that Jones Lang LaSalle Incorporated (JLL) - a Chicago-based global real estate services firm hired to advise on the privatisation structure - had submitted a comprehensive due diligence report to the government and proposed three options.

The report suggested that floor area ratio (FAR) of the building currently stood at 1:15 (650,000 sq. feet retail area) which could be doubled to 1:30 (about 1.3 million sq. feet), thus increasing the retail sellable area, with support from the metropolitan authorities and secondary market.

"The increase in Roosevelt's FAR provides a difference of a few billion dollars," chipped in minister Aleem Khan who said that real estate was one area he could claim significant personal expertise, unlike other entities on the privatisation list. He said he was not talking about a few billion dollars as the total value of Roosevelt but the additional value because of the higher floor area ratio - a term used for the covered area for construction.

"I may not be as expert as the expert advisers (JLL) but I would be personally responsible for even a loss of a single rupee in the Roosevelt transaction against its true potential and best value," said the minister who himself operates one of the leading real estate businesses in at least three major cities, including Islamabad.

The cabinet had approved a joint venture option with international investors for mix-use development. "We now have to tell them what are the transaction options" for which the report would be

taken up with the federal cabinet, said Mr Bajwa, explaining that these could include an outright sale, long-term lease, or joint venture operations depending on all the pros and cons, including but not limited to maximum proceeds over a period of time.

Mr Bajwa said the privatisation commission would take up the JLL's report to the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP) for a decision and was targeting to invite expressions of interest (EOIs) by the first week of August. "We are ready to go to CCoP," he said.



PIA bids

Talking about the PIA's privatisation, Mr Bajwa said the six pre-qualified bidders - Air Blue, Lucky Group, Arif Habib Group, Blue World, Pak Ethanol, and FlyJinnah - were currently conducting due diligence on the PIA's data and confirmed that they also had concerns over European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EUASA) ban on Pakistani airlines that also applied to PIA.

He said the PIA management had informed the bidders and the government as well that the airline had been cleared by the EUASA but the ban could not be lifted because of regulatory functions that pertained to certain things with Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and their standard operating procedures (SOPs), currently going through restructuring. Mr Bajwa said all the bidders would be provided comprehensive due diligence by CAA as well to address those concerns.

The minister deplored that a former cabinet member had said adverse things about Pakistani pilots despite the fact that Pakistani pilots were among the best in the world. "There may be issues with safety and security of planes but this would improve once new investors take over and airports are also privatised" for which the sale process was underway. He said the PIA had among the best international routes and spots. These are the biggest assets that would make the airline

profitable the day it is in private hands. "Hopefully, bidders concerns would be resolved in due course" and would not impact the bids.

Mr Khan said the PIA hotels' proceeds had been separated from the core PIA whose Rs630bn debt would be paid off over a period of 10 years under an easy payment plan with banks. The hotel proceeds would finance these PIA debts.

Mr Bajwa explained that PIA bidders would complete their due diligence in a week and the timeline for bidding would be set within 10 days in consultation with bidders. He said the level of detail bidders and their experts had gone into and questions raised showed very serious interest. "We expect very healthy competition," he said.

The minister added that the cabinet had authorised divestment of 51-100pc shares and it would be decided within a few days in consultation with bidders how much shareholding should be actually offered for bidding.

"We would like to keep shareholding in PIA for a better dividend or subsequent improved return but this would be based on finances the government could also spare for fresh investment in line with private investment," the minister said, adding that all bidders would bid for the same size of shareholding and processes would be made transparent.

The minister said the nation was fully convinced with the privatisation programme under which 24 entities were on the active sale list, spanning five years. He lamented that former chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry had caused irreparable loss, not only to privatisation but also to the country's economic interests. He should come forward and tender a public apology and his assets should be sold and pay at least a fraction of the national loss.

He pretended as saviour of the nation and destroyed Pakistan Steel, PIA, and Reko Diq with billions of dollars of loss. "We paid more than Rs500bn to PIA since and \$6bn additional cost for Reko Diq along with national integrity. Today, PIA losses stand at Rs830bn," he said, adding that all the stakeholders of the country contributed to these national losses over the years with no exception, including all the political parties.

'On sale' PIA has 304 employees per plane, NA committee told

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), which is currently for sale, has an average of 304 employees per aircraft, the aviation division's head told a National Assembly committee on Monday, 08 July.

In a detailed briefing to the Standing Committee on Aviation, Saif Anjum, the aviation division secretary, said PIA has a fleet of 34 aircraft, of which 13 are on dry lease while the rest are owned by the airline.

Currently, PIA has a workforce of 10,323 employees, of which 7,399 are regular while 2,924 are outsourced.

The committee was informed that the privatisation process of PIA is almost complete.

On the performance of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA), the meeting was told the regulator currently operates 22 out of 43 airports in the country, of which 13 are international.

However, the aviation regulator has been experiencing development budget constraints for several years, forcing it to use outdated equipment.

The Airport Security Force (ASF) representative also complained about the lack of funds, which is why the force is compelled to use old security gadgets.

Still, the ASF representative claimed, they have been working on procuring the latest gadgets and some baggage scanning equipment have already arrived.

The meeting was informed that ASF has 15,565 personnel, including 14,135 uniformed and 873 civilian staff.

Of the 43 airports located across the country, ASF is deployed at 22.

The committee, which met under the leadership of PPP MNA Nawabzada Iftikhar Ahmed Khan, expressed concerns over cracks in the aircraft parking area at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore.

In response, the PCAA officials acknowledged the issue and said the renovation is underway.

The committee also questioned the appointment of aero-medical staff and pilots' licensing and sought a comprehensive report on these matters.

Regarding complaints about delays of private airlines and inconvenience faced by travellers, Mr Anjum said notices had been served on two private carriers, Air Blue and Air Sial, as there was no excuse to justify frequent delays.

PIA would also be served notice if its

flights are delayed, he added.

To another question, he informed the meeting that due to feasibility, private airlines are not interested in operating flights on the Islamabad-Lahore-Islamabad route.

The committee emphasised the need to improve the quality of in-flight catering services and the behaviour of PCAA staff towards passengers.

In response to a member's query, the ASF representative informed the meeting that nobody, except the VVIPs, is exempted from body searches at airports.

The committee was also informed about the recently devised policy 'Civil Unmanned Aircraft Rules, 2024', to regulate the usage

of drones. The policy is set to be presented before the federal cabinet for approval.

PMD to install new radars

Furthermore, the committee was briefed about the Pakistan Meteorological Department's (PMD) plans to install five new radars in Quetta, Dera Ismail Khan, Cherat, Gwadar and Lahore.

Three mobile radars and 300 automatic weather stations will also be installed under the World Bank-funded Hydromet Project. The committee was also informed about the development of a mobile application to provide farmers and other state departments with early weather forecasts and flood warnings.

The aviation security team of UAE-GCAA declares the security measures at Islamabad and Karachi Airports to be of world-class standard



The aviation security assessment conducted by the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority (UAE-GCAA) at Islamabad and Karachi Airports, led by Senior Director GCAA UAE, Mr. Abdullah Al Kaabi, and hosted by PCAA, concluded on 5 July 2024 here in Karachi. The team inspected various aviation security areas at both airports, including passenger and baggage screening, cargo, and catering security.

They also assessed airlines operating directly to the UAE, ground handling agents, regulated cargo agents, and catering companies. The assessment focused on security access control, aircraft security checks, and other related

procedures, as well as reviewed national and airline security documents.

During the debriefing session, the GCAA UAE team expressed their gratitude to the PCAA for hosting them and conveyed satisfaction with the overall security protocols maintained by Airport Management, the Airport Security Force (ASF), airlines, cargo companies, and other stakeholders, noting their alignment with international standards and best practices.

This visit marks the first ever assessment visit of (UAE-GCAA) in Pakistan and is a sequel to earlier (ICAO-USAP) Audit and (UK DfT) assessments this year.

Flydubai launches flights to Islamabad and Lahore

Flydubai, the Dubai-based carrier, inaugurated its operations to Islamabad and Lahore in Pakistan on 01 July. This marks the start of the carrier's daily services to Islamabad and Lahore.

flydubai, said: "at flydubai, we are always looking for opportunities to better serve our customers with more options for travel and we are pleased to have launched our daily services to Islamabad and Lahore. The

countries served by a young fleet of 88 Boeing 737 aircraft.

Flight details for the two destinations

Flights will operate daily from Terminal 2, Dubai International (DXB) to Islamabad International Airport (ISB) and Allama Iqbal International Airport (LHE).

Return Business Class fares from DXB to ISB start from AED 5,500 and Economy Class fares start from AED 1,300. Return Business Class fares from ISB to DXB start from PKR 400,000 and



Economy Class fares start from PKR 120,000.

Return Business Class fares from DXB to LHE start from AED 5,500 and Economy Class fares start from AED 1,200. Return Business Class fares from LHE to DXB start from PKR 400,000 and Economy Class fares start from PKR 120,000.



The inaugural flights touched down at Islamabad International Airport (ISB) and Allama Iqbal International Airport (LHE) and were met with a water cannon salute and a warm welcome by airport officials.

Commenting on the start of operations, Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President, Commercial Operations (UAE, GCC, Africa and the Indian Subcontinent) at

commencement of our 14 weekly flights to these two points will enable more of our passengers to enjoy direct access between the UAE and Pakistan."

flydubai's network in Pakistan includes Faisalabad, Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Multan, Quetta and Sialkot.

The carrier has built a growing network of more than 125 destinations across 58





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Saudi Airlines gets fire in the left landing gear at Peshawar Airport

The landing gear of a Saudi Airlines flight caught fire upon landing at Peshawar's Bacha Khan International Airport on Thursday, 11 July, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) said in a

statement.

"All 276 passengers and 21 crew members safely exited the aircraft using inflatable slides," the statement added. "The Saudi Airlines flight had arrived from Riyadh to Peshawar."



statement, prompting the air traffic controller to deploy fire tenders to handle the emergency situation.

Incidents involving landing gear fires and other emergencies have occasionally occurred with different airlines at various Pakistani airports.

To address such situations, Pakistani authorities have implemented comprehensive emergency response plans to ensure they meet international safety standards and are prepared to handle these eventualities effectively.

"After Saudi Airlines flight 792 landed at Peshawar Airport, the air traffic controller noticed smoke and sparks coming from the left landing gear," the PCAA said in a statement. "The air traffic controller informed the pilot about the smoke and sparks coming from the left landing gear."

It informed the air traffic controller immediately notified the fire and rescue services, who promptly arrived at the scene and immediately controlled the fire, preventing a major

Later, Saudi Airlines acknowledged the incident, saying all passengers and crew members were safely evacuated.

