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Transport Canada Aviation Security Inspectors visit PCAA- HQ to inspect Airport Security Protocols

The Transport Canada Aviation Security Inspectors Commenced PCAA airport's security protocols, terming them in line with international standards and best practices.



The four-day aviation security assessment of JIAP, Karachi, conducted by the Transport Canada Assessment Team, was completed today on July 18, 2024. Transportation Security Inspectors Ms. Barbara Durette and Mr. Abdel Tahir led the assessment, hosted by PCAA and overseen by Director Avsec, Air Commodore (Retd.) Shahid Qadir. Various security measures were evaluated, including passenger and baggage screening, perimeter protection, cargo, and catering security, as well as security protocols for direct flights to Canada.

The assessment team also monitored security measures for PIA flights to Toronto, assessing access control, aircraft protection, security searches, and related procedures. A debriefing session was held at HQ CAA, where the team received crests and gifts from Mr. Nadir Shafi Dar, Deputy Director General, on behalf of Secretary Aviation, Capt (R) Saif Anjum.

The team expressed gratitude to PCAA for hosting them and commended the airport's security protocols for aligning with international standards and best practices. The Avsec assessment of JIAP Karachi was deemed successful, following the ICAO USAP Audit and GCAA-UAE assessment.



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Canadian team satisfied with security at Karachi Airport

The Transport Canada Aviation Security inspectors on Thursday, July 18 completed security assessment of the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, and commended Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority's (PCAA) airport security protocols, terming them in line with international standards and best practices.

A PCAA spokesman said that the Transport Canada Aviation Inspectors, Barbara Durette and Abdel Tahir, led the assessment, hosted by PCAA and overseen by Avsec Director retired Air Commodore Shahid Qadir.

During the assessment of the Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, various security measures were evaluated, including passenger and baggage screening, perimeter protection, cargo, and catering security, as well as security protocols for direct flights to Canada.

The Canadian team also monitored security measures for PIA flights to Toronto, assessing access control, aircraft protection, security searches, and related procedures, the spokesman said.

A debriefing session was held at the PCAA, where the Canadian team received crests and gifts from Nadir Shafi Dar, the deputy director general, on behalf of the aviation secretary, retired Capt Saif Anjum.

The team expressed gratitude to PCAA for hosting them and commended the airport's security protocols for aligning with international standards and best practices.

The Avsec assessment of JIAP Karachi was deemed successful, following the ICAO USAP Audit and GCAA-UAE assessment, the spokesman said.

In a related development, the Pakistan International Airlines has announced plans to commence direct flights to Jeddah from Faisalabad and Quetta to facilitate residents of the two cities.

PIA starts flights from Faisalabad and Quetta to Jeddah

The national flag carrier has also announced a 15 per cent discount for Umrah pilgrims for those travelling from Toronto to Saudi Arabia via Lahore.

A PIA spokesman said the new flights, aimed to facilitate travel for Umrah pilgrimage and other travel needs for citizens, will start from Aug 6 this year. PIA's two flights per week will operate between Faisalabad and Quetta each, and Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, for the convenience of travellers. Earlier, the residents of Quetta and Faisalabad had to travel via connecting flights through Lahore, Karachi or Islamabad.

In another development, PIA has announced a 15 per cent discount on tickets for those travelling from Toronto to Saudi Arabia via Lahore.

The spokesman said that the discount will apply to ticket holders from July and will be valid for travel between August and November 15 this year. The PIA has already begun selling these discounted tickets.

Govt. refuses to roll back visa regime

After nine months of protests against strict travel regulations on the Pak-Afghan border and several rounds of talks, locals in Chaman and government officials have reached an agreement on all but one point — the visa regime.

Following successful talks over the weekend, the border crossing was reopened with some relaxation in travel restrictions. However, officials have refused to roll back the 'one-document regime' imposed in October last year, under which entry into Pakistan was only allowed on a visa and passport.

Earlier, the gateway had been liberally used by locals to travel between the two countries upon showing Pakistan's National Identity Card and Afghanistan's tazkira. Chaman's All Parties Traders Alliance, a local group of businessmen and political leaders, staged protests against the decision and demanded its withdrawal. The border had been shut since then with commercial activities, including the Afghan transit trade, badly affected.

On Sunday, government officials and protesters' representatives held negotiations, and an agreement was reached to open the border on Monday.

Officials have claimed that most of the "legitimate demands" of protesters have been accepted but reiterated that the one-document regime will stay in place.

"Border crossing will be allowed from both sides only on passport and valid visa," a senior official said, adding that it was decided in the agreement that the government would help travellers get their passports. All required facilities would be provided to them, the official added.

Meanwhile, border officials have said that only those traders and daily wagers who have registered with the authorities in Chaman could travel to Spinbuldak on the Afghan side upon showing their Pakistani ID card. Meanwhile, Afghan border authorities expressed resentment over the agreement, saying that they were not taken into confidence over talks for reopening the border.





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Airfare pain eases as pricing power swings back to passengers

Qantas Airways Ltd., not known for usually offering big discounts, has cut prices more than six times this year. Virgin Australia is averaging at least one fare sale a month. Even Ryanair Holdings Plc, which practically invented affordable European air travel, says flights are getting cheaper.



Passengers around the world are winning some respite from the fare madness that followed the pandemic "- and further price declines are coming.

It's a partial re-balancing of power from the post-Covid demand surge that gave airlines almost free rein over fares. As travel restrictions lifted and the world rushed to reconnect, prices ballooned for the reduced number of seats that were available. Premium fares reached more than \$20,000.

Now, falling fares reflect the growing number of international flights on offer, particularly in Asia and Europe, and a traveling public that is increasingly cost conscious.

"It's not just a blip, it's a global trend," said James Kavanagh, chief executive officer of leisure at Brisbane-based travel agency Flight Centre Travel Group Ltd. "Airlines certainly don't have all the power at the moment."

International fares globally fell 6.13 per cent in the first six months of 2024 from the year-ago period, Flight Centre said recently. Flights out of Australia were 13 per cent cheaper, while fares to Indonesia "- home to Bali, one of Australia's favorite getaways "- slumped 18.13 per cent, Flight Centre said.

Prices will continue to fall as the cost-of-living crisis makes consumers more price-sensitive, Kavanagh said. With under-pressure airlines seeking to fill planes months before departure, there are deals for early bookers, he said, citing 10-

day tours to China, including flights and accommodation, on offer for A\$999 (\$658).

Greater Bay Airlines, which flies between Hong Kong and a handful of destinations around Asia, recently, offered hundreds of return flights for just HK\$20 (\$2.56) each. Qantas, where fares usually align with its full-service brand, on Tuesday cut the price of more than one million seats on domestic flights to as little as A\$109. The snap offer was the airline's sixth local sale of the year.

To be sure, the trend isn't uniform. Qatar Airways CEO Badr Mohammed Al-Meer, for example, said in an interview this week that passenger demand was accelerating for the Gulf airline.

At the same time, a shortage of



commercial aircraft and ruptures to aviation's supply chain are constraining capacity. Wait times for the most popular aircraft from Boeing Co. and Airbus SE are years long. Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury said at the Farnborough Air Show that the manufacturer is turning down some orders because of its huge backlog. To some degree, these factors limit how far ticket prices can fall.

All the same, declining fares are troubling some airline bosses and unsettling investors. The Bloomberg World Airlines Index, which includes American Airlines Group Inc., Air China Ltd. and Deutsche Lufthansa AG, is down around 15 per cent in the past 12 months.

Ryanair this week cut its outlook for ticket prices in the crucial summer travel period and said fares will be "materially lower." Consumers have become "just a little bit more frugal," the airline's chief financial officer, Neil Sorahan, said on a call. Shares in Ryanair are down about 26 per cent this year.

Sialkot Int'l Airport marks exports over 4,840 Metric Tons in 180 days

Sialkot International Airport is a key aviation hub in Pakistan, renowned for its cargo and passenger services. Established to serve the dynamic industrial city of Sialkot, the airport offers state-of-the-art facilities to support international air traffic. With a strong focus on customer satisfaction and operational excellence, Sialkot International Airport plays a crucial role in connecting the region to the world.

Sialkot International Airport is proud to announce a remarkable achievement in its operations, having exported over 4,840 metric tons of goods in the past 180 days. This milestone is a testament to the airport's growing role in facilitating international trade and supporting the region's economic development. Sialkot, renowned for its vibrant industrial base producing sports goods, surgical instruments, leather products, and textiles, has successfully leveraged the airport's state-of-the-art infrastructure to expand its reach in global markets.

This significant volume of exports underscores the airport's commitment to providing efficient and reliable logistics services. The airport's ongoing efforts to enhance cargo handling capabilities, streamline customs procedures, and ensure timely deliveries have been pivotal in achieving this milestone.

Chairman SIAL Hassan Ali Bhatti stated that with a dedicated team and advanced facilities, Sialkot International Airport continues to support local businesses in meeting international demand. CEO Sial AVM (R) Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti said that this milestone is a result of our team's dedication and the unwavering support of Sialkot business community. We are committed to further enhancing our services to sustain this growth trajectory. He added that Sialkot International Airport remains focused on continuous improvement, aiming to bolster its position as a leading cargo hub in the region. With a vision to drive economic growth and foster international trade, the airport is poised to support the evolving needs of its exporters.



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Gulf Air to bring its MRO in-house with new facility at Bahrain Airport

1 25 Gulf Air has announced plans to build a maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility at its home base at Bahrain International Airport.

“This is the beginning of another exciting milestone for Bahrain’s aviation sector,” Gulf Air Group CEO Jeffrey Goh said in a statement July 20. “For Gulf Air, it will be the first purpose-built MRO facility.”



Until now, Gulf Air has phased out MRO work for its fleet.

“The new facility will provide a great opportunity to enhance our aviation maintenance talents and capabilities,” Goh said. The airline said its new MRO facility will “bring its maintenance operations in line with the highest international standards [and] will also implement the latest technologies in aircraft engineering, automation, sustainability, and environmental footprint reduction.

The MRO complex will house a 20,000+ m² (215,000 ft.²) temperature-controlled hangar, as well as stores, workshops, and a dedicated tarmac. The facility will service Gulf Air’s fleet as well as third-party customers.

Gulf Air operates 41 aircraft, comprising 31 Airbus narrowbodies and 10 Boeing 787-9 widebodies.

