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 Web. www.newflyerintl.com
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Issue Monthly
 Price Rs. 500/=

Annual Subscription Pakistan Rs.5000/=
 Other Countries US\$100/=

Published from New Flyer International
 B-65 Ablagh-e-Aamma
 (media) Cooperative
 Housing Society
 Block-8, Gulistan-e-Jauhar
 Karachi-75290

By Abdul Sattar Azad
 Phone 34615924
 Fax 34615924
 Printed by Sardar Sons

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International
Monthly Magazine of Aviation and Tourism
Vol 32 JANUARY-2025 No. 04

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An MoU sign between Beijing AI Force Tech and Daewoo Pakistan, picture shows Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz with other guests on this occasion.

Govt plans to pull out of Hajj operations, Senate panel told

The Senate Standing Committee on Religious Affairs was informed on Tuesday, December 31 that the government plans to phase out its involvement in the Hajj arrangements and intends to transfer the responsibility of managing the operation to private companies, possibly in 2025.

Religious Affairs Secretary Dr Zulfiqar Haider disclosed this while briefing the Senate committee about the government's next Hajj scheme.

The committee, chaired by Senator Attaullah Rehman, witnessed heated arguments between private Hajj operators and the Religious Affairs Ministry officials over the quota allocated to the tour operators.

Responding to the accusation by the tour operators that the government was planning to harm their business, Dr Haider said the government intends to transfer the entire responsibility of managing the Hajj operations to private companies, potentially starting in 2025.

The secretary explained that the ministry had registered 904 companies for Hajj operation, but following concerns conveyed by the Saudi authorities about the large number of participating entities, this number was reduced to 162.

"However, Saudi Arabia expressed concerns over dealing with such high number of companies, and asked to reduce it further," the official claimed.

He said the Saudi authorities had given their policy directive to Pakistan that each Hajj operator should manage a minimum of 2,000 pilgrims.

The official apprised the meeting that a Hajj quota of 179,000 had been allocated to Pakistan for 2025 by the Saudi government based on the country's population, adding that the government had divided this number into two, with one half to be covered under the official scheme and the other by private tour operators.

He said a quota of around 90,000 had been allocated for the private Hajj scheme and this quota had been divided among the selected 40-45 operators.

Dr Haider said that the reduction in the number of companies had to be done in compliance with the Saudi instructions, adding that they want to streamline the Hajj operations.



When the committee members inquired about the impact of reducing the number of tour operators to around 46 only, the ministry officials said a large number of tour operators had challenged the decision in a court of law. The secretary asked the tour operators to withdraw their court cases, warning that failure to do so could result in the cancellation of their Hajj quotas. The

committee was informed that around 80 complaints had been received against the private Hajj scheme and 18,000 over the government's scheme related to Hajj 2024.

Dr Haider cautioned that any further delay in resolving the court matter could result in Saudi Arabia revoking the private Hajj quotas altogether. He suggested that the private operators should merge to avail the minimum quota of 2,000 pilgrims.




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SAPS quality team achievements for getting the ISAGO Certificate

On 29th January 2025, Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS) held a special ceremony at the Head Office to present Appreciation Certificates with cash award to individuals who went above and beyond in ensuring the successful ISAGO Registration Renewal for the Head Office, the ISAGO Accreditation Renewal for SAPS Karachi Station, and the addition of two new station accreditations for SAPS Lahore and Islamabad. The certificates were presented by the Director Aviation SAPS, Air Commodore (Retd) Wasim Ahmed Khan in the presence of the Head of Commercial, Captain Saeed Ahmed Khan and the General Manager of SAPS Karachi Station Air Commodore (Retd) Ahsan Arshad.

Muhammad Aamir Siddiqui, Assistant Director of QA, Sheikh Anas Daniyal, QA Officer at the Head Office, and Engr. M. Wali Hussain, QA Officer from Karachi Station, were recognized for their leadership and significant contributions to the success of the overall project. The ceremony highlighted the team's exceptional dedication and hard work in advancing SAPS' global quality standards.



Group photo taken on the occasion shows (L - R) Mr. Muhammad Aamir Siddiqui, Assistant Director of QA, Air Commodore (Retd.) Ahsan Arshad, GM, Karachi, Air Commodore (Retd.) Waseem Ahmed Khan, ED & Director Aviation, Eng. M. Wali Hussain, QA Officer and Sheikh Anas Daniyal, QA Officer - SAPS.

Historic Milestone: First commercial flight lands at New Gwadar Int'l Airport



Defence and Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif walks alongside Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti inside the New Gwadar Int'l Airport on January 20, 2025.

Pakistan's largest airport, the Gwadar International Airport, became operational on Monday, January 20 with the landing of the first PIA flight from Karachi carrying 46 passengers.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti welcomed the passengers of the inaugural flight with flowers.

Addressing the gathering at a grand ceremony on the occasion, the federal minister declared the new Gwadar International Airport as "not an end but a beginning".

"We have turned a dream into reality with the inauguration of an airport at Gwadar," Mr Asif said.

"The airport symbolises a new era of prosperity for the people of Gwadar and the rest of Balochistan. It will generate job opportunities and boost business," the minister added. He described the airport as a milestone in the country's aviation history and thanked everyone who contributed to its completion, calling it a "beacon of hope for Pakistan's future".

Mr Asif said the new airport is a vital component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. "The masterminds who envisioned CPEC prioritised the establishment of this state-of-the-art airport, recognising its potential to accelerate the region's development," he observed.

The defence minister held up the

collaboration between Pakistan and China for building Gwadar airport as a testament to their "storied partnership".

He acknowledged the tireless efforts and expertise of Pakistani and Chinese teams, whose dedication helped build an airport that conformed to international standards.

Mr Asif also expressed gratitude to the Chinese government for its assistance, calling the airport a gift that would benefit the people of Balochistan and the rest of Pakistan.

The new Gwadar International Airport, the minister said, would transform the region and the entire country. "It is more than just an airport — it is a gateway to progress and will play a crucial role in laying new infrastructure and spur trade and tourism."

The airport would attract investors, improve the quality of life for the people of Gwadar and encourage cultural exchanges, Mr Asif added. In his speech at the ceremony, the Balochistan chief minister said that the inauguration of the Gwadar International Airport would turn out to be "a milestone for the speedy development of the province".

"This airport is a historic project not only for Balochistan but also for the entire country. It will open up new vistas of trade, investment and tourism," CM Bugti said.

Gwadar Airport is equipped with the latest technology and capable of handling large aircraft.

The chief minister said the new airport would connect Balochistan with major cities of the world and bring about immense progress in the province.

CM Bugti said this project would also provide employment opportunities to the locals.

"The people of Gwadar have always played a key role in the development of Balochistan and the new airport will hopefully speed up this process."

Mr Bugti said the airport project is an important initiative under the CPEC banner and would go a long way in transforming Balochistan. He said he was determined to undertake more projects so that the people of the province could see a positive change in their lives.

"Balochistan's uplift is my priority and I will take all possible steps for this purpose."

The inaugural PIA flight for Gwadar, PK-503, took off from Karachi at 9:50am with 46 passengers and landed at 11:10am. Upon its arrival, the flight was greeted with a water cannon salute on the runway.

According to a PIA spokesperson, the 3.6-kilometre-long runway of the Gwadar airport is suitable for large aircraft such as those belonging to Airbus and Boeing.

Built at a cost of Rs66 billion, the airport is spread over 4,300 acres, making it the country's largest by area.

As a flagship project of CPEC, it boasts modern security arrangements and facilities for passengers.

AirSial to launch flights from Pakistan to UAE

Pakistan and the UAE have reached an agreement to expand flight services between the two nations.

The move aims at enhancing connectivity and strengthen their long-standing partnership, according to a senior diplomat.

The agreement marks a significant step in increasing bilateral trade and connectivity as Pakistan aims to strengthen its economic ties with its key partner in the Middle East.

Faisal Niaz Tirmizi, Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE told media that the deal was finalised recently, following discussions with UAE authorities regarding the introduction of new low-cost airline services between the two countries.

"As part of this agreement, Pakistan's AirSial will begin flights from three Pakistani cities to Abu Dhabi, while Wizz Air will operate flights between Abu Dhabi and two cities in Pakistan," Ambassador Tirmizi explained. The new services are expected to launch within the next two to three months, with final route details and flight schedules to be announced by



the airlines soon.

Currently, at least eight airlines including Emirates, Etihad Airways, fly Dubai, PIA, Fly Jinnah, Air Arabia, Serene Air and Air Blue operate flights between the two countries.

"This agreement goes beyond just increasing the number of flights," Tirmizi added. "It's about expanding trade, commerce, and cultural exchange

between our two nations."

This development comes at a pivotal time, as Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is set to visit the UAE in February to participate in the World Government Summit. The visit is expected to offer further opportunities to deepen bilateral cooperation, particularly in trade, investment, and skilled labor employment.

Karachi Airport runway upgrading for larger aircraft landings



The construction work for the new runway is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, according to airport officials.

The new runway is being built by demolishing the old one, and the project aims to enhance the airport's ability to handle larger, long-haul flights.

Several international airlines, including Emirates, have expressed interest in using the upgraded runway to land their large aircraft.

The new runway will significantly increase Karachi's capacity to handle high-capacity flights, boosting its potential as a major international air hub.

Karachi Airport authorities are accelerating the upgrade of runway 07L, set to be classified under category 4F, allowing it to accommodate the world's largest aircraft.

The upgrade will enable the landing of Airbus A380 aircraft, which has a capacity of 600 passengers.



PIA returns to European skies after four years

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) resumed flights to Europe on Friday, January 10, marking the end of a four-and-a-half-year ban imposed by EU regulators following a pilot licence scandal and a deadly crash in Karachi.

PIA's inaugural flight PK749 (Boeing 777) departed Islamabad International Airport at around 12:40pm, heading to Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport, where weather conditions were clear. The flight carried 313 passengers, while 309 are scheduled to return from Paris to Islamabad.

Onboard the inaugural flight were several key officials, including the CEO, chief commercial officer, PIA spokesperson, deputy general manager (Brand and Public Affairs), chief HR officer and chief technical officer, among others.

At the airport, which was beautifully decorated, all immigration counters were activated to facilitate passengers travelling in the inaugural flight to Paris.

"This is the first time I am travelling with PIA," AFP quoted passenger Shumaila Rana, as saying. "I'm nervous and I'm having a lot of anxiety, but I'm hoping it's gonna be a good flight," said the 38-year-old school teacher living in Germany.

According to aviation sources, the flight landed in Paris at 4:40pm local time.

After a long wait, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) announced in November 2024 the lifting of the ban on Pakistani airlines operating in EU countries.

However, clearance to fly in Britain and the United States remains pending. PIA has approached the UK's Department for Transport to seek approval for resuming flights to London, Manchester and Birmingham.

The EASA imposed a ban on Pakistani airlines flying to Europe in June 2020, following a tragic crash in Karachi that killed nearly 100 people, as well as statements from the then aviation minister regarding the pilot licence scandal.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif congratulated the nation on departure of PIA's first flight to Paris after the lifting of EASA ban on its flights to European countries. In a statement, he said the restoration of PIA flights to Europe will facilitate the overseas Pakistanis as they



Cabin crew members wait to board the inaugural flight to Paris at the Islamabad International Airport.

will benefit from the direct flights.

He noted that due to suspension of flights, the national flag carrier had to incur huge losses worth billions of dollars and also had to lose its reputation. "By the grace of Allah Almighty, the incumbent government has restored the identity of the national airlines," the prime minister said. After restoration of flights to Europe,



Khawaja Asif takes part in a ceremony in Islamabad, before the flight's departure for Paris.

Roadshow marks return of PIA flights to Paris

A roadshow was held in capital of France to mark the resumption of PIA flights to Paris.

A large number of Pakistanis and travel agents from across France and Europe participated in the roadshow which was held at a local hotel in Paris, a spokesman for PIA said.

During the ceremony, Pakistanis told the PIA administration that they faced numerous problems due to suspension of flights of the national airline.

The Pakistani community demanded the PIA management to resume flights to other European cities to facilitate Pakistanis.

After resumption of PIA flights to and from Europe, there has been a clear decrease in fares of other airlines operating

PIA will move towards news development and progress, he added.

In this regard, he said Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif, the relevant departments and their officers and staff deserved appreciation.

Mr Asif, who inaugurated the departure of PIA's flight to Paris, called restoration of flights to Europe a "major value addition" that would make PIA more attractive to potential buyers.

This significant milestone marks PIA's renewed presence in one of the most important international aviation markets, he added.

Addressing the gathering at the airport, Mr Asif commended PIA's management for their efforts in achieving this milestone and highlighted the strategic importance of restoring operations to Paris and the EU.

to Pakistan, the spokesman said.

