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The DGR Course held at Zonal ACAAP office Sialkot, arranged by Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone, Vice Chairman, Mr. Faizan Akram, Convener Training & Education Subcommittee, and Mr. Amjad Fakhri, Member EC, and Mr. Zahid Abbas Member TES Subcommittee from 14-18 April 2025.

China's CH-YH1000 cargo drone completes maiden flight

China's CH-YH1000 unmanned logistics aircraft completed its maiden test flight on Thursday 22 May at an airfield in Northwest China. The test has retrieved good flight data and achieved its goals, the Global Times learned from the cargo drone's developer.

The successful test flight represented a key developmental milestone for the CH-YH1000 unmanned cargo aircraft since the start of the program a year ago, according to a press release the Aerospace CH UAV Co Ltd, the developer of the aircraft, sent to the Global Times.

The CH-YH1000 cargo drone is a multi-purpose unmanned aerial platform designed for medium-altitude unmanned logistics operations. It features a classic cargo aircraft layout and a twin-engine design, equipped with mission-proven avionics from the CH drone series, ensuring strong anti-interference capabilities and high robustness, according to the CH UAV company.

With outstanding short takeoff and landing performance and the ability to operate in harsh environments, the CH-YH1000 can take off and land on secondary roads, compacted dirt runways and grassy fields. Additionally, when fitted with float kits, it can perform water landings, and with ski kits, it can operate on snowy terrain, significantly expanding the application scenarios of unmanned logistics aircraft, the drone maker said. The successful test flight came after the drone completed a full-load taxiing test under full working conditions in Zhanghe Airport in Jingmen, Central China's Hubei Province in January.

A developer of the drone told the Global Times at the time that the CH-YH1000 is like a "pickup truck in the air," and that the drone developer hopes to achieve efficient air transportation at only a slightly higher cost than land transportation, meet the logistics needs of remote areas, and solve the problem of high delivery fees and slow delivery time in regions such as Xizang and Xinjiang. Official data show that the CH-YH1000 unmanned logistics aircraft boasts a range of 1,500 kilometers, a mission endurance of 10 hours, a service ceiling of 8,000 meters, and a payload capacity of 1,200 kilograms. It can carry four one-cubic-meter cargo pallets, with the capability to load and unloading cargos from its front and to drop cargos from its belly, enabling flexible logistics operations. Additionally, its six-kilowatt onboard power supply supports special mission

equipment, meeting diverse operational demands.

The drone can connect central cities with remote counties and townships, enabling low-cost, rapid cargo transport, addressing logistics challenges in remote central and western regions, the company said, noting that the aircraft is also capable of diverse delivery missions, demonstrating exceptional versatility.

Fu Qianshao, a Chinese aviation expert who closely observed the CH-YH1000 when a prototype was displayed at the Airshow China 2024 in Zhuhai, South China's Guangdong Province, told the Global Times that the cargo drone was uniquely designed, enabling rapid loading and unloading, leading to a high daily

sortie rate, which reduces operational costs.

Compared with manned transport aircraft, the cargo drone features a lower empty weight and higher load capacity, resulting in greater efficiency and reduced costs, granting it another significant advantage, Fu said.



The CH-YH1000 unmanned logistics aircraft completes its test flight at an airfield in Northwest China on May 22, 2025. The test retrieved good flight data and achieved its goals, according to the drone's developer.





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Australian High Commission Delegation visits Skardu International Airport

A delegation from the Australian High Commission in Islamabad visited Skardu International Airport to review airport facilities, emergency response readiness, and security arrangements.

The visiting team included Mr. Scott Gordon Macdonald-Golden, Second Secretary and Consul; Mr. Wali Muhammad, Manager Consular and Passports; and Mr. Nasir Abbas, Assistant Security Manager. The delegation was received by the Airport Manager, accompanied by the Officer Commanding (ASF), Officer In-Charge Medical, and the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer (CFRO).