“We have two more 787s to come, as well as about six or seven A320/321s, and we are currently reviewing the needs of

our fleet portfolio,” Goh told Aviation Week in a June interview in Dubai.

Gulf Air has also placed four of its A320neos on the market. “But we are revisiting that, we may need additional capacity,” the CEO said.

Gulf Air has its own Aviation Academy, which utilizes four Airbus A320 full flight simulators. “We already have third-party users, and we are

looking for opportunities to expand the academy with additional simulators,” Goh said. “Obviously, the academy has to serve the needs of Gulf Air first, including 787s [simulators in the future]. Then we will look for opportunities with third parties,” he said. Goh describes Gulf Air as a modest-sized airline. “Gulf Air will turn 75 years old in 2025,” he said. “The airline has got a brand, a history behind it.”

Its goal, Goh said, is to deliver customer service. “That should give us a proposition that would be sufficiently attractive,” he added. “The pie [in the Middle East region] is big enough for us to have a small slice to participate in that market.”

In 2023, Gulf Air carried 5.3 million passengers, 70% of whom transferred in Bahrain. “We have one of the most efficient transfer times compared to other hubs in the region,” Goh said. “We are a less complex airport for transfers.”

IATA data shows an increase Air Cargo demand in June

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has released data for June 2024 global air cargo markets showing continuing strong annual growth in demand.



This contributed to what IATA said was an “exceptional first half-year performance for air cargo”, with volumes exceeding 2023, 2022, and even the record-breaking 2021 levels.

- Total demand, measured in cargo tonne-kilometres (CTKs), rose by 14.1% compared to June 2023 levels (15.6% for international operations). This is the seventh consecutive month of double-digit year-on-year growth.

- Capacity, measured in available cargo tonne-kilometres (ACTKs), increased by 8.8% compared to June 2023 (10.8% for international operations).

- Total half-year (H1) demand increased by 13.4% compared to H1 2023, by 4.3% compared to H1 2022, and by 0.02% compared to H1 2021.

“Air cargo demand surged in June. Strong growth across all regions and major trade lanes combined for a record-breaking first-half performance in terms of CTks. Maritime shipping constraints and a booming e-commerce sector are among the strongest growth drivers. Meanwhile, the sector has remained largely impervious to ongoing political and economic challenges, and the US customs crackdown on e-commerce deliveries from China. Air cargo looks to be on solid ground to continue its strong performance into the second half of 2024,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director General.

Olympics provide European business aviation boost



With the start of the Paris Summer Olympic Games drawing business aircraft from all over the globe, FBOs at Le Bourget Airport are seeing a surge in activity. The games will conclude on August 11.

The opening of the Summer Olympic Games on Friday, July 26 in Paris provided a boost to private aviation in the host city. According to industry data tracker Argus International, the overwhelming majority of this traffic went to Le Bourget Airport (LFPB), which saw a more than 34% increase in arrivals recently, compared with the same period a year ago. Of the 705 business aircraft arrivals, there were 189 ultra-long-range, 145 large, 83 super-midsize, 64 midsize, and 40 very light jets, as well as 14 twin-engine and 50 single-engine turboprops.

Despite that surge, Argus senior v-p for software Travis Kuhn told AIN that for July, this year's arrivals at LFBP are down by nearly 10% versus 2023.

Space at LFPB is at a premium, with ExecuJet reporting that its hangar and ramp parking are fully booked. Signature said it received a steady flow of traffic at its facility but, due to high slots and parking restrictions at the airport, it was limited to quick turnarounds since its parking was full as well. Universal Weather and Aviation noted that it is coordinating spillovers to regional airports where it has made arrangements, adding that due to the high-security measures in and around the French capital, all non-Olympic travel is simply avoiding the area. That, it said, has helped offset some of the congestion.

WingX noted that the Olympics - along with other major July sporting events such

as the Euro soccer tournament, Wimbledon, and the British Open Golf Tournament - sparked a 4% increase in business jet activity in Europe compared to the previous month, down 10% compared with the peak in 2022, and a 15% increase from pre-Covid July 2019.

Etihad's Guest Program

Etihad Guest is Etihad Airways' loyalty program. It allows travelers to collect and spend miles and also offers frequent travelers the chance to earn elite status. It is primarily a program for those who regularly fly with Etihad Airways, but not necessarily just those based in the UAE.

As with all airline loyalty programs, there are certain advantages and disadvantages. This guide looks at some of the main perks and ways to get the most value out of the program - arranged as a series of tips related to earning miles, spending miles, and holding elite status.

For those who have been using Etihad Guest for some time, note that major changes were made to the program in 2024, particularly around elite status.

Earning miles with Etihad Guest

Etihad Guest still operates a distance-based earning system. Miles for all flights (both with Etihad Airways and with partners) earn miles based on the flight distance and fare class or booking code.

K2 Airways takes delivery of Boeing-737-400SF aircraft

Pakistan's newest airline, has successfully taken delivery of its inaugural aircraft, a Boeing 737-400SF, marking the commencement of its fleet operations. The company is preparing to announce its foray into cargo services in Pakistan, aiming to innovate and transform the country's logistics and cargo industry.



K2 Airways is committed to providing reliable, efficient, cost-effective air cargo services to connect Pakistan to global markets further. The airline aims to empower Pakistani businesses, enhance trade, and foster economic development.

Tariq Raja, CEO of K2 Airways, expressed, "Recognizing the importance of cargo airlines is vital for all stakeholders in the country. We are steadfast in establishing new standards in air cargo services, supporting Pakistan's economic growth, and connecting businesses to global opportunities." Introducing the Boeing 737-400SF will significantly augment cargo capacity and frequency, enhancing connectivity to domestic and international destinations. The inauguration of K2 Airways, whether for passenger or cargo operations, not only creates direct employment opportunities within the company but also stimulates the economy by generating additional jobs and contributing to overall growth, fostering a sense of optimism about the future. K2 Airways is excited about bolstering Pakistan's aviation industry by expanding its fleet with more aircraft and implementing advanced technology to enhance its cargo operations.



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Polish pair makes history with first-ever glider flight over K2

In a historic feat, two Polish aviators have flown above 8,611-metre K2 in a glider aircraft.

Sebastian Kawa and Sebastian Kot Lampart have become the first in the world to fly a glider over the summit of the second-highest mountain.

According to Karar Haidri, Secretary of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, this was a pioneering flight

taking their Ash-25 glider plane to over 8,611 metres above sea level in the Karakoram mountains. The pilots had to face many obstacles, besides the high altitude; the weather at K2 was windy, and they had to face difficulties in getting the necessary permits, since flights of all kinds are heavily restricted in some areas in the Karakoram range.



These photos, taken by Polish glider pilot Sebastian Kawa, capture the breath taking views he and his co-pilot saw as they made the first-ever glider flight over the world's second tallest mountain.

above K2, despite high-speed winds and stringent flight restrictions in Pakistan, showcasing their exceptional skill and determination.

According to the organisers, Sebastian Kawa and Sebastian Lampart, with support from their friends, had to transport their Ash-25 glider plane in a trailer all the way from Poland to Pakistan. The pilots had obtained a flying licence from local authorities in the Shigar district to fly over the Karakoram range mountains after fulfilling the required procedures.

On Friday, July 19 in a test flight from Skardu airport, the pilots reached 4,600 metres. On Saturday, July 20 at 4:50pm, Sebastian Kawa and Sebastian Lampart were the first people to fly over the summit of K2 in a glider. The pair were on board a two-seater Schleicher ASH 25 glider, equipped with oxygen and a small emergency engine. A car pulled them with a rope until they were airborne; they took off from Skardu airport and then flew over the Karakoram and around K2.

Sebastian Kawa and Sebastian Lampart made aviation history after

The tour organiser, Mountain Challenger, said in a statement, "K2 is the biggest and highest mountain, but our team was higher than K2. This is one of the best days for us."

"My emotions have subsided; you can post some photos from Saturday - K2, Broad Peak, Baltoro," said Sebastian Kot Lampart in a Facebook post. "It is!! First ever glider flight in Karakoram...." he said.

Sebastian Kawa said in his Facebook post, "Beautiful view at K2 and Broad Peak from ASH25Mi cockpit. It was not easy but worth it."

Sławomir Makaruk, Przemysław Janusz, Krzysztof Strama, Marcin Polar from Poland were also in the expedition team.

Karrar Haidri appreciated the first K2 flight summit. He said Sebastian Kawa and Sebastian Lampart achieved a remarkable feat by soaring over K2 and Masherbrum in a glider. He added that the Alpine Club of Pakistan commends their accomplishment and hopes it would inspire and promote the sport of gliding in our beautiful country.

Parade on Seine marks start of Paris Olympics

Lady Gaga sang a French cabaret song near Notre Dame cathedral, as athletes were cheered by the crowd along the Seine in the pouring rain and dancers took to the rooftops of Paris in the Olympics' opening ceremony on Friday, July 26.

A fleet of barges took the competitors on a 6km-stretch of the river alongside some of the French capital's most famous landmarks.

As tradition dictates, the Greek delegation had the honour of leading out the flotilla, as the cradle of the modern Olympic movement.



Athletes and guests line the Trocadero Gardens venue, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, for the opening ceremony of the 2024 Paris Olympic games.

This is the first time an opening ceremony has taken place outside a stadium, adding to the headaches for a vast security operation.

France's anthem rang out as the parade passed by the Grand Palais, before the show paid tribute to women who made French history, including former minister Simone Veil.

Hours before the opening ceremony, saboteurs struck France's TGV high-speed train network in a series of pre-dawn attacks across the country, causing travel chaos and exposing security gaps.

The coordinated sabotage took place as France mounted a massive security operation involving tens of thousands of police and soldiers to safeguard the capital for the sporting extravaganza.

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Extreme heat makes flying harder: Airlines and airports say they aren't sweating it

It's been another summer of record-smashing temperatures and record-smashing air travel. Airports and airlines say they can handle both.

U.S. airlines expect to carry 271 million passengers across the globe this summer, up 6.3% from last season, the Airlines for America trade group has projected. Carriers have added flights and seats — in some cases too many — to accommodate the uptick. It comes in a year when the Earth notched its hottest June ever, and as last days saw two days in a row break planetary heat records.

