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**Air Karachi
coming soon**

**PIA's return to
Europe boosts
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ICAO Training Instructors Course conducted at CATI Hyderabad

CAA to build cargo complex at Quetta airport



The ICAO Training Instructors Course (TIC) was successfully conducted at the Civil Aviation Training Institute (CATI), Hyderabad from February 17 to 21, 2025. The course was led by ICAO instructor Ms. Pamela Johnson, marking the first time in 17 years that an ICAO instructor conducted a course at CATI. This prestigious training will serve as a foundation for developing international courses at CATI in the future. A total of twelve officers participated in the course, including ten

from Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), one aviation officer from Saudi Arabia, and one officer from Fly Jinnah. The participants engaged actively and gained valuable knowledge through this high-quality and rigorous training program. The ICAO Training Instructors Course (TIC) is a specialized program designed to enhance the instructional skills of aviation trainers. It ensures that trainers adopt effective teaching methodologies in line with ICAO's global standards for aviation education.



Mr. Sumair Saeed, Director, Civil Aviation Training Institute, Hyderabad addressing on the occasion.



The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) will build an international-standard cargo complex, equipped with all modern facilities, at the Quetta International Airport.

The announcement was made by CAA Terminal Manager Sardar Sadiq and Deputy Facilitation Manager Sabir Ali during a meeting with officials and members of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI), on Tuesday, February 04.

Prior to this, senior members of QCCI, including Haji Abdullah Achakzai and Haji Agha Gul Khilji, highlighted the lack of cargo terminal facilities at Quetta airport. They pointed out that despite the promising expansion project at the airport, exporters and importers from Balochistan currently rely on Karachi airport to send goods abroad via air.

This has led to delays in the transportation of commercial goods, with perishable items such as fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dates, and seafood at risk.

“Historically, cargo services from Quetta have not been available on a large scale. If a modern, international-standard cargo complex is built, it will greatly benefit Balochistan’s business community and further boost business activities,” said one of the senior QCCI members. During the meeting, the CAA officials emphasised that their visit was aimed at understanding the business community’s needs concerning cargo services. Once the volume of commercial goods being exported from Quetta is estimated, they will prepare a feasibility report for the cargo complex and include the project in the Annual Development Plan.

They assured that the cargo complex at the Quetta airport would be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, ensuring the quick dispatch and receipt of goods. They also expressed their commitment to breaking the current stalemate and engaging in discussions with the business community to move the project forward.

The CAA officials requested the QCCI to send a letter to the airport manager and other relevant authorities to facilitate the reception of commercial delegations.



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French Ambassador visits PAA, explores collaboration



French Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Nicolas Galey, accompanied by Consul General Alexis Chahtahtinsky, visited the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) headquarters, recently. They were received by DG PAA, AVM Zeeshan Saeed, and senior officials.

Ambassador Galey was briefed on PAA's role post-separation from CAA, its strategic vision, and key modernization projects. Discussions covered the implementation of e-gates, RNP AR approaches at northern airports, and

outsourcing operations at major airports to enhance service standards. The New Gwadar International Airport's operationalization was also highlighted.

He lauded PAA's modernization efforts and reaffirmed France's commitment to Pakistan's aviation sector. AVM Zeeshan Saeed emphasized international partnerships, noting opportunities for collaboration with French firms.

The visit concluded with an exchange of souvenirs, symbolizing strong bilateral ties.



New rules for 2025 Hajj: No children allowed, preference for first-time pilgrims

Saudi Arabia has announced significant changes for the 2025 Hajj pilgrimage, including a new rule prohibiting children from accompanying pilgrims. The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah stated that the decision was made to protect children from the dangers of overcrowding during the pilgrimage, which sees millions of worshippers gathering annually.



The ministry emphasized that the restriction aims to safeguard young children from potential risks associated with managing large crowds in hazardous situations. The move is also intended to make the pilgrimage experience more seamless for all attendees.

First-time pilgrims will be given preference for the 2025 Hajj. Saudi authorities said this measure is aimed at allowing more Muslims the opportunity to perform the sacred journey at least once in their lifetime.

Saudi citizens and residents can now apply for the 2025 Hajj season through the Nusuk app or the official website. Applicants must verify their information and register their travel companions.

'Air Karachi': New airline seeks license to a flights in Pakistan

A new private airline, 'Air Karachi' has submitted an application to the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) for a Regular Public Transport (RPT) license to launch operations in various cities of the country, media reported.

Sources within the PCAA, the authority will decide to issue the RPT license to Air Karachi after approval from the federal government.

Upon receiving the license, Air Karachi will commence its flight operations. The airline has already been registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). The business community of Karachi had earlier announced the launch of the new airline.

Businessman Hanif Gohar announced that Air Karachi will begin operations with an initial investment of Rs 5 billion, with each shareholder contributing Rs 50 million.

Former Southern Commander (ret'd) Air Vice Marshal Imran, has been appointed as the CEO of Air Karachi. The airline plans to lease three aircraft in its initial phase.

Key shareholders of Air Karachi include Aqeel Karim Dhedhi, Arif Habib, SM Tanveer, Bashir Jan Muhammad, Khalid Tawab, Zubair Tufail, and Hamza Tabani.

Earlier in September last year, at least three local airlines including Jet Green, Q Airways, and Go Green Air have approached the PCAA for licenses and permits, according to sources.

Air Indus had also approached the PCAA to resume flight operations, sources revealed. Q Aviation and Liberty Air, have also applied for licenses from the CAA to launch flight operations in Pakistan.

The PCAA officials said the large number of license applications is significant for the country's economy.

AirSial to launch flights to Bangladesh, efforts to secure necessary approvals underway

Pakistan's private airline AirSial is set to initiate its flights to Bangladesh, following a meeting between the High Commissioner of Bangladesh to Pakistan MD Iqbal Hussain Khan and Chairman AirSial Fazal Jilani on Wednesday, February



05.

The high commissioner visited AirSial's corporate head office, where he was received by Chairman Fazal Jilani, Senior Vice Chairman Qaiser Iqbal Baryar, CEO Ameen Ahsan, and COO Tariq Amin. During the meeting, both sides engaged in productive discussions on matters of mutual interest, with a particular focus on strengthening bilateral ties through enhanced air connectivity. Chairman AirSial Fazal Jilani apprised His Excellency of AirSial's ongoing efforts to secure the necessary approvals from the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to commence flights to Bangladesh.

Jilani emphasized AirSial's commitment to providing seamless and world-class air travel services, further solidifying the bond between Pakistan and Bangladesh. He also requested His Excellency to simplify and facilitate the visa issuance process for Pakistani visitors. Easing visa procedures could enhance travel, business, and cultural interactions, benefiting both countries.

The meeting concluded with an exchange of souvenirs as a gesture of goodwill, reaffirming both parties' commitment to strengthening cooperation. AirSial remains focused on expanding its international reach and enhancing travel convenience for passengers across the region.



Aviation Division merged with Defence Ministry



The Aviation Division has been officially merged with the Defence Ministry, following approval from the federal cabinet, media reported.

A written directive has been issued by the Defence Ministry to this effect, instructing all relevant institutions, including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and Airport Security Force (ASF), to report to the Defence Ministry on all matters.

In a separate development, the federal government earlier revealed the details of ministries that have been or will be abolished on the committee's recommendations in a move aimed at 'reducing' the expenditures.

According to the ministry of finance, six ministries including Kashmir Affair and Gilgit Baltistan, SAFRON; Information Technology and Telecom; Industries and Production; National Health Services Regulations and Coordination; Capital Development Authority (CAD) were processed under Wave-1.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzaib said the committee, constituted on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's directives, decided to merge Ministries of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, and States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) whereas CAD was abolished, adding there were 80 entities associated with these ministries, these have now been reduced to 40.

Muhammad Aurangzeb said that under Wave 2, the committee considered

the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Commerce Division, the Ministry of Housing and Works, and the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Out of their 60 entities, 25 would be wound-up, 20 reduced and nine merged or shifted.

Flyadeal Begins Flight Operations to Pakistan



Saudi Arabia's new airline, Flyadeal, has launched its flight operations to Pakistan.

The first Flyadeal flight, F3-661, arrived from Saudi Arabia at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport at 8:04 AM.

The airline will operate two weekly flights to Karachi - one from Jeddah and the other from Riyadh.

Upon arrival, the Flyadeal aircraft was given a water salute at Karachi Airport.





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Director General Pakistan Airports Authority visits Multan Int'l Airport



Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed, Director General of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), visited Multan International Airport (MIAP) to inspect the ongoing expansion project.

During the visit, the DG was briefed by the Airport Manager, sectional heads, and Joint Director Services (Planning & Development) on the existing facilities and future upgradation plans. He appreciated the efforts of the airport team in enhancing commercial activities and improving passenger facilitation. The DG PAA emphasized the importance of ensuring maximum passenger comfort and safety in line with international aviation standards. Key improvements at MIAP include:

- Expansion of airport access lanes from 2 to 4 for smoother traffic flow.
- Installation of a third scanner at the International Briefing area to reduce congestion.
- Relocation of the Joint Search area for improved passenger movement.
- Addition of more check-in counters to manage long queues efficiently.

With MIAP handling over 1.4 million passengers annually - surpassing its current terminal capacity - DG PAA stressed the need for expansion and modernization. Future upgradation plans include:

Increasing aircraft parking bays from 4 to 6, including two wide-body aircraft stands. Remodeling and expanding the passenger terminal to accommodate the growing influx of international travelers.

Multan International Airport, the fourth largest in Pakistan, serves South

Punjab, parts of Central Punjab, and Sindh. The Pakistan Airports Authority remains committed to enhancing infrastructure and passenger services in line with the country's aviation growth.

Body formed to probe fallout of pilots' licence remarks

The federal cabinet has set up a committee to investigate financial losses to the national exchequer following former aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan's 2020 statement in Parliament about pilots with dubious licences, media reported.