"The aircraft is now undergoing technical evaluation by specialists," it announced in a statement. "This includes repairs, along with comprehensive inspections and subsequent tests, to ensure its safety."

The Pakistani aviation industry has been under international scrutiny for its security standards in recent years. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) conducted a comprehensive assessment last year and noted significant improvements.

To ensure compliance with international standards, the PCAA has actively sought certification from various countries.

Earlier this month, the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority certified the aviation security at Islamabad and Karachi airports, confirming that they meet "international standards."

Indonesian flying school offers training facilities to PIA pilots

An Indonesian flying school has offered training facilities to pilots of Pakistan International Airlines. The offer came from the CEO of Mitra Aviation Perkasa and Perkasa Flying School of Indonesia, Septo Sudiro, who is visiting Pakistan.

His visit is aimed at strengthening the civil aviation cooperation between Indonesia and Pakistan, including pilots' training. "As far as I know, there are currently around 25 Indonesian pilots working in various Pakistani airlines. My company is able to provide highly skilled aviation workers from Indonesia to meet the needs in Pakistan, including pilots and aircraft engineers," Mr Sudiro told the Indonesian Charge d'Affaires, Rahmat Hindiarta, and the embassy's economic team.

The official said that established in July 2013, Perkasa Flying School had an ideal training base in Indonesia located at Tunggul Wulung Airport of Cilacap, Central Java, as well as Nusawiru Airport of Pangandaran, West Java.

The training base accommodated ground and flight training. The Perkasa Flying School is one of the largest international pilot schools in Indonesia with a PSC - 141 - 017 pilot certificate and focused on preparing pilot students who are ready to take on roles as commercial pilots. According to the embassy of Indonesia, which received Mr Sudiro, the company has offered a solution of the pilots' possible shortage in Pakistan due to the flight boom and tougher competition among airlines at the global stage. Moreover, being the largest Muslim country in the world, Indonesia is definitely suitable for Pakistani students, the embassy said in a press release.

"Perkasa Flying School is offering a cooperation programme for Pakistani airlines to train their cadet pilots in Indonesia, through innovative financial scheme of 50:50 which will surely create greater number of reliable pilots in Pakistan," the visiting official said.

Salam Air flight landed at Islamabad International Airport

Salam Air, Oman's first budget carrier, marked a significant milestone on Tuesday 09 July, 2024 with the launch of its inaugural flight from Muscat to Islamabad Pakistan. Salam Air's first flight landed at Islamabad International Airport.

A spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) said the flight OV563 arrived in Islamabad at 2:55am with 203 passengers on board.

The inaugural flight was welcomed with a traditional water cannon salute, followed by a cake-cutting ceremony attended by the COO/airport manager Syed Aftab Gilani.

The momentous occasion also celebrated by distinguished guests, including the Chairman of MIAN'S Group, Mr. Amer S. Mian, His Excellency the Omani Ambassador, and Salam Air's esteemed Country Manager for Pakistan.

The Salam Air management and representatives of Menzies (RAS) were also present at the event.

Subsequently, flight OV564 departed for Muscat at 4am with 201 passengers on board. The airline plans to operate five Islamabad-Muscat flights per week.

This New route signifies Salam Air's commitment to expanding its network and strengthening the connection between Oman and Pakistan. It opens doors for increased travel opportunities and fosters strong business ties between two nation.





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Ethiopian Airlines commences new service to Warsaw, Poland



Ethiopian Airlines, Africa's largest network operating carrier, is pleased to announce the commencement of its four times-weekly new flight services to Warsaw, the capital and largest city of the Republic of Poland, via Athens as of 01 July 2024. The flight departed from Addis Ababa Bole International Airport in a colorful ceremony attended by the Ambassador of Poland to Ethiopia, Ethiopia's high ranking government officials and Ethiopian Airlines' executives.

The new flight marks a significant milestone for Ethiopian Airlines' network expansion in Europe, enhancing global connectivity and promoting commerce and tourism.

Regarding the commencement of the new route Mr. Mesfin Tasew, Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines Group said, "We are truly pleased to establish yet another connection between Africa and Central Europe with the flight that we have commenced to Warsaw, Poland. We are committed to enhance our passengers' convenience in traveling across the globe in a seamless connection, and we are proud to take our African Flavored Ethiopian Hospitality services further to Poland."

With the launch of this new flight, Warsaw marks Ethiopian Airlines' 24th destination in Europe. This milestone underscores our commitment to meeting the growing demand for travel between Africa and Europe, reinforcing our mission to connect people, cultures, and economies across regions. Our dedication to providing an exceptional customer experience has earned us multiple accolades, further solidifying our reputation in the industry.

Ethiopian remains committed to service

excellence, claiming international accolades along the way. Recently,

Qatar Airways to increase Colombo-Doha flight frequency

Qatar Airways has announced plans to boost its flight frequency between Sri Lanka and Doha, Qatar, from five to six daily flights, effective July 10, 2024.

The increase in flights further demonstrate the award-winning airline's dedication to providing more choices and

Ethiopian Airlines achieved remarkable success at the SKYTRAX World Airlines Award 2024, winning in four prestigious categories: Best Airline in Africa for seven consecutive years, Best Business Class in Africa for six consecutive years, Best Economy Class in Africa for six consecutive years, and Best Economy Class Onboard Catering in Africa. Additionally, Ethiopian was honored with 'Best Entertainment' and 'Best Wi-Fi' in Africa at the 2024 APEX Passenger Choice Awards.

Travelers can now book their flights with Ethiopian Airlines through its digital channels and at its ticket offices, ensuring convenient access to our award-winning services.

Country Manager Sri Lanka & Maldives, said: "We are thrilled to be increasing our flights to and from Sri Lanka to provide even better connectivity to our passengers. This flight increase is a testament to our commitment in providing our passengers with the best travel experience possible,



better connectivity for all passengers flying to and from Sri Lanka.

The additional flights will be served by the Boeing 787 aircraft, featuring 30 Business Class seats and 281 Economy Class seats. With this network enhancement, Qatar Airways will operate a total of 42 weekly flights to and from Sri Lanka, connecting passengers to nearly 170 global destinations worldwide.

Jonathan Fernando, Qatar Airways

onboard the World's Best Airline. With more flights to and from Sri Lanka via our home hub, Hamad International Airport, we hope to make it easier for more travellers to discover their dream destination within our robust network."

The newly added flights will provide passengers with more options to connect to major destinations in the Middle East, Europe, Africa and more, via Skytrax World's Best Airport, Hamad International Airport.

Over 1.5m Muslims perform Haj under shadow of Gaza conflict

More than one million Muslims packed a giant tented city near Makkah on Friday, 14 July for the Haj in sweltering heat and against the grim backdrop of the Gaza conflict.

Robed worshippers arrived on buses or on foot, many shaded by umbrellas, at the vast encampment in Mina after performing tawaf — walking seven times around Kaaba at the Grand Mosque.

Chanting “God is great” and “God, we answer your call”, many were awash with spiritual fervour as they followed in the footsteps of the Holy Prophet’s (Peace be upon him) final pilgrimage nearly 1,400 years ago.

Participants, who numbered 1.5 million by Monday, 10 June have travelled from all parts of the world for the annual rites, this year held in intense heat with forecast daily highs of 44 degrees Celsius).

“It’s very, very hot,” said Fahad Azmar, 31, from Pakistan. “But I thank God for the opportunity to be here.”

They spent Friday night at Mina, a rocky valley several kilometres outside Makkah, before climbing Mount Arafat for the Haj’s climax on Saturday, 15 June. Many worshippers were tightly packed inside as they sat and lay on narrow mattresses laid close to each other on the floor.

‘Carry an umbrella’

Outside, misting stations were installed to cool the faithful, and security guards splashed passers-by with water.

Most of the Haj is outdoors, but Saturday will be particularly testing for the pilgrims, when they spend most of the day

praying on Mount Arafat.

Mohammed Al Abdulali, spokesperson for the Saudi health ministry, said this week there were more than 10,000 documented cases of heat-related illnesses last year, 10 per cent of which were heat stroke.

A text message sent to pilgrims instructed them to “drink water regularly, more than two litres daily” and to “always carry an umbrella”, warning that temperatures could climb to 48 degrees Celsius.

Many pilgrims said they would pray for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, more than eight months into the conflict that has left tens of thousands dead.

Zahra Benizahra, 78, from Morocco, could not hold back her tears as she described the “images of war, displaced people, dead children” that haunt her. “Our brothers are dying, and we can see it with our own eyes.”

Palestinian pilgrims

Some 2,000 Palestinians are performing the Haj at the special invitation of King Salman, official media said. However, the country’s minister in charge of religious affairs warned last week that “no political activity” would be tolerated.

The Haj, one of the world’s largest religious gatherings, is one of the five pillars of Islam and must be performed at least once by all Muslims who have the means to do so.

Some have waited for years for the chance to make the trip, with permits allocated by Saudi authorities on a quota basis for each country.



Pilgrims carry umbrellas to shield themselves from intense heat as they arrive in Mina.

PIA flights delay, cancellations hit tourism in GB

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Haji Gulbar Khan has expressed concern over extraordinary delays and frequent cancellations of PIA flights to the region, particularly during peak tourism season.

In a letter sent to federal Minister for Aviation Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Saturday, 22 June the GB CM criticised PIA for its erratic flight schedule to Gilgit and Skardu airports, terming it irresponsible behaviour and demanding that the minister ensure regular flights to both airports.

“These cancellations have not only caused significant inconvenience to the residents and visitors of the region but also severely impacted the ability of the Gilgit-Baltistan government to meet its commitments at the federal level,” he lamented.

He said air travel is the primary mode of transportation for officials and representatives of the GB government to attend crucial meetings, conferences, and other engagements in Islamabad and other parts of Pakistan.

In recent months, he added, there has been a noticeable increase in the frequency of cancellations, delays, and unreliable scheduling with PIA flights.

“This has had a profound impact on travellers, both domestic and international, causing inconvenience, financial loss, and heightened anxiety among passengers, CM Khan said.

The chief minister further emphasised that the lack of prior notice regarding these cancellations aggravates the issue, leaving passengers with minimal time to make alternative travel arrangements. This has resulted in missed opportunities, delayed projects, and a significant erosion of trust in PIA’s reliability as the national airline. CM Khan requested the federal government and the aviation minister to address this issue promptly.

Drastic increase in fed for international travellers save the travel & tourism industry of Pakistan

Travel Agents Association of Pakistan (TAAP) strongly oppose the imposition of 150% increase in FED on Economy class and 40% on Business / Club/ First Class air tickets in recent Federal budget 2024-25 from 1st July 2024

TAAP bring to the attention of competent authorities of Pakistan through Media towards the matter leading to the brink of destruction of travel / tourism industry of Pakistan without considering serious consequences on Pakistan economy.