Nevertheless, the aviation industry is adjusting to “a new normal” of scorching temperatures during the busy summer travel period, said Kevin Burke, president and CEO at Airports Council International–North America. So far, airports have managed “to adapt to these conditions” by working with airlines to tackle safety risks and operational challenges, he said.

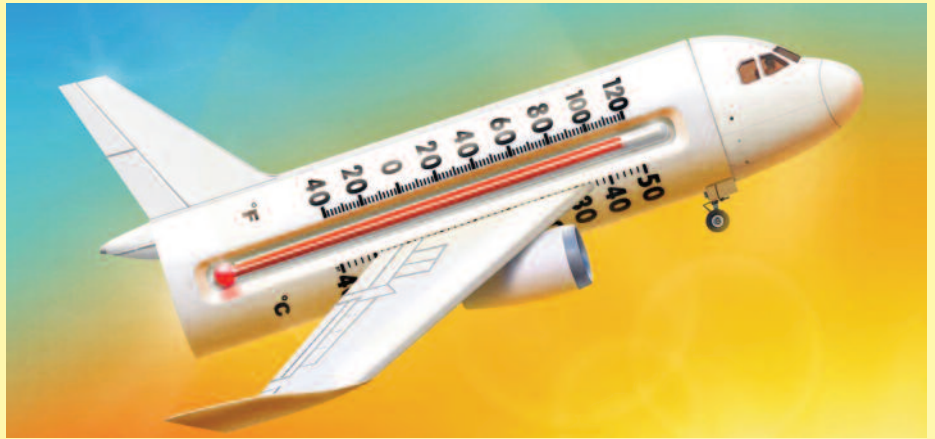
The U.S. Department of Transportation tracks “extreme weather” delays caused by conditions like tornadoes, blizzards or hurricanes but not those due to heat. And while the share of delay minutes caused by weather overall has declined in the last few decades, heat-related snags have been turning upward in recent years.

In July 2022, a scorching heat wave in Europe caused runway damage at London's Luton Airport, briefly suspending flights.

In June the year before, Alaska Airlines canceled and delayed flights due to record-breaking heat that had raised tarmac temperatures to 130 degrees Fahrenheit in Seattle and Portland and affected operations in California, Texas, Arizona and Louisiana. Ground crews were offered opportunities to take breaks in air-conditioned “cool down vans.”

In Las Vegas, which is seeing record highs again this summer, officials at Harry Reid International Airport (LAS) say the larger, heavier aircraft used for long-haul flights can have a harder time taking off.

It's physics: “Airplanes perform better aerodynamically at cool temperatures, when the air is denser,” said Patrick Smith, a pilot and founder of “Ask the Pilot,” an air travel blog. Very hot weather reduces aircraft engines' thrust, requiring a longer runway to achieve liftoff and gain altitude.



The aviation industry is adjusting to record passenger volumes and record seasonal temperatures simultaneously.

To address that challenge in Vegas, “the air traffic control tower will institute a configuration change for takeoffs to the east, which avoids the mountainous terrain,” said LAS spokesperson Amanda Mazzagatti. “That configuration can cause slight delays for departures as it reduces the number of takeoffs per hour,” she said.

High temperatures sometimes require aircraft to reduce their weight before getting up in the air by shedding baggage, fuel or even people, said Robert Thomas, an assistant professor at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida. Making these adjustments before takeoff “can also cause delays and

anger passengers,” he conceded.

On days when temperatures rise more than expected, aircraft sometimes burn off fuel on the runway to lighten their load, as one pilot recently recounted on TikTok. But there's only so much they can incinerate before there's no longer enough to get to the destination.

High heat can pose mechanical challenges, Smith said. “Engines also are subject to internal temperature limits beyond which operation isn't permitted, and when it's really hot outside these limits are easier to exceed. I expect it to happen more frequently as climate change causes more extreme weather events, including extreme heat waves.”

But in Phoenix this year, where temperatures have soared well into the 110s this month, officials at Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX) insist they're “well prepared for Arizona summers,” with runways that can accommodate takeoffs and landings in hot conditions.

Preparations for the summer weather begin each spring, said airport spokesperson John Trierweiler. Aviation department employees take a mandatory heat-safety course, and this year PHX added a video on the subject for all airport staffers, he said. During extreme heat, the airport urges employees to stay hydrated, take frequent breaks and, if they're working outdoors, to cool off inside every hour.

“Passengers are also encouraged to use the airport's water stations to stay hydrated in the Arizona heat,” he added.

Southwest Airlines said it has things under control even though severe heat is



A heat wave affected flights in Hanover, Germany, in 2018.



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“arriving earlier and persisting throughout the summer” at Sun Belt airports where the carrier has a large presence, said spokesperson Chris Perry. Like other airlines, Southwest is keeping planes cool by running air conditioning on the ground and asking passengers to close window shades and open overhead air vents upon arrival.

Atlanta-based Delta Air Lines also asks passengers to take these steps, said spokesperson Drake Castañeda. When cabins get uncomfortably hot, employees can pause boarding and wait until it cools down, even if that means a delay, he said.

Perry said Southwest hasn't experienced any widespread heat-related delays or cancellations lately, but he acknowledged reports of exploding soda cans due to high temperatures.

“We're aware of the issue and have been taking steps to keep onboard beverages cooler,” he said.

High temperatures are also pushing airports and carriers to adjust their ground

operations and upgrade infrastructure, ACI-NA's Burke said. Some airports are installing “smart glass” to reduce solar heat transmission into terminals, replacing aging central plant equipment with higher-efficiency technologies and improving electrical power systems.



Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix last summer. The airport starts preparing for summer weather conditions every spring.

Carriers are also paying attention to pets. Delta, Southwest and United Airlines don't allow pets to travel in cargo holds any time of year. Alaska and American do, but there are summertime restrictions.

The former, which has year-round breed restrictions for short-nosed dogs and cats, only allows pets to travel when the weather at both the departure and arrival cities is between 45 and 85 degrees. For much of this summer, Alaska isn't accepting pets in baggage compartments on flights arriving or departing between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m. at more than two dozen airports.

American Airlines also imposes breed restrictions year-round and doesn't accept pets as cargo whenever temperatures surpass 85 degrees. From May 1 through Sept. 30, the airline also prohibits pets in cargo on flights originating, connecting or terminating in Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; Las Vegas; or Palm Springs, California.

“If we find that temperatures become unsafe during travel,” the carrier tells customers, “we'll take your pet to a local kenneling facility — at no charge — for a comfort stop to play, eat and sleep until temperatures return to a safe range.”

Airlines halt Beirut flights

Air France and the German airline group Lufthansa said on Monday, July 29, they were suspending flights to Beirut after Israel threatened reprisals for a rocket strike launched from Lebanon.

Lufthansa services would be halted up to and including August 5 due to “current developments in the Middle East”, a group spokesman said.

Air France and its low-cost subsidiary Transavia France meanwhile said that flights between French airports and Beirut would be suspended on Monday, July 29 and Tuesday, July 30 because of the “security situation” in Lebanon. Israel blamed Hezbollah, which said it had “no connection” to the strike.

The incident heightened fears that the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza could spread north to Lebanon.

The country's only airport in Beirut was packed with travellers on Monday, July 29 including families anxiously awaiting delayed flights in the suffocating heat. Syrian-German traveller Nisreen al-Hussein said she found out her flight to Dusseldorf had been cancelled upon arriving at Beirut airport.

“I'm trying to look for another flight but they're all either packed or cancelled,” said Hussein, who was travelling with children.

Many Syrians have been taking flights from Beirut since civil war erupted in their country in 2011.

Ahmad Arafat, from the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, said he had been waiting with his family for a delayed Paris flight for two hours. “I don't know what

A Greek airport source said that an Aegean flight to Beirut had been cancelled on Sunday, July 28 night. Lebanon's Middle East Airlines said in a statement that it had rescheduled a number of flights on Sunday, July 28 and Monday, July 29 citing “technical reasons related to the



People sit beside their luggages at Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, on Monday, July 29.

I'll do if the flight is cancelled,” he said.

“It's going to be difficult waiting long hours in the heat, with young children and little available seating.” Other airlines have also cancelled or rescheduled flights in the wake of the attack.

distribution of (aircraft) insurance risks”.

The Lufthansa group, which includes Swiss and Austrian Airlines, has repeatedly paused travel to the region since the Gaza conflict began in early October.

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Saudia tops global airline list for on-time performance in June



Saudi Arabia's national carrier has topped the list of global airlines as it achieved an 88.22 percent on-time arrival rate in June, according to new data from the independent aviation tracking site Cirium.

Saudia also recorded an on-time departure rate of 88.73 percent, while operating 16,133 flights across its network of over 100 destinations on four continents.

The accomplishment is significant given that June is a peak travel month due to the annual Muslim Hajj pilgrimage and the summer travel season. The Kingdom saw around 2 million visitors during the Hajj season this year.

King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh also secured the top position for most on-time performance globally in June for the second consecutive month, according to the same report.

This comes amid steady growth in Saudi Arabia's aviation sector, which contributed \$21 billion to the Kingdom's gross domestic product in 2023, enhancing its status as a global tourism hub.

The National Transport and Logistics Strategy aims to increase the aviation industry's GDP contribution from the current 6 percent to 10 percent by 2030.

Ibrahim Al-Omar, director general of Saudia Group, said: "This accomplishment is a realization of our strategic goals to enhance operational efficiency and quality through continuous improvements in flight scheduling and the implementation of the best digital solutions and systems for operations management."

He added: "Maintaining a high level of on-time performance requires significant effort, as it involves overcoming numerous operational challenges in the aviation industry, such as weather conditions, high temperatures, technical issues, and other airport-related factors."

Saudia has been consistently ranked among the top 10 global airlines for on-time performance since last year, reflecting its commitment to high-quality standards and air safety, the company said.

Its operations are coordinated through one of the largest integrated operation control centers in the Middle East, which utilizes the latest technologies for aircraft communications to ensure smooth operations by monitoring all procedures related to aircraft takeoff and landing in real time at all domestic and international airports.

King Khalid International Airport's top

ranking by Cirium underscores its dedication to operational excellence and serves as a catalyst for ongoing improvements, said Ayman Aboabah, CEO of Riyadh Airports Co., the Saudi Press Agency reported.