In June 2020, during a parliamentary session, Mr Khan stated that investigations had revealed more than 262 of the country's 860 active pilots either held fake licences or had cheated in their exams.

According to a cabinet secretariat notification, the newly formed committee would "assess the financial losses incurred by the national exchequer due to the irresponsible statement" by ex-minister Khan in 2020. The committee will also "evaluate the reputational damage caused to the country and [the Pakistan International Airlines] due to this irresponsible statement."

The seven-member committee will be chaired by Defence and Aviation Minister Khawaja Asif as the convener. It will also comprise the minister for law and justice, the minister for finance and revenue, the secretaries of the defence ministry and ministry of law and justice, the CEO of PIA, and the director general of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The panel is expected to submit its reports to the cabinet within four weeks, according to the notification.



FAA team to assess Pakistan-US flights



A team from the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is scheduled to visit Pakistan in March to assess the feasibility of resuming direct flights between Pakistan and the US.

In preparation for the visit, Islamabad has already paid the required \$75,000 fee, sources have revealed.

Direct flights from Pakistan to the US were suspended in 2017 and efforts to restore them faced setbacks due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2020 PIA aircraft crash in Karachi.

Following the European Union's ban on the national carrier, the FAA downgraded Pakistan's aviation safety rating from category CA1 to category CA2, further delaying the resumption of flights.

During the Covid-19 crisis, Pakistan was granted special permission to operate 12 flights on humanitarian grounds to the US, seven of which were successfully conducted.

To pave the way for flight resumption, PIA and PCAA have taken various measures to address safety and regulatory concerns. The FAA's five-member team is expected to conduct a preliminary assessment in March, marking a crucial step toward restoring Pakistan's aviation rating. Additionally, clearance from the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) will be required before flights can officially resume.

If the restrictions are lifted, PIA is expected to reinstate direct flights to major US cities, including New York, Chicago, and Houston. In the past, PIA operated its US flights via Manchester but efforts are now focused on establishing non-stop connectivity.

Sialkot International Airport enhances passenger experience with new state-of-the-art ramp buses



Sialkot International Airport is Pakistan's first privately owned international airport. Renowned for its efficiency and passenger-centric approach, SIAL continues to expand its services and infrastructure to accommodate the growing needs of travelers and airlines. Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) continues to set new standards in passenger convenience and operational efficiency with the induction of new state-of-the-art ramp buses. This latest addition reinforces SIAL's commitment to providing world-class facilities and ensuring seamless connectivity between the terminal and aircraft. The newly introduced ramp buses are equipped with advanced features, including spacious interiors, comfortable seating, air-conditioning, and accessibility options for passengers with reduced mobility. These buses are designed to

enhance the overall travel experience, ensuring a smooth and efficient transition for travelers boarding and disembarking flights. The buses are capable of taking more than 100 passengers at a time.

Chairman & Vice Chairman SIAL, stated, that "The induction of these modern ramp buses marks another milestone in our ongoing efforts to elevate passenger services at Sialkot International Airport. We are dedicated to enhancing the comfort, safety, and efficiency of airport operations, and these buses will significantly contribute to that goal." This investment in infrastructure is part of SIAL's broader vision to continuously upgrade facilities and meet the evolving needs of passengers. As one of Pakistan's leading international airports, SIAL remains committed to adopting innovative solutions that ensure a seamless and world-class travel experience.



PAA issues clarification on international flight parking issue at Karachi airport

The Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) issued a clarification regarding the temporary parking of an international flight at Karachi airport, on Thursday, February 13.

According to the PAA spokesperson, Emirates flight EK606 arrived at Karachi Airport 23 minutes ahead of schedule. At the time, Bay 24 was occupied, so the flight was temporarily parked at Bay 16 after consulting with the captain. Once Bay 24 became available, the aircraft was transferred there. The spokesperson further explained that PK213 was pushed back at 1:14 AM, and by 1:21 AM, EK606 was towed to Bay 24 for final parking. The airport staff followed standard procedures, and no error was made in the aircraft's parking.

Additionally, the PAA stated that the captain of EK606 was aware that Bay 24 was occupied and did not register any complaints regarding the temporary arrangement. The authority has dismissed reports suggesting a mistake in the flight's parking, stating that the information circulating in the media is inaccurate.

Earlier, it emerged that a flight Dubai to Karachi flight was mistakenly parked at the domestic terminal instead of the international at Karachi airport. Upon realizing the mistake, the international flight was pushed back and relocated to the international terminal, the sources claimed. Runway upgradation work, to ensure landing huge planes at Karachi international airport, is underway at full pace. According to Karachi airport administration, the new runway is being constructed at the Karachi airport after dismantling the old one. The upgrade work of 7-L runway will be completed by the end of this year, the authorities said.

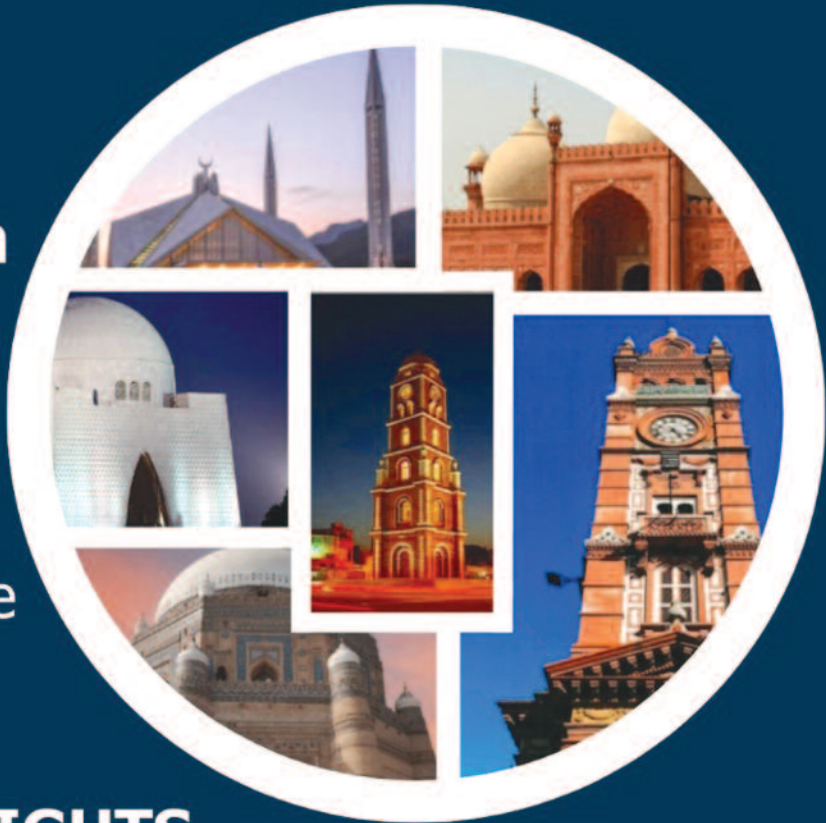
The completion of development work will enable 600 seater airbus and 380 passenger planes to land at the Karachi airport.



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PAF showcases JF-17 fighter jet capabilities in Saudi Arabia exercise

The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) showcased the long-range operational capabilities of its indigenous JF-17 fighter jets during the Exercise Spears of Victory-2025 in Saudi Arabia, the military's media wing said on Friday, February 14 as the PAF contingent returned home.

The international exercise, held at King Abdul Aziz Air Base, involved air forces from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, France, Greece, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

"For this international deployment, PAF fighters executed a non-stop flight from their home base in Pakistan to Saudi Arabia and back, conducting in-flight air-to-air refueling, demonstrating long-range operational capabilities of the JF-17 Block-III aircraft," the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

The PAF contingent participated with JF-17 Block-III fighter jets, combat pilots, and technical ground crew. The JF-17 Block-III earned recognition for its performance in combat scenarios, proving its technological strengths and operational potential in comparison to advanced fighter jets.

The exercise aimed to enhance interoperability among the participating

nations through realistic air combat simulations. The PAF's participation highlights its commitment to staying at the forefront of aerial warfare through joint exercises and modern combat training, ISPR added.

How many fighter jets, helicopters are part of PAF?

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 aircraft, 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 aircraft. 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 aircraft, 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 aircraft. 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.



This handout photo from February 14, 2025 shows PAF contingent posing for a group photograph on arrival in Pakistan, following their participation in Exercise Spears of Victory-2025.

Govt gets another shot at PIA sale

The government is making another attempt to privatise PIA after the previous effort in which a sole investor submitted a bid of Rs10 billion, significantly lower than officials' expectations.

The lack of interest shown by the buyers during the first round of privatisation was due to multiple reasons, including the 18 per cent GST on the purchase of new aircraft and the national carrier's liabilities.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Privatisation was informed on Monday, 03 February that the government had removed 18pc GST on the purchase of new aircraft in a bid to spur investors' interest.

The Privatisation Commission chairman informed the committee that the IMF agreed to remove the tax after the government presented its concerns.

According to information provided to the standing committee, PIA's liabilities amounted to Rs45bn.

Of this amount, Rs 26bn is owed to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) under various taxation charges, Rs10bn to the Civil Aviation Authority, and the remaining is pension liabilities.

The committee was informed that a mechanism would be devised to address outstanding issues, ensuring that financial burdens do not hinder potential investors.

The airline's non-core assets are not part of the bidding process, and a consultant has been hired to formulate a separate policy for them.

The consultant has proposed two to three options to the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP), which will consider them and issue a policy on non-core assets.

The CCoP will adopt one of these options and issue a policy regarding non-core assets.

The committee also discussed the Privatisation Commission (Amendment) Bill 2024 and raised objections to some of its provisions.

The committee sought clarity from the Ministry of Law on whether there was any precedent where the prime minister has been given the authority to make privatisation decisions instead of the cabinet.