Bringing bodies of Pakistanis back to Pakistan from European countries used to cost thousands of dollars and entailed severe hardship and suffering. After resumption of PIA flights, this facility will now be provided free of charge, PIA's Chief Commercial Officer (CCO) Nausherwan Adil announced this on the occasion.

He said PIA will commercially expand its network in Europe and it will provide facility to bring bodies of fellow citizens from European countries to Pakistan free of cost.

He said PIA plans to commercially extend its network in Europe.

The national flag carrier resumed its flights to Europe on Friday after a ban of four and a half years.



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How are flight cancellations at the Karachi's Jinnah International Airport impact the airlines

Recent flight cancellations at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport have disrupted travel for passengers departing from the facility, affecting both domestic and international routes. The cancellations, attributed to unspecified technical and operational reasons, caused significant delays, leaving passengers stranded across several terminals. Nine flights were cancelled on a Sunday, January 26 and the ripple effect extended to several major airlines.

Affected Airlines and Flights

Among the airlines impacted were several domestic and international carriers. Some of the key airlines affected included:

- **Serene Air:** Two flights departing from Karachi to Lahore (ER522) and Islamabad (ER504), along with an additional unspecified flight to Islamabad.
- **Air Sial:** Two flights from Karachi to Lahore (PF145) and Islamabad (PF123).
- **Airblue:** Flight PA200 from Karachi to Islamabad.
- **Gulf Air:** An unspecified flight was cancelled.
- **Air China:** CA946, a flight from Karachi to Beijing, was impacted.
- **Emirates:** EK609, the flight from Karachi to Dubai, was also among those cancelled.

The cancellations left many passengers unsure of their travel plans, as the delays continued throughout the day. While some passengers were rebooked or offered alternative flights, the situation caused considerable inconvenience, particularly during peak travel times.

Karachi's Key International Connections

Despite the disruptions, Jinnah International Airport remains a vital hub for international and domestic travel. The airport connects Karachi to approximately 32 international destinations spread across 16 countries. Among the most frequently traveled international routes are those to Dubai (DXB) and Jeddah (JED), both of which are popular among passengers traveling for business, tourism, and religious purposes.

The ongoing connectivity provided by these international routes is crucial for the economy and tourism, and delays such as those caused by the technical issue can ripple out to affect international travelers and business dealings. While the technical glitch and resulting cancellations had a short-term impact, the airport's ongoing operations continue to support a significant volume of

passengers from diverse international locations.

Impact on Travelers and the Industry

These unexpected disruptions highlight the vulnerability of air travel to operational issues. The travel industry, particularly airlines operating from major hubs like Karachi, can



face significant consequences when technical glitches affect flight schedules. While most passengers are accustomed to the occasional delay, the sheer number of cancelled flights in this instance could have long-term effects on customer loyalty for affected airlines.

For international travelers, especially those flying to or from Karachi, these cancellations may mean missing connecting flights, particularly for those who rely on the connectivity to regions like the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The uncertainty in travel plans can also affect business professionals who rely on punctual air services for meetings or conferences.

Given the volume of international connections at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, any disruption to service has the potential to cause a ripple effect that touches many sectors of the global travel economy. While passengers might be rebooked on alternative flights, delays such as these put pressure on airlines, airport authorities, and the passengers themselves, particularly those with tight schedules or urgent travel needs.

The Bigger Picture for the Airline Industry

This incident serves as a reminder of the complexities involved in modern air travel. The rise of global travel has brought with it a significant increase in the demand for smooth and uninterrupted flight operations. Airlines and airports are under constant pressure to maintain efficiency, with the smallest technical issue potentially snowballing into a much larger inconvenience for travelers.

For the airline industry at large, issues like these can damage a carrier's reputation, especially in a highly competitive market. Customer confidence is built on the reliability of an airline's services, and incidents like this force both airlines and airports to reassess their contingency plans and operational protocols.

Airports like Karachi's Jinnah International play a crucial role in the broader travel ecosystem, serving as key points of departure for millions of international and domestic passengers. Ensuring the smooth operation of flights is essential not just for customer satisfaction but for the continued growth of tourism and business travel within the region.

Moving Forward:

A Call for Improved Operations

To prevent such disruptions in the future, the airline industry and airport authorities must work collaboratively to improve operational resilience. The implementation of more robust systems, quicker technical troubleshooting, and better customer communication would go a long way in ensuring that similar issues don't disrupt travelers' plans on a large scale. Additionally, ongoing investment in technology and infrastructure is critical for maintaining smooth operations at busy airports like Jinnah International.

While the flight cancellations at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport were inconvenient for passengers, they also served as a reminder of the complexity and vulnerability of global travel systems. The ripple effects of such disruptions have far-reaching implications for both the travel industry and travelers. In a time when efficiency and reliability are crucial, airlines and airports must continuously work to strengthen their operational systems and ensure that travelers can rely on their services, no matter the circumstances.

PIA's first international flight from Gwadar airport takes off to Muscat

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) marked a historic milestone as it operated its first international flight from the new Gwadar International Airport to Muscat.

According to a PIA spokesperson, the inaugural flight, PK-197, carried 39 passengers and departed on schedule, marking the official launch of international operations from the state-of-the-art facility, Express News reported.

To begin with, PIA will operate a weekly flight from Gwadar to Muscat, catering to growing passenger demand and strengthening regional connectivity.

Speaking on the occasion, PIA officials bid farewell to passengers at Gwadar airport and reaffirmed the national carrier's commitment to expanding its services to meet public needs and national aspirations.

The New Gwadar International Airport formally began its operations on Monday, January 20, welcoming its first commercial flight that symbolised a new chapter in the country's aviation history and a step forward towards making Pakistan a hub of regional connectivity. The Karachi-Gwadar PK-503 flight of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) touched down at the new state-of-the-art airport at 11:15am.

The flight received water salute upon arrival. The flight, carrying 46 passengers, had left Karachi at 9:50 am.

Covering 4,300 acres, the airport is

Pakistan's largest and represents a significant step towards regional development.

The start of flights was hailed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Balochistan Governor Jaffar Mandokhail, Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti and others.

In a statement, Prime Minister Shehbaz termed the operationalisation of Gwadar International Airport an example of Pakistan-China friendship and a great step forward towards strengthening connectivity within Pakistan as well as the entire region.

"With the inauguration of Gwadar airport, another milestone has been achieved – to link Gwadar with Central Asia and East Asia besides providing linkage between the Middle East and Gulf states," the prime minister stated.

"Today, we have come closer to fulfilling the joint commitment of the Chinese President Xi Jinping and Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif for the development of Pakistan and the region through the CPEC [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor]," he added.

Addressing at the inauguration ceremony at the airport, Chief Minister Bugti termed the inauguration of Gwadar International Airport a milestone in the development of Balochistan, which would lead the province to the new paths of prosperity and economic stability.



British officials in Pakistan to audit CAA for flight restoration

A British delegation has arrived in Pakistan to assess the country's aviation safety standards, media reported on Monday, January 27.

The delegation from the UK Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation



Authority (CAA) will review the safety standards of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA). This assessment is a crucial step towards Pakistani carriers' resumption of flight operations between Pakistan and the UK. The PCAA's Director-General, Nadir Shafi Dar, and his team of experts are hosting the delegation.

During the visit, several high-level meetings will take place between both parties, focusing on aviation safety protocols, reviewing documentation, and operational procedures. The British delegation will also visit airlines to review their adherence to international standards. Over the past few months, CAA officials have been engaged in a series of technical discussions with the UK.

CAA officials are optimistic about the positive outcomes of the British delegation's visit. Earlier, Nadir Shafi Dar, Director General of PCAA, who will lead the local team during the audit, said, "We are ready to brief the British officials." The audit will run from January 27 to February 6, 2025. Previously, PIA began international flight operations from the New Gwadar International Airport, with the maiden flight taking off for the Omani capital of Muscat on Friday, January 24. A PIA spokesperson said the inaugural flight, PK-197, carried 39 passengers.

Senior PIA officials saw them off at the airport. According to the spokesperson, the national flag carrier would operate a weekly flight on the Gwadar-Muscat route.



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Dubai airport clocks record 92.3m passengers, extending hot streak

A record 92.3 million passengers travelled through Dubai's international airport last year, its operator said on Thursday, January 30 extending a post-pandemic tear that exemplifies the city's economic boom.

The figure surpassed the previous high of 89.1 million in 2018, Dubai Airports said, despite regional tensions caused by the Gaza war and last April's unprecedented floods that severely disrupted flights.

The United Arab Emirates city, located between Asia, Europe and Africa, has now been ranked as the world's busiest international air hub for a decade. Dubai Airports CEO Paul Griffiths said the airport was still profiting from Dubai's bounce-back from Covid-19, when the city rapidly reopened its doors and the flag-carrying airline, Emirates, was quick to re-activate its fleet.

"We were like a coiled spring ready to respond as soon as the market recovered," Griffiths said in an interview. "So we've been able to get back to capacity, we've been able to encourage new airlines and we've seen double-digit growth from most sectors during the course of last year as a result of that." The trade, tourism and business centre is also witnessing record real-estate prices and soaring population growth, spurred by the UAE's efforts to diversify its economy away from oil. More than a quarter of Dubai's GDP in 2023 — 27 percent — came from its aviation sector, including Emirates and Dubai Airports, according to an economic impact report published by the two state-owned entities in October.

"It's a symbiotic relationship between the health of the aviation sector and the

health of the city's economy," Griffiths said.

In 2023, Dubai airport's passenger numbers outstripped pre-pandemic 2019. A record performance in the first half of 2024 was followed by a strong finish with 8.2 million travellers in December, the busiest month of the year.

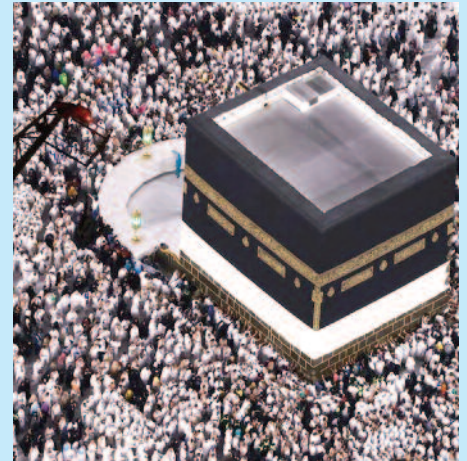
Dubai is profiting from the slow recovery of competitor airlines and their home airports, which are being hampered by the slow turnaround of new aircraft orders, Griffiths said. "If you take a lot of aircraft out of your fleet and you retire whole fleets, the ability to respond surely is by the acquisition of new aircraft and we know that the supply challenges from Boeing and Airbus have been very significant," he said.

"If you were to go out and order a new aircraft now, the lead time is probably the longest it's ever been. "And the difficulties with resuscitating existing fleets and having retired aircraft and pilots, those are all conspiring to create a shortage of supply, which means that airlines and airports that do have the capacity are soaking up excess demand." In a statement, Dubai's ruler and UAE Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said the airport was targeting 400 international destinations, up from 272 currently. Dubai, now expecting competition from a major new airport being built in Riyadh, in neighbouring Saudi Arabia, is also planning a \$35 billion expansion and relocation to Al Maktoum International, on the city's outskirts.

"That will be a game-changer for the city and for the world because it will give us the capacity we need to be able to push on with our increases in the flights and the fleet enlargements of both (budget offshoot) flydubai and Emirates," Griffiths said.



Saudi Arabia streamlines Umrah procedures for GCC citizens with new measures



Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Hajj and Umrah has announced new facilities aimed at simplifying Umrah procedures for citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, making the pilgrimage more accessible and convenient.

The ministry stated on social media platform X on Friday that GCC citizens can travel to Saudi Arabia to perform Umrah at any time through various land and air entry points.

Pilgrims can easily obtain their Umrah permits via the "Nusuk" app, which provides a streamlined and user-friendly process for completing the required steps.

The ministry also emphasised the importance of pre-booking through the "Nusuk" app for those wishing to visit Al Rawdah Al Sharifah in Medina to ensure better organization and a more comfortable spiritual experience for visitors.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah said it will continue to enhance services for pilgrims, aiming to facilitate their access to Mecca and Medina and create a seamless spiritual journey in a faith-filled environment.

PAF among top 10 most powerful air forces globally



A recent report published on a globalfirepower.com website has ranked the world's most powerful air forces based on their aircraft inventory, including fighter jets, helicopters, and support aircraft.

The United States was identified as the strongest air force globally, followed by Russia and China in second and third places, respectively. India ranked fourth, South Korea fifth, and Japan sixth, with Pakistan securing the seventh spot. The report noted that the US Air Force is unrivalled, with a fleet that exceeds the combined air capabilities of Russia, China, India, South Korea, and Japan. It operates 5,737 helicopters, 1,854 fighter jets, and 3,722 support aircrafts, with an annual budget of \$800 billion, accounting for nearly 40% of global military spending.