"This excellence reflects our commitment to quality and operational efficiency. It motivates us to continue collaborating with various partners at King Khalid International Airport to deliver the best travel experience and the highest level of services to our passengers," he added.

"King Khalid International Airport stands as a national landmark, showcasing the Kingdom's status and future aspirations in line with Vision 2030's objectives," Aboabah also said.

He highlighted the importance of his staff's commitment to the highest operational standards, which he said was a defining characteristic of the airport's workforce, and their continuous efforts to enhance passenger experiences.

The recognition of King Khalid International Airport as the world's most punctual airport follows a third-place ranking by Cirium in January. The airport advanced to first place in May and maintained this position in June, reflecting its recent rapid and notable progress.



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Passenger relieved as airport management returns bag with valuables worth PKR 4.5 million



Passenger expresses relief after the airport management successfully returns his lost bag, which contained valuables valued at PKR 4.5 million.

Upon his arrival in Islamabad, Jumma Khan, a passenger returning from Spain, accidentally left his baggage unattended at the scanning machine. The bag contained 18 tola gold worth PKR 4,544,100/- and other items valued around PKR 100,000. The Duty Facilitation Officer (DFO-arrival) found the bag and promptly deposited it in CAA Lost & Found office.

After contacting the airport management, the bag was handed over to the passenger in the Airport Manager's office after necessary checks. The visibly relieved passenger expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the exceptional service and dedication in recovering and returning his lost baggage to him. "Losing track of baggage was a stressful experience, but the prompt response and thorough actions taken by your team provided immense relief", said the passenger.



Qatar Emiri Air Force F-15QA Advanced Eagle Flies at Farnborough International Airshow

The F-15QA (Qatar Advanced) is the most advanced variant of the F-15 Eagle. It is based on the F-15SA that is in production for Saudi Arabia, and has the same fly-by-wire flight control system introduced by the Saudi version. It also has Raytheon's APG-63(V)3 AESA



radar, Lockheed Martin AAS-42 Tiger Eyes infrared search and track system, a redesigned internal wing structure, and two additional wing hardpoints that allow it to carry up to 16 AIM-120 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles.

Where the F-15QA differs is that it is the first version to feature a new BAE Systems head-up display and a single wide-area cockpit display that replaces the multiple screens of previous variants. Boeing has also installed a new mission computer and a digital electronic warfare suite. The F-15EX for the U.S. Air Force is based closely on the Advanced Eagle that Saudi Arabia (F-15SA) and Qatar (F-15QA) both procured.



How do cabin crew spend their break periods?

While fun and exciting, a flight attendant's job requires hard work, focus, and attention to detail. Unlike a conventional 9-to-5 job with a routine start and end to the day, working as a flight attendant calls for flexibility, depending on when they are rostered. This also comes with break times that vary from flight to flight.

How busy does it get for cabin crew?

During a flight, the cabin crew is often busy ensuring the safety and comfort of passengers. From the moment passengers begin boarding, the crew actively welcomes and assists them, stows luggage, and ensures everyone is seated and seat belts are fastened.

As the flight progresses, they conduct safety demonstrations, serve meals and beverages, attend to individual passenger needs, and manage any in-flight issues. Additionally, they continuously monitor the cabin for safety and security, performing checks and communicating with the flight deck.

The crew also handles the disembarkation process, guiding passengers off the plane efficiently and ensuring no personal belongings are left behind. Throughout the flight, the cabin crew's responsibilities require them to remain attentive, responsive, and proactive, maintaining a high level of professionalism and service despite the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable nature of air travel.

Beyond these well-known duties, cabin crew also take on a variety of other



ambient music to create a relaxing atmosphere, depending on the flight phase.

Passengers witnessing this happening might wonder: do the cabin crew ever get some downtime? If so, when and what do they do during these breaks?

Short-haul flights: crunch time

On short-haul flights, there are limited windows of down-time. Due to the short period between take-off and touch-down, the cabin crew is often constantly on their feet, ensuring passengers experience the highest levels of safety and comfort.

It's usually busy in the cabin and galley, so cabin crew don't take breaks during these flights unless it's very quiet or a longer (but still short-haul) flight—like a four-hour flight, for example. They might only rest for a few minutes or so by sitting on their crew jump seat and grabbing a quick meal and some water while their colleague keeps an eye on the cabin.

Often, however, flight attendants do not sit down for a meal until their flight is over and they are on the ground during a turnaround. It is during these times, when the flight returns to its point of origin on

the same day (or when it has reached its final destination and the crew is afforded some time on the ground), that short-haul flight attendants get a proper break.

Long-haul flights: more time to rest

On long-haul flights, it's a different story for cabin crew. They typically get anywhere from an hour to three and a half hours of rest, depending on how long the flight is. Sometimes, it's just a curtained-off row of seats in economy, which isn't very conducive to sleep. In such situations, cabin crew might opt to watch some in-flight entertainment or listen to music to unwind and relax. The goal is to maximize their rest period, even if the conditions aren't always ideal.

Long-haul flights are operated on larger aircraft, which come with different types of rest areas, depending on the aircraft. They vary from overhead crew rest compartments, accessible via a



roles to enhance the passenger experience:

- Ensure lavatories are clean and well-stocked throughout the flight.
- Help passengers stow away their carry-on luggage, optimizing every inch of overhead bin space.
- Adjust cabin lighting and



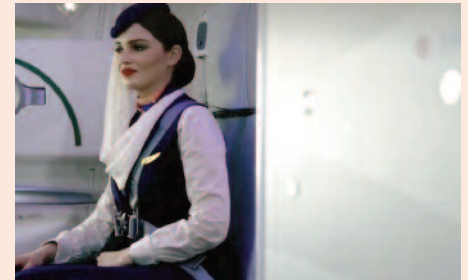
staircase or hatch, to lower deck crew rest areas. These areas contain multiple bunks or lie-flat beds for sleeping during long flights. Some aircraft also have shared rest compartments for both pilots and flight attendants, ensuring privacy and comfort



curtained off to allow the pilots to sleep.

Cabin crew, please be seated for landing

As the plane approaches landing, another crew member from the active shift will go to the crew rest area to wake everyone up, typically about 10 minutes before their break ends. This allows the crew time to tidy their hair, brush their teeth, reapply makeup, spray some scent, and do whatever else they need to freshen



for each group.

Comfort and rest for the crew

On larger aircraft, crew rest areas can be located in the tail, cargo area, or sometimes above the cabin. These spaces are designed to help crew members get some much-needed sleep, especially on ultra-long-haul flights. To make the most of their rest time, many cabin crew come prepared with their own pillow and a small duvet, often child-sized, to fit in their bags.

A small hot water bottle is also a great addition, as it can get quite chilly. Some crew members even bring pajamas to ensure they're comfortable. The video below shows a flight attendant's cheat sheet on getting through a long-haul international flight.

What are the alternatives?

Some cabin crew do not like the claustrophobia of crew rest areas, so they might try to sleep on their jump seat, using a curtain to create some privacy. While it's not easy, making a makeshift bed using the two jump seats, an atlas box, and a couple of cushions is possible. However, not all crew members can sleep during their rest period. Instead, some might choose to read, listen to music, or just rest their eyes.

Now, you might wonder — what about the pilots? The flight crew has their own rest area near the flight deck. On ultra-long-haul flights, there are additional crew members so they can take turns resting. If there is no designated rest area on the aircraft, business class seats may be

up. The working crew will then swap places with those who were resting, preparing everyone for the landing.

Cabin crew rest areas are a vital component of modern aviation, designed to ensure that both flight attendants and pilots can perform their duties with optimal efficiency and safety. These rest areas, varying from overhead compartments to lower deck bunks and designated reclining seats, provide the necessary respite during long-haul flights. By offering private, comfortable spaces for rest, airlines not only comply with regulatory requirements but also prioritize the well-being and performance.

Sialkot International Airport successfully concludes Hajj Flight Operation 2024

Sialkot International Airport Successfully concludes its Hajj flight operation for 2024. CEO Sial AVM(R) Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti stated that this dedicated operation marks another achievement in our commitment to providing exceptional service and ensuring the smooth travel of more than 4300 Hajj pilgrims. Throughout this Hajj season, Sialkot International Airport facilitated the departure and arrival of thousands of pilgrims, ensuring their journey was safe, comfortable, and efficient.



Our dedicated team worked tirelessly to coordinate flight schedules, manage passenger flow, and provide necessary support and amenities, ensuring that each Hajj flight operation was executed seamlessly. "We are extremely proud of

our team's efforts and the collaborative spirit that made this Hajj operation successful". CEO Sial added "Our primary goal was to ensure the safety and comfort of our pilgrims, and we are pleased to have achieved this with the highest standards of service." The airport implemented

rigorous safety measures, including enhanced sanitation protocols, comprehensive passenger screening, and efficient baggage handling processes, to ensure the well-being of all passengers amidst ongoing global health concerns.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our airline partners, ground handling staff, and all the support teams whose dedication and hard work made this operation possible. Most importantly, we thank the pilgrims for their cooperation and patience.

Sialkot International Airport remains committed to excellence in service and looks forward to continuing to support the needs of our passengers with the highest standards of safety, efficiency, and care.

Tech outage disrupts global flights, communications

Travellers faced the prospect of sleeping overnight at the airport, or giving up and taking to the road for an arduous journey instead, as July 19, Friday's worldwide IT breakdown caused chaos and left air passengers around the world "in limbo".

Airlines, banks, rail services and other services were impacted worldwide as interruptions triggered by an outage of Microsoft's cloud computing suites led to flights being grounded, news outlets being unable to broadcast information and operations in brokerage houses being hindered.

The outages were reported mainly in Australia, the US, the UK and India, among other countries, affecting institutions ranging from banks, media houses, and stock markets to government branches and airports. According to Downtetector, a real-time internet outage monitoring website, breakdowns for Microsoft services, including the cloud computing program Azure and office software Microsoft 365, were reported globally since Thursday. In the US alone, 1,751 outages were reported. Microsoft said its outage started at 3am on Thursday, July 18 with a subset of its customers experiencing issues with multiple Azure services in the central US region.

Separately, the company announced it was investigating an issue impacting various Microsoft 365 apps and services. "We're continuing to progress on our mitigation efforts for the affected Microsoft 365 apps and services," Microsoft said. "We still expect users to see remediation as we address residual impact."