The implications of this hike are far-reaching:

1. Threatens to substantially raise the cost burden on international travelers.

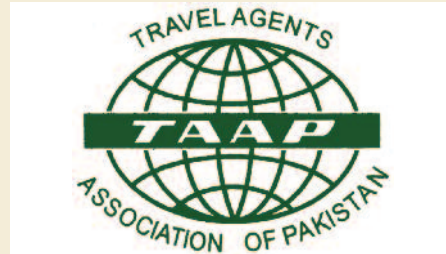
2. This increase not only affects individual business travelers but also poses a significant challenge to IATA travel agents of Pakistan who are collector of such taxes and remit airlines thru IATA/BSP system of payment, whether agents receive payments or not from clients. This they do without being compensated by Government or Airlines.

3. This will adversely impact business travelers and results in reduction in Government revenue.

4. This increase will also significantly impact the common people who travel for employment

5. Many businesses rely on frequent international travel for sustaining business

operations, client meetings, and conferences. The sudden increase in FED which is already higher adds to the overall



travel expenses, it will negatively impact travel budgets.

6. The increased FED could diminish the competitiveness of agents operating in Pakistan, making it harder for them to offer competitive pricing compared to agents in other jurisdictions with lower taxes.

7. IATA agents who furnish financial guarantees to secure airline money to IATA, their guarantee amount will increase consequently it will increase their financial cost.

8. A thriving business environment depends on efficient travel infrastructure and affordable travel options. Any increase in travel costs could deter foreign investment, hinder business expansion, and impede economic growth.

9. We foresee a negative impact of this hike in taxes as it will result in high cost of tickets and most of the travelers will prefer

to book tickets from other countries due to this fact the employment created by Travel agents will be at stake.

10. TAAP respectfully urge GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN to reconsider the recent decision of increase in FED on international travelers. While we understand the need for revenue generation, it is crucial to strike a balance that supports economic activity and facilitates international business travellers.

ICAO team carries out safety assessment

A team of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has concluded a seven-day visit during which it assessed the safety measures implemented by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA).

The scheduled ICAO Coordinated Validation Mission (ICVM) took place from June 5 to 12, according to a PCAA statement issued on Thursday, 13 June.

The team conducted an extensive validation of corrective actions taken by the PCAA and visited the Pakistan International Airlines engineering and flight safety department, a senior official said.

The four-member team also assessed the implementation of ICAO's safety-related standards, airworthiness of aircraft, operations and engineering capabilities.

A CAA spokesman said the team arrived in Karachi as per schedule for extensive validation of corrective actions taken by PCAA after the last ICAO audit in December 2021.

Aviation Division Secretary and CAA DG Saif Anjum and Deputy DG Nadir Shafi Dar accompanied the team during its visit.

The team held a closing meeting on June 12, attended by the PCAA DG, deputy DG and directors.

The mission shared its preliminary report during the closing meeting, which will be followed by a detailed report in future, the statement added.

Deaths during Haj pilgrimage reach 1,301

The number of deaths during this year's Haj pilgrimage totalled 1,301 people, Saudi Arabia's health minister Fahad Al-Jalajel said on Sunday, 23 June.

The minister, quoted by state television, said that deaths were caused by pilgrims "walking long distances under direct sunlight without adequate shelter or comfort".

Fatalities also included a number of elderly people and those suffering from chronic diseases. Some 83 per cent of the fatalities were among people who were not authorised to make the pilgrimage, he said.

Most of the dead were Egyptians. Security and medical sources said on Sunday, 23 June that the Egyptian death toll had risen to 672 and another 25 were missing.

A total of 236 Indonesians died, according to Indonesian government data, while India's External Affairs agency said 98 Indian citizens died during Haj.

Further deaths were reported by Tunisia, Jordan, Iran, and Senegal, making this year's total toll at least 1,114 people, according to a tally.

An Egyptian crisis unit tasked with investigating the situation said on Saturday, 22 June it has suspended the licences of 16 tourism companies and referred them to the public prosecutor, accusing them of being responsible for deaths it said were mainly among pilgrims not registered under the official system. The unit said 31 deaths were confirmed as a result of chronic illness among officially registered pilgrims.

SIAL cautions the public on avoiding traps of fake agents

Sialkot International Airport is cautioning the public against falling prey to fraudulent activities perpetrated by fake travel agents operating in various cities and locations. Recent reports have highlighted instances where unauthorized individuals posing as travel agents have misled air travelers with enticing offers of visa services, Permanent residencies, cheap education, etc.

These fraudulent agents operate outside the boundaries of legality, preying on unsuspecting individuals who seek reliable travel arrangements. Spokesperson Sialkot International Airport M. Umair Khan, emphasized, "It is crucial for travellers to be vigilant and cautious when dealing with travel agents, especially those operating outside the established norms.

By verifying credentials and using authorized services, air travelers can mitigate the risk of falling victim to fraudulent activities." These agents use social media to create fake, baseless, and irrational propaganda against the airport and public departments operating. It is pertinent to mention that on an average dozens of Pakistanis are deported from multiple countries causing irreparable loss to the image of the country and also facing hefty financial loss.

However, Sialkot International Airport continues to collaborate closely with law enforcement agencies and regulatory bodies to crack down on illegal practices within the travel industry. The airport remains committed to upholding high standards of safety and integrity in all travel-related services. The Spox for Sialkot International Airport, emphasized, "The proliferation of fake travel agents poses a significant risk to air travelers. We urge all passengers to exercise caution and verify the authenticity of travel services they engage with, particularly those offered outside established channels."

SIAL elects new Chairman & Vice Chairman for the year 2024-25




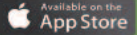
New Chairman Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti & Vice Chairman Mr. Faraz Akram Awan (centre) being presented a bouquet by the Directors of SIAL.



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Ethiopian Airlines MRO gains Boeing 737 MAX CFM Leap 1B engine testing capability

Ethiopian Airlines' Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facility, the largest MRO service facility in Africa, has achieved testing capability for the CFM Leap-1B Engine,

"We feel proud for achieving full testing capability for the CFM Leap-1B engine at our modern MRO facility in Addis Ababa. The addition of this state-of-the-art facility will enable us to finalize

Restoration Shop Visit (PRSV1) project by the end of September 2024, allowing it to offer Leap 1B PRSV solutions for other operators in the region and beyond.

Ethiopian MRO is certified by various



which powers the Boeing 737 MAX. This marks yet another milestone for the Ethiopian flag carrier, whose MRO facility becomes the first in Africa to achieve this testing capability.

CFM Leap-1B Engine testing in Addis Ababa

On July 09, 2024, Ethiopian Airlines (ET) proudly inaugurated its CFM Leap-1B engine test cell at its MRO facility at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport (ADD). This gives Africa's largest airline group the full testing capability of Leap-1B engines, the exclusive powerplant for the new-generation 737 MAX. Ethiopian Airlines is currently the largest operator of the type on the continent.

The newly launched testing facility will enable Ethiopian to finalize the development of Performance Restoration Shop Visit (PRSV1) repair capability on the Leap 1-B engine, which is expected to be operational soon. Speaking about the development, Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mesfin Tasew said,

the development of Performance Restoration Shop Visit (PRSV1) repair capability on the engine, which is expected to be ready very soon. We extend our appreciation to SAE, GE, and the other partners who contributed to this success."

Ethiopian Airlines' MRO facility, which is fully equipped with hangars and engine and component maintenance workshops, has become the fifth facility in the world outside the Safran Aero Engines (SAE) and the General Electric (GE) network to possess Leap-1B engine testing capabilities. According to the airline, it is also the first in the Middle East and Africa.

Extending services in the region

The MRO service facility in Addis Ababa, established in 1957, provides line maintenance services at stations served by Ethiopian Airlines and extends its services to other African and Middle Eastern operators. The Ethiopian flag carrier plans to complete the Phase 2-Performance

regulatory bodies, including the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The maintenance workshops have all the equipment required to repair/overhaul aircraft, engines, and components.

With over 160 CFM Leap operators worldwide, airlines flying the Boeing 737 MAX benefit from enhanced performance in terms of fuel efficiency, emissions, and noise reductions. Ethiopian Airlines is one of six 737 MAX operators in Africa. According to ch-aviation, the Addis Ababa-based carrier has 17 MAX 8s in its fleet, with 34 more on order. The MAX has proven reliable for the airline, although one jet was lost in the fatal 2019 crash. The other African operators include Air Tanzania, ASKY Airlines (an ET partner), Cabo Verde Airlines, Mauritania Airlines, and Royal Air Maroc. North African carriers Air Algérie and Egyptair also have 737 MAX aircraft on order.



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Qatar Airways makes \$1.7 billion profit in 2023/24 financial year



Last year, Air New Zealand CEO Greg Foran said 2023 "was as good as it gets" for airlines. The combination of high demand and tight capacity pushed fares higher, lifting most carriers into the profit zone. This week, Qatar Airways announced its best financial performance in its 27-year history, generating a record profit of US\$1.7 billion for the 2023/24 financial year.

A fine set of numbers

For the year ended March 31, 2024 (F23/24), Qatar Airways generated total revenue of \$22.2 billion, a 6% or \$1.3 billion increase compared to the previous year. The Group reported a strong EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortization) margin of 24% at \$5.2 billion, around \$0.3 billion higher than FY2022/23.

Qatar Airways Group's airline business carried more than 40 million passengers in FY23/24, 26% more than in FY22/23. The airline took a disciplined approach to adding more capacity by just 21% year-on-year (YoY) to record its highest-ever load factor of 83%. Those factors flowed through to the bottom line, with the Group reporting a net profit of \$1.7 billion, compared to \$1.2 billion in the previous year, a gain of around 40%.

In its announcement recently, Qatar Airways Group (Qatar) said the FY23/24 performance had created a strong platform for the future of the Group's airline business. It added that the higher EBITDA came from a continued focus on customer

experience, innovation, digitalization, and sustainability, resulting in streamlined, agile, and fit-for-purpose operations across all areas.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive Officer Engr. Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said the very strong financials are a testament to the ambition and clear direction that have informed the Group's progress throughout the 2023/24 financial year.

"Our continued focus on profitability, efficiency, and customer experience have been underpinned by a strategic program of network growth and fleet expansion, resulting in the highest revenues and profit margins in the history of the airline."

The fleet is growing

Qatar added 25 aircraft in the last financial year, including five Airbus A350-1000s, nine Boeing 737 MAX 8s, seven 787-9s, three 777-300ERs, and one 777-F freighter. At the end of March 2024, the Group's total fleet numbered 284 aircraft,



of which 230 were for passengers, 29 for Qatar Airways Cargo, and 25 for Qatar Executive, the corporate jet division

offering luxury jet charter services.