Russia, with one-third of US air power, operates 1,554 helicopters, 809 fighter jets, and 610 support aircrafts. However, it has suffered losses, with 220 aircraft destroyed since the onset of the Ukraine war in 2022.

China, ranked third, has been investing heavily in modernising its air force and recently added its sixth-generation fighter jet to its fleet. The country is also working on supersonic aircraft. India, South Korea, and Japan follow with 2,296, 1,576, and 1,459 aircrafts, respectively.

Pakistan, ranked seventh, operates 1,434 fighter jets, helicopters, and support aircraft. Egypt, Turkey, and France round out the top ten, with respective inventories of 1,080, 1,069, and 972 aircrafts. The report highlights the evolving landscape of air power, with countries like China rapidly advancing their technological capabilities, while others, such as Russia, face challenges in maintaining their fleets due to ongoing conflicts.

Bangladesh considering procurement of Chinese JF-17 Block III Fighters: High-Low Pairing with J-10C Planned?



Chief of General Staff of the Bangladesh Armed Forces Lieutenant General S M Kamrul Hassan has led a defence delegation to the Pakistan Air Force Headquarters in Islamabad to meet Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, where talks were held on strengthening bilateral defence ties. During talks Lieutenant General Hassan expressed a strong interest in the JF-17 fighter jet, with Bangladesh planning to send an official delegation to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the aircraft.

The JF-17 is manufactured in both China and Pakistan, and while almost all of its technologies are of Chinese origin, the large majority of fighters produced have been built for the Pakistan Air Force. The most complex parts of the aircraft including its radar, engine and avionics suite are built in China. Following its first flight in December 2019 the JF-17 Block III has demonstrated tremendous advances over previous variants, with the aircraft considered a '4+ generation' fighter with fifth generation level avionics and weaponry. The aircraft has benefitted considerably from advanced technologies developed for the J-20 fifth generation fighter, which provide capabilities well in advance of older fourth generation aircraft.

Alongside the JF-17 Block III, Bangladesh Air Force Air Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan in December confirmed that the service is exploring the possibility of acquiring J-10C fighter

aircraft. The JF-17 Block III is a lighter aircraft with much lower procurement and operational costs and similarly advanced avionics and weapons, although its flight performance is far inferior and



its radar is considerably smaller and less powerful than that of the J-10C.

The Pakistan Air Force currently deploys both fighter classes as part of a high-low combination, with the JF-17 filling out the bulk of its large fleet while the J-10C is fielded in a smaller number of more elite units. Bangladesh is speculated to be planning to replicate this combination, fielding the JF-17 Block III to replace its J-7 fighters, and the J-10C to replace its larger Russian MiG-29s. The J-10C has proven capable of outperforming some of the world's heaviest fighters in air to air combat, with the aircraft reported in 2020 to have consistently outperformed the Russian Su-35 in simulated engagements.

With Bangladesh's neighbours India and Myanmar both relying heavily on the Russian Su-30 and MiG-29, inducting the J-10C and JF-17 Block III would provide more sophisticated aircraft with significantly superior weaponry.

PIA expands international, domestic operations

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced plans to expand both its domestic and international operations by launching new flights starting in January. The national flag carrier is adding flights to Kuwait, Bahrain, Doha, Dammam and Jeddah.

A spokesperson for PIA said the airline has introduced new international routes to Kuwait, Bahrain and Doha, in addition to expanding its services to Dammam and Jeddah. The airline is also expanding its domestic network with additional weekly flights between Karachi and Peshawar. A third weekly flight from Karachi to Peshawar will be part of the schedule beginning January 25.

The spokesman said PIA would resume its weekly two-way flights between Lahore and Kuwait from January 25. In addition, two new weekly flights from Lahore to Dammam will begin of January 22.

He said additional flights would be operated from Sialkot to Jeddah from January 20. A new two-way weekly flight from Sialkot to Doha will begin on January 21. These new flights are part of the airline's efforts to restore and introduce international services to and from various cities in Pakistan.

The spokesman emphasised that PIA is committed to enhancing connectivity and ensuring convenient travel options for its passengers, both domestically and internationally.

This expansion follows the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) decision to lift the ban on Pakistani flights to EU countries. After this, PIA has also resumed its services to Europe and the United Kingdom.

As part of its fleet rejuvenation efforts, PIA is working on bringing back aircraft that had been grounded for extended periods. Recently, an ATR aircraft, which had been in long-term storage, was reintroduced to service. With the addition of this ATR, PIA has strengthened its domestic operations, particularly on routes to Gilgit, Sukkur, Turbat and Gwadar.

The PIA management is focused on ensuring punctuality, with an on-time performance target set at 90 per cent, the

spokesperson said, adding that the airline is currently meeting this target consistently on a daily basis.

Cabinet extends licences for 86 foreign pilots

The federal cabinet on Tuesday, January 21 approved the extension of licences for 86 foreign pilots currently employed in Pakistan for the past two years.

The decision, made during a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, followed a recommendation from the Cabinet Division. The cabinet also approved a three-year licence validation for foreign pilots hired in 2025, according to a press release from the Media Wing of the Prime Minister's Office.

Officials informed the meeting that the Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions on Pakistani pilots in recent years had compelled local airlines to hire foreign pilots. The Cabinet Division's recommendations will be implemented following the completion of legal formalities.

PM Shehbaz also said the newly inaugurated Gwadar International Airport would not only benefit the economy of Balochistan but also Pakistan's economy.

Presiding over the federal cabinet meeting, PM Shehbaz said the airport was constructed with the help of a \$230 million Chinese grant, adding that the airport "is a gift for Pakistan from China and we should honour it".

"Creating hurdles in completion of Gwadar Port is also animosity with Pakistan," PM Shehbaz said, adding that "the enemies of Pakistan do not want [the]

operationalisation of Gwadar Port".

The prime minister also formed a committee, headed by Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, to review the Toshakhana Act 2024, aiming to introduce greater transparency in the system.

The cabinet also approved rules for appointing the chairman and members of the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority, based on recommendations from the Cabinet Division.

An amendment to the Rules of Business 1973 was also sanctioned, transferring the responsibility of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act 2016 from the Ministry of IT and Telecom to the Ministry of Interior.

The cabinet approved the appointment of Dr Ammar Habib Khan as member finance of the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) Appellate Tribunal, based on recommendations from the Ministry of Law and Justice.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed the formation of a committee to expedite the restructuring process of the Utility Stores Corporation and improve its monitoring mechanisms.

He also stressed the need for a new strategy to ensure the Prime Minister's Relief Package reaches deserving beneficiaries. The cabinet ratified decisions taken during Economic Coordination Committee meetings held on Jan 6 and Jan 17.





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Nok Air selects Sabre to make content available through a Global Distribution System for the first time

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, is adding content from Nok Air, one of Thailand's prominent budget carriers, to its Global Distribution System (GDS).

By joining Sabre's extensive travel marketplace, Nok Air will be able to enhance its visibility among travel agencies, corporate buyers, and travellers, driving bookings and revenue growth. The addition of Nok Air's content reinforces Sabre's commitment to delivering an extensive range of low-cost carrier options, empowering its travel agency partners to craft the most compelling offers for their customers.

"We're thrilled to bring Nok Air's extensive route network and service offerings to a wider audience through Sabre," said Wutthiphum Jurangkool, Chief Executive Officer of Nok Air. "By making our content available via Sabre's GDS, we're broadening our global and market segment reach and ensuring both leisure and corporate travellers have more ways to discover and book our flights."

Established in 2004, the airline operates an extensive network within Thailand and to key destinations in the region. Additionally, Nok Air offers connecting flights through codeshare partnerships and fly-n-ferry services, providing travellers access to islands in Thailand that aren't connected via air. Sabre's multi-source content platform enables travel agencies to intuitively compare, shop, book, and service all types of content, including traditional EDIFACT offers, New Distribution Capability (NDC), and low-cost carrier.

"This is the first time that Nok Air has offered its content through a GDS which is testament to the value Sabre's global marketplace brings for our airline and agency partners," said Brett Thorstad, Vice President, Agency Sales and Airline Distribution, Asia Pacific, Sabre. "By adding Nok Air to our growing portfolio of budget carrier content, we're expanding the range of options available through Sabre's multi-source content platform and enabling the airline to connect with new audiences through our global travel marketplace."



Bangladesh eases visa process for Pakistanis

Bangladesh has simplified visa process for Pakistanis, with an objective to further strengthen trade and economic relations.

While speaking to business community here at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry on Saturday, January 11, High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan Iqbal Hussain has said the present government in Bangladesh has removed the need for clearance from Dhaka for Pakistani heads of missions while issuing visa. He said that increasing trade and investment between the two countries must be a top priority to move forward. He stressed collaboration with LCCI to achieve this goal.

Mr Hussain stated Bangladeshi government is eager to improve relations with Pakistan, which had been less than satisfactory over the past decade. He said Bangladesh, with its population of 180 million, represents a significant consumer market that Pakistan has the potential to tap. The diplomat said the trade potential between the two countries remains largely untapped, and Pakistan has the capacity to capitalise on it. He also mentioned the efforts of Dr Mohammad Yunus, the chief adviser to Bangladesh's interim government, for regional cooperation. He called for greater collaboration between South Asian countries and stressed the importance of revitalising the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) to enhance regional trade and cooperation. Despite growing regional cooperation globally, South Asia still faces challenges which require collective

efforts to overcome.

The High Commissioner said that it is responsibility of both countries to create opportunities for the current generation and remove obstacles to mutual trade and cooperation. He said LCCI has an influential role in fostering increased trade and investment between Pakistan and Bangladesh.

He also reflected on the lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic and how it underscored the importance of international cooperation, stating, "It is essential to recognise that nations must collaborate in times of crisis to keep trade flowing smoothly," he added. LCCI President Mian Abuzar Shad shared data indicating that two-way trade between Pakistan and Bangladesh amounted to \$718 million during the fiscal year 2023-24.

"Pakistan's exports to Bangladesh were valued at \$661m, while imports from Bangladesh stood at \$57m. The first five months of the 2024 fiscal year (July-November) saw exports to Bangladesh increase to \$314m, while imports from Bangladesh remained low at \$31m," he explained. The LCCI president expressed a strong desire to boost the volume of two-way trade to at least \$2 billion in the near future. He urged both governments and the private sector to take decisive actions to achieve this goal. He said that the sectors including information technology, pharmaceuticals, rice, surgical instruments, processed foods, automotive parts and sports goods can play an important role in this regard.

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PM welcomes launch of Menzies Aviation

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday, January 16 welcomed the launch of Menzies Aviation – an international logistics company – in Pakistan, and expressed hope that it would help promote new technology, attract foreign investors and create job opportunities for youth in the country.



During a meeting with a six-member delegation led by Philip Joeinig, chief executive officer of Menzies Aviation, the PM lauded the opening of IT infrastructure and facilitation desk by the company in Pakistan. He also unveiled the plaque while inaugurating the establishment of the first office of Menzies Aviation in Pakistan. He said “the launch of services of an internationally renowned company like Menzies Aviation in Pakistan is a testament to the unlimited business potential for international investors in our stable economy.”

He said the arrival of the aviation company in Pakistan was a very important milestone for the country’s economy, especially the IT sector, adding the development of the country’s economy was linked to the development of the IT sector. As a result of recent investor-friendly policies, he said the country’s IT exports were continuously increasing.

“The gradual increase in IT exports is propitious as the recent economic development and the arrival of Menzies Aviation in Pakistan would attract other international companies to invest in the country,” he added. He maintained that the positive economic indicators were indicating the recent economic policy being conducive to the business environment in the country. Sharif said the government was fully committed to the development of the country after achieving the economic stability.

Sole Turkish group bids below threshold for Islamabad airport

A Turkish consortium, the sole bidder to take over the operations of Islamabad International Airport, has offered a concession fee below the minimum threshold, the chairman of the bid evaluation committee said on Thursday, 2nd January. The government is looking to generate revenue by speeding up a privatisation push, including outsourcing the running of three major airports.

The consortium, comprising Terminal Yapi, ERG Insaat and ERG UK, bid to pay the government 47 per cent of its revenue from operations in the form of a concession fee, short of the 56pc minimum set by the government, the aviation and airports authority said.

The matter will now be referred to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) — a member of the World Bank Group, which is advising Islamabad on the outsourcing — before Pakistan takes a decision on whether the bid can go through.

“The details of the financial proposal will... be presented and forwarded to the IFC for further evaluation and submission of final reports,” said Sadiq ur Rehman, the chairman of the bid evaluation committee and deputy director general of Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA).