IT security firm CrowdStrike ran a recorded phone message, saying it was aware of reports of crashes. "Thanks for contacting CrowdStrike support. CrowdStrike is aware of reports of crashes on Windows [...] related to the Falcon sensor," the prerecorded message played when Reuters called the company's technical support. According to the company, the Falcon Sensor software was causing Microsoft Windows to crash and display a blue screen, known informally as the 'Blue Screen of Death'.

CrowdStrike CEO George Kurtz apologised for a global tech failure, vowing to work with all of its customers as they work to get their operations back online. "We're deeply sorry for the impact that we've caused to customers, to travellers, to anyone affected by this, including our

company," he told NBC News 'Today' programme. "It could be some time for some systems that won't automatically recover," Kurtz said.

According to Downtetector, in Pakistan a maximum of 25 outages of Microsoft Azure were reported, with only 13 outages of Microsoft 365. Haroon Baloch, program manager at digital rights organisation Bytes for All, told media, "I've not heard as of now if any Pakistani organisation or airline's operations are disturbed due to Azure outage."

However, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) said the outage affected Microsoft customers in the country. "The fault forced affected PCs and servers into a recovery boot loop, preventing proper startup. Some internet services are also affected because of this," it said.



Travellers queue outside the Rotterdam Airport after a technical bug caused a global IT outage, on Friday, July 19.

The PTA added that the fault was identified and isolated with a fix provided by CrowdStrike. The PTA suggested clients to update the software from their support portal to restore services. A Pakistan International Airlines spokesperson said the national carrier's flight operations have been "fully restored and are operational". He said, "As soon as the [glitch] was reported, the PIA switched to an alternative system of air operations."

He added that one PIA flight at the Lahore airport was slightly delayed, but all other operations are fully normal. Major US carriers including American Airlines, Delta Airlines, and United Airlines issued ground stops citing communication issues, less than an hour after Microsoft resolved the outage that impacted several low-cost carriers. UAL and Allegiant Air too grounded flights. Australia's Commonwealth Bank, said some customers had been unable to transfer money due to the service outage.

National airline Qantas and Sydney Airport said planes were delayed but still flying. Victorian state police said some

internal systems had been hit by the outage but emergency services were operating normally. The output of many media companies was also disrupted. A spokesperson for New Zealand's parliament said its computer systems had also been affected, while state broadcaster ABC said it was experiencing a "major network outage".

In a pre-recorded message played on Sky News Australia as regular programming was disrupted, correspondent Tom Connell said the outage was not believed to be the result of a hack.

"Our computers, our systems are down all the things that make Sky News run down and indeed for many other major companies around the country," he said. Three Indian airlines announced disruptions to their booking systems. "Our

systems are currently impacted by a Microsoft outage," IndiGo, the country's largest airline by market share, said in a post on X. "During this time booking, check-in, access to your boarding pass, and some flights may be impacted."

The Press Trust of India reported passengers were "stranded" in the coastal holiday hotspot of Goa as a result of a technical glitch with the airport's check-in system. The aviation sector was hit particularly hard due to its sensitivity to timings. Airlines rely on a closely coordinated schedule often run by air traffic control. Just one delay of a few minutes can throw off a flight schedule for take-offs and landings for an airport and airline for the rest of the day. In Europe, Schiphol airport, Berlin airport, London Gatwick, Edinburgh airport and others said they were also impacted by the outage.

However, some airlines and airports said they were already back online, with Spanish carrier Iberia saying it had managed to avoid flight cancellations. At Dubai International, the world's busiest international airport, check-ins for some flights were affected, but the airlines switched to an alternative system.



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Pilot sole survivor as Nepal plane crash kills 18

A small passenger plane belonging to Nepal's Saurya Airlines crashed and caught fire while taking off from the capital Kathmandu on

investigate the incident, a government spokesman said.

Television footage showed fire fighters trying to put out the blaze as thick black

bodies being carried to ambulances on stretchers.

Kathmandu airport was closed temporarily following the crash but reopened within hours, officials said.

According to Flightradar24 flight tracking, Saurya currently operates two CRJ-200 regional jets, a programme that was owned by Canada's Bombardier but which was bought by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries in 2020.

Bombardier referred questions about the incident to Canada-based MHI RJ Aviation Group.

"We are committed to cooperate with the authorities in the investigation to get an understanding of the cause of this accident," MHI said in a statement to media. Nepal has been criticised for its poor air safety record, where many airlines fly to small airports in remote hills and near peaks shrouded in clouds. The country is home to eight of the world's 14 tallest mountain peaks.

The country's main airport is ringed by mountains, affecting wind direction and intensity and making takeoff and landing a challenge for pilots. The deadliest incident occurred in 1992, when a Pakistan International Airlines Airbus crashed into a hillside while approaching Kathmandu, killing 167 people.



Security personnel inspect the remains of a Saurya Airlines plane after it crashed during takeoff at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu on Wednesday, July 24.

Wednesday, July 24 killing 18 people on board and leaving one survivor, the captain, officials said.

"Only the captain was rescued alive and is receiving treatment at a hospital" said Tej Bahadur Poudyal, a spokesman for Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport. The 50-seater plane, carrying two crew members and 17 technicians, was heading for regular maintenance to Nepal's new Pokhara airport, which is equipped with aircraft maintenance hangars, the officials said.

Eighteen of those on board the CRJ-200 aircraft were Nepali citizens, with one engineer from Yemen, Saurya said.

"Shortly after takeoff ... the aircraft veered off to the right and crashed on the east side of the runway," the Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal said in a statement.

The crash again focused attention on the poor air safety record of the impoverished, landlocked Himalayan nation that is wedged between India and China and is heavily dependent upon air connectivity due to its limited road network. Nearly 360 people have died in aircrashes in the country since 2000.

Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli visited the crash site and asked people to "be patient" in a social media post, without elaborating. An emergency cabinet meeting was called to form a panel to

smoke rose into the sky. Images also showed the plane flying a little above the runway and then tilting to its right before it crashed. Other visuals showed rescue workers examining the charred remains of the plane, strewn in lush green fields, and



Crew members inspect the sun-powered aircraft, SolarStratos, after its landing at the Sion airport, on Thursday, July 18. The plane is preparing for its first flight at an altitude of 10,000m in 2025 to set the world record for being the first manned solar-powered aircraft to enter the stratosphere, the second layer of Earth's atmosphere.

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PM calls for steps towards \$60bn exports in three years



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in meeting with a delegation of Hangeng Trade Company on Tuesday, July 23rd.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday, July 23rd asked the authorities to take proactive measures to ensure the country's annual exports reach \$60 billion within three years.

Presiding over a National Export Development Board (NEDB) meeting, the prime minister asked the commerce ministry and other relevant departments to take necessary measures to achieve the given target.

He said the country's exports crossed the \$30bn mark during the previous fiscal year, and the government's policies also took the IT exports to over \$3.2bn.

The prime minister asked the ministry to resolve the issues pointed out by the exporters and present a report within two weeks. He said that he would personally chair the National Export Development Board meeting every one-and-half months.

Calling for collective efforts for the development, he paid tribute to the business community and investors for their role in increasing exports despite challenging circumstances.

Mr Shehbaz asked the commerce ministry to finalise the policy proposals in

coordination with representatives of the potential export sectors.

He also tasked the Ministry of National Food Security to improve extension services to enhance agricultural exports in coordination with provinces.

He instructed the exporting of quality seeds and agricultural products after further processing and taking measures to introduce crop varieties with high yields.

He said solving logistical problems should reduce the delivery time of Pakistani goods to Europe and America. He also called for research and development, innovation, and brand development to increase the export of Pakistani goods.

The premier warned against any delay by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in refunds to the exporters. He highlighted the private sector's crucial role in national development and called for its inclusion in the policymaking process. He also directed the power ministry to present a comprehensive plan to provide low-cost electricity to industries.

The export sector representatives appreciated the prime minister's frequent meetings to resolve their problems and called his keen interest in the sector "very

encouraging." They also appreciated the prime minister's initiative to ensure timely FBR refunds to the export industry.

Later, the prime minister invited Turkmen companies to benefit from Pakistan's promising investment climate and highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in facilitating foreign investors' investments in different sectors.

The prime minister underlined the importance of regional cooperation and connectivity, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the early completion of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline and to working together on other connectivity projects.

A press release said the prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov, who called on him at the PM House.

In a separate meeting with a delegation of Hengeng Trading Company led by Chairman Zhang Bin, Mr Shehbaz said that during his recent visit to China, signing multiple bilateral business-to-business agreements between companies of the two countries was a good indicator.

ACAAP Conducts Study Tour for Trainees to SIAL

The Cargo Basic Course classes were held at ACAAP's Zonal Office in Sialkot from July 22-26, 2024. As part of the training, students visited Sialkot International Airport to observe cargo handling operations firsthand. The management of SIAL welcomed the students and provided a briefing in the conference room. Following this, the students toured the Airport Cargo Terminal to gain practical insights into the processes they studied during the course.



Ambitious \$60bn three-year target set, despite exporters' concerns on taxation structure

The government has set a new ambitious export target of \$60 billion over the next three years despite changes to the tax structure in the budget that have sparked widespread discontent among the country's exporters.

Commerce ministry officials craft presentations to support the wishes of every new government without considering the practical challenges faced by the export sector and the export earnings projections of international lenders.

Official sources informed media, recently, that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with his economic team, which included Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, to discuss improving the country's export earnings.

Pakistan's former Ambassador to the World Trade Organisation, Dr Manzoor Ahmed, delivered a detailed presentation to the economic team. This meeting served as the basis for forming an 18-member committee to study the country's tariff structure.

Two structural issues fall outside the committee's scope. The committee will not investigate the change in the export tax regime outlined in the budget or the high energy costs compared to the rest of the area.

Exporters are currently confronting issues related to sales tax refunds and income tax, but no tax official from the Inland Revenue Service has been made part of the committee to address the exporter concerns. It shows that the committee will primarily focus on import tariffs, as proposed by the IMF, to progressively phase them down.

The caretaker government announced that export proceeds will surpass \$100bn over the following five years (2027-28). The commerce ministry projected an increase from numerous industries to meet this unrealistic target.

Soon after this declaration, a report from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) doubted Pakistan's export targets by projecting statistics. In striking contrast to the ministry's projections, the Fund expects Pakistan's exports to progressively rise from \$30.84bn in FY24, while actual export proceeds for the same year are slightly lower at \$30.64bn.