The committee directed the ministry to present relevant details in the next meeting.

Later, discussions on the bill were deferred till the next meeting.

The committee also discussed the privatisation of power distribution companies (Discos).

The meeting was informed that in the first phase, the electric power companies of Islamabad, Faisalabad, and Gujranwala will be considered for privatisation.

For this process, two firms submitted their bids, out of which the board recommended the firm Alvarez & Marsal Middle East Limited.

Later, the final bidder gave a presentation to finance and law ministers, who eventually agreed to proceed with the bidder.

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has announced a comprehensive plan for developing and modernising three airports' and the construction of a new greenfield at the D.I. Khan airport.

The PAA has engaged national and international consultants from Japan and Switzerland through a bidding process, a PAA spokesperson said in a statement on Monday, 03 February.

The experts will design modern terminals, enhanced taxiways, and expanded infrastructure to

accommodate growing passenger and aircraft traffic.

The 'Development Plan for Greenfield and Upgradation of Three Airports' announced by the PPA includes the construction of a new greenfield at the D.I. Khan airport and the upgradation and expansion of Sukkur, Skardu, and D.G. Khan airports.

PAA Director General Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed stated that modern, efficient and world-class airports were necessary to transform the country into a global gateway.

The PAA has also assigned project directors to accelerate the design phase and oversee execution.

They will act as a bridge between internal and external stakeholders, ensuring seamless coordination and high-quality development, the PAA said.

Additionally, the authority's Planning and Development Directorate has already initiated significant projects at Karachi and Lahore airports.

These include the successful completion of the runway and external roads network at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport, while the expansion of Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport was ongoing to improve passenger facilities.



A train crossing the Attock railway bridge built over the Indus River in 1884. The red truss bridge, which connects Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, showcases the impressive engineering techniques from 19th century against the mountainous backdrop.

Kingdom's Civil Aviation Authority launches integrated digital platform, new brand identity



Saudi Arabia's civil aviation authority has launched a new integrated digital platform and brand identity.

The General Authority of Civil Aviation's changes, which includes an updated website, was announced at its headquarters in Riyadh on Wednesday, February 19 the Saudi Press Agency reported.

The new platform, named Ajwaa, provides all civil aviation services, ensuring quick and efficient access for users and creates a fully digital environment for stakeholders, the SPA

reported.

The aim is to improve operational efficiency, transparency, and GACA's regulatory role, the report stated.

The event was attended by Saleh bin Nasser Al-Jasser, Saudi Arabia's transport minister and chairman of GACA's board, Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al-Duailej, president of GACA, vice presidents, CEOs, and other officials.

Al-Duailej said the slogan for the Ajwaa platform is "Together for New Horizons."

UK team meets PIA officials, inspects flight safety

A delegation of the UK's Department for Transport currently visiting Pakistan to evaluate aviation safety standards held a meeting with the PIA management on Friday, January 31.

The UK team visited PIA headquarters and inspected the national flag carrier's flight operations, flight safety and engineering.

The successful completion of the UK DfT team's visit will pave the way for Pakistani airlines to resume direct flights to the UK, ending a long restriction on UK routes. A spokesman for Civil

Aviation Authority (CAA) said the UK delegation had arrived here four days ago to review aviation safety standards.

The UK team was welcomed by CAA Director General Nadir Shafi Dar and heads of various departments. The UK team's evaluation came after months of preparatory meetings between Pakistani and British aviation authorities.

The CAA is hopeful about the outcome, citing extensive preparations regarding international aviation safety requirements. The ban on Pakistan's national carrier operating in the EU was

lifted by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in November last year.

The restriction was imposed in 2020 after a PIA plane crash and pilots' licence scandal. After the ban on Pakistani flights was lifted by EASA, PIA resumed flights to European destinations. The PIA is keen to fly to London, Birmingham and Manchester from Islamabad and Lahore.

Logistics industry faces staggering losses

Pakistan's logistics industry faces annual losses of around \$36 billion due to offline trade, potentially resulting in the loss of two to three million jobs.

Experts emphasised these concerns at the Pakistan Logistics and Shipping Summit 2025, which was held on Thursday, February 20.

According to a press release, industry leaders emphasised that real-time solutions, including processing, tracking, and other digital facilities, are the only way to tap into growth opportunities and compete with the developed world.

While government processes have become nearly real-time, a significant gap remains, with approximately 70pc of private sector activities, including those of freight forwarders and related service providers, still relying on outdated, manual methods. Experts highlighted various issues linked to foreign trade, noting that only 40pc of imported containers return as exports from Pakistan, indicating a serious imbalance in trade.

Founder CEO of Galaxefi Solutions Asif Pervez said initiatives such as Digital Pakistan, Uraan Pakistan, and Pakistan Single Window (PSW) have laid a robust foundation for modernisation. PSW, in particular, has digitised over 70 government agencies, streamlining customs, licencing, and regulatory processes that previously hindered trade operations. However, technological gaps, hesitation from SMEs and stakeholders in adopting digital solutions, and slow-paced support for digitisation are still preventing Pakistan from keeping pace with other developing countries.

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Haj expenses reduced

Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Chaudhry Salik Hussain on Tuesday, February 04 announced a reduction in this year's Haj package costs, providing financial relief to pilgrims.

Speaking at a press conference, the minister said the cost of the 40-day Haj package has been reduced by Rs25,000, bringing the total to Rs1,050,000 while the 25-day short Haj package has been reduced by Rs50,000 and it will now cost Rs1,100,000. The minister said that all rooms and tents will be air-conditioned in this year's Haj.

Mr Hussain said the government's Haj quota has been filled, and no additional applications will be accepted.

The Haj quota for Pakistan is 179,000 for the year 2025 allocated by the Saudi government based on the country's population. The government has divided this Haj quota into two parts. Half of the quota has been retained by the government under the official Haj scheme, while the remaining half has been kept for private tour operators. Each pilgrim will receive a specially designed bag containing a Pakistani flag, a QR code for identification, and relevant information.

A special mobile app, Pak Haj, will provide all information to pilgrims on their mobile phones, enabling them to stay updated about their Haj group's information, training schedule, flight details, accommodation in Saudi Arabia, and live maps and locations of sites during Haj. The minister said that all pilgrims are required to submit their third installment at the designated banks between February 6 and 14, adds APP. The ministry has ensured that every pilgrim will receive a notification regarding their payment status through the Pak Haj mobile application, he added.

In another major development, Mr Salik announced a refund of over Rs4.75 billion to the pilgrims of 2024. He said the refunds have been categorised into seven different groups, based on factors such as accommodation in Mina, lodging in Makkah, and Maktab C allocation. Additionally, savings from Qurbani refunds and air fare reductions are also being passed on to the pilgrims. Highlighting the statistics of the refund

process, the minister said that 14 per cent of pilgrims (9,588 individuals) will receive Rs20,000, five per cent (3,358 individuals) will receive Rs35,000, 19pc (12,981 individuals) will receive Rs50,000, 23pc (16,037 individuals) will receive Rs75,000, 26pc (17,828 individuals) will receive Rs90,000, 10pc (6,784 individuals) will

receive Rs110,000, and 3pc (2,228 individuals) will receive Rs140,000. The refunds will be transferred through the designated bank branches.

He said the transfer of funds to nominated banks will commence within the next two days, ensuring timely financial relief for the pilgrims.

Iran's first drone carrier joins Revolutionary Guards' fleet

Iran's Revolutionary Guards unveiled the country's first drone carrier on Thursday, February 06 in Gulf waters, state media reported. The carrier, called the Martyr Bahman Bagheri, is a commercial vessel that was repurposed as a drone carrier over the past two-and-a-half years, Guards naval commander Alireza Tangsiri said during the unveiling ceremony.

Described by Tangsiri as the "largest naval military project" in the history of the Islamic republic, the carrier is capable of launching long-range missiles in addition to carrying drones and helicopters. It is also equipped for electronic warfare, and can remain at sea for up to a year.

Amid military exercises lasting from early January to early March, Iran's armed forces have unveiled new weaponry as Tehran braces for more tensions with Israel and the United States under President Donald Trump. According to the IRNA state news agency, the vessel has a capacity of 60 drones.

"The Revolutionary Guards took action to transform a commercial ship... into a mobile naval platform capable of carrying out drone and helicopter missions in the oceans," said Navy Commander of the Revolutionary Guards Alireza Tangsiri. "The addition of this ship to our fleet is an important step in increasing the defence and deterrence capability of Iran in distant waters and in maintaining our national security interests," Tangsiri added.

During the unveiling ceremony, Guards chief Hossein Salami emphasised that Iran did not seek to threaten others, "but we will not bow to the threat of any power". He also stated that Iran "will not engage in any wars with the governments we recognise".

The chief of

the Iranian armed forces, General Mohammad Bagheri, who was also present at the ceremony, described the vessel as "a mobile base that can operate self-sufficiently throughout the world's waters".

The ship is different from previous Revolutionary Guards warships because it can launch and retrieve larger drones such as the Qaher, a miniaturised drone version of a local fighter jet. The warship also holds fast-attack crafts and unmanned submarines, in addition to short-range anti-ship cruise missiles.

Iran on Sunday unveiled a new ballistic missile it said was capable of reaching targets up to 1,700 kilometres away during a ceremony attended by President Masoud Pezeshkian.

Since the 1979 revolution and the break in ties with the United States — which had been Iran's main arms supporter — Tehran has developed a series of sophisticated missiles and drones.

The unveiling of the carrier coincides with the so-called Fajr decade, an annual 10-day celebration of the Islamic revolution that overthrew the US-backed shah of Iran. Since the return of US President Donald Trump, who pursued a "maximum pressure" policy against Tehran during his first term, the Iranian government has conducted multiple shows of military strength.