Pakistan is also looking to offload a 60pc stake in debt-ridden airline PIA to raise funds and reform state-owned enterprises as envisaged under a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund programm.

Meanwhile, the Islamabad airport management has successfully tested the parking of narrow-body aircraft on wide-body stands, said a spokesman for the PAA. This milestone, configuring 8 out of 9 wide-body stands for narrow-body operations, marks a significant improvement in operational flexibility, reduced turnaround time, enhanced passenger convenience, and increased revenue for PAA.

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia sign Haj agreement 2025



Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Saudi Minister of Haj and Umrah Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan al-Rabiah signed the annual Haj agreement 2025.

The agreement was signed in Jeddah, formally recognising that 179,210 Pakistani pilgrims will perform Haj this year. The agreement includes a commitment to provide the best possible facilities to Pakistani pilgrims, who will be offered special accommodation in Mina at reduced rates. The Saudi Minister of Haj and Umra, Dr Tawfiq bin Fawzan al-Rabiah, assured Mr Hussain to provide all possible support for better facilities for Pakistani pilgrims.

To make the Haj journey more accessible, easier, and comfortable, a short Haj programme of 20 to 25 days has been introduced. Pilgrims will have the option to choose their accommodation in Madina for a duration of four to eight days.

Each pilgrim will receive a specially designed bag containing the Pakistani flag, a QR code for identification, and relevant information. A special mobile app will provide all information to the pilgrims on their mobile phones, enabling them to stay updated about their Haj group’s information, training schedule, flight details, accommodations in Saudi Arabia, and live maps and locations of sites during Haj. Mr Hussain will also participate in a four-day international Haj conference and expo in Jeddah organised by the Saudi Ministry of Haj, where additional agreements will be made with institutions and companies responsible for providing facilities to pilgrims. The Haj quota is allocated by the Saudi Haj ministry based on the Muslim population in the relevant country.



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Over 60 killed in deadliest US crash of the century

There were no survivors after an American Airlines regional flight collided with a US Army Black Hawk helicopter on Wednesday, January 29 and crashed into the frigid Potomac River near the Reagan National Airport.

American Airlines said 60 passengers and four crew members were aboard the plane, while US officials said the helicopter was carrying three soldiers on a training flight.

This was the deadliest US air disaster since November 2001, when an American Airlines jet crashed after departing from JFK International Airport in New York, killing all 260 people on board and five people on the ground.

Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin told Reuters that the bodies of most of those involved in the collision had been recovered.

Passengers on the flight included ice skaters, family and coaches returning from events in Wichita, Kansas, including Russian-born former world champions Yevgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov.

The mid-air collision occurred as the passenger jet was approaching to land at Reagan. Radio communications showed the helicopter crew knew the plane was in the vicinity.

US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said both the helicopter and the airplane had been flying standard flight patterns, and there had been no breakdown in communication.

CBS News reported that a dive team had recovered one of the two data recorders, the so-called black boxes, from the plane.

Airspace is frequently crowded in the US capital region, home to three commercial airports and several major military facilities, and officials have raised concerns about busy runways at Reagan National Airport, located just across the river from Washington.

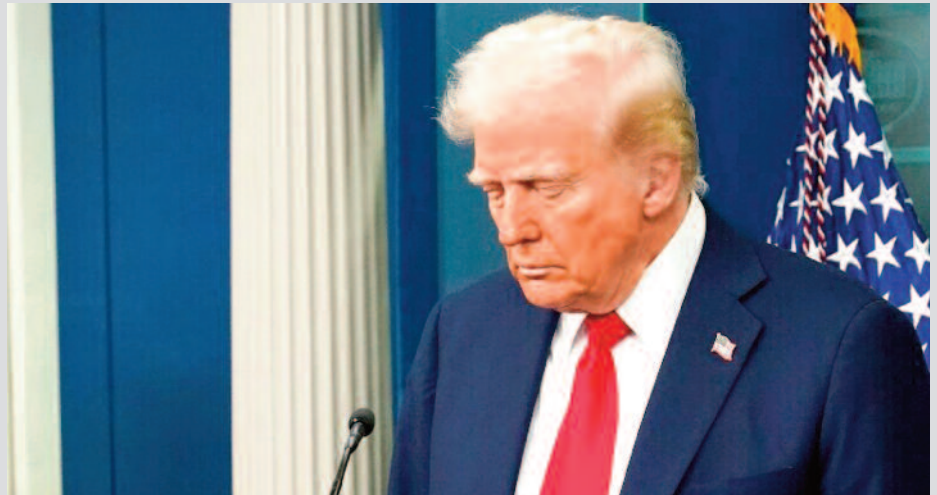
There have been several near-miss incidents that have sparked alarm, including a near-collision in May 2024.

A shortage of air traffic controllers in the US has also spurred safety concerns in recent years. But although he admitted it was not yet clear what caused the crash, President Donald

Trump had some “very strong opinions and ideas” on the subject.

Blaming his predecessor, Joe Biden, for lowering standards for air traffic controllers, he said that federal diversity efforts were at fault, without offering any evidence to support the claim.

Asked if the crash was caused by diversity hiring, he said: “It just could have been.” Soon after the accident, Trump on Thursday, January 30 said that he had appointed a former senior aviation official as the acting head of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).



US President Donald Trump pauses for a moment of silence to recognise crash victims as he speaks to reporters about Wednesday's deadly midair collision in the Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington, US, January 30, 2025.

Chris Rocheleau, a US Air Force veteran who worked at the FAA for more than 20 years, was previously chief operating officer of the National Business Aviation Association.

Mike Whitaker, who was unanimously confirmed as the FAA administrator in October 2023, stepped down on Jan 20 when Trump took office. Trump's remarks contrasted sharply with those of other officials, who said there was no immediate indication why the crash took place.

Air traffic control recordings appear to capture the final attempted communications with the helicopter, call sign PAT25, before it collided with the jet.

“PAT25, do you have a CRJ in sight? PAT25, pass behind the CRJ,” an air traffic controller says at 0147 GMT on Wednesday, January 29 according to a

recording on liveatc.net.

Seconds later, another aircraft calls in to air traffic control, saying, “Tower, did you see that?” — apparently referring to the crash.

An air traffic controller then redirects planes heading to runway 33 to go around.

According to Flightradar24's Ian Petchenik, the collision occurred at approximately 300 feet (90 meters), mere seconds before landing.

“The runway threshold is at the river's edge. The Kansas flight was ready to touch down,” he told WUSA-

TV in DC. Commercial aircraft like the one involved are equipped with TCAS (Traffic Alert and Collision Avoidance System), designed to alert pilots to nearby aircraft and provide last-minute collision avoidance instructions.

The helicopter was from the 12th Aviation Battalion, which is based at Fort Belvoir in Virginia. The unit is responsible for helicopter flights in the US capital area and can be used to carry senior government officials. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth told reporters at the White House that there appears to have been an elevation issue with the Black Hawk, and said Army investigators were on the ground looking into the matter.

“It was a fairly experienced crew and it was doing a required annual night evaluation,” Hegseth said in an earlier statement.

What are the 10 cheapest private jets in 2025?

Whether you're an aviation buff curious about the market or someone considering a jet for personal or business use, this guide will provide valuable insights into the most budget-friendly options available today.

It's worth noting that the price of a private jet depends on several factors, including whether the aircraft is new or pre-owned, its size and performance capabilities, maintenance requirements, and the manufacturer. Used jets often provide significant cost savings but may require more upkeep. On the other hand, newer models tend to feature the latest in avionics, efficiency, and comfort. Now, let's dive in.

Citation CJ1

Price: \$2 million

The Citation CJ1 is a classic light jet, offering an excellent balance between performance and cost. Manufactured by Cessna, this model is a favorite among business travelers looking for an affordable and reliable option for short-haul flights. The CJ1 delivers simplicity and efficiency, making it a smart entry point into private aviation.

Its appeal lies in its practical design and solid engineering, providing a hassle-free flying experience for owners and passengers alike. While it doesn't have the cabin size of larger jets, the CJ1 is perfectly suited for short trips, ensuring speed and convenience. Its low acquisition cost and fuel efficiency make it a standout choice for first-time buyers exploring private jet ownership.



Key characteristics:

- **Type:** Light jet
- **Passenger capacity:** 5-6 passengers
- **Range:** 1,300 nautical miles
- **Max speed:** 377 knots

According to Avia Jet, a pre-owned model costs between \$1 and \$2 million, making it one of the cheapest private jets available in the light jet category.



Phenom 100

Price: \$2 million

The Embraer Phenom 100 is a sleek and efficient very light jet (VLJ) designed for short hops. Its modern cabin, spacious for its class, and outstanding reliability have made it a popular choice among first-time jet owners. The Phenom 100 offers excellent fuel efficiency, which further reduces operating costs.

What sets the Phenom 100 apart is its stylish interior, which incorporates premium materials and a clean design aesthetic. Its Garmin G1000 avionics system enhances safety and ease of operation, making it a favorite among owner-pilots. As a VLJ, the Phenom 100 is ideal for those seeking a balance between affordability and modern comfort in the skies. Today, a used model can be bought for around \$2 million, per Stratos Jets.



Key characteristics:

- **Type:** Very light jet (VLJ)
- **Passenger capacity:** 4-6 passengers
- **Range:** 1,178 nautical miles
- **Max speed:** 390 knots

Learjet 60

Price: \$2 million

A midsize jet with a legacy of performance, the Learjet 60 is perfect for those who prioritize speed and cabin comfort. It is well-regarded for its ability to climb quickly to cruising altitude, minimizing travel time and optimizing fuel efficiency. Inside, its cabin features ergonomic seating and space for productivity, making it a favorite for business travelers. This combination of reliability and comfort ensures the Learjet 60's enduring popularity among private aviation enthusiasts.



Key characteristics:

- **Type:** Midsize jet
- **Passenger capacity:** 8 passengers
- **Range:** 2,405 nautical miles
- **Max speed:** 457 knots

Although older models dominate this price range, the Learjet 60's durability and strong performance make it a viable choice for enthusiasts or those seeking their first midsize jet. According to Stratos Jets, a Learjet 60 from the 90s can go for

less than \$1 million, while one from the early 2000s is typically sold for around \$2 million. Newer 2010-era jets can cost upwards of \$6 million.

Eclipse 500

Price: \$2 million

Compact yet efficient, the Eclipse 500 is a popular option for budget-conscious jet buyers. Designed for short trips, this VLJ is known for its low acquisition and operating costs. Its size makes it ideal for travelers needing a quick and convenient point-to-point solution.

Despite its compact frame, the Eclipse 500 offers a surprisingly smooth flight experience, thanks to its advanced avionics and streamlined design. The jet is also environmentally friendly, boasting lower emissions compared to larger aircraft. These factors make it an attractive option for buyers seeking value without sacrificing quality. This very light jet sells for \$1.5 to \$2 million, per Avia Jet.



Key characteristics:

- Type: Very light jet (VLJ)
- Passenger capacity: 4-5 passengers
- Range: 1,125 nautical miles
- Max speed: 370 knots

Cirrus Vision SF50 (Vision Jet)

Price: \$2.5 million

The Cirrus Vision SF50, often called the Vision Jet, stands out as one of the most innovative private jets on the market. Its single-engine design and modern technology, including the Cirrus Airframe Parachute System (CAPS), make it an appealing option for owner-pilots. The cabin is stylish and compact, catering to small groups and families.

Beyond its safety features, this small



but mighty jet offers an unparalleled view of the skies, thanks to its large panoramic windows. It's designed to provide a comfortable and enjoyable flying experience, complete with high-end finishes and seating configurations tailored for family or business use – all for under \$2.5 million.



Key characteristics:

- Type: Very light jet (VLJ)
- Passenger capacity: 5-7 passengers
- Range: 1,275 nautical miles
- Max speed: 300 knots

Eclipse 550

Price: \$2.9 million

A step up from the Eclipse 500, the Eclipse 550 offers upgraded avionics and enhanced efficiency. For an additional \$900,000 more than its predecessor, this VLJ combines affordability with advanced technology, making it an excellent option for budget-conscious buyers who prioritize performance and comfort, per Avia Jet.

Its dual-engine design improves reliability while maintaining the cost-effective features of its predecessor. The Eclipse 550 also boasts advanced auto-throttle and anti-skid systems, providing a seamless flying experience. Its quiet cabin ensures passengers can relax during short to mid-range trips.



Key characteristics:

- Type: Very light jet (VLJ)
- Passenger capacity: 4-5 passengers
- Range: 1,125 nautical miles
- Max speed: 375 knots

Hawker 400XP

Price: \$3 million

The Hawker 400XP is a light jet with a reputation for comfort and speed. Its

spacious cabin and solid range make it a versatile option for business travelers or small groups. The jet is particularly well-suited for regional travel. One of its standout features is the flat-floor cabin design, which enhances passenger comfort on longer flights.