The purpose of the visit was to gain familiarization with the airport's operational procedures and ensure adequate support and safety measures are in place for Australian nationals, particularly tourists traveling to the region.

During the visit, the delegation toured the arrival and departure terminals, observed passenger handling procedures, and received briefings on Skardu Airport's emergency preparedness and security protocols. The team also reviewed general passenger amenities and expressed satisfaction with the airport's cleanliness, organization, and service quality.

Skardu International Airport, operated by the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), continues to play a pivotal role in promoting tourism in the northern region of Pakistan. The airport is fully equipped and ready to welcome both domestic and international travelers.



Fastest business jet in the world completes first flight from Toronto

The fastest business jet in the world just completed its first flight from Toronto. Bombardier's Global 8000 is now one step closer to certification. This jet is capable of reaching a top speed of Mach 0.94 and an 8,000-nautical-mile range.

And it would be the world's fastest civilian aircraft since the Concorde.

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Introducing SBX Cars, the world's first premium global car auction platform by @supercarblondie!

There's constantly exciting developments happening in the world of airplanes.

Supersonic flights could be coming back to America thanks to a new government bill.

A Chinese company is reportedly building a hypersonic plane that could circle the Earth in just under seven hours.

And there's the AHyM, which travels five times faster than the speed of sound.

But these are just the tip of the iceberg in a rapidly changing industry.

In a similar vein, there's Bombardier's Global 8000.

Billed as the fastest business jet in the world, it took flight over the past weekend, replacing the Global 7500.

It took off from Bombardier's Aircraft Assembly Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, which borders Toronto, and executed a

series of tests before wrapping up.

Stephen McCullough, Bombardier's senior vice president of engineering and product development, is optimistic about the progress so far.

"Having this first production aircraft take to the skies is another important step in this journey that will redefine the business aviation landscape," McCullough told the Robb Report.

Bombardier expects the plane to be certified and delivered to its first owner by the end of the year.

The next step is to have the interior completed at Bombardier's headquarters in the Laurent Beaudoin Completion Center in Montreal.

In many ways, the Global 8000 is similar to its predecessor, the 7500.

The 7500 has racked up more than 250,000 flying hours over 200 planes delivered since 2018.

What sets the 8000 apart from it is modifications on the wings, which allow for more space for fuel reserves – giving it increased range.

The top speed has also been increased by 38MPH.

But the cruising altitude of 51,000 feet will remain the same.

In addition to being the fastest of business jets, the 8000 will reportedly also have the lowest cabin pressurization.

With four living zones onboard – including a master suite and a stand-up shower – it's also set to be the largest.



PIA successfully completes Haj operation

The Pakistan International Airline's Haj operation which began on April 29, concluded successfully on May 31, transporting 42,000 pilgrims to Saudi Arabia.

A spokesman for PIA said that a total of 147 Haj flights were operated to transport 42,400 pilgrims to the holy land.

These flights include 35,000 government pilgrims, 4,000 private pilgrims, and more than 3,000 pilgrims left behind by other airlines during the closure of domestic airspace, said the spokesman.

He said that the national carrier's Haj flight schedule regularity ratio remained above 90 per cent.

PIA's post-Haj operation will begin from June 10, 2025, said the spokesperson.

FlyDubai starts operations to Peshawar Airport

FlyDubai launched its operations at Bacha Khan International Airport (BKIAP) Peshawar with the arrival of flight FZ-375 from Dubai (DXB-PEW). The inaugural flight, carrying 164 passengers, received a celebratory water cannon salute upon landing.

Following the arrival, a cake cutting event was held, attended by senior officials including the Airport Manager, Airside Manager, Duty Terminal Manager, FlyDubai Director Commercial, Chief Security Officer ASF, CFRO, DD Operations ASF, DD FIA, and FlyDubai staff.

This milestone marks a significant expansion of aviation connectivity between Peshawar and the Gulf States, further enhancing access to European destinations. The inaugural flight departed at 02:20 hours, carrying 185 passengers on flight FZ-375 from Peshawar to Dubai.