The armed forces have launched large-scale military exercises across the country and showcased underground military bases in recent days.



Iran's first drone carrier, called the Martyr Bahman Bagheri, during an unveiling ceremony in the Gulf, off the coast of southern Iran.



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Balochistan govt launches plan to train young pilots

The Balochistan government has launched a 'Youth Pilot Development Programme (YPDP-1)' to provide training to young people in the aviation sector so that they could join national and international aviation industry. Women will be encouraged to join the programme, while children of martyrs will also be given opportunities.

Provincial government spokesman Shahid Rind disclosed this while speaking at a presser along with Captain Ali Azad, Director General of the Aviation Wing of Balochistan. In the first phase, Mr Rind said, one female candidate from Gilgit-Baltistan has been included in the programme.

He said the YPDP-1 would be a first of its kind by any provincial government in the country and serve as a milestone in promoting aviation in the region.

Giving details of the programme, he said young pilots will receive an additional 200 flight hours of training, which will greatly enhance their practical skills.

Mr Rind expressed the hope that YPDP-1 will play a key role in fostering the growth of aviation in Balochistan, helping the youth compete on a global scale and access employment opportunities both nationally and internationally. The spokesman said the government is committed to creating more opportunities in the aviation sector, opening new horizons for the youth. He mentioned that under the guidance of Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti, the implementation of the programme is being started immediately. Mr Azad shed light on the significance and technical details of the programme.

Also present on the occasion were trainee pilots who described the initiative as an invaluable opportunity for the youth of Balochistan.

Mr Rind said the programme aims to establish Balochistan as a hub in the aviation industry and added that it would not incur additional costs for the government, as available resources will be efficiently utilised to run it.

Saudi Arabia offers new opportunities for Pakistani travellers



Saudi Arabia is emerging as a top global travel destination in 2025, offering exciting new opportunities for Pakistani travellers.

With over 2.7 million Pakistani travellers visiting Saudi Arabia in 2024 and an anticipated 2.87 million in 2025, this country is strengthening its accessibility and diverse experiences beyond religious tourism, according to Saudi Arabia Tourism Authority's press release on Friday, February 14.

Saudi Arabia is enhancing travel for various segments, including solo female travellers, destination weddings, and cultural exploration.

In 2024, Pakistani esports players dominated the Esports World Cup (EWC) in Riyadh, outshining over 1,700 competitors and showcasing their rising prowess on the global gaming stage.

Moreover, the LEAP Information Technology Expo recorded the highest-ever participation of Pakistani exhibitors, highlighting their growing influence in the tech industry.

The Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector has also seen remarkable growth, with 37 Pakistani tourism groups actively engaging in Saudi Arabia's dynamic event landscape. To further drive tourism, the Saudi Click Campaign will highlight the country's rich cultural experiences.

The campaign will focus on showcasing Saudi Arabia through vibrant colors, encouraging Pakistani buyers from

the fashion and media industries to choose Saudi Arabia as their next creative and business partner.

Offering seamless travel experiences, Saudi's latest initiatives include Group Inclusive Tours (GITs) for effortless group travel and exclusive last-minute Ramadan deals, allowing visitors to experience the spiritual essence of the Holy Month in an immersive setting.

The introduction of the e-visa for Umrah pilgrims has further simplified religious travel, granting unrestricted entry to any Saudi Arabia airport.

Visitors can explore eight UNESCO World Heritage Sites, enjoy a business-friendly environment, and experience Umrah travel without the need for a mahram, reinforcing Saudi Arabia's commitment to seamless accessibility.

Looking ahead, Saudi is set to redefine luxury travel with the launch of The Saudi Red Sea's exclusive hotels, including Six Senses Southern Dunes, JW Marriott, and 7th Reserve - the world's seventh Ritz-Carlton Reserve - alongside the recently launched Shebara.

With a commitment to world-class hospitality and seamless accessibility, Saudi Arabia is rapidly becoming a top destination for Pakistani travellers. Offering a diverse range of experiences - from rich heritage and thrilling adventures to accommodations that suit every budget, from affordable stays to luxury retreats - Saudi Arabia ensures an unforgettable journey for all.

Pakistan Travel Mart 2025 held in Karachi



A journey of three decades gratitude and commitment



Mr. Sajid Khan Batoor, President, Daewoo Pakistan speaks of the 31 years odyssey

In January 1994, I began my professional journey as a Credit Control Officer. Now, in January 2025, I am privileged to step into the role of President of Daewoo Pakistan. Reflecting on these three decades, I am filled with gratitude for the challenges, growth, and invaluable experiences along the way. Alhamdulillah, it's never too late to continue the journey, and I firmly believe this is just the beginning.

I dedicate this success to the logistics industry and to the organizations that have shaped my career: TCS, OCS, M&P,

Leopards, and Daewoo. I am profoundly grateful to those who have played a pivotal role in my growth and success: Mr. Sikandar Naqi, Mr. Naveed Khalid But, Mr. M.S. Sajwani, Mr. Saqib Abbas Hamdani, Mr. Salman Akram, Mr. Shafiq Malik, Mr. Mumtaz Hussain Syed, Mr. Mian Jahangir Shahid, Mr. Mian Rizwan Saadat, Mr. Sheryar Chishty, Mr. Umer Lodhi, and Mr. Faisal Ahmed Siddiqui. Your mentorship, trust, and unwavering support have made all the difference.

I must also express my deepest appreciation to my family—my devoted wife and supportive children—whose love and encouragement have been my greatest strength throughout this journey.

To everyone who has been a part of this experience, I am deeply thankful. As I continue forward, I remain committed to achieving even greater milestones and contributing to the success of Daewoo Pakistan with the same passion and dedication that has guided me this far.



Daewoo Pakistan: celebrating well - deserving, promotions at FastEX.

Meet Sh. Umer Sandal



A former 'Scandinavian Airlines official (SAS - stands for 'Special Air Service') Mr. Umer Sandal son of Sh. Anees Annees-u-Rehman Sandal and son-in-law of Prof. Sh. Safdar Sandal has now, after leaving 'SAS' (he served there for 10 years) has started his own business in Copenhagen (being his birth place with a Danish Nationality or with a natural 'Dual Nationality') is currently living in Copenhagen. He has recently become a full-fledged Director of 'SIAL' (from 6th of November 2024) by applying after the sad demise of his father SH. Anees Sandal, in Copenhagen. He has been engaged now as a Director of SIAL.

Mr. Anees was an immigrant in Denmark from early seventies and he had passed 35 years of his precious life, there. During his frequent visits to Sialkot being his home town (and a cousin of mine); I had convinced him to become a Director of 'SIAL' in the very early founding years of 'SIAL' when rightly so, people were afraid and hesitant to invest a very large sum of Pak Rupees. 50,000,000, when SIAL had its office in a rented house of Model Town of Sialkot - (between the years 2003-2005). Sh. Anees-u-Rehman being my cousin and a nice friend, was kind enough to have accepted my invitation to invest his lifetime savings in 'SIAL' and he did so and accepted my proposal, for which I feel obliged to him also and thus he became a Director in early twenties, during which period, the tenure of (the then called) 'CEO - SIAL', Mr. Baber Iqbal, a prominent industrialist and business man of Sialkot, had started.

Above are given photographs of Mr. 'Umar Sandal', being now a full Director of 'SIAL Company'. He is thus entitled to all the benefits and liabilities of the Company, as per rules. As to reiterate, I also being his father-in-law and a Director of 'SIAL' along with our other 'Sandal Family' directors, and all near and dear ones, wish him a heartiest felicitation and a candid CONGRATULATION !!

PIA upbeat about resumption of UK flights

Now that the PIA has resumed its flights to the European Union (EU), the management of the cash-strapped national flag carrier has high hopes that authorities of the United Kingdom (UK) will also grant it permission to resume its flight operation to the UK after a lapse of over four years.



Sources revealed that the British Safety Committee is scheduled to review the request for resumption of PIA flights in its meeting scheduled for March 12.

The British Civil Aviation Authority and the Department for Transport (DfT) team will present the recent audit report of the PIA and the Civil Aviation Authority Pakistan at the meeting. If approved by the British Safety Committee, PIA's direct flights to the UK will also be restored.

PIA management is confident about the resumption of flights to the UK.

The airline has already prepared a plan to immediately commence operations to London, Manchester, and Birmingham as soon as approval is granted. A two-member PIA team recently returned to Pakistan after assessing preparations for flight operations in the UK, sources added.

The EU and UK aviation authorities imposed a temporary ban on the PIA in June 2020 after the aviation minister during the PTI rule revealed in parliament that a number of pilots in Pakistan had fake licenses. The PIA's flight operation to the EU was resumed on January 11.

PIA's return to Europe key to tourism revival: MD PTDC

The revival of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on its once-popular European routes is a major milestone for Pakistan's aviation and tourism sectors.

This move presents a golden opportunity to improve the country's global image, with the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) working closely to ensure that the benefits extend beyond air travel.

Aftab ur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of PTDC, in an exclusive interview with APP expressed optimism about how the restoration of PIA's European flights will contribute to Pakistan's broader tourism goals.

"This revival is part of a larger strategy to promote the country's tourism potential," Rana said on Sunday, February 9.

"Increased connectivity will help showcase Pakistan's hidden treasures to the world, attracting not just tourists, but also investors and cultural ambassadors," he said. Rana emphasized that PTDC aims to foster a favourable perception of Pakistan internationally, with PIA's return serving as a direct boost to the tourism sector.

"PIA's European routes will connect travelers to the beauty and culture of Pakistan, making it an attractive destination," he explained. The revival of PIA and the resurgence of tourism are intricately linked.

PTDC has been working to shift Pakistan's image from one of negative stereotypes to a country with rich landscapes, diverse cultures, and deep history. Initiatives like the online visa policy for 126 countries, offering fast processing, are crucial to this transformation. These efforts align with the broader goal of turning tourism into a sustainable industry.