The Hawker 400XP also boasts impressive climb rates, allowing it to reach cruising altitudes quickly. This, combined with its reliability, makes it a favorite in the light jet category. \$3 million can get you a used Hawker 400XO, per Stratos Jets.



Key characteristics:

- Type: Light jet
- Passenger capacity: 7-8 passengers
- Range: 1,600 nautical miles
- Max speed: 450 knots

Cessna Citation Mustang

Price: \$3 million

The Citation Mustang is another light jet that has earned its place among the most affordable options. It offers a well-rounded combination of comfort, performance, and efficiency, making it a favorite among owner-pilots and small business operators.

Its state-of-the-art Garmin G1000 cockpit is user-friendly and packed with advanced navigation tools, ensuring a safe and stress-free flight. The Citation Mustang's fuel efficiency and dependable design make it a popular choice for short-haul regional flights.



Key characteristics:

- Type: Very light jet (VLJ)
- Passenger capacity: 4-6 passengers
- Range: 1,200 nautical miles
- Max speed: 340 knots

According to Avia Jet, you can get a brand new Citation Mustang for around \$2.5 to \$3 million – while an older 2006 model costs just \$1.25 million, per AvBuyer.

Pilatus PC-12**Price: \$4 million**

Though technically a turboprop, the Pilatus PC-12 often competes with jets due to its outstanding range and versatility. It's a robust and reliable aircraft, ideal for both business and leisure travel. Its ability to land on short and unpaved runways sets it apart from many of its jet competitors.

The cabin design emphasizes comfort and utility, accommodating passengers with luxurious seating and ample storage. Its efficiency and operational flexibility make it a favorite for destinations that are difficult to access with traditional jets.

**Key characteristics:**

- *Type: Turboprop*
- *Passenger capacity: 6-8 passengers*
- *Range: 1,845 nautical miles*
- *Max speed: 290 knots*

HondaJet Elite II**Price: \$5 million**

The HondaJet Elite II is a standout in the light jet category, offering cutting-edge technology, remarkable efficiency, and luxurious interiors. It's one of the more expensive options on this list, but its performance and innovative design justify the investment.

Its advanced Over-The-Wing Engine Mount design improves fuel efficiency and reduces cabin noise, creating a more enjoyable flight experience. With its impressive range and speed, the HondaJet Elite II is perfect for regional and some transcontinental flights.

Key characteristics:

- *Type: Light jet*
- *Passenger capacity: 6 passengers*
- *Range: 1,547 nautical miles*
- *Max speed: 422 knots*

While not exactly the cheapest – although still under \$5 million – Avia Jet

reports that pre-owned models are becoming increasingly available for less than \$4 million.

Conclusion

The private jet market in 2025 offers a range of options for aviation enthusiasts and aspiring owners, proving that luxury air travel doesn't always have to break the bank. From the compact and efficient Eclipse 500 to the versatile Pilatus PC-12, each aircraft brings unique strengths to the

table, catering to various travel needs and preferences.

Whether you're drawn to the innovative design of the Cirrus Vision SF50 or the timeless performance of the Learjet 60, these jets provide an entry point into the exclusive world of private aviation. While most of us may never own a private jet, understanding what these aircraft offer and why they stand out is an exciting exploration into the possibilities of the skies.

Lufthansa acquires 10% stake in AirBaltic

Lufthansa has finally firmed up its acquisition of a 10% stake in Riga-based Latvian flag carrier airBaltic. The move, which was announced on Wednesday, 29 January evening, follows rumors of the same that emerged back in October. The latest acquisition also follows Lufthansa's continued interest in expanding its reach across Europe through investments, with the recent finalization of the purchase of 41% of Italian flag carrier ITA Airways as a testament to this.

A 10% convertible share in airBaltic

The agreement announced this evening covers a €14 million (\$14.6 million) investment in airBaltic, signed between the Latvian Ministry of Transport and the Lufthansa Group. It gives the Lufthansa Group both a minority stake and a seat on the Supervisory Board. Initially, the investment provides Lufthansa with a 10% convertible share in the airline.

The agreement also provides for their conversion into ordinary shares, "upon a potential IPO of airBaltic" for which a date has not been set. The initial public offering (IPO) was initially delayed to the spring of 2025, although earlier this month it emerged that it could even be stalled to early 2026, per Reuters. airBaltic said the following in a statement:

After IPO, the size of Lufthansa Group's stake will be determined by market pricing of the potential IPO, with Lufthansa Group's holding amounting to no less than 5% of airBaltic. The transaction builds on the existing strategic partnership between Lufthansa Group and airBaltic.

Lufthansa Group will also appoint a Supervisory Board member upon closing of the investment. The closing of the transaction is planned for Q2 2025, and is subject to antitrust review. With the new agreement, airBaltic will receive the financial backing it needs to continue to



grow, including the expansion of its wet-lease agreement with the Lufthansa Group. It is not exactly clear what that expansion could look like, although the existing agreement already provides for airBaltic wet-lease capacity to the Lufthansa Group for upcoming summer periods. Lufthansa says that with the investments it "intends to strengthen airBaltic's role as a strategic partner of Lufthansa Group."

airBaltic's relationship with Lufthansa Group

airBaltic's relationship with the Lufthansa Group dates back to 2019 and currently includes a significant amount of wet-lease capacity. A large slice of airBaltic's Airbus A220-300 fleet is currently earmarked to operate for the Lufthansa Group's airlines over the course of this summer period. The agreement, which has been extended "for a further three years beyond the summer of 2025," will see planes deployed with Lufthansa, Austrian Airlines, and Brussels Airlines as of March 2025. Service with SWISS will also continue. This covers 21 planes. In total, airBaltic has 49 examples per ch-aviation data of which 15 are listed as inactive. Schedules are slowly being loaded in by the Lufthansa Group's airlines for their airBaltic A220 plans. For its part, Austrian Airlines loaded flights to Amsterdam, Stockholm, Berlin, and Nice, for example, from its Vienna base. More recently, Brussels Airlines added its plan for this summer, which indicates service to Lyon, Venice, and Ljubljana, among others.

AirSial signs agreement with DAE capital to acquire an Airbus A320

AirSial thrilled to announce the signing of one more Airbus A320 aircraft, marking yet another significant milestone in AirSial's journey towards excellence. This momentous occasion took place at the DAE Capital Headquarters in Dubai and was graced by several esteemed guests, including David Houlihan, President of DAE Capital, Mr. Firoze Tarapore, CEO of DAE Capital, and Mr. Fazal Jilani, Chairman of AirSial.

The ceremony was also attend by Sr. Vice Chairman Mr. Qaiser Iqbal, CEO Mr. Ameen Ahsan, COO Mr. Tariq Amin of AirSial, VP Sales DAE Capital Mr. Ali Al Derazi, and Head of MEASA Sales DAE Capital Mr. James Carroll.

This addition will bring the fleet to a total of 10 aircraft in 2025, reinforcing the commitment to expanding and providing even better service to valued passengers. "We look forward to the continued growth of AirSial and the many milestones to come", said AirSial management.



Group photo taken with Mr. Fazal Jilani - Chairman AirSial shows Mr. M. Jamil Ahmed - Chairman PIFFA, Mr. Aijaz Ghauri, Mr. Sajid Ali - EC Member PIFFA, Rana Tanveer & Syed Sajid Ali - Director AirSial on the occasion of 4th Anniversary and Award ceremony of AirSial held in Sialkot.



Customs Exports Collectorate Port Muhammad Bin Qasim surpasses revenue targets at EPZ

The Customs team of Export Collectorate, Port Muhammad Bin Qasim (PMBQ), has achieved remarkable progress through annual audits of the Karachi Export Processing Zone (KEPZ). These audits, resumed in January 2024 after more than five years, have yielded significant recoveries of duties and taxes, strengthening compliance and transparency within Pakistan's customs framework.

Under the leadership of Collector Saadia Sheeraz and the efforts of Deputy Collector KEPZ Syed Amin Haider Shah and his team, the Collectorate has recovered an impressive Rs. 71 million in duties and taxes during the ongoing annual audit of EPZ units. This represents a 305% increase compared to Rs. 0.72 million in the same period last fiscal year and Rs. 17.5 million for the entire FY 2023-24. These achievements were realized within just six and a half months of FY 2024-25. The major recovery cases include:

1. **M/s YG Textiles** – Duties and taxes worth Rs. 28.7 million were recovered after lodging of FIR due to the absence of 130 MT of plastic material.

2. **M/s MYU Textiles** – A recovery of Rs. 8.3 million was made against shortage of 32 MT of used handbags, purses, and toys.

3. **M/s Laiqam Services (Pvt) Limited** –Rs. 5.6 million were recovered against missing quantity of 45.6 MT of household items.

4. **M/s Rida Clothing** – Pilferage of 79 MT of used clothing and 31.2 MT of used clothing wastage led to a recovery of Rs. 4 million.

5. **M/s Silver Denim** – Illegal removal and sale of 80.792 MT of used clothing and allied articles resulted in the recovery of Rs. 3.7 million.

In addition to audit-based recoveries, the Collectorate also made commendable progress in revenue collection from KEPZ clearances to tariff area. From July to January-2025, the collection of duty / taxes increased by Rs. 202 million, totaling Rs.

2,669 million, an increase of 7.6% compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. This achievement underscores the Collectorate's unwavering focus on revenue generation. In addition to enforcing compliance, the Collectorate has taken innovative steps to enhance trade facilitation. Notably, the establishment of the Committee for Internal Dispute Resolution (CIDR) at KEPZ in September 2024 has significantly improved the grievance redressal process. Comprising customs officials, EPZ investors, and customs agents, the CIDR has fostered inclusivity and reduced the number



of complaints and grievances, contributing to a more harmonious trade environment.

Speaking to the media, Ms. Saadia Sheeraz highlighted the importance of balancing regulation with trade facilitation. "Over the past year, Exports Collectorate PMBQ has not only exercised strong administrative measures at KEPZ but also introduced innovative steps to promote legitimate trade. This ensures compliance while addressing the genuine concerns of stakeholders," she stated.

The success of the EPZ audits and other initiatives reflects a sincere commitment of customs team towards maintaining integrity and efficiency within Pakistan's customs system. These achievements underscore the Collectorate's dedication to fostering a fair and transparent trade environment while consistently achieving and exceeding its revenue targets. With such initiatives, the Exports Collectorate of Port Muhammad Bin Qasim is setting a new benchmark for excellence in customs administration, demonstrating the critical role of leadership and teamwork in achieving organizational goals.

Private firms urged to use Gwadar Port

The government on Tuesday, January 14, sought private sector support in routing their cargoes through Gwadar Port whose capacity utilisation has remained far short of its potential owing to insufficient marketing.

At a meeting on the commercialisation of the port, the National Logistic Cell (NLC) contested criticism from the Planning Commission over its purported higher rates. The meeting, second in less than a week and presided over by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, had been called on the prime minister's directives.

The management of the NLC presented a report on the port tariff plan as called for in the Jan 8 meeting. It asserted that not only was the state-run freight operator entirely focused on transporting shipments to and from Gwadar port, but its rates were very reasonable compared with other ports in the region.

The minister told the participants that the prime minister had issued directives for devising short- and medium-term strategies to operationalise Gwadar Port effectively within six months. He emphasised the importance of comparing Gwadar's trade costs with other regional ports.

He urged the private sector to share detailed proposals to enhance trade through Gwadar port, assuring full government support in providing relevant data and trade and transport facilitation.

He also asked the participating entities to help the private sector bring more shipments to Gwadar, which had handled traffic mainly through government initiatives so far.

The minister tried to address concerns regarding Gwadar's infrastructure saying that "there are no water issues due to the availability of a desalination plant, and most areas now have access to electricity".

Regarding the port's capability to handle significant cargo volume, the minister said the facility previously handled 600,000 tonnes efficiently.