At the end of the 2019/20 financial year, Qatar had 258 aircraft in its group fleet. It said investing in the world's most technologically advanced aircraft "has helped the airline maintain agility when responding to opportunities and challenges during the 2023/24 financial year."

Of the 230 passenger aircraft, 121 are from Boeing, and 109 are from Airbus. The Boeing aircraft include nine 737 MAX 8s, seven 777-200LRs, 57 777-300ERs, 30 787-8s, and 18 787-9s. The Airbus fleet includes 29 A320s, four A330-200s, eight A330-300s, 34 A350-900s, 24 A350-1000s and 10 A380-800s.

Qatar has over 236 aircraft worth over \$63.1 billion on order, including options and Letters of Intent. Qatar Airways Cargo maintained its position as the world's leading air freight carrier in FY2023/24 and enhanced its services and digital transformation by retiring its last 747 and transitioning to an all Boeing 777F fleet of freighters.

Qatar Airways grew its network to more than 170 destinations in 2023/24, adding Al Ula, Neom and Tabuk in Saudi Arabia; Lyon and Toulouse in France; Medan in Indonesia; and Trabzon in Turkey throughout the year. It also resumed flights to 14 destinations, including Bahrain, Birmingham, Beijing, Chengdu, Chongqing, Davo, Tokyo Haneda, Osaka, Marrakesh, Nice, Penang, Phnom Penh, Ras Al Khaimah and Yanbu.

LHC admits plea challenging PIA's privatisation

The Lahore High Court's (LHC) Rawalpindi bench has admitted a petition challenging PIA's privatisation process and also asked the top law officer to respond to the questions raised in the plea.

Justice Jawad Hassan issued the order on Friday, 28 June on a pro bono petition filed against the procedure adopted to privatise PIA. The judge also expressed his intention to examine the law introduced by the previous caretaker government to set up an appellate tribunal for privatisation disputes. The petition stated that the government issued an advertisement to privatise the national carrier without properly evaluating its local and foreign assets as required under the Privatisation Commission Ordinance, 2000.

When the judge questioned the petitioner's counsel over the plea's maintainability, he argued the requirements in Section 23 of the Privatisation Commission Ordinance, 2000 have not been met. While proceeding with the privatisation process, principles already settled by the Supreme Court were also ignored, he argued, adding that the bench could take up this case.

Justice Hassan recalled a judgement authored by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah in a case titled 'Arshad Waheed versus Province of Punjab and others' where he detailed the high court's powers in such matters. According to Justice Hassan under Article 199 (jurisdiction of the high court) of the Constitution, the high court is empowered to examine administrative actions from the touchstone of violation of law and breach of the Constitution. He, however, added that the power of judicial review is regulated by the principle of judicial restraint.

"Judicial restraint encourages the judges to exercise their powers with restraint and wisdom and to limit the exercise of their own powers to intervene in the matters relating to [the] policy of the Statutory Bodies/Board having financial perspective and outcome and exercise."

The petitioner's counsel argued that his client is only challenging PIA's privatisation process because the mandatory requirement of advertisement, as given in Section 23 (advertisement of privatisation) of the Privatisation Commission Ordinance, 2000, has not been fulfilled.

He also drew attention towards the amendment introduced by the caretaker government in Section 28 of the Privatisation Commission (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, whereby an appellate tribunal was constituted.

He stated that there is no need for any such tribunal when the high court is empowered to hear such cases.

The court order said that cases regarding PIA's privatisation are already pending before the Sindh High Court (SHC) and also argued before a single-member LHC bench.

But on the criteria laid down by the SHC in the case of the KESC Labour Union and the fact that certain provisions of the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (Conversion) Act, 2016 needed to be interpreted, "subject to maintainability of this petition notice be issued to the Respondents," said the court order. The court also directed the law officer to seek instructions from the relevant authorities and ensure that para-wise comments are submitted by the respondents in four weeks. The court also issued notice to the attorney general to respond to legal questions raised in this petition and adjourned further hearing till September 12.

PIA announces reduced Umrah fares

The Pakistan International Airlines has announced a reduction in Umrah fares to facilitate pilgrims.

A PIA spokesman said on Sunday, 30 June that the airline's management has reduced Umrah fares, which will remain effective till July 15 this year. He said the return fare for Umrah from Karachi to Madina will be Rs76,000 plus tax. The spokesman said that the return fare from Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Multan and Sialkot to Madina will be Rs86,000 plus tax.

"The discounted fares will take effect immediately," the spokesman said.

The government has imposed federal excise duty (FED) on international travel in the recently approved budget for FY25.

For people travelling in Economy and Economy-plus, the FED will be Rs12,500, while Club, Business and First Class travellers going to the Middle East and Africa, will have to pay Rs105,000 more.

Singapore approves SIA-Garuda commercial joint venture

Singapore's competition regulators have allowed Singapore Airlines and Garuda Indonesia to deepen their strategic partnership as part of a commercial joint venture agreement.

The move, announced on 5 July, covers a "wider range" of commercial activities, including the potential operation of revenue-sharing flights between Indonesia and Singapore, as well as the coordination of flight schedules, and joint



sales and marketing initiatives.

In May, the carriers announced plans for deeper commercial co-operation. Both Garuda and SIA are also working on "strengthening" their frequent flyer partnerships.

SIA chief Goh Choon Phong says: "We are poised to deepen our collaboration across a wider scope of commercial activities. Along with the ongoing work to strengthen the links between our frequent flyer membership programmes, this will provide our customers with even more options and enhanced value."

The two carriers codeshare on flights between Singapore and Indonesia. In addition, Garuda places its code on SIA-operated flights between Singapore and Johannesburg, London Heathrow, and Mumbai.

Garuda chief Irfan Setiাপutra says: "We are very pleased to receive this approval, as it marks significant progress towards our commitment to enhance service quality as well as broaden both Garuda Indonesia and Singapore Airlines' networks through a deepening partnership."

Riyadh Air partners with Delta to strengthen connectivity

Delta Air Lines, the world's leading premium airline, and Riyadh Air, Saudi Arabia's innovative new full-service global carrier, have signed a Strategic Cooperation Memorandum of Understanding with the goal of introducing a broad range of benefits for customers traveling between North America, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and destinations beyond.

The agreement, signed recently, at a ceremony at Delta's World Headquarters in Atlanta, serves as the foundation for a strategic partnership that will enable both airlines to strengthen connectivity, expand their networks and drive future growth.

"This partnership with Riyadh Air will further Delta's mission of connecting the world and open an array of new choices, benefits and destinations for our customers traveling to and from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," said Delta CEO Ed Bastian. "Most importantly, Riyadh Air shares Delta's commitment to providing an elevated customer experience, which is why we're looking forward to building and expanding this partnership in the months and years ahead. We appreciate the opportunity to work with the Riyadh Air team and the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia as they transform the transportation economy in the Kingdom."

"We look forward to enjoying a very warm and productive relationship with Delta Air Lines, one of the largest and most successful airlines in the world. Riyadh Air and Delta Air Lines share common goals and pursue the highest standards in many areas including guest experience, loyalty, and sustainability, built upon great networks and strong connectivity," said Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas.

The agreement envisions a long-term relationship, subject to regulatory approvals, that includes interline and codeshare connectivity, as well as a deeper partnership encompassing loyalty, customer experience, digital transformation and broader aviation services such as maintenance, repair and overhaul services, ground handling and training. In the future, the airlines intend to explore an immunized joint venture to further expand the partnership and allow collaboration on network planning and growth in the region. Both airlines are committed to driving the best sustainability practices throughout their operations as



they transform the future of travel.

The partnership will open new destinations in Saudi Arabia and beyond for Delta customers, including future nonstop service on Delta between the U.S. and King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh. It will provide leisure travelers with a new region of the world to explore while creating new opportunities for business travelers to Riyadh, a G20 capital city, plus destinations beyond. And it will offer Delta's leading North American network for Riyadh Air customers, offering convenient access to hundreds of destinations in the U.S. and beyond with Delta's famous reliability and elevated service.

The new partnership comes as large-scale, ongoing investments in the Kingdom are transforming it into a popular and attractive destination for both leisure and business travelers. Travel is central to the nation's long-term economic growth plan, with an \$800 billion investment in the tourism sector that includes development

of luxury resorts on the Red Sea, the opening of the Diriyah and al-Ula historical site to visitors, and the hosting of the 2030 Riyadh Expo.

Riyadh Air, which will begin operations in 2025, is committed to building a premier carrier for customers traveling to and from the Middle East, with its base of operations in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Delta, which will mark its 100th anniversary next year, is the most-awarded U.S. airline with an industry-leading global network and an unrivaled reputation for outstanding customer service and operational excellence.

"It's fitting that Riyadh Air will begin its journey the same year that Delta launches our second century of flight," Bastian said. "We'll have many opportunities to learn from each other and become better airlines for our mutual customers, our employees, our investors and our communities as we fly forward together."



The FAA has approved an executive private aviation airport in Las Vegas

Recently, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) greenlit a project that would develop a new executive airport in the Las Vegas metro area in Nevada. The area where the airport will be built is run by the Clark County Commissioners, who unanimously approved construction to begin on the runway earlier this year. The project also intends to house the Las Vegas Spaceport, which will be focused on providing access to space tourism.

New Las Vegas private aviation-focused airport

In May, the Clark County Commission unanimously approved the runway construction for the proposed airport, which has been designated as the Las Vegas Executive Airport for the time being. This airport will be located approximately 30 miles west of Harry Reid International Airport (LAS), which is the region's most popular airport for both commercial and general aviation flights.

Las Vegas is also served by the Henderson Executive Airport (HND) and the North Las Vegas Airport (VGT). The Clark County Department of Aviation operates each of these airports, so the addition of another executive airport would fall under its operations.

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the project, Rob Lauer, who is also the CEO of the Las Vegas Spaceport, spoke about the ruling from the FAA. He told Fox 5 Vegas that the plan was to break ground for the runway within the next three months. The second phase of the project will include a terminal and separate hangars for private jets. This will allow the new Las Vegas Executive Airport to take advantage of global events that are held in the Las Vegas area, such as the popular Formula 1 race, the Las Vegas Grand Prix. The third phase of the plan would incorporate a casino and hotel near the airport.

Specifically, the FAA's approval of the plan stated that the airport could accommodate single and multi-engine aircraft as well as helicopter operations. When reached by Simple Flying, a spokesperson for the FAA confirmed the following:

"After a thorough review, the FAA determined that the proposed Las Vegas Executive Airport would not affect the



safety or efficiency of the surrounding airspace."