Air Asia starts flights from Kuala Lumpur to Karachi



AirAsia of Malaysia touched down in Pakistan for the very first time on May 30, landing at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport around 2145 hours after a smooth 6-hour flight from Kuala Lumpur to Karachi.



US and China reach deal to cut tariffs, easing slump fears

The United States and China have agreed to temporarily slash reciprocal tariffs in a deal that surpassed expectations as the world's two biggest economies seek to end a damaging trade war that has stoked fears of recession and roiled financial markets.

The US will cut extra tariffs it imposed on Chinese imports in April this year to 30 per cent from 145pc and Chinese duties on US imports will fall to 10pc from 125pc, the two sides said recently.

The new measures are effective for 90 days.

The dollar rose and stock markets lifted following the news, which helped allay concerns about a downturn triggered last month by US President Donald Trump's escalation of tariff measures aimed at narrowing the US trade deficit.

"Both countries represented their national interest very well," US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent said after talks with Chinese officials in Geneva. "We both have an interest in balanced trade, the US will continue moving towards that."

Striking a conciliatory tone towards China, Bessent was speaking alongside US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer after the weekend talks in Switzerland in which both sides hailed progress on narrowing differences.

"The consensus from both delegations this weekend is neither side wants a decoupling," Bessent said. "And what had occurred with these very high tariffs ... was the equivalent of an embargo, and neither side wants that. We do want trade." The tariff dispute had brought nearly \$600 billion in two-way trade to a standstill, disrupting supply chains, sparking fears of stagflation and triggering some layoffs. The Geneva meetings were the first face-to-face interactions between senior US and Chinese economic officials since Trump returned to power and launched a global tariff blitz, imposing particularly hefty duties on China.

Bessent said the deal did not include sector-specific tariffs and that the US would continue strategic rebalancing in areas including medicines, semiconductors and steel where it had identified supply chain vulnerabilities.

The accord went further than many analysts had expected following weeks of confrontational rhetoric on trade.

"This is better than I expected. I thought tariffs would be cut to somewhere around 50pc," said Zhiwei Zhang, chief

economist at Pinpoint Asset Management in Hong Kong.

"Obviously, this is very positive news for economies in both countries and for the global economy, and makes investors much less concerned about the damage to global supply chains in the short term," Zhang added.

Shares in LVMH and Kering go up

Meanwhile, shares in luxury firms LVMH and Gucci-owner Kering were up 7.4pc and 6.7pc respectively.

US planemaker Boeing did not respond to requests for comment on how the deal would affect deliveries of aircraft to Chinese customers. In April, it said it was looking to resell potentially dozens of planes locked out of China by tariffs. Wall Street stock futures climbed as the talks boosted hopes a global recession might be averted.

Trump gave a positive reading of the talks before they had concluded, saying the two sides had negotiated "a total reset... in a friendly, but constructive, manner." The president levied the tariffs in part after declaring a national emergency over fentanyl entering the United States, and Greer said conversations over curbing the deadly opioid were "very constructive" though on a separate track.

US and Chinese officials met over two days at the Swiss UN ambassador's gated villa overlooking Lake Geneva. Greer said many of the most challenging issues were settled outside, sitting on patio furniture beneath the shade of a tall tree.

"Having this setting, as opposed to ... a sterile hotel conference situation or conference rooms, I think, let us develop personal relationships with our counterparts and lead to the successful conclusion," he said.

World's largest and heaviest amphibious aircraft receives certification

This means that the AG600, the world's largest and heaviest amphibious aircraft, has completed a long list of stringent tests and has gained permission to enter the market, AVIC said.

The AG600 is China's second amphibious aircraft model after the SH-5, which was developed in the 1970s for military purposes and has long since been retired from service.

It is one of three large-sized aircraft to emerge from the nation's ambitious effort to become a top-tier player in the global aviation sector, joining the Y-20 strategic transport plane and the C919 narrow-body jetliner, which are both in active service.