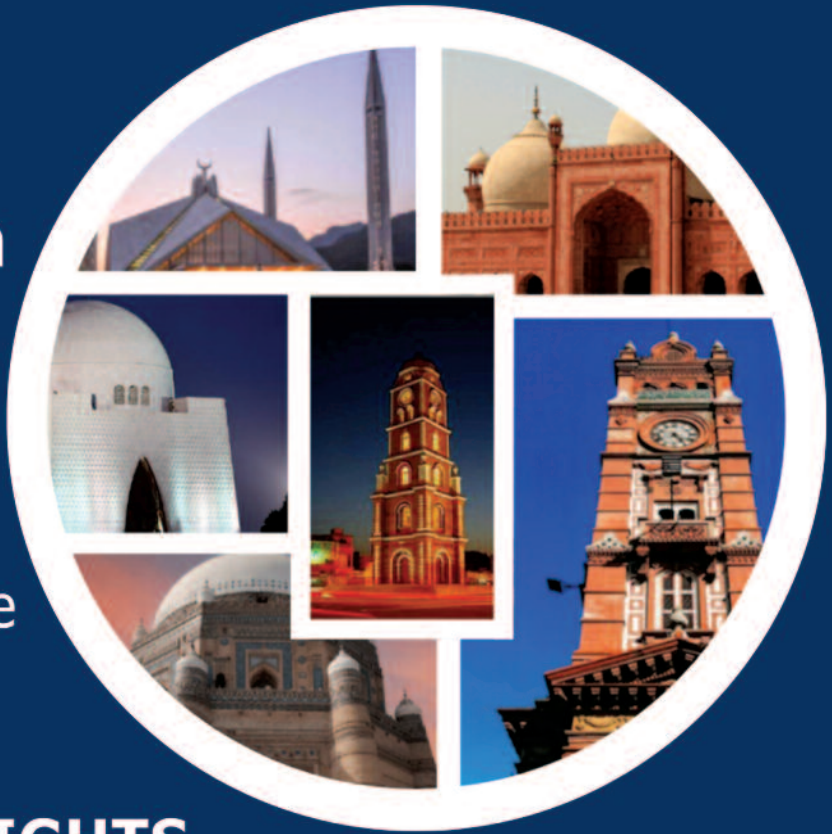
He also reminded the participants of Gwadar's potential as a key hub for trade with Central Asian Republics, given its proximity and capability to handle imports and exports efficiently.



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Three key questions about economic globalisation

In the face of a sluggish world economic recovery, the rising threat of protectionism, and the widening gap between the rich and the poor, discussions around economic globalisation are increasing within the international community. At the centre of discussion, there are three main questions as follows.

Has economic globalisation stagnated or regressed?

Economic globalisation has not stagnated or regressed, but continues to develop against headwinds.

According to the Global Trade Update published by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), global trade is on track to hit a record \$33 trillion in 2024, marking a 3.3 percent annual growth. It has demonstrated strong resilience, largely driven by digital trade and trade in services.

Despite unbridled unilateralism and protectionism, and some countries' obsession with "decoupling and severing supply chains" and building "small yard with high fences," the overall global landscape shows that businesses around the world continue to thrive within the interconnected supply, industrial and value chains. The World Openness Report 2024 indicates that the rise and evolution of global value chains reflect the inherent rationale of economic globalisation, which is driven by digitalisation, green economy, and services sector.

Globally, political consensus and policy measures to promote open development are steadily increasing. The high-quality implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has delivered increasingly prominent development dividends to member countries. The Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) has not waned despite the withdrawal of some country; instead, it has attracted more countries to join.

African countries are accelerating the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which was enacted in several African nations, including South Africa, Ghana,



and Kenya in 2024. The 31st APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting also reached an important consensus on upholding the multilateral trading system and advancing regional economic integration.

How to view the headwinds and undertows facing economic globalisation?

Despite headwinds and undertows, economic globalisation has always been the general trend. Historically, the global economy was thrown into disarray by two world wars, which severed international trade routes. The subsequent nearly half-century-long Cold War divided the world into two distinct camps, hindering economic exchanges and disrupting the flow of resources.

However, in the long run, these disruptions did not prevent the world from returning to the path of economic globalisation. This is because economic globalisation is an objective requirement of growing social productive forces and a natural outcome of advancement in science and technology — a fact that no one can change.

The current headwinds against economic globalisation are largely a result of political shifts within a few countries and do not signify a change in the fundamental logic that economic

globalisation promotes global welfare.

According to the World Trade Organisation (WTO), between 1996 and 2021, a high trade share of GDP was strongly linked to faster economic growth in low- and middle-income economies. This fully proves that openness is the only path toward prosperity and development for every country.

Today, the world is moving faster to embrace a digital, green and smart economy, building up powerful energy for further expedition of economic globalisation down the road. WTO statistics show that the global exports of digitally delivered services reached \$4.25 trillion in 2023, up nine percent year-on-year, accounting for a record 54.2 percent of world services exports.

Besides, green and sustainable development has become a global consensus, with global annual renewable capacity additions increasing by almost 50pc in 2023. Mark Leonard, director of the European Council on Foreign Relations, noted that due to accelerated reforms in energy and technology, the world is experiencing "re-globalisation" rather than "de-globalisation."

How to resolve the issues and challenges brought by economic globalisation?

Economic globalisation is at a new

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crossroads. It must be guided carefully to maximise its benefits and ensure its sound and sustainable development.

The World Trade Report 2024 warns that mounting protectionism threatens to unwind 30 years of progress in closing income gaps between the poor and the rich.

Both the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund have recently cautioned that rising tariffs could hamper global economic growth.

All countries, especially major economies, should uphold the general trend of open development, resist protectionism, and build an open world economy.

To resolve the challenges brought by economic globalisation, the key lies in promoting a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation. It is important to address the development imbalances between and within countries resulting from the global allocation of resources, and ensure that different countries, classes, and communities can all participate in and benefit from economic and social development, so as to take economic globalisation to a new phase that is more dynamic, inclusive, and sustainable. This requires wisdom and decisive action from governments of all countries.

China has blazed a path of pursuing common development through opening up. Its active participation in economic globalisation has not only driven its own development but also provided immense development opportunities to other countries.

China's experience demonstrates that promoting a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation can contribute to shared development of all countries in the world. This is why China is committed to pursuing a mutually beneficial strategy of opening up, expanding voluntary and unilateral opening up in an orderly manner, steadily expanding institutional opening up, and pushing for an open world economic system.

Economic globalisation is a sure way for human society to achieve development and an irreversible trend of the times. All countries must possess the wisdom to recognise this overarching trend, and the determination and confidence to work with it, so as to join hands in promoting a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation.

Textile exports rise 9.6pc in 1HFY25

The textile and clothing exports grew 9.67 per cent in the first half of 2024-25, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed on Monday, January 20.

The textile exports maintained a bullish trend with robust growth of 13pc in August, 17.92pc in September, 13.11pc in October, 10.81 pc in November and 5.55pc in December, respectively. However, exports contracted 3.09pc in July -- the first month of 2024-25.

Trade experts believe it would take a lot of struggle for the sector to compete with regional rivals due to the implementation of harsh taxation measures in the current fiscal year. However, the disruption in supply from Bangladesh has also boosted demand for Pakistani garments.

Textile and clothing exports have been static for the last two years despite having a \$25bn installed capacity due to structural issues, according to textile players.

In absolute terms, the textile and clothing exports rose 9.67pc to \$9.08bn in July-December FY25 from \$8.28bn in the corresponding period last year.

The government has introduced various measures, including increasing the tax rate on exporters' income in 2024-25. They are demanding the early release of refund/rebate payments that have been pending for many

months.

The PBS data showed exports of readymade garments rose 22.48pc in value and 10.0pc in quantity during 6MFY25, while knitwear rose 18.42pc in value and 8.87pc in quantity. Bedwear grew 14.75pc in value and 14.27pc in quantity.

Towel exports rose 5.97pc in value and 5.65pc in quantity 6MFY25, whereas cotton cloth went up 4.10pc in value and contracted 1.70pc in quantity, respectively.

Yarn exports dipped 37.96pc in 6MFY25. Made-up articles, excluding towels, increased by 9.36pc, and tents, canvas and tarpaulin went up by 9.55pc in 6MFY25. Raw cotton exports recorded a decline of 98.85pc during the period under review.

The import of synthetic fibre shrank 3.67pc, and the arrival of synthetic silk yarn increased by 9.86pc. However, the import of other textile items increased by 71.64pc during the period under review.

The import of raw cotton surged 154.93pc from a year ago. However, the import of second-hand clothes grew 20.49pc during the months under review. The import of textile machinery also recorded a growth of 53.90pc during the first half of the current fiscal year from a year ago. In July-December FY25, the country's total exports increased by 11.04pc to \$16.64bn, up from \$14.98bn in the same months last year.



Overall textile exports rose to \$9.08bn in July-December from \$8.28bn in same period last year.

Exports to Europe rise to \$3.8bn in July-Nov

Exports to European countries grew 8.62 per cent in the first five months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to higher shipments to western states.

The resurgence in exports to Europe in the current fiscal year was due to a slight increase in demand for Pakistani goods in western, eastern and northern Europe. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$3.866 billion in July-November FY25 from \$3.559bn in the same period last year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan.

In FY24, Pakistan's exports to the EU dipped 3.12pc to \$8.240bn despite its GSP+ status, which allows duty-free entry into most European markets.

In October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the GSP+ status for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan, to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on European exports.

Western Europe, which includes countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Belgium, accounts for the largest portion of Pakistan's exports to the EU. The exports to this region increased by 11.67pc to \$1.933bn in 5MFY25, up from \$1.731bn in 5MFY24.

There is also a slight increase in exports to eastern and northern Europe during the period under review. The exports to the north of Europe saw a rise of 10.44pc to \$288.351m in 5MFY25, up from \$261.092m in the corresponding months last year.

Exports to southern Europe saw a paltry decline of 2.89pc to \$1.273bn in 5MFY25 from \$1.311bn in the corresponding period last year. In this region, exports to Spain dipped 5.94pc to \$600.87m in 5MFY25 from \$638.85m in the preceding year.

Exports to Italy declined 5.24pc to \$480.73m in 5MFY25 compared to \$501.99m in the same period last year. Exports to Greece recorded a marginal increase of 15.43pc to \$59.17m during the year under review against \$51.26m over the previous year.

However, exports to eastern Europe witnessed a growth of 44.95pc. The export value to this region stood at \$372.24m, up from \$256.87m in the corresponding period last year.

Before Brexit, Pakistan's major export destination was the United Kingdom. In the post-Brexit period, Pakistan's exports to the UK slightly went up to \$935.02 in 5MFY25 from \$863.48m over the corresponding period of last year, indicating an increase of 8.25pc. In FY24, Pakistan's exports increased by 2.33pc to \$2.014bn to the UK from \$1.968bn in the preceding year.

The British government, however, has assured Islamabad that there will be no change in the post-Brexit

scenario, as evidenced by Pakistan's inclusion in its preferential market access scheme.

Pakistan's exports to Western Europe increased by 11.67pc to \$1.933bn in 5MFY24 from \$1.731bn last year. Exports to Germany surged 15.29pc to \$707.65m in 5MFY24 from \$613.77m. Similarly, exports to the Netherlands, the second biggest market for Pakistani goods, increased 10.86pc to \$621.16m in 5MFY24 from \$560.26m over the corresponding period of last year.

Exports to France rose 11.42pc to \$230.86m in 5MFY24 from \$207.18m, followed by a 9.17pc rise to Belgium's \$257.89m against \$236.21m over the same period last year.

Pakistan, BD joint business council formed

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) on Monday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to form Pakistan-Bangladesh Joint Business Council (PBJBC) to strengthen, facilitate and enable trade between the two countries.

The delegation headed by FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh also participated in the Bangladesh Pakistan Business Forum in Dhaka.

The visit to Bangladesh is taking place after a gap of 12 years. Pakistani businessmen look forward to meeting Dr Muhammad Yunus, Chief Advisor to the interim Bangladesh government in a couple of days.

FBCCI Administrator Muhammad Hafizur Rahman emphasised utilising the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to strengthen bilateral trade relations.

He said there is ample scope for the two countries to work closely in energy, education, technology, human resources development, research and innovation to meet the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution.

Mr Atif said that diverse industries, sectors and verticals like electronics, cars, industrial machinery, carpets, toys, ceramics, sanitary products, handicrafts, fabrics, ready-made garments, leather, home appliances, processed foods, furniture, plastic goods, jute products, cosmetics, sports goods and jewellery, were represented in the business forum.

He said the delegation had a productive meeting with Bangladesh Commerce Minister Sheikh Bashiruddin a day earlier, during which he expressed his government's intent to facilitate Pakistani exporters and products.

He added that the Bangladesh government has already relaxed visa requirements for Pakistani nationals, and Pakistan has reciprocated. Mr Bashiruddin said that both countries would jointly search for options like investments, trade and industrial relations. He also assured the delegation of supporting Pakistani companies.

The FPCCI president highlighted that the trade delegation also had high-profile meetings with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority (BIDA), where they discussed collective trade promotion activities, the exchange of delegations, and single-country exhibitions.

Scientists discover the formation of Earth's sixth ocean



In the vast deserts of Ethiopia, a remarkable phenomenon has been quietly unfolding since 2005 - an extraordinary 35-mile-long crack known as the East African Rift.

Far from being a mere curiosity, this rift holds the potential to drastically alter the geography of our planet, the socio-economic landscape of Africa, and even political boundaries. Remarkably, it could one day lead to the formation of Earth's sixth ocean.