The project has already secured over \$10 million in funding. It would need an additional \$20 million in funding, beyond the FAA's approval.



What will it be used for?

Speaking to Simple Flying on the phone recently, Lauer outlined several of the initial uses for the spaceport in the immediate future. The most exciting of which is potentially its role in hosting air races. Given its unique position in the desert, yet still accessible from downtown in 15 minutes by car or 15 minutes by helicopter, the site is well suited to support racing events without concerns of noise pollution.

The other primary use is as a flight training center. According to Lauer, pilot training at North Las Vegas airport can cost an extra \$6,000, as trainees are not allowed to do touch-and-go and must practice at tertiary airports. This creates a unique opportunity for student pilots and their instructors in the region.

In the meantime, the airport is taking

bids for a fixed-base operator, maintenance, repair, and overhaul provider, and fuel supplier.

A public spaceport in Las Vegas?

Beyond the new executive airport, the project also includes one of the world's first public spaceports. This official project proposal has yet to be finalized and distributed to the FAA, but Lauer says that the proposal is expected to be filled later this summer. This application process can take approximately two years to pass through the FAA's spaceport division.



Lauer also spoke about the spaceport plan for Fox 5 Vegas. He stated,

"They'll be able to go to the moon, they'll be able to go to space stations, they'll be able to go fully into space, bring satellites into space, people into space. They're going to change the world as we know it. As much as the jet airline changed the world, these space planes are going to change the world."

The Las Vegas Spaceport will eventually include a space pilot school, a post-high-school academy, and a takeoff and landing mechanism for space planes, which are different from traditional rockets.

Lahore

4 weekly flights



Multan

6 weekly flights



Karachi

10 weekly flights



Islamabad

3 weekly flights



Sialkot

5 weekly flights



Peshawar

4 weekly flights



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Wide Angle: Our relationship to AI

In 2024, AI is making headlines daily. We may be aware of the science, but how do we imagine AI and our relationship to it both now and in the future? Fortunately, film may provide us with some insights.

Probably the best-known AI in film is HAL 9000 from Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968). HAL is an artificially intelligent computer housed on board a spacecraft capable of interstellar travel.

The film was released less than a year before humans landed on the moon. And yet, even in this optimism about a new era of space travel, HAL's portrayal sounded a note of caution about artificial intelligence. His motivations are ambiguous, and he shows himself capable of turning against his human crew.

This 1960s classic demonstrates fears that are common throughout AI film history - that AIs cannot be trusted, that they will rebel against their human creators, and seek to overpower or overthrow us.

These fears are contextualised in different ways during different historical eras - in the 1950s they are associated with the Cold War, followed by the space race in the 1960s and 1970s. Then, in the 1980s, it was video-gaming and, in the 1990s, the internet. Despite these differing preoccupations, fear of AI remains remarkably consistent.

My latest research, which forms the backbone of my new book AI in the Movies, explores how "strong" or "human-level" AI is depicted in film. I examined more than 50 films to see how they shed light on human attitudes to AI - how we interpret it and understand it through characters and stories, and how attitudes have changed since AI's beginnings.

Types of AIs

The idea of AI was born in 1956 at an American summer research project workshop at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, where a group of academics gathered to brainstorm ideas around "thinking machines."

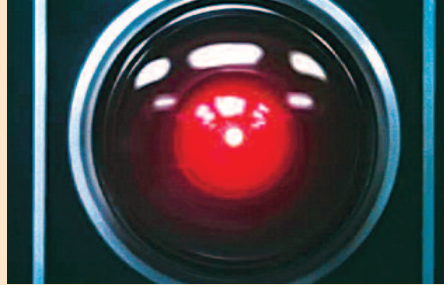
A mathematician called John McCarthy coined the name "artificial intelligence" and, just as soon as the new scientific field had a name, filmmakers were already imagining a human-like AI and what our relationship with it might be.

In the same year an AI, Robby the Robot, appeared in the film Forbidden Planet, and returned the following year in

1957, in the film The Invisible Boy, to defeat another type of AI, this time an evil supercomputer.

The AI-as-malevolent-computer appeared again in 1965 as Alpha 60, in the chilling dystopia of Jean-Luc Godard's Alphaville, and then in 1968 with Kubrick's memorable HAL in 2001: A Space Odyssey.

These early AI films set the template for what was to follow. There were AIs that had



HAL, the mercurial supercomputer AI from Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey (1968).

robot bodies and later robot bodies that looked human - the first of these appearing in Westworld in 1973, where a robot malfunction at a futuristic amusement park for adults creates chaos and terror. Then there were AIs that were digital, like the evil Joshua in the 1977 horror Demon Seed, where a woman is impregnated by a supercomputer.

In the 1980s, digital AIs started to become connected to network computing - where computers "talked" to one another in an early incarnation of what would become the internet - like the one stumbled upon by Matthew Broderick's high-school student in War Games (1983), who almost accidentally starts a nuclear conflict. From the 1990s, an AI could move between digital and material realms. In the Japanese animation Ghost in the Shell (1995), the Puppet Master exists in the ebb and flow of the internet, but can inhabit "shell" bodies. Agent Smith in The Matrix Revolutions (2003), takes over a human body and materialises in the real world. In Her (2013), the AI operating system Samantha eventually moves beyond matter, beyond the "stuff" of human existence, becoming a post-material being.

Mirrors, doubles and hybrids

In the first few decades of AI film, AI characters mirrored the human characters. In Colossus: The Forbin Project (1970), the AI supercomputer reflects and amplifies the inventor's own arrogant overreaching ambition.

In Terminator 2: Judgement Day (1991), Sarah Connor has become like the AI Skynet's Terminators herself: her strength is her armour and she hunts to kill.

By the 2000s, human-AI doubles began to overlap and merge into each other. In Spielberg's AI: Artificial Intelligence (2001), the AI "son" David looks just like a real boy, whereas the real son Martin comes home from hospital connected to tubes and wires that make him look like a cyborg.

In Ex Machina (2014), the human Caleb tests the AI robot Ava, but ends up questioning his own humanness, examining his eyeball for digital traces and cutting his skin to ensure that he bleeds.

In the past 25 years of AI film, the borders between human and AI, digital and material have become porous, emphasising the fluid and hybrid nature of AI creations. And in the films In The Machine (2013), Transcendence (2014) and Chappie (2015), the boundary between human and AI is eroded almost to the point of non-existence.

These films present scenarios of transhumanism - in which humans can evolve beyond their current physical and mental constraints by harnessing the power of artificial intelligence to upload the human mind. Although these stories are imaginary and their characters fictional, they vividly depict our fascinations and fears. We are afraid of artificial intelligence and that fear never goes away in film, although it has been questioned more in recent decades, and more positive portrayals can be observed, such as the little trash-collecting robot in WALL-E.

But mostly we are afraid that they will become too powerful, and will seek to become our masters. Or we fear they may be hiding among us, and that we might not recognise them. But at times, too, we feel sympathy towards them: AI characters in films can be pitiful figures who wish to be accepted by humans but never will be. We are also jealous of them - of their intellectual capacity, their physical robustness and the fact that they do not experience human death. Surrounding this fear and envy is a fascination with AIs that is present throughout film history - we see ourselves in AI creations and project our emotions on to them. At times enemies of humans, at times uncanny mirrors, and sometimes even human-AI hybrids, the past 70 years of films about AI demonstrate the inextricably intertwined nature of human-AI relationships.



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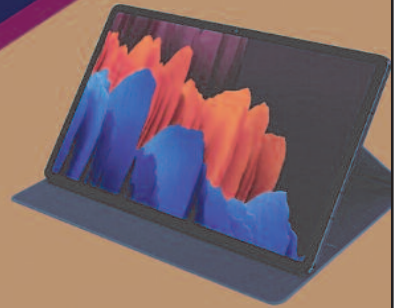
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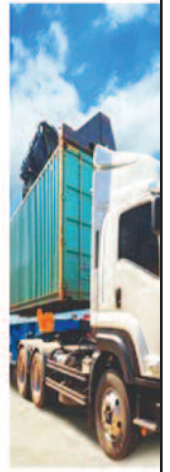
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Cultural amity among nations recalling of Zoroastrianism (Prof. Safdar Sandal)



Birthdays have been celebrated all around the world. In China, a child's first birthday is considered more special than most other occasions. In some parts of the Christian world, it is believed that all people are born with the 'Original Sin'. 'Kinderfeste' is the name in

of the moon and the smoke from the candles carried their prayers and wishes to God. Cake candles existed to be used in ancient Pagan cultures too. One will find that Zoroastrianism and Hindu religions did have some common beliefs and traits of culture in their society because also due

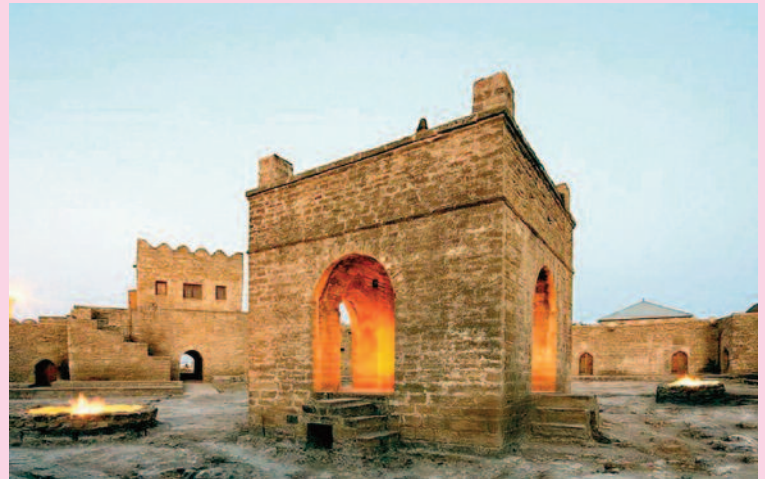
a very popular 'Interfaith Marriage' among Muslims, in the Indian political history. According to some Islamic jurists, Zarathustra was a messenger of God and his followers are



Zaratusht



Atashdan



The Atashgah

a German birthday-party story, which is close to today's birthday parties. It featured a birthday cake adorned with candles. Guests from members of near family or close friends were invited. In Christianity, the idea was to ward off the so called 'Original Sin'. It is the German bankers who invented the 'Birthday Cake' for their client's kids (kinder). It gave pleasure to the participants who brought gifts for the kinder, as a gesture of their love. The origin of 'Kinderfeste' comes from an old German belief that children were highly susceptible to being harmed by evil spirits (and especially so, on their birthdays). During 'Kinderfeste', the child's parents would make the cakes in the morning. They lit candles on the cake in the evening which represented the glow

their geographical neighborhood and interchange of populations which continued over centuries. It has continued till today in some form or another. The Arabs attacked and occupied Persia (Iran), the local population being of Zoroastrians fled to and sought refuge in neighboring India, between 632 and 654. In centuries thereon, cultures of both the peoples got impacts of each other. Zoroastrian people still prefer to live in India and Iran.