The IMF export's projections are \$32.35bn in FY25, \$34.68bn in FY26, \$37.25bn in FY27, and \$39.46bn in FY28. The export target for FY25 is projected at \$32.3bn in the annual plan 2024-25. This target is likewise quite close to the IMF's prediction.

According to the official, export earnings have grown by a single digit in recent years, and the projected export target is far from being met in the next three years. While the IMF bases its projections on nominal growth rates, the commerce ministry's plan hinges on aggressive growth and a diversified export portfolio.

An official announcement from the commerce ministry said that Commerce Minister Jam Kamal chaired the committee's inaugural meeting on tariff rationalisation. Recognising the task's complexity and extensive scope, the minister established three subcommittees to expedite the process.

These subcommittees are tasked with providing detailed recommendations to the main committee, which will then present a finalized report to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, the commerce minister emphasised the technical nature of the subject and the need for comprehensive consultation with experts from both the private and public sectors.

The committee's TORs include reviewing existing proposals, suggesting short to long-term tariff rationalisation measures, and devising a comprehensive plan to reach the export target. The ministry will finalise its recommendations within two weeks.

The committee will review the proposals/recommendations already developed by the National Tariff Commission/National Tariff Board and suggest tariff rationalisation measures and alternative revenue measures for achieving revenue targets.



A worker plucks dates at a farm maintained by the University of Agriculture, recently.



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Meat exports hit record \$512m amid high demand

Exports of meat and its products hit a record high of \$512 million in FY24, marking a 20 per cent increase from \$426m in the preceding year.

This growth is attributed to a 24pc rise in export volume, which reached 123,515 tonnes from 99,892 tonnes in the previous fiscal year, driven by strong international demand and competitive pricing following a significant devaluation of the rupee.

Azeem Akhundzada of Sherman Securities said that despite the overall growth, the average meat price in the international market during FY24 dropped

\$142m in FY24.

Kuwait and Qatar, two promising markets that together constitute around 17pc of Pakistan's meat export market, saw declines in value terms, with exports falling by 13pc to \$49m and by 2pc to \$38m, respectively.

Additionally, new export markets such as Vietnam, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have developed over the past few years.

Mr Akhundzada highlighted that the Organic Meat Company Ltd, a major exporter of fresh, chilled beef to Middle Eastern countries, has diversified into pet chews and cooked meat products.



The UAE remained the largest market for Pakistani meat, accounting for 39pc, or \$200m, of total exports.

by 3pc to \$4.1 per kg compared to \$4.3 per kg a year ago.

The United Arab Emirates played a major role in this price reduction, with export values to the UAE decreasing by around 2pc, while prices in other regions remained relatively stable.

Export volume surges 24pc to 123,515 tonnes on back of competitive prices

However, the UAE continued to be the largest market for Pakistani meat, accounting for 39pc of total exports valued at \$200m.

Despite an estimated 2pc drop in meat prices in the region, overall exports grew by 4pc in dollar terms.

Saudi Arabia emerged as the second-largest destination for Pakistani meat, comprising 28pc of total meat exports.

Thanks to rising demand and favourable pricing, exports to Saudi Arabia surged by 66pc year-on-year to

Abu Dhabi to invest \$250m in Karachi port



Omani Ambassador Fahad Sulaiman Khalaf Al Kharusi shakes hands with PM Shehbaz Sharif.

Abu Dhabi will invest \$250 million in 10 years in the Karachi Port to upgrade it for boosting economic activities.

According to the PM Office, Abu Dhabi Ports Pakistan CEO Khurram Aziz Khan on Friday, July 19 called on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and informed him that the company would invest \$250m in the port during the next 10 years.

Accompanied by a delegation, the company's CEO explained that a fully equipped multipurpose terminal would be completed within two years with an investment of \$130m. With the new infrastructure, cargo ships of up to 120,000-tonne capacity would be able to anchor at the port. The PM called for using modern technology and machinery to improve cargo and container handling at the port besides reducing the clearance time.

Later, PM Shehbaz in a meeting with a four-member delegation, led by Huawei Pakistan CEO Ethan Sun, said Pakistan's IT exports would rise with Huawei's annual professional training to 300,000 Pakistani students. Collaboration with Huawei was essential for providing advanced IT training to young people in various fields, he said, adding that the government would give priority to people of Balochistan for this training. On the occasion, Huawei expressed interest in collaborating with the Pakistani government to transform Islamabad into a smart city.

PCAA hosts "11th Experience Sharing Platform Event" at Civil Aviation Training Institute – Hyderabad



The Chief Guest, Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) Sajid Habib, Ex-DDG-CAA talking to the guests.



Mr. Sumair Saeed, Director, CATI briefing the students in a class room.



Group photo taken on the occasion shows Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) Sajid Habib, Ex-DDG-CAA, Mr. Sumair Saeed, Director, CATI and Mr. A.S Azad, Editor, Flyer International with other guests.

Tuning out AI

Recently, several major record labels filed copyright infringement lawsuits in US courts against the makers of two generative AI music apps, Suno and Udio.

The labels allege the AI companies have engaged in copyright infringement by copying many sound recordings belonging to the record labels, and producing outputs very similar to those recordings.

The labels are seeking damages of US\$150,000 (A\$225,000) for each of the thousands of tracks of which copyright has allegedly been infringed.

The lawsuits allege Udio produced output with “striking resemblances” to songs, including Dancing Queen by ABBA and All I Want For Christmas Is You by Mariah Carey, while Suno allegedly turned out songs similar to I Got You (I Feel Good) by James Brown and Johnny B. Goode by Chuck Berry, among others.

These lawsuits are not the first to trouble the booming generative AI industry. Visual artists have sued makers of image-generating systems, while various newspapers are suing OpenAI, the owner of ChatGPT, for similar allegations. The result of the litigation may determine the future viability of such generative AI products.

How do music generators work?

For those who have not used these type of products, they work like this. You type in a text prompt, such as “compose a female jazz song about beating the Monday morning blues.” If you like, you can also provide your own lyrics.

The app then generates output in the form of an MP3 song, with a combination of vocals and instrumentation, which can be downloaded by the user.

To generate the song, the AI has been trained with a vast amount of data. The lawsuits allege this data comprises pre-existing sound recordings owned by various record labels and copied without permission. These sound recordings are at the heart of this issue.

The litigation is likely to hinge on whether what Suno and Udio have done with any of these sound recordings is found to be “fair use.”

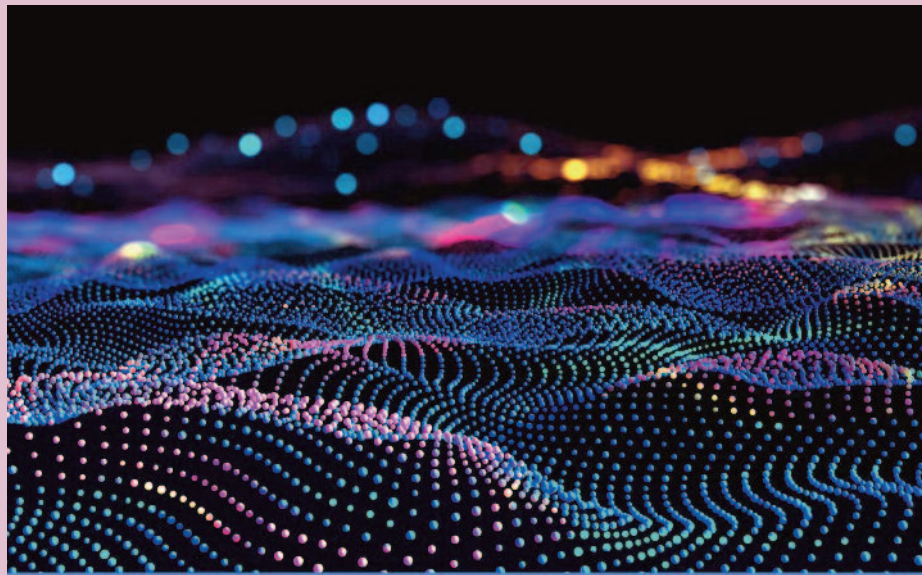
In the US, fair use is a defence to copyright infringement. In Australia, we have a narrower “fair dealing” copyright doctrine, which pertains to particular uses,

such as research and study.

How will the court make its decision?

The court will examine four factors in relation to the use of the record labels’ songs by Suno and Udio. These are:

the purpose and character of the use the nature of the original copyright work the amount and substantiality of the portion



used, and the effect of the use on market value.

The most contentious factor is the purpose and character of the use. This involves examining whether the generative AI music is sufficiently “transformative”, which means it provides a new meaning, expression or value to the original work.

At the heart of Suno and Udio’s argument is that their technology is sufficiently transformative in nature. They argue that this is because their AI synthesises new, original output, rather than copying and reproducing pre-existing songs.

The court will examine the amount and substantiality of the portion of songs copied. It will examine how the allegedly copied songs are used in the AI training process and in generating output.

The element of substantiality may be qualitative, rather than quantitative. This means that, in addition to the amount copied, the court can also consider whether a distinctive part of a song has been copied. In addition, the effect of the generative AI use on the market value of the original sound recording will be considered. A use which substitutes for the original song in the market is more likely

to be considered substantial. This point can be argued both ways.

What’s in a voice?

One major concern for the music industry is the cloning of voices. This is where other generative AI music apps (not Suno or Udio) can be used to clone a famous singer’s voice on to any song.

Suno released a statement on X, denying that voice cloning is possible using their app, because it does not allow users to reference particular singers. This issue will likely be contested in court.

What will happen next? It is difficult to predict.

Perhaps a settlement will be reached prior to the hearings. Perhaps new licensing arrangements between the parties will be developed, in a similar situation to OpenAI’s recent collaboration with News Corp.

What is certain is that there are other new AI voice cloning innovations being developed through start-up companies, to monetise and license voice cloning. One example is Hooky, a licensing platform for AI voice modelling, which provides artists with control over the use of their voice.

If the record labels’ litigation proceeds, it will give American courts the opportunity to clarify whether training activities and output from generative AI music apps are captured under fair use.

This decision may also set a precedent for the activities conducted by other types of generative AI apps.