Development of the AG600 was approved by the central government in June 2009 and began in September that year. Tens of thousands of researchers and engineers from 312 domestic institutes, enterprises and universities took part in the program. Construction of the first prototype began in March 2014 and was completed in July 2016.

The AG600 made its maiden flight in December 2017 in Zhuhai in South China's Guangdong province, taking off and landing at an airport. Ten months later, it carried out the first water-based takeoff and landing on the Zhanghe Reservoir in Jingmen, Central China's Hubei province.

In July 2020, the seaplane conducted its first sea-based test flight over the Yellow Sea.

Over the past several years, four prototypes have been built to undertake various kinds of tests across the country to verify the flying boat's capabilities and compliance with airworthiness standards.



An AG600 large amphibious aircraft conducts a flight test in Pucheng county of Northwest China's Shaanxi province.

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Pakistan confirmed the sale of up to 40 new JF-17 Thunder to Azerbaijan



At the same time as it officially announced the Chinese offer for 40 J-35A fighters to equip its Air Force, the government of Pakistan confirmed through a brief statement on its social media platforms that it has reached an agreement with Azerbaijan to carry out the sale of up to 40 new JF-17 Thunder Block III fighters. These aircraft will allow Azerbaijan to replace its current fleets composed of Russian MiG-29 fighters, which are complemented by Su-25 attack aircraft. According to the statement, Baku will invest a total of \$4.6 billion to complete the deal, representing a significant boost for Pakistan's military-industrial complex.



It is worth noting that the number of JF-17 fighters in this deal is considerably higher than the figure originally announced last September, which was estimated at around a dozen aircraft manufactured by the joint venture between Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and Chengdu Aircraft Industry Corporation. At the time, the news emerged shortly after the end of a renewed conflict between Azerbaijan and neighboring Armenia, which led to a new requirement for a minimum of 24 fighters moving forward.

It should also be recalled that the Sino-Pakistani aircraft had already been showcased at HeydarAliyev Airport in the presence of Azerbaijani President IlhamAliyev and officials from the lities.

country's Air Force. On that occasion, the local delegation not only had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the platform in a static display—which included a presentation of the broad array of weaponry the JF-17 can carry—but also witnessed a flight demonstration highlighting the aircraft's capabilities.



Furthermore, as previously reported last year, Azerbaijan's Air Force is expected to leverage its partnership with Turkey and its defense industry to acquire the weaponry to be integrated into the newly purchased fighters. In this context, there has been discussion of a potential purchase of Bozdoğan and Gökdoğan missiles, for short- and medium-range engagements respectively. This aligns with Azerbaijan's broader strategy of diversifying its sources of military equipment and reducing its reliance on Russia in this domain.

**Goodbye to traffic:
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Imagine rising above gridlock instead of crawling through it—that's the promise of Klein Vision's newly certified AirCar, expected on U.S. roads and runways in 2026.

Drivers, commuters, and even small businesses stand to gain. The company



plans roughly 100 units a year at \$800,000–\$1 million each, turning what could be a two-hour slog into a 30-minute hop. At rest the six-meter AirCar looks like a sleek coupé no wider than an SUV. Tap a dashboard button and, in 80 seconds, wings and tail unfold while a 280-horsepower V-6 shifts from the wheels to a rear propeller.

Top speeds reach 124 mph on pavement and 155 mph in the sky, backed by a 1,000-kilometer flight range and a service ceiling of 10,000 feet. Handy, right?

What makes Klein Vision's AirCar different from earlier flying car prototypes

Many concepts stalled at the paperwork stage. After 170 flight hours and 500 takeoffs and landings, the AirCar earned an airworthiness certificate from the Slovak Transport Authority in 2022 and is now courting U.S. regulators.