Zartushta believed in One God. It is world's oldest monotheistic faith.

Mohammad Ali Jinnah had married a Zoroastrian woman in Bombay with the name Rattan daughter of Sir Dinshaw Petit, a Bombay Parsi millionaire. Rattan got converted to Islam in April 1918 and married Mohammad Ali Jinnah. It became

referred to as 'Majus' in Quran and are according to them, as 'People of the Book' like Christians and Jews for the reason that Zoroaster believed and preached for 'One God' (around 3200 to 3500 years ago as archeological evidence point out). 'Monotheism' has been main preaching of his 'Zartosht' religion. Zoroastrianism is thus arguably the world's oldest monotheistic faith preaching three main beliefs, 'Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds'. 'Ahremen' is the Spirit of evil, chaos and destruction (like Satan, in Judaism Christianity and Islam). 'Fire' represents light, wisdom and truth of One God who created the world : 'Ahura Mazda' (Wise Lord) is the name of their God. A person's Birthday is a special day for that person's prayers to be accepted. It



Pharohas

is common with them to light candles, be generous to give and receive gifts. Birthday celebration has become a common feature among all peoples of the world, today. It may be noted that I am not

started celebrating pharaoh's Birth Day as God the day when he sat on the throne. 'Birthday Celebration' didn't begin when Pharaohs were born but on the date when they were crowned.

whom I asked with fear !!. Sir, suppose there come clouds in the sky and make us unable to see the moon, should we have Eid day tomorrow or not !!. He firmly said No – and added to see the moon is



Viewing splitting of the 'bahr-e-qulzum' (red sea)

trying to be sympathetic or a sociopath towards any creed, except my own which I proudly possess and practice.

Preceding 'Pagan cultures' believed that fire lit from the candles scared away evil spirits and the smoke from candles carried their prayers to the God unhindered. Burning of 'agarbatis' in domes, tombs and sometimes in our living houses for fragrance purposes carry the same mindset of thousands of years ago. The practice prevails in Pakistan too, which however harms none. At the most it can be listed as 'biddat' (in our religious definition for un-necessary customs; the same can be attributed to 'Birthday Celebrations' being an international commonality with malice to none).

Early civilizations had no track of time other than by using the moon, sun or some other important stars or planets for deciding important events. The practice still continues even in the Islamic world, for instance using the nearest planet Moon for deciding Eid Days or Ramadan month etc. This also bore the basis of calendars, which marked the time changes and other special days in human society all over the world. Moon also has effects on 'madojazar'. But the modern man has developed the habit and tradition to utilize and depend more on their own intelligence, scientific researches, rather than on their centuries' old habit of looking for stardom to guide them; developed more modern science and technology. The test example is the WIFI

necessary for deciding the Eid day. I did not dare to argue further with him, sure out of respect.

The story of 'agar-batti's' origin is woven into the tapestry of ancient civilizations. Around 6,000 years ago, in the heart of ancient Egypt, incense began its journey as a conduit between the earthly and divine realms. Its aromatic allure was used in sacred rituals and as a remedy for both body and soul. Parsee colonies (residential areas in Karachi) are now lying vacated. Most Parsees have migrated from Karachi to Bombay, sensing the danger from the rise of religious intolerance bordering fanaticism. 'Religious tolerance' has been one of the main teachings of Islam and monotheistic



Birthday on coronation

To trace the origin of this 'Birth Day' tradition; one will go back to the period when Pharaohs were crowned in ancient Egypt. Pharaoh-Kings soon started to be considered as having been transformed into gods when sitting on the throne and this divine promotion made their coronation date more important than their birth-date of arrival in the world. So, they

system which is advancing beyond limits and which has completely changed the scenario of approach foreign to man hardly 50 years ago. They prefer to see the Google holding in their hands, than be eager to go on the roof to see and to pray for the moon to cope out, in order to enjoy the Eid next day. I remember I had asked a close uncle of around fifties

belief of Zoroastrians should have helped the situation. Conversions to Islam have been allowed only through permeation and definitely not through force. Zoroastrianism, despite being a dying community because of its age too, has maximum 120,000 to 150,000 believers left over and that too living in different countries of the world.

Upgrading CPEC

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif recently visited China to further strengthen the ‘Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership’. Besides a three-hour meeting with President Xi Jinping and another one with Premier Li Qiang, dozens of MoUs and agreements were signed. A joint statement described the bilateral relationship “as unshakable as a mountain”, “solid as a rock”, and “ironclad friends”.

A key takeaway of the visit was a decision to upgrade CPEC by building several new corridors, including growth, livelihood, innovation, and green corridors. There is also a commitment to rehabilitate the Karakoram Highway and optimise the use of the Gwadar port. The Chinese side will train 1,000 young Pakistanis in tech and agriculture. Huawei will train 200,000 Pakistani youth annually in IT. This would help towards digitalisation of the economy and promoting e-governance.

Another positive announcement was that CPEC would be made an open and inclusive platform, and third parties would be welcomed to participate in its priority areas of industry, agriculture, ICT, science and technology, and mining. Previously, the two countries had agreed to extend CPEC only to Afghanistan. Now that third parties are being invited, clear modalities would need to be worked out.

These plans are ambitious and an upgrade of CPEC’s first decade that focused exclusively on infrastructure development and power generation. However, signing MoUs does not automatically translate into projects. For that, we need to create a congenial business environment, with minimal red tape and fast-track facilitation. The private sector must be facilitated to take the lead. A welcome feature of the PM’s visit was that several meetings were held between Pakistani and Chinese businessmen and investors at the Pakistan-China Business Forum in Shenzhen.

The two governments also signed an ‘Action Plan for Framework Agreement on Industrial Cooperation’. The Chinese side committed to encouraging Chinese companies to invest in Pakistan’s SEZs while Pakistan agreed to “optimise its business environment and policy framework” to facilitate Chinese investments.

Setting up industries is the need of the hour as industry generates employment for our youth. However, the actual situation is not encouraging. Setting up SEZs has been inordinately delayed. Rashakai has made limited progress while Dhabeji is still at the bidding stage. Setting up SEZs should be a top priority to attract investments from China and other countries. Pakistan’s own investors, who have parked their capital outside because of the lack of business opportunities in the country, should also be incentivised to invest in them.

Another project of significance is upgradation of the ML-1 railway track, to be implemented in a “phased manner” after agreeing on financing modalities. This project has already been delayed because of which the price tag has gone up. The north-south railway track is 100 years old, and its upgradation is imperative to meet our strategic and socioeconomic needs.

Security of foreign investors and investments has emerged as a serious issue. There have been several terrorist attacks against the Chinese working on CPEC projects in Pakistan. China expects Pakistan to make every effort to hunt down and punish the perpetrators. The joint statement called for a “zero tolerance” attitude to counter terrorism effectively.

Despite the establishment of a special security division, attacks against the





Chinese have continued, mostly by the TTP and BLA. We must find ways to deny spaces to the terrorists through intel operations, the kinetic use of force where required, co-opting the people of ex-Fata and Balochistan in our counterterrorism strategies, and coordination with the relevant countries, particularly China, which has considerable influence in Afghanistan.

Although the joint statement did not mention financial liquidity issues, it is well-known that Pakistan often seeks the roll-over of funds loaned by China. The Chinese have so far obliged Pakistan. However, they would justifiably expect Pakistan to use these loans prudently and generate wealth to pay them off.

In an era of geopolitical instability, Pakistan’s close ties with China is a valuable opportunity that must not be squandered. Let us make the best of China’s help to modernise agriculture, digitalise the economy, improve electricity transmission, and strengthen mining and industrial cooperation. Having invested billions on building infrastructure and energy generation, let the private sector take the lead in setting up industries to make optimal use of that infrastructure. CPEC in its second phase should become private sector-friendly, export-oriented, the creator of jobs, and enabler of technological value addition.

The writer is a former foreign secretary and chairman of Sanober Institute.

HIGHLIGHTS OF AMENDMENTS TO FINANCE BILL 2024

Product / Sector	Proposal in Finance Bill 2024	Final amendments		
 Books & stationery	10pc Sales Tax across the board	Books exempted		
 Builders & developers	No new taxes	10 to 12pc tax on taxable profits		
 Corporate dairy farms	Exempt from additional taxes	Exemptions withdrawn		
 Levy on diesel, gasoline	Rs60 per litre	Rs70 per litre		
FED imposed on international air travel				
Economy and economy plus	Club, business and first class			
All destinations	North, Central, South America and environs	Middle East and Africa	Europe	Far East, Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islands
Rs12,500	Rs350,000	Rs105,000	Rs210,000	Rs210,000

Chinese official emphasis on enhancing security for the future of CPEC



Leaders from various political parties pose for a photo with Minister of Central Committee of the International Department of Communist Party of China, Liu Jianchao, and other participants of the third meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism, on Friday, 21 June.

In a dire warning, a high-ranking Chinese official on Friday, 21 June singled out security as the foremost challenge threatening the future of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and emphasised the urgent need for enhanced security protocols and a more supportive business and media environment to ensure the project's continuation and success.

Liu Jianchao, who is serving as the Minister of Central Committee of the International Department of Communist Party of China, was speaking at the third meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism, in which representatives from all major Pakistani political parties participated.

The Joint Consultative Mechanism (JCM) forum, initiated in 2019, convened in person after a five-year hiatus. It also held a virtual session in August 2020.

"Security threats are the main hazards to CPEC cooperation. As people often say, confidence is more precious than gold. In the case of Pakistan, the primary factor shaking the confidence of Chinese investors is the security situation," he emphasised.

In recent years, militants have increasingly targeted Chinese projects in Pakistan, including CPEC. In March, two notable attacks highlighted the ongoing threats. The banned outfit Baloch Liberation Army attempted to breach the Gwadar Port Authority complex, but the assault was foiled. Meanwhile, a suicide

bombing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Shangla district targeted a convoy of Chinese engineers, resulting in the deaths of five engineers and their local driver.

These incidents are part of a larger trend of targeted violence by various militant groups aimed at disrupting this strategic initiative. This persistent threat has significantly impacted project continuity, contributing to the slowdown of CPEC's progress in recent years.