PTDC's statistics show that international arrivals reached 2.21 million in 2023, with a projected 15% increase in 2024. This uptick reflects growing global interest in Pakistan, driven by the country's natural beauty, hospitality, and heritage. The return of PIA's flights to Europe will further fuel this growth by making travel to Pakistan easier and more reliable.

"We're seeing more tourists from key markets like the USA, China, Germany, and the UK," said Rana. "With enhanced travel

options through these European routes, we expect this growth to continue."

Pakistan is home to some of the world's most stunning landscapes, from towering mountains to lush valleys, and a rich cultural heritage. In 2019, CNN and Forbes recognized Pakistan as an emerging travel destination, and in subsequent years, the British Backpacker Society named it one of the "friendliest countries" with some of the most breathtaking mountain scenery.

Through strategic reforms, PTDC has been building an ecosystem that supports both inbound tourism and local economic growth. The streamlined online visa policy, which processes free visas within 24 hours for visitors from 126 countries, is designed to ensure a seamless experience once PIA brings international tourists to Pakistan.

PIA's history is a tale of both success and decline. Once a symbol of national pride, the airline was known for its world-class service, modern fleet, and ability to connect Pakistan globally. In the 1960s and 1970s, PIA was a respected name in aviation, admired worldwide. However, over the years, mismanagement, financial crises, and poor policies led to the airline's downfall.

By 2020, PIA faced massive losses, with debts exceeding PKR 56 billion. Political interference, corruption, and failure to modernize further eroded the airline's position in the competitive global market. The revival of PIA's European routes is more than just about restoring an airline - it's part of a broader effort to reclaim Pakistan's global reputation and boost its economy. As the airline resumes services to Europe, the aim is not only to attract more passengers but also to make Pakistan a more accessible destination for tourists.

Rana views this as a crucial moment for both PIA and the country. As Pakistan's tourism sector steadily recovers, PIA's revival could spark a new era of growth for both the airline and the nation's tourism industry. While the road to recovery remains long, there is hope that continued collaboration between government agencies, PIA, and the private sector will allow Pakistan's skies - and its tourism sector - to flourish once again.





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World's best airline named in 2025 global ranking



The world's best airlines for the ultimate in-flight experience have been revealed – and Korean Air has knocked Qatar Airways off the top spot following its eighth win in 2024.

A new ranking by AirlineRatings.com, an aviation safety and product website, ranked the top 25 full-service airlines for 2025 as part of its annual "World's Best Airlines" awards.

The airlines had to offer a "full-service experience" including meals, snacks and beverages, an economy seat pitch a minimum of 31 inches, lie-flat business class beds, a seven-star safety rating and a strong financial standing to meet the list criteria.

South Korea's flag carrier airline was awarded the top overall airline of the year title for its "exceptional focus on passenger comfort", "generous meal portions" and "outstanding economy class".

Thoughtful touches including slippers and eyemasks, in-flight menus with Western and Korean options and service with a smile cemented the Korean Air's top spot.

AirlineRatings chief executive Sharon Petersen added: "While many airlines have added a 10th seat per row on 777 aircraft and reduced seat pitch in economy to 31–32 inches (down from the previous 32–33 inches), Korean Air has chosen not to follow this trend. They have maintained

their original seat configuration and a generous 33-34 inch seat pitch, offering passengers a more comfortable experience."

Simon Calder, the six-foot-tall travel correspondent of The Independent, said: "It's good that an airline bold enough to offer more space in economy has been recognised. This is a welcome exception to the gradual 'densification' of economy on other airlines.

"But extra legroom comes at a premium; when I flew to Seoul last summer, I chose Korean Air's budget rival, T'Way, because it was so much cheaper."

Also featured in the top 25, former frontrunner Qatar Airways, Air New Zealand and Cathay Pacific all impressed based on passenger comfort.

The list was compiled from traveller feedback and aviation experts with consistency, safety and financial stability key factors in the best-in-class awards.

As for regional winners, Virgin Australia Regional, delivered an "outstanding travel experience" for its efficiency and customer focus while Vietjet won the best ultra-low-cost carrier award for affordability while maintaining quality.

Ms Petersen said: "These airlines deserve recognition for their excellence in hybrid operations and their innovative

offerings. We are proud to be the first aviation media outlet to acknowledge this shift and introduce a dedicated category that celebrates hybrid airlines and their significant positive impact on the travel industry."

AirlineRatings.com's top 25 full-service airlines for 2025

1. Korean Air
2. Qatar
3. Air New Zealand
4. Cathay Pacific
5. Singapore Airlines
6. Emirates
7. Japan Airlines
8. Qantas
9. Etihad
10. Turkish Airlines
11. EVA Air
12. Fiji Airways
13. Virgin Atlantic
14. ANA
15. Aero Mexico
16. Air Caraïbes
17. Thai Airways
18. STARLUX Airlines
19. Vietnam Airlines
20. Sri Lankan Airlines
21. Air France
22. KLM (note the airline are trialling a Hybrid model on some routes)
23. Air Calin
24. Air Mauritius
25. Garuda Indonesia



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Commerce Minister Jam vows adherence to treaties for GSP+

Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan assures the European Union of adhering to 27 international conventions to avail of the trade benefits under the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+) scheme.



On Tuesday, January 28 the minister gave the assurance at a meeting with EU Special Representative for Human Rights Ambassador Olaf Skoog to discuss ways to strengthen the partnership through trade and economic cooperation. In an announcement, the commerce ministry said that the meeting focused on sustaining and advancing trade benefits under the GSP+ while ensuring compliance with international commitments.

The discussions emphasised Pakistan's adherence to the 27 international conventions, covering human rights, labour rights, environmental standards, and good governance, to which Pakistan is a signatory.

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.

In FY24, Pakistan's exports to the EU dipped 3.12pc to \$8.240bn despite its GSP+ status.

In a message on X on Tuesday, January 28 the EU office in Islamabad announced that Olaf Skoog met with Mr Kamal to discuss the economic benefits

and obligations associated with GSP+, particularly concerning human and labour rights. The EU office further highlighted that the European Union remains Pakistan's top export destination, accounting for 30pc of the country's exports in 2023.

According to the announcement, Mr Kamal reiterated Pakistan's commitment to these obligations: "We are not only improving on these aspects as international obligations but because it is beneficial for us as a nation and government."

Mr Skoog praised Pakistan's active engagement with the EU and highlighted the mutual benefits of the GSP+ framework for both Pakistani exporters

and European importers. He also expressed his desire for stronger collaboration between the EU and Pakistan at multilateral human rights forums.

Mr Jam acknowledged the economic challenges faced by the government in the past year and assured the delegation of significant progress, noting reductions in inflation and interest rates.

Both sides agreed to enhance collaboration to ensure Pakistan's continued eligibility for GSP+ status while addressing shared concerns. The commerce minister reiterated the government's commitment to fulfilling international obligations through initiatives led by the Treaty Implementation Cell.

Exports to Europe rise on improved demand in 1HFY25

Exports to European countries grew 8.32 per cent in the first half of 2024-25, mainly due to higher shipments to western states.

In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$4.429 billion in July-December FY25 from \$4.089bn last year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan.

The export resurgence was due to a slight increase in demand for Pakistani goods in western, eastern and northern Europe.

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 12.16pc to \$2.186bn in 6MFY25, up from \$1.949bn in 6MFY24.

There is also a slight increase in exports to eastern and northern Europe. The exports to the north of Europe saw a rise of 14.29pc to \$353.42m in 6MFY25, up from \$309.22m in the corresponding months last year.

Exports to southern Europe saw a paltry growth of 0.06pc to \$1.525bn in

6MFY25 from \$1.524bn in the corresponding period last year. In this region, exports to Spain dipped 3.07pc to \$724.92m in 6MFY25 from \$747.93m in the preceding year.

Exports to Italy increased 0.18pc to \$569.35m in 6MFY25 compared to \$568.29m in the same period last year. Exports to Greece recorded a marginal increase of 7.77pc to \$70.84m during the year under review against \$65.73m over the previous year. However, exports to eastern Europe grew 18.75pc to \$364.89m from \$307.26m 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 \$1.10bn in 6MFY25 from \$1.02bn over the corresponding period of last year, an increase of 7.84pc.

In FY24, Pakistan's exports increased by 2.33pc to \$2.014bn to the UK from \$1.968bn in the preceding year.

Pakistan's exports to western Europe increased by 12.16pc to \$2.186bn in 6MFY24 from \$1.949bn last year.

Exports to Germany surged 15.11pc to \$843.72m in 6MFY24 from \$732.97m. Similarly, exports to the Netherlands, the second biggest market for Pakistani goods, increased 10.79pc to \$742.73m in 6MFY25 from \$670.39m over the corresponding period of last year.

Exports to France rose 10.40pc to \$280.56m in 6MFY24 from \$254.12m, followed by a 7.55pc rise to Belgium's \$298.95m against \$277.96m.

Trade war: a losing situation for all

US President Donald Trump, during a meeting with visiting Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, announced plans to impose reciprocal tariffs on multiple countries very soon, escalating the risk of a global trade war. In today's era of global interconnectedness and economic interdependence, the tariff wars initiated by the US threaten to disrupt international commerce and sow the seeds of discord among countries.

Driven by a combination of economic concerns, political strategy, and ideological beliefs, Trump has once again embraced tariffs as the means to address perceived trade imbalances, protect US industries, and extort concessions from trading partners.

On his inauguration for his second term in office, the White House issued Trump's "America First Trade Policy" memo, saying: "I am establishing a robust and reinvigorated trade policy that promotes investment and productivity, enhances our nation's industrial and technological advantages, defends our economic and national security, and above all benefits American workers, manufacturers, farmers, ranchers, entrepreneurs and businesses."