At the heart of this phenomenon are tectonic plates—massive sections of the Earth's crust that move atop the semi-fluid mantle beneath. These plates have shaped the planet's surface over millions of years, driving the formation and breakup of continents.

What makes the East African Rift particularly significant is its scale and implications. The Somalian tectonic plate is gradually pulling away from the Nubian tectonic plate, echoing the dramatic separation of South America and Africa that began hundreds of millions of years ago.

This gradual shift is well-documented. A study published in *Earth and Planetary Science Letters* delves into the dynamics of this tectonic separation, revealing that the plates are moving apart at a rate of just a few millimeters per year. While slow, this process is undeniably transformative.

A large crack, stretching several miles, made a sudden appearance recently in south-western Kenya. This is what Africa could look like in millions of years. (CREDIT: CC BY-SA 3.0 / Twitter)

The implications for Africa are profound. Over time, the rift could result in the creation of a vast new ocean, flooding the Afar region and the East African Rift Valley with water from the

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

Ken Macdonald, a marine geophysicist and professor emeritus at the University of California, underscores the scale of this transformation: “The Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea will flood over the Afar region and into the East African Rift Valley, giving rise to a new ocean. Consequently, this part of East Africa will evolve into its own distinct continent.”

Beyond its geological impact, this process could reshape the socio-economic fabric of the region. For landlocked nations like Ethiopia and Uganda, the emergence of coastlines would open up unprecedented opportunities for trade and economic growth, transforming them into key players in global commerce.

The creation of new ports and trade routes could drive regional development, bringing wealth and infrastructure to areas that have long faced economic challenges.



A large crack, stretching several miles, made a sudden appearance recently in south-western Kenya. This is what Africa could look like in millions of years.

Siberian migratory birds add beauty to Karachi's coastline



Siberian migratory birds Karachi coastline.

Karachi, known as the land of migrants, has become a seasonal haven for Siberian birds fleeing the harsh winters of their homeland.

These migratory guests, traveling thousands of kilometers through Kazakhstan in search of food, have made Karachi's coastal belt their home since October and will stay until February before heading back to their permanent habitats.

The visiting birds, which include ducks, pelicans, cranes, and several other species, are a mesmerizing sight as they grace Karachi's shores, enhancing the natural beauty of the coastline with their vibrant presence. Speaking about the phenomenon, Deputy Conservator Mumtaz Soomro highlighted the importance of these migratory birds and the role they play in showcasing nature's splendor.

Citizens, particularly those with a love for the sea, have expressed their delight at the sight of these winged visitors. Each year, these birds, known for their ability to fly for up to 10 months, bring life and color to Pakistan's coastal belt, making it a natural attraction for locals and wildlife enthusiasts alike.

As February approaches, these majestic creatures will take their final flight back to Siberia, leaving behind fond memories and a promise of their return next year.

As February approaches, these majestic creatures will take their final flight back to Siberia, leaving behind fond memories and a promise of their return next year.



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13 ibexes, one blue sheep hunted in GB trophy hunting season

Local and foreign hunters have hunted 13 ibexes and one blue sheep during the current trophy hunting season in the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan, according to the GB Wildlife and Parks Department.

The latest trophy was a 25-inch blue sheep hunted by a Belarus citizen, Vasili Achapoukaski, in Sokhterabad, Gojal, in the Khunjerab National Park Community Control Area.

He had paid \$25,100 to the GB government for a license to hunt the species native to the Himalayas.



Vasili Achapoukaski with his trophy.

The hunting season for markhors, ibexes, and blue sheep continues from November 1 to April 31, with December and January being the most suitable months for hunting markhors and ibexes in the mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan.

The wildlife department introduced the trophy hunting programme with the local community's involvement in Bar Valley, Nagar, in 1990. Around 80 per cent of the money earned from licenses goes to the community for wildlife protection and conservation.

However, local tour operators said this year's earnings were impacted due to the GB Parks and Wildlife Department's decision to redo the auction for hunting licenses.

In November 2024, the GB Parks and Wildlife Department auctioned permits for 118 rare animals, including four Astor markhors, 100 Himalayan ibexes, and 14 blue sheep for the hunting season 2024-2025.

Later, the bidding process was

cancelled due to low bids.

During the initial process, the highest bid for an Astor markhor license was \$107,000. The bid for the exportable trophy of Himalayan ibex was \$6,700 and Rs1.8 million for the non-exportable trophy. Locals secured licenses for Rs760,000, while bids of \$1,200 were placed for licenses to hunt blue sheep (exportable) and Rs1.65 million (non-exportable).

An official of the Wildlife Department told media that during the initial process, the fees for exportable licenses were significantly lower than the previous season.

According to official data, the trophy hunting season of 2023-24 generated a revenue of around Rs309 million.

Due to lower bids for this season, the GB Wildlife Department cancelled the bidding process and re-auctioned with a higher base price for Astor markhor and exportable blue sheep and ibexes.

The official said that only the auction for exportable categories of animals was affected by the cancellation, while the non-exportable and national permits remained valid.

According to outfitters and local tour operators, the decision affected their business.

Ikram Beg, a local tour operator and an outfitter, said the trophy hunting programme faced a significant setback following the cancellation of the first bidding.

He said the first auction, held on October 30, 2024, was unexpectedly annulled by the Wildlife Department "without clear reasons".

Subsequently, the reserve prices for permits were increased for the second bidding on November 25, leading to a lack of participation from outfitters.

He said this resulted in a "devastating loss" for communities whose livelihoods depend on these funds, with an estimated revenue shortfall of approximately Rs360 million.

He said the business of outfitters was also severely impacted, and the disruption was likely to have long-term consequences on trophy hunting in the region.

84 Hindu pilgrims arrive from India



Hindu pilgrims, accompanied by officials of Evacuee Trust Property Board, speak to the media upon their arrival at Wagah border from India, on Sunday, 05 January to celebrate the birth anniversary of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib in Sindh.

A group of 84 Hindu pilgrims arrived in Pakistan from India on Sunday, January 05 to attend the birth anniversary celebrations of Shiv Avtari Satguru Sant Shadaram Sahib at Shadani Darbar in Hayat Pitafi, Sindh.

Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Additional Secretary for Shrines, Saifullah Khokhar, received the pilgrims at the Wagah Border and presented bouquets on behalf of the board's chairman, Syed Ataur Rehman.

Mr Khokhar assured that all necessary arrangements, including foolproof security and medical facilities, had been put in place to ensure a safe and comfortable visit for the pilgrims.

The group travelled directly from Wagah Border to Shadani Darbar, where the main religious rituals and celebrations will take place.

During their stay, the pilgrims are also scheduled to visit other religious sites, including Yog Mata Mandir in Aqilpur, Ghotki, Pano Aqil, Sukkur and the historic Sadhu Bela Temple.

In addition, the pilgrims will spend a day in Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Baba Guru Nanak, on Jan 14 before returning to India on Jan 15.

The Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi issued 94 visas to Indian pilgrims for the event under the Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines of 1974, which facilitates religious visits between the two countries.

Telenor Pakistan and TAAP Launch Travel SIM for International Travelers



Telenor Pakistan has signed a MoU with the Travel Agents Association of Pakistan (TAAP), the country's foremost body for travel and tour operators, to redefine how travelers experience connectivity outside of Pakistan. This strategic collaboration empowers travel agents to offer Telenor's cutting-edge Travel SIM solutions as part of their travel packages, ensuring a seamless communication experience for travelers going outside Pakistan, while using Telenor's roaming services.

The partnership introduces tailored connectivity solutions to meet the unique needs of international Pakistani travelers. With affordable international roaming packages covering key global destinations, the Travel SIM is designed to simplify travel while providing uninterrupted connectivity. Special attention has been given to creating exclusive bundles for spiritual journeys such as Umrah, alongside solutions for travelers heading to destinations in the Far East, Middle East, United States, and Europe.

Mr. Naeem Sharif, Chairman of TAAP, expressed enthusiasm for the initiative, stating, "This collaboration with Telenor Pakistan marks a new chapter for TAAP as we enhance the value we offer to our clients. By integrating Telenor's Travel SIM into our tour packages, we aim to provide international travelers with world-class connectivity solutions that ensure convenience, reliability, and a worry-free experience. Whether it's a spiritual pilgrimage or an adventurous holiday, this partnership

ensures travelers stay connected with ease."

Speaking on behalf of Telenor Pakistan, Mr. Waqas Amanullah, Senior Vice President Sales and Customer Care, said, "At Telenor Pakistan, we understand the importance of staying connected while traveling. This collaboration allows us to deliver tailored connectivity solutions that offer exceptional value, ensuring that every traveler can enjoy uninterrupted service, whether for business or leisure." By leveraging TAAP's extensive network of travel agents and Telenor

Pakistan's expertise in connectivity solutions, this partnership aims to create a comprehensive offering for Pakistani travelers going abroad. It is a significant step in enhancing the travel experience, allowing them to stay effortlessly connected with their loved ones and business associates throughout their journey.

This initiative reflects Telenor Pakistan's commitment to customer-centric innovation and its vision of making Pakistan a digitally inclusive and connected destination.

Romeo and Juliet star Olivia Hussey dies at 73

Olivia Hussey, who starred as a teenage Juliet in Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film *Romeo and Juliet*, garnering her a Golden Globe, died Friday at age 73, her family announced.

"Olivia was a remarkable person whose warmth, wisdom, and pure kindness touched the lives of all who knew her," her family said in a statement posted to her Instagram account. Buenos Aires-born Hussey was 15 when she and her co-lead Leonard Whiting starred in the Oscar-winning adaptation of William Shakespeare's tragedy.

In 2023, the two actors filed a lawsuit against the studio alleging child abuse over a controversial nude scene featuring the pair, who were minors at the time. A judge dismissed the lawsuit later that year.



Olivia Hussey



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CNN includes Gilgit-Baltistan in 'must-visit' list for 2025

Gilgit-Baltistan has been included in a list of the top 25 destinations worth visiting in 2025, curated by CNN.

Thousands of tourists and foreign climbers visit the region annually for expeditions on various peaks, paragliding and other activities.

In the list published on Wednesday, CNN Travel wrote, "The Gilgit-Baltistan region in the Karakoram Mountains isn't the easiest place to get to — flight schedules can be unreliable, roads can be blocked off seasonally — but it has more tantalising peaks than a lemon meringue pie.

"It's home to five of the 14 eight-thousander peaks [i.e. mountains towering above 8,000 metres above sea level] recognised as the world's highest. That includes K2, the world's second-tallest mountain but No. 1 in terms of difficulty and danger," the broadcaster said. CNN Travel added that hiking in GB "makes the Himalayas look like a trapeze in Central Park" but added that

travelling alone is "not an option", noting that Nepal also banned solo hiking throughout that country last year. Gilgit-Baltistan is a popular tourism destination known for some of the highest peaks, glaciers, pastures, lakes, meadows and its unique landscapes. Despite road and communication issues, thousands of international and local tourists visit the

region to enjoy the landscapes every year.

According to GB tourism officials, 2,100 foreign adventurers among climbers visited the region in 2023 to scale peaks such as K2, Nanga Parbat, Gasherbrum-I, Gasherbrum-II and Broad Peak after obtaining permits in the summer season. The number rose to 2,380 in 2024.



A view of the snow-covered town of Sost, near Khunjerab Pass, on Friday.

Top official vows to improve Sindh's tourist sites

Stressing the importance of promoting Sindh's tourism potential through national and international platforms, Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah has directed the relevant departments to work collaboratively for the implementation of tourism projects.

He issued the directions while presiding over a high-level meeting held to discuss development of prominent tourist sites across Sindh. He emphasised the critical role of tourism in driving economic growth, creating job opportunities and fostering cultural exchanges.

The discussion focused on the comprehensive plans for Keenjher Lake, Haleji Lake, Gorakh Hill Resort and the globally-renowned heritage site of Mohenjo Daro. With their unique historical, cultural and natural significance, these sites hold immense potential to showcase Sindh as a diverse and attractive destination for travellers, the participants noted. The Keenjher and Haleji lakes are set to be developed as eco-tourism hubs, offering water sports, guided tours and conservation-focused activities to balance tourism with environmental preservation.

The plans regarding Gorakh Hill Station

include upgrading road access, expanding lodging options and enhancing recreational activities to attract a wider audience to this scenic hill retreat.

Mohenjo Daro, a world heritage site and a centerpiece of the Indus Valley civilisation, remains a cornerstone of Sindh's tourism potential.