The Chinese official, however, praised the recent successes of Pakistani law enforcement agencies in combating militancy, noting that these efforts have helped mitigate the challenge posed by militant groups who have "so badly sabotaged" the security environment and targeted Chinese interests. Mr Liu further called for improving the business environment in the country.

Pakistan has difficulty attracting Chinese investments due to its precarious financial situation and a history of unmet commitments to Chinese firms in the power sector. The hesitation among Chinese investors is compounded by the reluctance of Chinese insurance company Sinosure to cover new projects, resulting in a significant slowdown in the initiation of these endeavours. Additionally, the development of special economic zones, a vital component of CPEC, has remained stagnant. To counteract these threats, Mr Liu advocated for a unified political front to build broad public consensus and enhance support for CPEC. He also

stressed the importance of combating misinformation campaigns. "We must take that seriously and create a CPEC-friendly media environment," he maintained.

He also underscored the need for stability in the country, saying, "Only when all political parties in a country join hands to ensure political and social stability can there be sustainable development."

Islamabad committed to second phase. In his remarks, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advancing and upgrading CPEC in its second phase.

Highlighting the presence of senior representatives from all major Pakistani political parties at the meeting, he said it underscored a strong political consensus on CPEC, besides acknowledging the significance of Pakistan-China relations for regional peace and development.

Senate Chairman Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani called for prioritising inclusive and sustainable growth and ensuring that no region is left behind.

Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, speaker of the National Assembly, reminisced that the Parliamentary Committee on CPEC had previously played a vital role in holding the government accountable and monitoring the progress of CPEC projects through regular updates to the parliament, ensuring transparency and oversight.

Mushahid Hussain Sayed, chairman of the Pakistan China Institute, warned that the foremost threat to CPEC's success lies in the spread of disinformation and fake news. To counter this menace, he advocated for establishing a rapid response information system designed to swiftly combat propaganda and fiction with verifiable facts, thereby safeguarding the project's integrity.

PTI leader Barrister Ali Zafar voiced concerns about the sluggish progress of CPEC, urging an acceleration in the project's development.

Meeting with COAS

Mr Liu later visited General Headquarters in Rawalpindi for a meeting with Army Chief Gen Asim Munir.

During the meeting, Gen Munir reaffirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to the strategic partnership with China and pledged full support for the successful implementation of CPEC, according to Radio Pakistan.

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PM seeks more bilateral trade with Dushanbe

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, 02 July emphasised the need to expand bilateral trade between Pakistan and Tajikistan, saying that the current trade volume does not reflect the strong relationship between the two nations.

a part of China-Tajikistan-Afghanistan trade corridor project, adding that it would be another opportunity to broaden the multilateral trade in the region.

PM Shehbaz also expressed confidence that the CASA-1000 power project would be completed soon,



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addresses a press conference at the Qasr-i-Millat alongside Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, on Tuesday, 02 July.

Recently, Somon Air of Tajikistan has launched flight operations from Dushanbe to Islamabad, which will also strength the relations to both the countries.

PM Shehbaz Sharif has visited Dushanbe capital of Tajikistan for two days. During his visit addressing a presser alongside President Emomali Rahmon of Tajikistan, he said the two countries have signed several memorandums of understanding (MoUs), which he hoped would strengthen bilateral ties.

The premier assured the Tajik president that he would work closely with him to further cement the brotherly ties not only in the fields of agriculture, education, health and promotion of investment, but also in expansion of bilateral trade.

Rail-road project

He underlined how both countries needed to work closely and fix targets to increase bilateral trade and investment, citing transportation of goods from Karachi port to Tajikistan via Afghanistan and then from Dushanbe to Karachi port via Afghanistan through a rail-road project.

He said Pakistan would be keen to be

bringing prosperity to this region.

The premier also referred to another MoU pertaining to relaxed visa requirements and said that it would be helpful for both countries in further achieving their goals.

The prime minister said the two countries had been the victims of terrorism; Pakistan faced this menace for years and paid a huge price in terms of human lives and economic losses to the tune of billions of dollars. The prime minister also offered cooperation to Tajikistan in this regard and said the two countries could fight this menace collectively wherever it existed and in any shape.

Earlier, when the prime minister arrived at the Qasr-i-Millat, the Tajik president warmly welcomed him which followed the guard of honour by the contingents of Tajik armed forces. President Rahmon emphasised brotherly relations between Pakistan and Tajikistan. The two leaders discussed the ways to strengthen cooperation in different fields between the two countries. PM Shehbaz invited Tajikistan's investment in different sectors of Pakistan, improving regional connectivity and linkages between the people of the two countries.

KPT cargo handling jumps 23pc

The Karachi Port Trust (KPT) recorded a notable rise of 23.43 per cent in cargo handling operations in FY24.

The entire freight closed at 51.65 million tonnes in which dry cargo stood at 40.24m tonnes with 31.39pc growth while liquid bulk cargo was 11.41m tonnes with 1.7pc rise as compared to 41.85m tonnes total freight in which the share of dry cargo was 30.63m tonnes and liquid bulk cargo at 11.22m tonnes during FY23. The breakup shows that overall Export Cargo handling at KPT closed at 18.80mn tonnes with a stunning 47.16pc rise at the end of FY24 as compared to 12.78m tonnes during FY23.

Similarly, the total import cargo handling was 32.85m tonnes, up by 13pc from 29.07m tonnes during FY23.

Export dry cargo handled at KPT during FY24 closed at 17.66m tonnes with 49.12pc increase due to extraordinary clinker handling as compared to 11.84mn tonnes during FY23. The Export Liquid Bulk Cargo stood at 1.14m tonnes with 22.24pc increase due to the contribution of furnace oil and molasses, etc as compared to 0.93m tonnes during FY23.



Bollywood actress and model Sonakshi Sinha (right) and actor Zaheer Iqbal pose for photographs during their wedding reception party, recently.

SIUT purchases Regent Plaza to expand services

The Sindh Institute of Urology and Transplantation (SIUT) Trust has finalised the purchase of Regent Plaza Hotel from Pakistan Hotel Developers Limited (PHDL) with a view to converting it into a hospital.

Regent Plaza Hotel and Convention Centre is located on main Sharea Faisal on an area of 13,200 square yards. The total covered area of the multi-storey building is 47,034 square yards.

“This move aims to address the pressing need for expansion due to the ever-increasing patient load on SIUT’s current facilities, which were built over 20 years ago,” said a statement issued here on Sunday, 30 June.

It said: “This initiative is particularly noteworthy as it contrasts the common trend of converting amenity parcels of land into commercial holdings. It is a rare instance where a commercial property is being transformed into a free hospital for the benefit of the common citizen.”

The 1500-bed SIUT is located in a congested part of the old city. Patients from all parts of the country come here for treatment due to its high quality of care, extensive range of services and unique model of free care at the point of contact.

The newly acquired property is

strategically located in the city’s heart, near other major hospitals, and boasts excellent public transport access. Its proximity to the cantonment railway station will facilitate



easier access for patients from other parts of the country, alleviating the need to navigate the congested area where SIUT’s flagship hospital currently operates, it added.

The conversion of the property into a hospital will occur in stages, helping to offload the pressure on SIUT’s existing premises.

Commenting on the purchase, a

spokesperson for SIUT said, “The acquisition was made possible through a bank loan, and the generous contributions through offshore Pakistanis in North

America.”

“We hope that our efforts to expand our services by acquiring this facility will garner support from the community and government, helping us transform this vision into reality. We call upon the government, local community, and Pakistanis living abroad to contribute towards this goal,” he added.

Sinkholes spread fear in Turkiye `s parched breadbasket

Every time Turkish farmer Fatih Sik drives his tractor across his cornfields he knows the earth could open up and swallow him at any moment.

Two giant sinkholes have already appeared on his land in Konya, a vast agricultural province known as Turkiye’s breadbasket. “Anywhere could sink, I keep thinking. And I know I’d be dead at the bottom,” the 45-year-old farmer from Karapinar said.

“But I have to work otherwise my family will starve.” This part of central Anatolia has had sinkholes for centuries. But their numbers have risen in recent years as increasing droughts has led to the overuse of wells for irrigation, experts say.

Many are dizzyingly deep - plunging up to 50 metres (165 feet). Invisible from a distance, you can suddenly come upon



This aerial photograph shows an 800-year-old Seljuk caravanserai in front of a sinkhole in the Turkish province of Konya.

them in the large fields of corn, beetroot, wheat and clover that dot the Konya plain.

“One of the major factors with

sinkholes is climate change,” says Arif Delikan, an associate professor of Konya Technical University, who has counted 640 sinkholes in Konya - with more than 600 of them in Karapinar alone.

“Around 20 holes have emerged over the past year in Karapinar,” he said, using a hammer to test the ground around the edge of one. He and the government’s AFAD disaster agency has identified more than 2,700 surface deformations and non-seismic fractures which indicate a sinkhole risk and need to be investigated. Sinkholes occur where water dissolves the bedrock below the surface, causing it to cave

in. They can form naturally or through “anthropogenic” causes, due to the direct or indirect action of people.



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Australia doubles foreign student visa fee

Australia said on Monday, July 1st it had more than doubled the visa fee for international students, the latest move by the government to rein in record migration that has intensified pressure on an already tight housing market.

From July 1st, the international student visa fee has risen to A\$1,600 (\$1,068) from A\$710, while visitor visa holders and students with temporary graduate visas are banned from applying onshore for a student visa.

“The changes coming into force today will help restore integrity to our international education system, and create a migration system which is fairer, smaller and better able to deliver for Australia,” Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil said in a statement. Official data released in March showed net immigration rose 60 per cent to a record 548,800 people in the year to Sept 30, 2023.

The rise in fees makes applying for a student visa for Australia far more expensive than in competing countries like the US and Canada, where they cost about \$185 and \$110 respectively.

The government said it was also closing loopholes in visa rules that allowed foreign students to continuously extend their stay in Australia, after the number of students on a second or subsequent student visa spiked by over 30pc to more than 150,000 last year.

The latest move follows a raft of actions since late last year to tighten the student visa rules as the lifting of Covid curbs in 2022 boosted annual migration to record levels.

English language requirements were tightened in March, while the amount of savings international students need to get a visa was raised in May to A\$29,710 (\$19,823) from A\$24,505, the second increase in about seven months.

Egypt tomb find may shed light on ancient diseases

A new discovery of 33 ancient tombs in Egypt’s southern city of Aswan could reveal “new information on diseases” prevalent at the time, the tourism and antiquities ministry said on Monday, 24 June.

The tombs date back to the Ancient Egyptian Late Period and the Greco-Roman Periods, which collectively lasted from the seventh century BC until around the fourth century AD.

The burials were found by a joint Egyptian-Italian archaeological mission.