But the reality is that any trade war is a double-edged sword. While such rhetoric resonates with his political base, particularly in areas of the US that have experienced the loss of manufacturing jobs as a result of globalisation, the tariff wars his administration is waging will not achieve those aims. The US tariff policies have triggered a surge in global trade protectionism. The potential consequences include reduced productivity, higher costs for businesses, and slower economic growth. As Mary Lovely, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said, they are a huge gamble, and "a recipe for slowing down the economy and increasing inflation".

The tariff battles will produce no winners and will not achieve the desired effects for the US. While tariffs might offer protection for specific industries and address trade imbalances in the short term, they fail to promote long-term investment and productivity. Retaliatory tariffs from trading partners can harm export-dependent manufacturing industries and

agriculture, putting jobs at risk. Moreover, trade wars erode trust with trading partners, potentially leading to retaliatory measures that harm the US defense sector's industrial base and disruptions to global supply chains on which many US defence and technology industries rely.

Tariffs are a crude and simple weapon of the Trump administration's beggar-thy-neighbor economic nationalism that aims to reinforce US primacy. But the notion of a winner in a trade war is a fallacy, as the destructive ripple effects of protectionist measures spread far beyond the immediate participants, inflicting harm on economies, businesses, and consumers around the globe.

The uncertainty surrounding US diplomatic and economic policies is having an increasingly significant impact on the global economy and international relations. Trump's trade policies contribute to the complexity and instability of the global economic landscape. This uncertainty makes it difficult for businesses to plan and invest, further dampening economic growth. They are especially harmful to small and medium-sized businesses. China is fully aware of the damaging consequences of trade wars. But the US administration has left it with no choice but to respond with countermeasures. It will not submit to external pressure.

Given the fact that many countries are struggling to recover their economic growth, what the Trump administration is doing will cast a pall on the prospect of the development of the world economy.

By standing up to the US and imposing carefully targeted countermeasures, China is not only showing that it will not be bullied but also demonstrating that it is a staunch defender of free trade and globalisation. China is ready and willing to strengthen its relationships with other countries to oppose the US' harmful unilateralism.

Beijing urges the Trump administration to engage in dialogue. Rather than resorting to adversarial tactics, nations should engage in talks and seek mutual understanding to resolve trade disputes and foster inclusive growth. Cooperation and collaboration are essential to address the complex challenges facing the global economy and to ensure a more stable and prosperous future for all.

Pakistan, Turkiye to review trade agreement

Pakistan and Turkiye discussed on Thursday, February 13, the need to revamp their preferential trade agreement with a view to addressing existing challenges and unlocking the business potential between the two countries.



The understanding was reached at a meeting between Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and his Turkish counterpart, Prof Dr Omer Bolat.

According to an official announcement, the two ministers explored the possibility of reviving and strengthening the D8 Preferential Agreement to boost trade among member countries. Omer Bolat said although Turkish investors faced problems in Pakistan, nearly all of them were eager to expand their investments.

The Turkish minister revealed that during the visit, 21 agreements would be signed in key sectors such as services, tourism, education, IT, defence and infrastructure.

Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to facilitating foreign investment, highlighting efforts to streamline business operations and improve the ease of doing business.

He dwelt at length on the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in ensuring a smooth investment process for Turkish companies.

Jam Kamal appreciated the confidence shown by Turkish companies in Pakistan's economy, citing their investments in infrastructure, manufacturing, energy, transport, and municipal services as examples of growing economic cooperation.

The minister proposed that a Made in Pakistan single-country exhibition be held in Turkiye, aiming to bring Pakistani companies across various industries to showcase their products. He recalled recent successful trade exhibitions in Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan and Ethiopia, noting that Turkiye's strategic location makes it an ideal trade hub for Pakistan.

Omer Bolat, the Turkish trade minister, pledged to work on reciprocal trade fairs and committed to boosting Pakistani exports, particularly Basmati rice, which he

said had not been fully utilised under existing agreements.

During the meeting, Omer Bolat also spoke about his country's booming health tourism sector, which has grown significantly and now attracts a large number of foreign patients every year.

He noted that while wealthy Turkish citizens once used to go abroad for medical treatment, they now prefer Turkish hospitals, both public and private.

Recognising the potential for collaboration, Commerce Minister Jam

Kamal invited Turkiye to participate in Pakistan's healthcare and industrial expo from April 17-19, stressing that joint ventures in medical technology and hospital infrastructure could benefit both nations.

The meeting also deliberated on defence cooperation, with Omer Bolat revealing that Malaysia and Indonesia had placed major orders for Turkish defence equipment. He reaffirmed Ankara's commitment to working closely with Islamabad on defence projects, particularly in joint production and technology transfer.

Zardari, Xi chart course for expansion of CPEC

President Asif Ali Zardari met his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Wednesday, February 05, reaffirming the long-standing strategic partnership between the two nations and exploring new avenues of cooperation under CPEC 2.0.

According to the Presidency, the meeting was held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, where the two leaders also discussed regional and international issues of common interest, and opportunities to further expand the scope of bilateral partnership, especially through continued high-level exchanges.

They highlighted the vital role of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in promoting regional connectivity, shared benefits and common prosperity, including through partnerships with other countries.

Both sides also underlined the significance of people-to-people linkages and cultural exchanges for strengthening the China-Pakistan Community of Shared Future in the New Era.

Underlining the enduring friendship between the two countries, both leaders also reaffirmed support for each other on the issues of core interest.

President Zardari, who is currently on a five-day official visit to China, reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to its "all-weather strategic cooperative partnership" with China and underlined the "unique, time-tested and special relationship" between the two countries.

He also commended China's exemplary development, progress and prosperity, calling it a manifestation of the vision of the Chinese leadership and the dynamism of the Chinese people.



Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Asif Ali Zardari walk past the honour guards during the welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, on Wednesday, February 05.

President Zardari also paid rich tribute to President Xi Jinping for China's profound contributions to global development under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). He described CPEC as a shining model of the BRI's visionary concept of win-win cooperation. He extended the invitation to President Xi to visit Pakistan, emphasising that the people and government of Pakistan hold him in high esteem as a visionary leader and as a special friend of Pakistan.

The meeting was followed by a ceremony where the two leaders witnessed the signing of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to enhance cooperation in science and technology, media, clean energy and socio-economic development, among others.

Earlier, President Zardari was warmly welcomed by President Xi and presented with the guard of honour upon his arrival. A group of children also extended a warm welcome and offered a heartfelt reception to President Zardari.

After the ceremony, President Xi

Jinping hosted a state banquet in honour of President Zardari and his accompanying delegation.

Intelligence sharing

Meanwhile, Pakistan and China agreed to enhance intelligence sharing and deepen cooperation on security matters, as part of efforts to bolster border security and counterterrorism measures.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chinese Minister of Public Security Qi Yanjun in Beijing, according to a communication from the Chinese capital.

The meeting comes in the wake of speculative reports suggesting Mr Naqvi's attendance at an anti-China event in the United States, which were later denied by the interior minister.

During the two-hour meeting, both sides discussed modernising Pakistan's police and paramilitary forces through Chinese technology and expertise. A detailed conversation was held regarding acquiring advanced equipment from China to improve law enforcement capabilities.

Mr Naqvi confirmed that Pakistan would procure modern policing technology from China, while both sides agreed to increase cooperation between Beijing Police and Islamabad Police, as well as expand collaboration with Pakistan's National Police Academy.

Both countries also expressed satisfaction with the progress of the Joint Working Group meeting held in January, which focused on bilateral security cooperation. Mr Naqvi also extended an invitation to his Chinese counterpart to visit Pakistan.

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Islamabad, Riyadh to upgrade trade ties



Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb meets his Saudi counterpart Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan on the sidelines of the Emerging Markets Conference in historical Alula city of Saudi Arabia on February 15, 2025.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on Saturday, February 15 explored ways to enhance cooperation in bilateral commerce, investment and finance, reaffirming their commitment to further strengthening this strategic partnership.

Bilateral cooperation was discussed during a meeting between Finance Minister Mohammad Aurangzeb and his Saudi counterpart Muhammad bin Abdullah Al-Jadaan held on the sidelines of the two-day (Feb 16-17) first high-level AIUla Conference for Emerging Market Economies.

Minister of State and Member of the Council of Ministers Dr Hamad Mohammed Al Sheikh of Saudi Arabia, and finance minister's adviser Khurram Shehzad also attended the meeting. The Saudi finance minister had earlier extended a special welcome to Mr Aurangzeb upon his arrival in Saudi Arabia for the AIUla conference.

An official announcement from the finance ministry said the meeting reaffirmed both countries' commitment to promoting economic cooperation and shared prosperity. The two sides discussed opportunities to enhance cooperation in bilateral trade, investment and financial sectors and expressed their commitment to further strengthening this strategic partnership.

The meeting emphasised a shared commitment to building bridges of economic cooperation and advancing mutual prosperity. Discussions highlighted opportunities to enhance bilateral trade, investments and financial collaboration, with both ministers expressing their dedication to unlocking the full potential of their countries' strategic partnership.

The two ministers also explored avenues for collaboration in key sectors, including infrastructure, energy, technology and finance.

Pakistan to launch freight train service to Russia next month

Pakistan Railways is launching an international freight train service to Russia by March 15 to enhance trade with Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia. The announcement was made by Pakistan Railways Freight CEO Sufiyan Sarfaraz Dogar. He urged the business community, particularly members of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), to commit to containerized cargo shipments for this new service.

between Pakistan and Russia during the 27th Saint Petersburg International Economic Forum in June 2024. The agreement aims to establish an efficient and cost-effective trade route connecting South Asia with Central Asia and Russia.