During the meeting, the chief secretary said the government's aim was to enhance facilities for visitors at Mohenjo Daro, including creation of a state-of-the-art visitor centre and provision of guided tours to increase global awareness of this archaeological marvel. He said that special attention would be paid to preserving the site's fragile structures while improving access and amenities for the tourists. Sindh's vast tourism potential extends beyond these locations, with the province offering a rich tapestry of cultural and natural attractions.

Historical landmarks such as Makli Necropolis, Shah Jahan Mosque, Rani Kot and Kot Diji Fort, alongside natural wonders like the Thar Desert, Nagarparkar landscape and Indus delta, contribute to Sindh's unique identity as a tourist destination.

A key objective of such development is

to create greater awareness and interest in Sindh's rich tourism offerings. The uplift of these sites would not only attract tourists, but also serve to educate both domestic and international visitors about Sindh's unique cultural heritage and natural beauty.

These efforts will highlight the province's historical significance, ecological diversity and vibrant cultural identity, positioning Sindh as a premier destination for travellers from around the world. The chief secretary also emphasised on collaborating with community and private sector to organise healthy activities like motorbike rally, desert safari train and other such initiatives.

He also instructed officials to prioritise sustainable tourism practices to ensure the long-term preservation of the province's natural and cultural heritage. The meeting concluded with a firm resolve to expedite development plans and position Sindh as a leading contributor to Pakistan's tourism sector. Among others, the meeting was attended by the Green Tourism managing director, Planning and Development Board Chairman Syed Najam Ahmed Shah, Secretary Culture Khair Muhammad Kalwar and other senior officials.

Digitally preserving heritage sites of Indus Delta

The audience was taken on a virtual journey to the cultural heritage of the Indus Delta as digitally documented sites, captured in high resolution, were showcased on a large screen at the terrace of the TDF MagnifiScience Centre.

The project, “The Lost Cities of the Indus Delta”, is part of Digital Heritage Trail Project by the MaritimEA — a research organisation with expertise in cultural heritage management, maritime archaeology and blue economy master-planning.

It is brought to fruition by maritime archaeologist Amer Bazl Khan, who is director MaritimEA Research and his team who have digitally documented the lost heritage sites of the Indus Delta.

The event was moderated by Amal Hashim, one of the team members of MaritimEA Research.

Mr Khan explained that the idea of digitally documenting those sites came during his first trip to the Indus Delta in 2019. “Thereafter we started working on the project which has digitally documented Lahiri Bunder, Bhambhor, Ratu Kot Fort, Ranu Kot, and Jam Jaskat Goth among others,” he said and explained the historical significance of these sites.

“All these sites have stories to tell and we felt this is important to tell people those stories and the folklore that are related to them,” he said, also pointing out that there was disagreement among archaeologists as to where Bhambhor was exactly located because some say that it’s under the sea and the location is not known.

He said there were forts built in the Delta mainly depending on the river’s course and on its key strategic points to maintain power by local tribes. Many of those sites and their related structures were almost entirely submerged under the mud and water during high level of river’s water, he explained.

“The outcome of this project has been that these heritage sites have been digitally preserved and we have recorded 2,000 gigabytes [2TB] of raw data and 3.5TB of processed data. Moreover, the data is of high resolution with 3D models, orthomosaics, and point clouds, etc. And now a website is also available to access

all that documented heritage among other benefits,” Mr Khan added.

Shabib Asghar, a team member, explored remains of one of the forts using a VR (Virtual Reality) headset in 3D. During that, he also went to a point of the fort where some people had carried out digging in search of some hidden treasure.

Architect and urban planner Arif

that digital documentation was more efficient and took less time as compared to manual data collection and measurement of heritage sites, which takes very long. “Thereby, it is also helping a lot to bring heritage and archaeology to the people,” he said.

Zain Mustafa, an architect and educationist, spoke on the importance



Hassan also spoke on this occasion. Commenting on the debate on true location of Bhambhor, he said it would be a big addition to heritage history if the exact location of it could be recorded and measured digitally by such projects.

He also said that past and history were something that people were very interested in. “However, there is not much effort to bring that lost past to people but one must remember that there are ways to do that.”

Thereafter, a documentary film produced by the MaritimEA Research was put on the screen. It had archaeologists like Kaleemullah Lashari and other heritage experts discussing the history of the above-mentioned sites and forts of the Indus Delta and how climactic changes affected them. A panel discussion was also part of the event. It was moderated by Ramsha Siddiqui.

During the discussion, archaeologist Ali Arshad Khan said the concept and practice of digital heritage was new in Pakistan and also not being taught at most universities.

He explained its importance and said

of heritage and why it should matter to the people at present. “People are quite interested in their history and identity as to who they are and where they came from. Therefore, such projects are of much importance and value,” he said.

Author Rumana Husain talked about folklore in the Indus Delta and other local regions. Discussing stories such as Noori Jam Tamachi, Uderolal, and Sohni Mahival, she said that such that stories tell how the society, the people and power dynamics were at those times.

Architect and environmentalist Tariq Alexander Qaiser also spoke about history of the Indus Delta and explained how the region changed and witnessed invasions. He also stressed the importance of putting in efforts and investment for the betterment of environment.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Khan added on to the debate concerning why one should be concerned about heritage and its conservation: “Heritage and cultural conservation might not save the world but it can make the world worth saving.”

Thrill seekers converge on Kalam for snow jeep rally

The final round of 13th Snow Jeep Race was held in Kalam on Sunday, January 12 with thrilling performances on the snow-laden tracks.

The event that started on Saturday, January 11 was organised by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) in collaboration with the Frontier 4x4 Club, Upper Swat Development Authority, and Pakistan Army.

According to the organisers, the event aimed to highlight Kalam as a prime winter tourism destination in the country. About 50 men and women adventure drivers from across the country participated in the jeep race.

MNA Dr Amjad Ali was the chief guest, while MPA Sharafat Ali also attended the concluding ceremony.

KPCTA spokesperson Mohammad Saad announced the winners at the closing ceremony.

In the women's category, Mashal claimed the first position, showcasing exceptional skills and determination. In category A, Babar Khan secured first place, followed by Bacha Khan in second and Dr Tahir in third. In category B, Yasin emerged as the winner, with Mohammad Syed and Waqas earning second and third positions, respectively.

On the occasion, Dr Ali praised the efforts of the organisers in promoting Swat as a winter tourism hub.

Speaking to the media, KPCTA spokesman Mohammad Saad emphasised, "This rally was organised to encourage winter tourism in Swat and showcase its potential as a year-round tourist destination. "Such events play a vital role in boosting local businesses and uplifting the region's economy."

The race attracted a large number of tourists and locals, who flocked to Kalam to witness the adventure-filled event. Many expressed their excitement about the unique experience.

Imran Khan from Islamabad shared, "It's amazing to see such a thrilling event in the heart of these



A driver departs the start line during Kalam jeep rally in Swat on Sunday, January 12.

snowy mountains and the full white Shahi ground. The energy here is unbelievable!"

Another visitor, Aisha Ahmed from Lahore, added, "Watching the jeeps race on snow was an adventure in itself. This event truly highlights the beauty of Swat in winter. We not only enjoyed the thrilling race but also the breathtaking scenery – the white carpeted ground and snow-

covered mountains around us doubled our enjoyment."

The event concluded with cheers and applause as participants and spectators celebrated another successful chapter of the snow jeep race.

The KPCTA and collaborating organisations aim to continue such initiatives to attract more tourists to the scenic landscapes of Swat.



Children play a game on the final day of food and cultural family festival at Central Park of Regi Model Town, Peshawar, on Sunday, January 26. The three-day event was organised by Peshawar Development Authority in collaboration with Unicef.



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The making of a King



As the British-stereotype in old movies used to say: bloody good show! I don't know why, but the words just blurted out of me at the end of *Mufasa: The Lion King*, the Barry Jenkins-directed original continuation of Jon Favreau's live-action remake of the Disney animated masterpiece *The Lion King*.

Mufasa doesn't have any British or Americans, but there are white-skinned predators in the form of a pride of evil white lions whose leader, Kiros (Mads Mikkelsen), wants bloody revenge for the death of his son... and, like all mad despots, wants to be the absolute ruler of the lands.

For a film about life and a lot of death, there is little — if any — actual blood spilled in *Mufasa*; one guesses that has more to do with its PG rating than anything else. Surprisingly (and thankfully), Jeff Nathanson's screenplay doesn't include present-day narrative-tweaking to make the film appealing for the niche, agenda-prone fraction of the audience. This story is good, if predictable, and it flows like the river — but not the dangerous kind that we see in the film.

Mufasa is the story of the young cub (Braelyn and Brielle Rankins voicing the young, and Aaron Pierre playing adult), who is separated from his father and mother, becomes a stray and joins a surrogate family in a docile and kind-hearted pride (voices of Thandie Newton and Lennie James), where he also finds his best-friend-cum-brother-in-name Taka (voices of Theo Somolu and Kelvin Harrison Jr as the young and adult, respectively).

Taka's and *Mufasa*'s journey as brothers, the latter's romance with another stray lioness (Tiffany Boone as Sarabi), his quest to find the fabled land of Milele (the eventual mountain peak that's home to the lions in *The Lion King*) and his prophetic calling as the "Lion King" of the land, becomes the main plot-points in this musical (Dave Metzger and Nicholas Britell score the film with Lin-Manuel Miranda taking over song duties).

The songs aren't memorable, but they are fine and undistracting in Jenkins' overall sensitive and emotional storytelling as director.

Initially, I was a tad reluctant about the constantly sweeping camera-work in this near-photorealistic computer-generated

film, but it definitely assists the lithe pacing of Nathanson's screenplay.

I have always found Nathanson's screenplays delicately balanced — he wrote *Speed 2*, *Rush Hour 2* and *3*, *Tower Heist*, *The Terminal*, *Catch Me If You Can*, and this film's predecessor (technically speaking, *Mufasa* is *The Lion King*'s predecessor, but you know what I mean). His films are simple, engaging and carry some emotional heft without the fake, studio-manufactured tone of most big commercial films.

This deftness gives *Mufasa* an advantage over other films this year — and please, Disney, don't take the following words seriously — and makes one want to see another original part of *Mufasa*'s journey.

Actually, just this once, Disney, if you guys are reading this, go ahead and make a continuation of this one — but only if it is just as good.

Released by Disney and HKC, Mufasa: The Lion King is rated PG and also features fan-favourite characters Timon, Pumbaa, Rafiki, Zazu and the voice of the late great James Earl Jones, who shall forever be the undisputed Lion King, Mufasa.



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How Qatar has beaten Japan, Turkey, Spain, Saudi Arabia, Malta, Ethiopia, Morocco, and Dominican Republic in tourism surge with over one hundred thirty percent growth

Global tourism in 2024 saw a remarkable comeback, with over one billion international arrivals, nearly matching pre-pandemic levels, as per the UN Tourism Barometer. Amid this global recovery, Qatar surged ahead, achieving a staggering one hundred thirty seven percent growth in tourism arrivals compared to 2019, far outpacing global tourism giants like Japan (sixteen percent), Turkey (fourteen percent), Spain (thirteen percent), Saudi Arabia (sixty nine percent), Malta (twenty nine percent), Ethiopia (forty percent), Morocco (thirty five percent), and the Dominican Republic (thirty two percent). Qatar's extraordinary performance was driven by strategic investments in world-class infrastructure, such as the renowned Hamad International Airport, and its focus on luxury tourism, cultural offerings, and global visibility through international events like the FIFA World Cup 2022. Unlike other destinations that leaned on established markets, Qatar diversified its appeal with tailored experiences for high-spending travelers and a seamless blend of modernity and tradition. This visionary approach allowed Qatar to dominate the global tourism surge in 2024, leaving even long-standing tourism leaders trailing behind.

So, how did Qatar outpace these global giants? The answer lies in its strategic investments, innovative tourism campaigns, and unparalleled infrastructure. Qatar leveraged its position as a global travel hub, with over five million international visitors in 2024, marking a 25% annual increase. The country's world-class airport, luxury experiences, and diverse cultural offerings have made it a magnet for travelers from the GCC, Europe, and beyond. Even its 69% hotel occupancy rate, a 19% jump from 2023, reflects the surging demand for what Qatar offers.

In comparison, while countries like Japan, with its record approx. thirty seven million visitors, and Turkey, attracting over forty nine million tourists, posted significant growth, their recovery percentages pale in comparison to Qatar's. Similarly, Spain's impressive over eighty



eight million arrivals and 10.7% growth or Morocco's 20% surge reflect solid performances, but they don't come close to Qatar's extraordinary leap.

From innovative strategies to

unparalleled visitor experiences, we'll also uncover the unique factors that contributed to the success of destinations like Japan, Turkey, and others—while showing how Qatar rose to dominate the tourism race.



Players in action during an ice hockey match as part of a sports festival organised by the department of tourism culture and archaeology in Shandur, Upper Chitral.

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