Prospective owners will need both a driver's license and a private-pilot certificate—are weekend flight lessons in your future? Before diving into policy debates, check how the AirCar compares with everyday options.

| Feature | AirCar | Conventional car | Regional jet |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------|--------------|
| Cruise speed | 155 mph | 65 mph | 450 mph |
| Door-to-door flexibility | High | High | Low |
| Runway required | Short airstrip | None | Full airport |
| Typical price | \$0.8–1M | \$40–70K | \$30–40M |

Challenges that could slow down the future of personal aviation in cities Urban air corridors, noise limits, and miniature “vertiports” must be mapped out long before skies fill with hybrid vehicles. Insurers, meanwhile, are puzzling over risk models for a machine that drives like a sports car yet flies like a light plane. Nevertheless, regulators tend to move faster once certified hardware exists—drones prove that point. Quick pros and cons at a glance: The Air Car's advantages and drawbacks fall into four easy bullet points:

PAA conducts e-Kacheri to address public grievances



The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) held an e-Kacheri session recently at its Karachi headquarters, chaired by the Deputy Director General (Works and Development) Sumair Saeed. Senior officials from Engineering Services, Human Resources, Security, Commercial & Estates, and Communication & Navigation Services were also present to assist in responding to public concerns.

Complaints raised by passengers included lost or damaged luggage, delays in airline compensation, bribery allegations against a ground handling agency, and requests to replace armed security with facilitation staff at airport entry points. Employee-related grievances involved harassment by officials, illegal fee collection by security personnel from retainership staff, and contractors not paying full wages to workers deployed at airports.

Infrastructure issues such as traffic congestion, porter shortages, and malfunctioning facilities were also discussed. In response to a query, the Chair stated that the consultancy phase is underway for upgrading Dera Ghazi Khan Airport, and runway expansion will be completed by the end of next year.

The Chair issued immediate instructions for urgent complaints, forwarded matters to relevant departments, and advised further investigation of localized issues. Complainants with complex concerns were asked to submit supporting evidence.

He concluded by saying, "We value public feedback—it drives improvement. Grievances raised today will be swiftly addressed, and systemic reforms will be prioritized to enhance service quality." Updates on unresolved matters will be shared in future sessions and directive implementation will be closely reviewed.



Mr. Sumair Saeed Dy. DG Pakistan Airports Authority conducts the e-Kacheri meeting.

Sheikh Zayed airport RYK damaged slightly



DEBRIS is strewn across the runway and lounge of Sheikh Zayed International Airport after it was hit by a missile fired by India on Saturday 10 May.

The Sheikh Zayed International Airport (SZIA) in Rahim Yar Khan district of Punjab — a landmark viewed as a symbol of friendship between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates — was struck by an air-to-surface missile fired by India in the early hours of Saturday 10 May, causing significant damage to its infrastructure, including the Royal Lounge used by the UAE president and his family.

Deputy Commissioner Khuram Javed confirmed that India targeted the airport with both a missile and a drone.

He said the airport is occasionally used by the Abu Dhabi royal family, as

commercial flight operations have been suspended since 2023.

The attack destroyed the Royal Lounge, and a 10-foot-wide crater was left at the apron area of the airport.

The deputy commissioner also confirmed that the UAE embassy has been informed about the damage caused to the airport.

Locals living near the airport reported hearing loud blasts around

4:15am on Saturday, which caused many to wake up in alarm.

Named after the late UAE president Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the airport serves as a vital part of Pakistan's aviation network and carries diplomatic importance because of its ties to the Gulf nation.

According to Civil Aviation Authority's website, the airport played a vital role during 1973 and 2010 floods for logistics support, including food and other supplies, as well as transportation of flood victims.

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Why The Boeing 737 MAX Has Such A Flattened Engine Shape Compared To The 737NG

How Different Will The Boeing 777X Be From The 777?

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Keuhne+Nagel, a major shipping company, has partnered with Natilus, which is developing a blended-wing body (BWB) aircraft, to explore the



possibilities of deploying such aircraft in the air cargo sector.