The writer is a Lecturer in Law at the University of New England in the UK

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Pakistan waives visa fee for 126 countries



In a major change in visa policy aimed at attracting tourists and investment from across the world, Pakistan has completely waived the visa fee for the citizens of as many as 126 countries.

The decision, dubbed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif a “quantum jump” to attract businessmen, investors, tourists and other travellers and to bring ease of doing business, was taken at the federal cabinet meeting on Wednesday, July 24.

While relaxing the visa policy, the cabinet approved the enforcement of online visa application system under which citizens of 126 countries would get business and tourist visas within 24 hours and would be exempt from paying visa processing fee.

An official handout issued by PM House quoted the prime minister as saying the cost of visa processing after the waiver would be covered through foreign exchange earned through investment and tourism, including religious tourism of which Pakistan has immense potential.

Not only the visitors would get visas within 24 hours through the electronic travel authorisation form, but also get the facility of e-gates, which would be established at Gwadar Port and nine airports across Pakistan, according to the statement. Initially, the e-gates would be installed at Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports.

Moreover, for the travel facilitation of Sikh Yatrees (pilgrims) having passports of a third country, the cabinet approved a separate sub-category for visa-on-arrival facility. For this purpose, it was decided that a dashboard would be introduced at the interior ministry to supervise the online visa system.

A source told media that the visa policy was relaxed for businessmen and tourists

so that they can apply for visa online, even a day before travel.

The decision of the cabinet would be implemented by the interior ministry and the Foreign Office, the source said, adding that all the 126 countries would be informed through the FO.

Also, the federal cabinet, on the recommendations of the high courts of Islamabad, Balochistan, Sindh, Lahore and Peshawar as well as the Ministry of Law and Justice, approved notification of special courts and banking courts with regard to banking cases.

The special and banking courts would function under the security exchange commission.

The cabinet also gave the go-ahead to signing of an MoU between Pakistan and Denmark for promotion of public-private partnership for logistics, transport, sustainable growth, water waste management, urban green development, alternative energy and construction of basic infrastructure.

Ex-PTDC chief passes away

Former managing director Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Saeed Anwar passed away at his native Chalt village of Nagar district in Gilgit-Baltistan. He was 83.

A large number of people from different walks of life attended his funeral. Saeed Anwar served in the tourism sector for decades and contributed to the promotion of tourism in the region and retired in 2002.

Anwar was amongst the founders of

PTDC motels chain in Pakistan. He was brother of Major Adeb Anwar Shaheed, a hero of the 1971 war. He is survived by his widow, one son and three daughters. GB minister for tourism, sports and culture Ghulam Mohammad and secretary Mir Waqar Ahmed paid tribute to Anwar for his services for the promotion of tourism in the region.

Court stops excise dept. from sealing Kaghan hotels

The Peshawar High Court's Abbottabad Circuit Bench has stopped the excise and taxation department from sealing hotels in Kaghan Valley over non-payment of “bed tax” until further orders.

Justice Ijaz Khan provided relief to hotel owners over their petition against the imposition of 10 per cent bed tax.

Saqib Khan Lughmani, lawyer for Kaghan Hoteliers Association president Seth Matiullah, told reporters here on Friday, July 26 that the petition challenged dual taxation.

He said besides others, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority, provincial entity, too, was unfairly receiving tax from Kaghan hotel owners.

Mr Lughmani said the valley's hospitality industry operated for two to three months in the summer, so it couldn't pay the bed tax.

“Officials of the excise and taxation department frequently visit hotels to demand the bed tax. They harass hoteliers and threaten to seal their premises,” he said.

The lawyer said the provincial government, in the Finance Act 2021, had proposed the collection of a 10 per cent tax from the hotels' bedroom earnings, which had been challenged in the court.

“The Sindh and Punjab governments have waived bed tax, which is considered dual taxation,” he said.

Mr Lughmani said the government had enhanced the bed tax from five per cent to 10 per cent and its collection period from three months for hill stations like Kaghan to six months.

He said the court ordered the fixing of the petition for early hearing.

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Experts call for conserving mangroves to help mitigate worsening climate

Speakers at a seminar highlighted that mangroves are facing severe threats due to water and silt diversion, over-exploitation and heavy grazing and it is necessary to take practical steps for their conservation as they are crucial for not just environment but also in mitigating worsening temperatures along with providing protection against cyclones and tsunamis among other things.

The seminar, “Importance of Mangrove Conservation”, was organised by the Muhammad Ajmal Khan Institute of Sustainable Halophyte Utilisation (MAK-ISHU) at the University of Karachi here on Friday, July 26. The event was held to mark World Mangroves Day in collaboration with the KU Institute of Environmental Studies and the Sindh government’s forest department.

Chief Conservator of the forest department Riaz Ahmed Wagan said there was a serious threat to mangroves due to water and silt diversion, over-exploitation and heavy grazing. “Mangroves are essential for coastal resilience, yet they face serious challenges. The Indus Delta once hosted eight mangrove species but today, only four remain,” he said.

Mr Wagan informed the audience about the provincial government’s efforts to restore mangroves along the coastline. Early record showed existence of eight species of mangrove on the Indus Delta, spanning the districts of Thatta, Sujawal, Badin, and Karachi, but presently only four are found, he said.

Say mangroves are facing threats from silt, grazing, and diversion

He shared that according to a 2022 World Bank report, “one hectare of well-stocked mangrove forest is valued at US\$58,000, with the overall asset value of the Indus Delta’s mangroves approximating US\$1.22 billion.”

He also spoke about various economic benefits of mangroves, such as supporting fisheries, providing fuel-wood, and grazing resources, regulating global climate through carbon sequestration, and protecting against soil erosion and coastal damage.

“Mangroves provide fish biomass, nursery, and habitat provision in support of fisheries, wood, grazed biomass and livestock provisioning services, global climate regulation, soil erosion control,

coastal protection, solid waste remediation, and recreation and education-related services,” he said.

However, he also pointed out the direct threats they face, including freshwater shortages, silt deposition, increased salinity, coastal erosion, sea intrusion, pollution, and exploitation for fuel and fodder.

He also emphasised the importance of maintaining a minimum freshwater discharge of 10 MAF into the delta for sustainable mangrove management. “Environmentalists advocate a minimum of 10 MAF freshwater discharge into the delta for sustainable management,” he said.

He also noted that mangroves significantly reduce wave damage, storm surges, high winds, tsunami impact, and erosion, and support adaptation to rising sea levels. “Due to continuous rehabilitation efforts since 2008, Pakistan currently occupies the 10th position globally and the 5th position in Asia for mangrove restoration,” he added.

Keynote speaker Dr Dolly Priatna from Pakuan University, Indonesia, while speaking through video link shared that Indonesia hosts the world’s largest mangrove area, covering 3.36 million hectares. However, he pointed out that “about 40 per cent of Indonesia’s mangroves were lost in the last three decades.”

Dr Priatna emphasised the critical role

of mangroves and said they support the restoration, protection, and conservation of endangered species like the Sumatran Tiger, elephants, and Sumatran and Bornean Orangutans.

“Mangroves play a major role in carbon sequestration, nutrient cycling, water filtration, and boosting ecotourism. Despite these benefits, they face threats from deforestation, land conversion, urban development, pollution, illegal logging, mining, policy issues, community practices, economic incentives, climate change, and rising sea levels,” he said.

Earlier, KU Dean Faculty of Science Prof Dr Masarrat Jahan Yousuf called for collaboration between biologists and zoologists to improve the world’s ecosystem and environment. “Biologists and zoologists should work together for the betterment of the world’s ecosystem and environment,” she said.

She also suggested that mangroves could potentially be used for honey production. “Mangroves can also be used for honey production, but it would require detailed research to know which species can be helpful in this regard,” she observed.

Former Director MAK-ISHU Prof Dr Salman Gulzar read a message from Unesco Director General Audrey Azoulay, emphasising the fragile and crucial nature of mangroves.

“Mangroves are a link between land



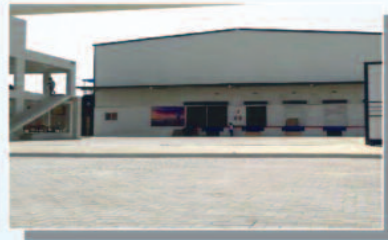
Mangroves plants stand tall in Karachi.



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and sea and form a rare and fragile universe; a haven of life that must be protected,” he quoted Azoulay.

KU Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Khalid Mahmood Iraqi stressed the need for regular scientific events to raise awareness about climate research among students, faculty, and the general public.

“Scientific events should be arranged regularly to educate not only students and faculty members but also the general public about the real threats to our future generations,” he stated.

Dr Iraqi highlighted climate change as the most significant threat today, driven by high levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. “Climate change is the biggest threat we are facing today, and global temperatures are rising at an alarming rate,” he said.

He stressed that urbanisation and concrete structures in cities like Karachi exacerbate

extreme weather events, urging immediate action to improve the environment. “Concrete structures in cities like Karachi will cause extreme weather events, such as unexpected high rains, flooding, or drought,” he said.

He also underscored the benefits of mangrove forests, describing them as “one of the most productive ecosystems,” and noted their role in fisheries support, cyclone and tsunami protection, and carbon sequestration.

“Mangrove forests hold several benefits for mankind, including protection against cyclones and tsunamis and serve as carbon sinks to clean the air we breathe,” he said. Finally, Director KU MAK-ISHU Prof Dr Irfan Aziz highlighted the unique ecological and economic benefits of mangroves, noting their widespread presence in tropical and subtropical regions.

“Mangroves have a very unique

ecosystem for our coastline and deltaic region,” he explained. He highlighted their role in sequestering large amounts of blue carbon, making them a crucial natural tool for climate change mitigation.

“Mangroves can trap sediments and organic matter via their complex roots, allowing them to accumulate significant amounts of blue carbon over time,” Dr Aziz explained. He noted that mangroves store carbon in both their biomass and the surrounding soil. “The amount of blue carbon stored in the mangrove ecosystem can be massive, with estimates up to 1,000 metric tons per hectare,” he shared.

Explaining their importance, particularly for Karachiites facing rising air temperatures, he said “Mangroves cover over 100,000 hectares of our coastline, so one can imagine how important they are to us, especially for Karachiites given increasing air temperatures.”