APTMA Chairman Kamran Arshad highlighted the growing potential of Pakistan's textile industry, which has set an ambitious export target of \$50 billion over the next five years. He acknowledged the government's role in



The freight train will operate from Qasim International Container Terminal and Pakistan International Container Terminal, offering container capacity options of 22 tons and 44 tons. Taftan station in Pakistan will serve as a key entry point for goods traveling along this route. Authorities have addressed most customs-related issues at Taftan to ensure a smooth trade process.

This rail service will facilitate the export of oil, natural gas, steel, and industrial goods from Russia to Pakistan. In return, Pakistani exporters will gain better access to markets in Iran, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia for their textile, food, and agricultural products, including rice, wheat, and cotton. The initiative builds upon a memorandum of understanding signed

creating a supportive environment for the textile sector, contributing to increased exports and foreign exchange earnings.

He suggested automating freight handling and cargo delivery to reduce costs and delays. He also recommended setting up dry ports along the route, introducing a barter trade system between Pakistan and Russia similar to the existing Pakistan-Iran model, and strengthening banking channels with Russia.

APTMA is supporting the new freight service, believing it will significantly boost regional trade and open new economic opportunities. The initiative is expected to streamline logistics, reduce transportation costs, and create a more reliable trade network between Pakistan and Central Asia.

UK Visa rules change in 2025: higher financial requirements for applicants

The UK's new financial requirements for students, visitors, employees, and family applicants have been added to the recently revised visa regulations, which go into effect on January 1, 2025. To guarantee that applicants can sustain themselves in the UK without depending on public funds, these reforms mainly aim to raise the minimum financial criteria. Although the government argues that these policies are essential for maintaining economic stability, questions have been raised concerning their long-term effects, affordability, and accessibility.

The UK is introducing an Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) system for visa-exempt visitors from a few European nations in addition to making financial modifications. Candidates who meet the requirements can apply for an ETA as early as March 5, 2025, and they will need it to gain entrance as early as April 2, 2025. Discussions concerning the effects of this extra layer of travel authorization on both business and short-term tourists have been triggered.

Whether these rules will be changed or repealed has not yet been formally confirmed. Potential improvements in certain visa categories, however, might still be feasible in the upcoming months given the increasing input from stakeholders, such as companies and institutions.

All UK Visa Categories After January 2025 will have New Financial Thresholds

Here is a summary of the financial conditions that will still be necessary for UK visas starting in February 2025, one month after these new modifications were put into effect:

1. More Maintenance Funds for Students

Online education for students

The minimum annual income required for living expenses outside of London for international students applying for a UK visa has increased from £9,207 to £12,000. The rise is more severe for students in London, who now need at least £15,000 annually instead of the previous £12,006. Many potential students are worried about affordability as a result of this rise, which is intended to keep up with growing living expenses.

2. Higher Salary Thresholds for Skilled Workers

The minimum wage criterion for skilled

worker visa applicants has increased from £26,500 to £38,700 annually. Even though some industries with a labor shortage—like healthcare and education—may be exempt, mid-level professionals may find it more challenging to get employment in the UK as a result of this large spike.

3. Higher income Requirement for Sponsorship of Family Visas

Families now have to fulfill more stringent financial criteria to reconnect in the UK. For a UK citizen or resident sponsoring a spouse or dependent, the minimum income criterion increased from £18,600 to £29,000, with additional projected rises that could bring it to £38,700 by 2026. Discussions over the viability of family reunification under these more stringent guidelines have been triggered by this shift.

4. More Proof of Funds for Travelers

Although there is no set financial requirement for tourists, unlike for students or employees, applicants now need to provide more convincing evidence of their financial stability, usually proving that they have at least £1,500 to £2,500 per visit to cover lodging, transportation, and personal expenditures. There have also been variations in the processing time for tourist visas, with some reports indicating lengthier wait times and more paperwork needed.

UK Visa Applicants' Reservations Following These New Changes

1. Students Reevaluate Their Choices

Online education for students

The goal of studying in the UK has grown increasingly difficult for many prospective students. Students are now looking into alternate study locations including China, the Czech Republic, Canada, Australia, and Germany, where financial requirements are still comparatively lower, as colleges express concern about the decline in international enrollments.

2. Employees Dealing with New Obstacles

Even though the UK is still looking for



qualified workers, some industries might find it difficult to draw in talent due to the higher salary threshold. The increasing pay criteria may make it more difficult for startups and small enterprises in particular to hire foreign workers.

3. Family Applicants Having to Make Tough Choices

Some UK citizens may find it difficult to bring their spouses or kids to the nation due to the increased income criteria for family visas. Critics contend that lower-income families are disproportionately affected by these changes, making reunion more challenging.

What Does This Mean for International Students?

The government is being urged by businesses, migration organizations, and universities to reevaluate some limits, especially for family and student applications. Although continued negotiations may result in improvements in some areas, there is currently no formal strategy to reverse or lower these financial requirements. People who are thinking about applying for a UK visa should keep themselves updated, carefully analyze their financial situation, and, if possible, look into employer-sponsored or scholarship alternatives.

More clarifications might be provided in the upcoming months if the UK's immigration laws change. Although it's unclear if changes will be made, candidates are encouraged to prepare ahead of time, carefully go over the updated financial criteria, and get expert assistance if necessary.



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Thar Desert Safari Train launched

Sindh Minister for Culture and Tourism Syed Zulfiqar Ali on Saturday, February 11, performed the launch of Thar Desert Safari Train at a ceremony held at the Cantonment station in Karachi.

The designated route of the train offers an immersive cultural and scenic adventure. From the bustling streets of



Sindh Minister for Culture and Tourism Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah inaugurates the Thar Desert Safari Train at Cantonment Station, Karachi, on Saturday, February 11.

Karachi to the serene desert landscapes of Khokhrapar, Tharparkar, this exciting journey is expected to take tourists and other travellers through vibrant cities, historical towns and picturesque villages.

Upon reaching Chhor, a town in Umerkot district, the people onboard were warmly welcomed by the Umerkot deputy commissioner and SSP, along with other senior government officials and army officers. A large number of jubilant local residents had also gathered at the Chhor station. Children of locals, in cultural attire, greeted the guests with flower bouquets.

Those who arrived in Chhor were supposed to enjoy a stay at the Parchi Ji Veri resort on Saturday February 11 night.

Secretary of Culture department Khair Mohammad Kalwar expressed his happiness on the successful launch of the project and the warm reception from the local community.

The tourism department's managing director hoped that the safari train would not only give a boost to tourism, but would also highlight and promote culture of the entire region. The train's inaugural journey carried over 100 tourists who would be taken to visit a picnic point at Parchi Ji Veri, developed by the army, by bus.

Karachi gets new passport office with 24/7 service availability



Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday, February 13, inaugurated a new passport office at NADRA's Mega centre in Karachi's North Nazimabad area.

The newly launched office is set to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, providing essential services to the public without interruption, Express News reported.

During his visit, Minister Naqvi interacted with citizens at the NADRA Mega centre who had come to apply for national identification cards and passports. He inspected the passport counters and met with the staff, assuring citizens of the government's commitment to improving public services.

"The main goal is to resolve the issues faced by the public," said Naqvi.

"Ensuring efficient service delivery is our responsibility."

The new passport office will operate in three shifts, providing convenience to citizens who previously had to navigate long processing times. In addition to passport services, Minister Naqvi also addressed concerns raised by women regarding the biometric verification process under the Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). He directed relevant authorities to ensure these issues are resolved promptly.

The opening ceremony was attended by Director General of Passports Mustafa

Jamal Qazi and other senior officials, marking another step in the government's efforts to enhance public service accessibility in Karachi.

The public expressed satisfaction with the new setup.

Last month, the Directorate General of Immigration & Passports (DGIP) set up passport counters at NADRA Mega Centers situated in North Nazimabad and the Site Industrial Area.

The one-window processing counters are capable of handling all essential formalities for the issuance and renewal of passports, including photo, thumb impressions, and document verification.

The facility will cater to over 400 passport applications on a daily basis. The new facility, launched on Monday, will reduce the rush at passport offices situated in Saddar and Awami Markaz.

Initially, six passport processing counters have been set up at NADRA Mega Center in North Nazimabad near Five Star Chowrangi, while six counters have been set up at NADRA Mega Center situated in Site Industrial Area.

An assistant director and required staff has been deployed at both the centers. These facilities will work round the clock in three shifts. Citizens will be able to avail passport renewal and issuance services 24 hours a day in both centers. At least 400 applicants are likely to benefit from both centers every day.

PM urges national team to give its best in CT



Pakistan cricketers unveil their kits for the upcoming Champions Trophy during the opening ceremony for the renovated Gaddafi Stadium on Friday, February 07.

Urging the Pakistan cricket team to give its best at the upcoming Champions Trophy, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif said the country will show the world its hospitality when the tournament begins.

Addressing a large gathering at the inauguration of the renovated Gaddafi Stadium, Shehbaz hoped Pakistan will beat arch-rivals India in their high-voltage clash of the Champions Trophy in Dubai on Feb 23.

India's matches of the tournament - the first ICC event to be hosted by Pakistan since it was co-host for the 1996 ODI World Cup - are being played in neutral United Arab Emirates after its government refused to send its team to Pakistan and the prime minister stated: "We will show the world that we are great hosts."

He added that he had high expectations from the Pakistan side.

"We all are praying for you. We are all waiting for the moment when you will defeat India," he said. "Babar Azam and [captain] Mohammad Rizwan, we have lots of expectations from you. Shaheen Shah Afridi, you should follow in the footsteps of your father-in-law [Shahid Afridi] and pile up wickets."

The ceremony was also attended by the Pakistan team, which unveiled its kit for the Champions Trophy, besides Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi, Punjab Chief Minister

Maryam Nawaz and many federal and provincial ministers.

Shehbaz praised the work done by Mohsin, the Punjab government and the FWO in completing the renovation of the Gaddafi Stadium in a record span of just 117 days during which LED floodlights, larger score screens, new hospitality boxes and upgraded seating were installed.