Ayman Ashmawy, who heads the Supreme Council of Antiquities’ Egyptian Antiquities Division, said studies of the mummies “indicate that 30 to 40 per cent of those buried died in their youth, as newborns or as adolescents”.

Patrizia Piacentini, professor of Egyptology and archaeology at

the University of Milan, headed the Italian side of the mission. She said preliminary studies on the remains showed that “some suffered from infectious diseases, while others had bone disorders”. The remains of several adult women showed signs of pelvic bone trauma.



The top fragment of a sarcophagus at the site where 33 ancient tombs were found in Egypt’s southern city of Aswan.

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Cherry festival to promote agri-tourism in GB

Two-day National Cherry Festival 2024 held at Rakaposhi View Point, in Ghulmat of District Nagar to celebrate the cherry harvest, attracted a large number of national and foreign tourists and local people.

The event aimed to explore agri-tourism potential, highlighted the region's agricultural richness, cherry cultivation, harvest and cherry production and boost the tourism sector by showcasing the natural beauty of Rakaposhi View Point.

The event was organised by the Nagar Agriculture Department in collaboration with the district administration.

Stalls and exhibitions of various varieties of cherries, traditional food, handicrafts, wooden carving items, crockery, herbal, oil, dry fruits, jam and gemstones and other traditional items stalls were displayed by local farmers and village organisations to sell their production.

Hundreds of local and foreign tourists

Saira Mirza, a representative of the local support organisation said a large number of local farmers including women set up stalls of cherry, locally made handicrafts, wooden carving items, dairy products, dry fruits, apricot oil and other items.

She said this is an opportunity for women to empower themselves economically, and the women have an opportunity to access national and international markets to sell their products.

“Local can get economic platforms and awareness of agri-tourism benefits from such events,” he said. It was an example to show the world how local people including women economically benefit while maintaining their traditional and cultural life.

Nagar Deputy Commissioner Ataur Rehman said the cherry festival had become a permanent feature of Nagar. He said Nagar had produced approximately 2,000 tons of cherry this year, mostly the local



GB Additional Chief Secretary Aziz Ahmed Jamali, Food Secretary Safdar Khan and others visit a stall during the National Cherry Festival in Ghulmat Nagar on Monday, June 24.

visited the venue and purchased various items from local farmers. According to organisers, one of the cherry stalls sold cherries worth Rs60,000 in two days. Gilgit-Baltistan governor Syed Mehdi Shah, GB additional chief secretary Aziz Ahmed Jamali, Secretary Food Safdar Khan and other officials also visited various stalls.

A participant said the event would help local farmers have access to national and international markets to sell their products.

“Not only local people but also the tourists had the opportunity to purchase products directly from local people at affordable rates,” he said.

cherry being sold in other parts of the country at a marginal rate. Ataur Rehman said the local cherry rates in other countries are high, and cherries export from GB to China through Khunjerab pass has already started.

“With consultation of local people, local administration has proposed to establish a food processing plant so that we can export cherries of the international standard. In this way farmers get a high rate and increase their production. With consultation of stakeholders hybrid farming and modern technology methods should also be introduced for more cultivation of cherries, he said.

Babusar road reopens for tourists after seven-month closure

The Babusar road, the famous tourist destination, was reopened for light traffic on Monday, 10 June after remaining closed for seven months.

Heavy snowfall in the area triggered the closure of the road.

After removing snow at Babusar top and nearby areas the Babusar road was reopened for light traffic on Monday, 10



June Diamer deputy commissioner Fayyaz Ahmed said.

He said the movement of vehicles on Babusar road from KP and GB sides has been allowed from 5am to 5pm every day till Eidul Azha.

Because of threats of heavy melting of snow at daytime and freezing at night the traffic movement has been allowed only in daytime, the deputy commissioner said.

He further said that new travel hours on the road will be announced after Eidul Azha.

The commuters have been advised to strictly follow the travel advisory of Met department.

According to the advisory, travellers and tourists have been requested to plan their trips for Babusar road after checking advisories/alerts of Met department.

The journey from Diamer to Mansehra takes seven hours through the Babusar road, while the same distance is covered in 14 hours through the Karakoram Highway.

First all-women expedition team will attempt to scale K2 next month

The first all-women expedition team will attempt to scale the world's second highest peak K2 (8,611 metres) next month.

Members of the expedition team completed their one-week climbing training at Sadpara Mountaineering School on Friday, June 10.

According to organisers, the six-member women expedition team comprising Anum Uzair from Lahore, Shama Baqir and Bibi Sultana from

peaks in the world and 11 eight thousanders peaks without oxygen.

Talking to media, team member Shama Baqir said the women expedition team members are optimistic to conquer the world's second highest peak this summer.

She said despite having immense potential, women generally avoid taking part in mountaineering in Pakistan, but through this adventure "we will give a message that women can dare and excel in this field too and the women who take

Hundreds of climbers reaching GB to climb K2, other peaks

As climbing season kicks off, hundreds of local and foreign climbers are making their way to Gilgit-Baltistan to climb eight-thousander peaks, including K2.

According to Gilgit-Baltistan Tourism Department, over 1,700 permits have been issued to foreign tourists to climb peaks in the region, while 175 permits have been issued



Members of the K2 women's expedition pose during training at the Sadpara Mountaineering School in Skardu.

Shimshal, Afzoom from Gulmit of Hunza and two sisters Siddiqa Hanif and Amina Hanif from Ghanche will hoist Pakistan's flag on the K2.

The first women expedition for K2 has been organised by Force Command of Northern Areas (FCNA).

According to an FCNA statement, Pakistan's challenging peaks offer immense opportunities for young women athletes, especially in mountaineering.

However, these talented individuals often face substantial barriers, primarily due to insufficient resources, which hinder their ability to fully showcase their potential.

In an empowering initiative, the FCNA is spearheading a significant effort to promote gender equality in this demanding sport. Coinciding with the 70th anniversary of the first successful ascent of K2, the FCNA has committed to supporting young female mountaineers by providing them with essential resources and training to summit the mighty K-2.

The expedition will be led by renowned Pakistani climber Sirbaz Khan, who is first Pakistani to summit 13 eight thousanders

interest should take part in mountaineering".

About the training at the Sadpara Mountaineering School in Skardu, she said: "We practised basic climbing, rock climbing, got training on ascent and descent on peaks and how to climb peaks with luggage."

K2, standing at 8,611 metres, is famous for its sheer slopes, unpredictable weather conditions and severe storms, making the already treacherous climbing conditions on its slopes even more challenging. The Pakistan army is not only sponsoring the women's expedition but also facilitating all preparations needed for the summit. This will be a unique expedition of its kind where all team members including the guides and the porters will be Pakistani.

Another member of the expedition team, Anum Uzair, told media: "I am honoured to be a part of this historical event. Me and my team members are hopeful to open doors for other women and we will be aiming summit with this thought that women can move mountains when they work together as a force, *InshaAllah*."



to scale K2 (8,611 metres).

Many climbers have established their base camps at K2, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum-I and Gasherbrum-II peaks.

Sajid Ali Sadpara, the son of world-famous high altitude climber, Mohammad Ali Sadpara, has also arrived at K2 base to attempt to climb K2 without oxygen. He is also scheduled to climb Broad Peak (8,051 metres) this year. Talking to media, Mr Sadpara said that several expedition groups, including female expedition teams, have arrived at K2 base camp.

Some climbers have established their base camps, some have started trekking from Skardu and Shigar districts. A base camp staff told media that supplies of various expedition teams are being delivered to them at base camps through local porters. Expedition teams will start summit push after July 20.

Two expedition teams consisting entirely of women are reported to be on way to Skardu in an attempt to scale K2, the world's second highest peak at 8,611 metres. One of the teams is a joint Pakistan-Italy expedition group while the other comprises six Pakistani women. A Pakistani female climber and a Saudi Arabia's female climber will also attempt to scale K2. Last year, the GB government collected Rs450 million in permit fees from mountaineers.



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Sikh pilgrims perform rituals at Dera Sahib



Sikh pilgrims, who had come to Pakistan from India on June 8, attended religious rituals at Gurdwara Dera Sahib on the eve of martyrdom day of the fifth guru of Sikhism, Arjun Dev Ji here on Sunday, June 09.

Provincial Minister Ramesh Singh Arora, Sain Ali Raza Qadri, the successor of Saint Mian Mir, officials of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee and Evacuee Trust Property Board, as well as a large number of local Sikh community were also present on the occasion.

In the prayer ceremony, tributes were paid to the services of Guru Arjun Dev.

The minister said Mian Mir and Guru Arjun Dev had a spiritual connection which would be remembered till the end

of the world. He said that the pilgrims were given full hospitality and excellent security during their visit to various Gurdwaras in Punjab.

He said that renovation of a Gurdwara in Jhelum has started while a Gurdwara is also going to open to the Sikh community in Faisalabad.

Mr Arora said that Pakistan has become the first country where the Sikh Marriage Act is in force.

Talking to the media, he said Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz desires the Sikh community to take full advantage of the Kartarpur Corridor, while all minorities in Pakistan get complete religious freedom.

The Indian Sikh pilgrims led by Sardar Gurbajan Singh would return to their country on June 17.



Families enjoy picnic near Angoori Dam in Islamabad on Wednesday.

Steering committee reviews arrangements for IDEAS 2024

The second meeting of the steering committee for the 12th edition of the International Defence Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS-2024) on Wednesday, July 03, reviewed the preparations for the mega event scheduled to be held in November in Karachi.

Chairing the meeting at the Chief Minister House, CM Syed Murad Ali Shah emphasised that hosting IDEAS underscored the commitment of the government to encourage technological growth and exchange in the region.

“The event will significantly contribute towards fostering and promoting Pakistan’s strategic relations with the international community and achieving shared objectives of global peace, stability, and balance,” he added. He credited the successful conduct of IDEAS since the year 2000 to the unwavering support of various government departments, the armed forces, law enforcement agencies, the public-private defence industry, trade bodies and the people of Karachi.

The 12th edition of IDEAS is set to take place from Nov 19-22 at the Karachi Expo Centre.

The meeting was also attended by senior representatives from federal ministries, various departments of the Sindh government, officials of the army, police and Rangers, DEPO and event manager Badar Expo Solutions.

DEPO Director General Maj Gen Asad Nawaz Khan highlighted that, as per tradition, the event would feature numerous activities showcasing cutting-edge defence technology demonstrations, an international seminar, and business expansions through well-planned B2B/B2G engagements.

Additionally, the IDEAS Karachi Show will be exclusively organised for the people of Karachi at Seaview near Nishan-i-Pakistan on Nov 21.

During the meeting, all government organisations and departments pledged their full support for the successful conduct of IDEAS 2024.

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