However, the two companies did not disclose an order. Natilus previously indicated that it has secured over 460 orders for the Kona, an autonomous cargo aircraft that can carry a payload of up to 20,000 lbs (9,072 kg).



Keuhne+Nagel

2023, announced a partnership with Natilus, a United States-based startup that aims to build commercial passenger and cargo aircraft.

The shipping giant said that the partnership will entail studies of Natilus' BWB aircraft and its environmental, economic, and operational impact of

integrating the to-be aircraft into commercial air freight operations.

"Leveraging its knowledge of the air logistics industry, Kuehne+Nagel will collaborate with Natilus to explore the operational feasibility of implementing its aircraft within the industry, focusing on route modelling, environmental impact assessment, operational cost analysis, and engagement with the aviation industry."

Reducing Fuel Consumption, Improving Payload

Keuhne+Nagel claimed that Natilus was the first company to commercialize a BWB design, with the startup, founded in 2016, looking to develop an aircraft family that would reduce fuel consumption by 30% and increase payload by 40%, without providing the



baseline for the comparison.

"Together, the companies will assess how blended-wing-body aircraft will operate within existing fleets to improve logistics efficiency, enhance service offerings, and reduce carbon emissions in freight forwarding," Keuhne+Nagel said, adding that it has been actively exploring opportunities to become more sustainable for its customers.

Holger Ketz, the Senior Vice President of Network and Carrier Management of Air Logistics at Kuehne+Nagel, stated that the company has always led the way in making air freight logistics more sustainable. Its collaboration with Natilus is just another example of how it is exploring new technologies for more environmentally friendly and cost-effective air freight solutions. Aleksey Matyushev, the founder and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Natilus, said that the partnership with the shipping company is "a meaningful step in helping the industry better understand the powerful advantages of blended-wing-body aircraft, which will



become a blueprint for other logistics companies over the next decade."

Natilus Horizon Blended Wing Plane Wants To Take A Slice Of Airbus & Boeing Narrowbody Market

Natilus promised that the Horizon, slated to compete directly against the Airbus A320neo and Boeing 737 MAX, should enter service in the early 2030s.

11 Looking For A Production Site

So far in 2025, developments for Natilus have been limited. In addition to a partnership announcement with Palantir, a company that has close ties with the



Donald Trump administration, including a \$30 million contract to track migrants and their self-deportation and deportation logistics, the company has also begun searching for space to build its manufacturing facilities.

On March 25, the company said that it has begun the process of selecting a potential site for the assembly of its aircraft to produce its BWB freighter Kona and the 200-passenger Horizon BWB commercial aircraft. "New tariffs on critical materials are expected to exacerbate aviation supply chain challenges and further delay deliveries of cargo and passenger aircraft to US airlines," it said, highlighting that by establishing its facilities in the US, it is well-positioned to mitigate the impact of potential trade restrictions and supply chain restrictions.

Iran's IKA awards contract for large air cargo logistics site



Iran's largest airport awards a \$300 mln contract for an air cargo logistics site.

Iran's largest airport has awarded a contract for an air cargo logistics site amid efforts to turn the airport into a major air freight hub in the West Asia region.

The Imam Khomeini Airport (IKA) issued a statement recently saying that it had signed a \$300-million contract with a private investor to launch a multi-level cargo terminal and logistics center at the airport.

IKA's CEO Saeed Chalandari said that the cargo logistics site will be the largest in Iran and will significantly increase the country's air freight capacity.

Chalandari said Iran's flag carrier airline Iran Air will contribute to the project, adding that the cargo terminal will start its operation at half capacity in 2028.

He said the project will create nearly 1,000 permanent jobs and will help Iran's efforts to become a major air freight hub in the West Asia region.

IKA is Iran's largest airport and is located some 25 kilometers to the southwest of the capital, Tehran. The airport offers services to dozens of international airlines flying to more than 50 destinations around the world.

The Iranian transportation ministry has planned major expansion projects for IKA in recent years despite US sanctions that restrict the country's access to international investment.