Mohsin said that the "Champions Trophy was for all of Pakistan".

In a musical ceremony that followed, singers Arif Lohar, Ali Zafar and Aima Baig performed with a lights

and fireworks show also part of the inauguration.

When the PCB began its expansive renovation plan for the three Champions Trophy venues in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi, there were concerns whether they will be ready in time.

Following the inauguration of the Gaddafi Stadium, a ceremony for Karachi's National Bank Stadium - which hosts the Champions Trophy opener between Pakistan and New Zealand on Feb 19 - is set for Tuesday.



Fireworks light up the sky during the inauguration ceremony of the renovated Gaddafi Stadium, on Friday, February 07. Gaddafi Stadium is one of the three to be used when Pakistan hosts its first major event in years. The ICC Champions Trophy 2025 will run from Feb 19 to March 9.

Horse & cattle show held in full splendour



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz arrive at the National Horse and Cattle Show 2025 at Fortress Stadium, Lahore on Feb 9, 2025.

The National Horse and Cattle Show 2025 commenced with grandeur at Fortress Stadium, Lahore, after a hiatus of several years.

The spectacular event was inaugurated by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, marking a vibrant celebration of Pakistan's rich cultural and agricultural heritage.

As the show commenced, the Fortress Stadium resonated with the rhythmic beats of traditional drums.

International tent pegging teams from Pakistan, Kuwait, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the United States participated in a grand march, while archery teams from Pakistan, Iran, Turkiye, and Tajikistan displayed their skills in a captivating parade. The livestock march, featuring camels and she-camels dancing to the beats, further enhanced the festive atmosphere.

The event also showcased a magnificent livestock exhibition, highlighting Punjab's best breeds, including Nili-Ravi and Sahiwal buffaloes; Lohi and Mandri sheep; and Thal, Faisalabadi, Gujrat Beetal and Nachi goats.

A parade of vibrant floats depicting regional and provincial cultures enthralled the audience. Each float featured traditional dances and performances, adding colour and energy to the show.

Among the highlights was the mystical Dervish dance performance, which left the audience spellbound. Slovakian artists mesmerized spectators with laser light tricks, while a Macedonian band brought international musical flavors to the event.

Renowned choreographer Wahab Shah, accompanied by hundreds of artists, showcased Punjab's traditional

songs, immersing the crowd in the provinces rich musical heritage.

The performance of singer Atif Aslam was met with overwhelming enthusiasm by the spectators.

The event also featured drone displays, stunning laser images of the national flag, Minar-i-Pakistan, and other cultural symbols. The lighting of torches added a dramatic touch to the night.

The National Horse and Cattle Show 2025 has not only revived a cherished tradition but has also strengthened Pakistan's cultural identity on the global stage, leaving an indelible mark on all who attended.

Besides PM Shehbaz and CM Maryam, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, foreign dignitaries and participants of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference also attended the opening ceremony.



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First 'Made in Pakistan' expo opens in Jeddah

Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan on Thursday, February 06, inaugurated the country's first-ever 'Made in Pakistan' single-country exhibition in Jeddah, marking a significant step towards enhancing trade ties with Saudi Arabia.

Addressing a gathering of Saudi officials, business leaders and diplomats, the minister emphasised the importance of strengthening bilateral economic cooperation and showcasing Pakistan's diverse industrial potential.

According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Commerce, the minister highlighted various aspects of Pakistan-Saudi economic ties. In his keynote speech, Jam Kamal Khan expressed his gratitude to Saudi Arabia for its support in organising the exhibition. This event, he said, was a testament to the enduring relationship between the two nations, rooted in shared faith, cultural ties and strategic partnership.

He highlighted that the exhibition served as a platform to present Pakistan's best products and services, including textiles, sports goods, light engineering, food, construction materials and more.

Govt committed to expanding trade, investment ties with Saudi Arabia, says commerce minister

The minister underlined the government's commitment to expanding trade and investment ties with Saudi Arabia through strategic economic

initiatives.

He noted that Pakistan's evolving industrial base and dynamic economy offered immense potential for collaboration, particularly in sectors like food security, energy, mining and human resource development.

"Our government is dedicated to fostering an investment-driven environment, and Saudi Arabia, with its Vision 2030, is ideally positioned to benefit from these opportunities," Mr Khan said. He also highlighted the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in prioritising Saudi investments in Pakistan.

He praised the contributions of the 2.7 million-strong Pakistani diaspora in Saudi Arabia, describing them as a cornerstone of bilateral ties.

He highlighted that over 1.7 million Pakistani workers have migrated to Saudi Arabia in the past five years, making it the top destination for Pakistani emigrants. The minister stressed the need for joint efforts in skill development to further enhance employment opportunities for Pakistanis in the kingdom.

The minister proudly showcased Pakistan's globally renowned football manufacturing industry at the exhibition. He congratulated Saudi Arabia on winning the bid to host the 2034 FIFA World Cup and expressed confidence that Pakistan would continue its legacy of

producing footballs for the prestigious event.

"From Brazuca to Telstar to Al-Rihla, Pakistani footballs have a rich history with FIFA. We look forward to contributing to FIFA 2034," he stated.

Mr Khan called for deeper collaborations between Pakistani and Saudi businesses, emphasising the potential for joint ventures targeting markets in Africa, Central Asia and the Far East.

FIFA suspends Pakistan Football Federation

FIFA on Thursday, February 06, suspended the Pakistan Football Federation "with immediate effect" after the recently elected PFF Congress rejected the constitutional amendments proposed by the global football body.

"The PFF has been suspended with immediate effect due to its failure to adopt a revision of the PFF Constitution that would ensure truly fair and democratic elections and thereby fulfil its obligations as mandated by FIFA as part of the ongoing normalisation process of PFF," FIFA said in a statement.

"The suspension will only be lifted subject to the PFF Congress approving the version of the PFF Constitution presented by FIFA and the AFC."

Speaking at a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Inter-provincial Coordination earlier in the day, Haroon Malik — the chairman of the PFF Normalisation Committee appointed by FIFA — had stated Pakistan was risking suspension.

The suspension adds pressure on the PFF Congress to accept FIFA's demands. At its extraordinary meeting last month, the congress had rejected the amendments which mostly centre on the candidacy for the president. FIFA had given the PFF NC till Feb 15 to conduct the elections but the rejection of the amendments by the congress put the process on hold.

Malik wrote to members of the Congress, aiming to set up meetings to resolve the issue. The PFF has been mired in crisis and controversy since 2015 and this is the third time since 2017 that Pakistan has been suspended.



Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan shows a football to Saudi Assistant Investment Minister Ibrahim Al Mubarak at Pakistan expo, on Thursday, February 06.



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'Tourism gets boost' in Pakistan after New York show award

The Alpine Club of Pakistan has said the country's tourism industry has received a significant boost with its recent achievement at the New York Travel and Adventure Show 2025.

In a statement on Sunday, February 09, Alpine Club of Pakistan secretary Karrar Haideri said Pakistan won the Best Partner Pavilion Award at the New York show which was a "remarkable milestone that strengthens the country's global image as one of the top travel destinations for tourists of the world".

The statement said that visitors, particularly those associated with mountaineering, adventure tourism and religious tourism, showed great interest in Pakistan's tourism potential at the event.

The increase in royalty fees for climbing and trekking expeditions was also discussed at during the show at the Pakistan Consulate in New York.

A delegation from Pakistan Association of Tour Operators (PATO), led by Senior Vice Chairman Nasir Hussain, expressed concern with a GB government delegation over the recent increase in royalty fees for climbing and trekking expeditions.

They urged the government to review its decision.

The delegation said the move could discourage international mountaineers and trekkers besides impacting local porters and communities which depend on tourism for their livelihood in GB, home to the world's highest peaks, including five with an altitude of over 8,000 metres.

The GB government delegation, including additional chief secretary Mushtaq Ahmad, held out an assurance that the matter would be reviewed.

The two-day show was held in New York on January 25 and 26.

GB Chief Minister Gulbar Khan, Pakistan Ambassador to US Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, GB Minister for Tourism Ghulam Muhammad, Minister for Planning and Development Raja Nasir Ali Khan, Consul General of Pakistan in New York Aamer Ahmed Atozai, Trade and Investment Counsellor in New York Adnan Mahmood Awan, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) representatives and officials from four provincial governments and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and

GB tourism departments were present at the Pakistan Pavilion.

The PTDC and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan had jointly set up the tourism pavilion in collaboration with the Consulate General of Pakistan, New York.

A total of 15 private Pakistani companies from the four provinces, AJK and GB tourism departments and PTDC had set up their booths at the pavilion, showcasing Pakistani products and tourists' destinations in Pakistan.

This New York event is the largest US travel show and it is organised annually for travel lovers from across the world to come to the show to discover new destinations to make plans for their next trips and get help.

Chitral records first non-exportable trophy hunting of markhor

For the first time in the history of Chitral Gol National Park, a non-exportable trophy hunting of Kashmir Markhor was carried out here on Monday, February 03.

Gulab Khan, a member of the local community, told media that American national, Kyle Adam Miller, selected the markhor of trophy size in the buffer zone of the national park near Shoghore village on Garam Chashma Road and easily hunted it down.

He said that the length of the horn of

the nine and a half year old markhor was measured at 42 inches.

He said that on the demand of the



communities depending on the national park, the government had last year decided to start non-exportable trophy hunting in the buffer zones of the national park.

Gulab Khan said that as per decision, the hunters could not export the trophy (horns) of the hunted animal with them to their home countries. He said that it had been the longstanding demand of the community as due to the successful conservation, the population of the markhor had increased in the park area.



Artists perform during the inaugural ceremony of the National Horse and Cattle Show at the Fortress Stadium, on Sunday, February, 09. PM Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz inaugurated the event, which also featured teams from Kuwait, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa and the United States.

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