Cascading Nish Kapar waterfall in Swat a cool respite for visitors

During the intense heat, the residents of the plains in Swat seek relief in rivers, springs and waterfalls. Among the many options, the cascading Nish Kapar waterfall in Kokarai stands out, drawing crowds with its cooler climate, lush green surroundings, and a pool perfect for young swimmers.

Perched in the mountains of Kokarai Valley, the cascading waterfall is just about 10 kilometres from Mingora, providing a cool respite for visitors. It is the nearest tourist site for the people of Mingora and the surrounding areas.

The Nish Kapar waterfall flows down into a sub-valley of Kokarai, an area renowned for its cool and refreshing water springs, maple and peach trees, and lush green terrain.

Visitors said that before reaching the waterfall, they witnessed a lush green landscape. “From the road, there is about a one-hour hike to the waterfall. Though the hike gets challenging at the end, there are several water springs, streams, and walnut, peach and persimmon trees providing cool shade and beautiful views,” said Yasar Khan, a young boy from Mingora, who visited the waterfall with his friends.

Umar Farooq, another visitor, who was taking selfie in front of the waterfall, shared his experience thus, “The hike to the waterfall is not only refreshing but

also educational. The variety of flora and fauna you encounter on the way is astounding. My children love spotting different birds and collecting leaves from the maple and peach trees. It’s a perfect spot for a family outing.”

Many visitors were bathing and swimming in the small, round pool formed by the waterfall. They remarked that the water was cool and refreshing, making swimming a real delight.

“In Mingora, the weather is very hot, but just 10 kilometres away, it is pleasant here. It feels like the pool water is ice-

cold. We are thoroughly enjoying the cool water and swimming,” said Musa Khan, a young visitor who was swimming in the pool.

Qaiser Ali, a visitor of a nearby village, reminisced about his early trips to the waterfall. “I’ve been visiting this waterfall since I was young. The place hasn’t changed much, and it still offers the same tranquillity and beauty. The sound of the water cascading down and the cool breeze are what I cherish the most. It’s a blessing to have such a natural haven so close to home.”



Visitors enjoy the pleasant weather at Nish Kapar waterfall.



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13 mountaineers scale Gasherbrum-II despite uncertain weather

Thirteen mountaineers, most of them foreigners except for two Pakistani nationals, on Sunday, July 21 morning scaled Gasherbrum-II (8032 metres), which is situated in the Karakoram Range and also known as K-4.

The climbers belonged to two expedition teams – Seven Summits Treks and Karakoram Summit. According to the tour organiser, 11 members of Seven Summits Treks scaled Gasherbrum-II on Sunday, July 21 morning.

In a statement, the Seven Summits Treks said: “We are proud to announce the successful ascent of Gasherbrum-II (8034m) by our incredible Seven Summit Treks team members and Sherpas on Sunday! Our team made it to the top while fixing the rope and opening the trail.” The statement congratulated every member for their dedicated teamwork, extraordinary perseverance, and strength.

Alina Pekova from Russia, Dorota Lidia Rasinska-Samocko from Poland, Josette Valloton from Switzerland, Marco Camandona from Italy, Pasang Tenje Sherpa, Dawa Nurbu Sherpa, Chhangba Sherpa, Phurbu Kusang Sherpa, Pasang Dukpa Sherpa from Nepal, Shahida Jamil Afridi, and Rana Hassan Javaid from Pakistan were part of the expedition. The mountaineers started their summit push on Saturday evening despite the uncertain weather conditions and managed to scale the peak by Sunday.

The two-strong team of the Summit Karakoram included renowned Nepalese climber Sanu Sherpa and Kosovan climber Uta Ibrahim, who scaled Gasherbrum-II on Sunday at 7am. They also started their summit push from Camp 3 on Saturday evening.

According to Iqbal Qadiri, who organised the tour, Gasherbrum-II, also known as K-4, is a formidable mountain, and conquering it requires skill, determination, and teamwork.

“The Karakoram range is one of the most spectacular and challenging mountain ranges in the world, and this accomplishment is a testament to the team’s expertise and perseverance,” he said while congratulating the members for their remarkable achievement.

Meanwhile, hundreds of foreigners and local mountaineers are waiting at the base camps of K-2, Gasherbrum-I, and

Broad Peak to start their summit push due to the inclement weather that hampered the progress of climbers.

Mr Qadiri said climbers had established Camp 3 at K-2, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum-I and completed their rotation and acclimatisation process to scale the peak. However, the weather continues to disrupt their efforts, with the summit season coming to a close.

The summit season ends in mid-August; if the weather continues to remain worse, there will be only a few summits as the season is about to end and climbers gathered at the base camps are frustrated, he said. There are also some radio communication issues at the base camps, which has irked the mountaineers.

On the other hand, the season at Nanga Parbat is already over and many climbers have returned due to the deteriorating weather.

The only climbers to reach the top were the 13 members of a foreign expedition team who scaled the peak on July 9 and 10. Pakistani national Jousaf Khawaja and his 15-year-old daughter Selena from Abbottabad along with high-altitude mountaineer Fazal Ali also abandoned their mission to scale the killer mountain.

Skiers Anny Tybor from Poland and Tom Lafaille from France intended to summit Nanga Parbat without supplementary oxygen and ski down the peak but they also called off the mission.

Govt. to establish world class mountaineering school in GB

Romina Khurshid Alam, the coordinator to the prime minister on climate change and environment-mental coordination, announced on Sunday, July 21, that the government will establish a world class mountaineering school in Gilgit-Baltistan to promote sustainable and environment-friendly climbing in the country.

The PM’s aide said this institution would offer structured training and educational facilities tailored to mountaineering, Sherpa training and sustainable tourism practices, aiming to promote world-class, environment-friendly mountaineering and tourism in the country’s northern regions.

At a meeting of the Prime Minister’s Committee to Establish the Mountaineering School in Gilgit-Baltistan, Ms Alam said the plan is being implemented in close coordination with the Gilgit-Baltistan government to set up the first government-run mountaineering school of world-class standard in Skardu.

The school aimed to equip aspiring mountaineers and climbers with skills and knowledge needed to safely enjoy mountains while respecting the local environment, values, and cultures of the communities living in the area.

“This initiative also seeks to create new employment opportunities for local

communities and promote sustainable mountaineering and climbing,” she said.

The PM’s aide noted that Gilgit-Baltistan, celebrated for its scenic towering peaks, including K2, the world’s second-highest mountain, has long attracted adventurers and explorers from around the globe. The region’s untapped potential for promoting mountaineering and climbing can be realised through the provision of skill development training and facilities.

“By equipping local and international participants with necessary skills and knowledge at the proposed mountaineering school in Skardu, we aim to foster a new generation of mountaineers and tourism professionals committed to preserving the natural and cultural integrity of Gilgit-Baltistan,” Ms Alam said. The meeting also discussed the curriculum for mountaineering and climbing, skill development modules, rescue training, site identification for the school, training programmes for local tour guides, and potential funding and collaboration opportunities for the school’s establishment and management. The meeting was attended by officials of the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission, GB Planning and Development Department and members representing the mountaineering community.



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Three young climbers scale 6,050m Thalo Zom peak in Swat

Three young mountaineers successfully climbed the 6,050-meter-high Thalo Zom peak on the Swat-Chitral border, marking the first time the local climbers having accomplished the feat.

Thalo Zom in the Pamir Hindukush region was first climbed on August 12, 1971, by a team from Graz, Austria, led by Herbert Zeffer. It was then climbed in 2019 by a team comprising Koki Gassiot (Catalonia-Spain), Massimo Marconi and Andrea Bollati (both Italian), and Samiullah Ghaznavi, Sadam Hussain and Abrar Saeed, three young local mountaineers under Mountain Wilderness International's Asian Desk.

The three - member Swati mountaineers' team led by Zeeshan Umar and comprising Seth Noman and Mian Syed Ali successfully summited the peak using their own resources and guidance. They said they grew up amid snow-covered high mountains in Swat and wanted to climb them since childhood.

Zeeshan Umar said it was their second expedition, which the team organised on their own. "Last year we scaled Falak Sar, the highest peak of Swat, and this year we summited Thalo Zom, the 6,050-meter-high peak, which was our dream. The mountain is tough and mysterious, and when we reached the top, we yelled with excitement," he

said.

The mountaineers also showed concern that the 16-kilometre-long glacier had developed big cracks at several locations. "The climate change effects have surfaced on the glaciers in the upper Swat and Chitral mountains, which is alarming. We saw huge crevasses and cracks develop in the Thalo glacier," Umar said.

The mountaineers said they came across several challenges, including harsh weather and the danger of a heavy storm. "Halfway up the huge glacier, we faced a heavy snowstorm, which was 120km/h fast, against which we had to resist.

At one point, we almost lost courage when the storm lasted more than an hour. It caused an avalanche from above, but luckily, we survived," said Syed Ali, another group member of the team.

Another group member, Noman Khalil, said the peak was technically tough and required professional skills. "Luckily, we scaled the peak without any support and sponsor.

We will attempt other peaks in the country, but we need sponsors to climb other high peaks," he said.

The mountaineers said there were many high and tough peaks on the Swat-Chitral border, and mountaineers from around the world should come and try them.



The mountaineers on their way to scale Thalo Zom Peak in Swat.

Pond of historical Gurdwara retrieved

The district administration of Sialkot has retrieved a pond and land adjacent to the historical Gurdwara Babey Di Beri on the Zafarwal Road after 77 years.

The land was occupied by the influential Hijra family since the Partition. A joint operation was conducted against the occupiers by the district administration, municipal committee, revenue department and the police.



The influential family had built a cattle pen and shops on the land while a political party had built its office and the local people had also constructed some houses on the land of the Sikh community, according to Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue Muhammad Iqbal. The special team demolished the shops, political party office, cattle pen set up on the land.

The district administration has ended the illegal occupation of eight kanal and 18 marla land of the pond belonging to the Sikh community, said the district administration spokesperson Syed Waqar Javed. He told media that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had constructed the current building of the gurdwara and the pond. He said that after the partition of India in 1947, the pond was closed and later local people occupied its land.

Muhammad Iqbal said the land retrieved from the mafia would be handed over to the Auqaf Department. He said strict legal action would be taken against the employees of the Auqaf Department found involved in the illegal occupation.

The Sikh community thanked the district administration for handing over the land to them.

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