Authorities said in August 2023 that they had awarded a \$2.7 billion contract to a Chinese company to build out the airport's second phase, a project which they said would be executed across 410,000 hectares of lands located to the south of the airport.

Iran has gained considerable revenues from international cargo transit in recent years under plans to diversify its economy away from crude oil exports.

Largest Engine in the World to Power 777X will undergo Dust-Ingestion test

GE's enhanced testing protocols address durability shortfalls that particularly affected power plants operated in dusty and sandy regions such as the Middle East.

BOSTON- GE Aerospace completed its first round of GE9X dust-ingestion tests in 2022. It conducted 1,600 engine-run cycles that revealed no adverse findings.

The company established these tests as part of its preparation for the 105,000 lb-thrust GE9X engine. This engine will power Boeing's long-delayed 777-9 aircraft scheduled for customer delivery next year.

GE9X Engine for Boeing 777-9; Photo: By Dan Nevill from Seattle | Wikimedia Commons

GE Engine Testing Phase

GE announced on May 28 that it has approached completion of the **second round of GE9X dust-ingestion tests**, building upon the initial 2022 evaluations.

The GE9X represents the first powerplant GE subjected to dust-ingestion tests before service entry. It reflects the company's increased focus on durability following reliability issues affecting both GE's engines and competitors' models in recent years, as flagged by Flight Global.

GE's enhanced testing protocols address durability shortfalls that particularly affected power plants operated in dusty and sandy regions such as the Middle East.

The company recently rolled out durability improvement kits for **CFM Leap-1A turbofans**, which power Airbus A320neo-family jets, consisting of tweaked high-pressure turbine blades and nozzles.

Safran chief executive Olivier Andries noted in 2023 that Leap engines suffered significantly in harsh conditions. This is especially true in the Gulf and India regions.

Design Modifications

GE developed similar improvement kits for Leap-1B engines powering Boeing's 737 Max aircraft. It also implemented design changes to address dust and sand-induced durability issues

affecting its GENx and GE90 engines.

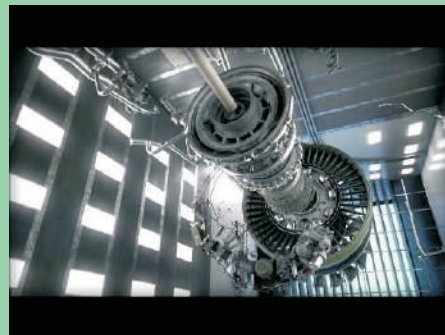
These modifications involved components including shrouds, nozzles, blades, and combustor linings.

GE senior executive director of research Joe Vinciguerra explained that the company initially lacked understanding of dust material constituents and their interaction with exotic materials systems within engines.

Advanced Testing

GE now recreates dust conditions to conduct experiments and tests that simulate real-world engine environments, enabling engineers to solve durability problems effectively.

The company subjected its GE9X to **27,000 simulated flight cycles and 17,000 hours of operation** during



development.

GE began shipping production-conforming GE9X engines to Boeing last year and plans to increase production during the second half of this year.

Competitor Responses

GE's competitors face similar durability challenges, with all companies dedicating increased resources to address these issues.

Pratt & Whitney works through widespread problems with its PW1000G geared turbofan family, while Rolls-Royce develops durability improvements for Trent engine variants.

Rolls-Royce's durability package for Trent 1000 engines aims to extend high-pressure turbine blade life and double service intervals between maintenance removals, while improvements for Trent 7000s and Trent XWB-97s include redesigned components and combustor optimisation.

Can you sleep well in economy class?

Experts offer eight tips for a more restful flight



With some preparation before and during the flight, you may be able to get some quality sleep on a long-haul flight in economy class.

The average economy class seat – with its more-than-75cm pitch, limited recline and barely-there legroom – may not be the most ideal setting for travellers looking to get a solid snooze at 30,000 ft.

Yet, long-haul flights are getting longer, making restful sleep in the air less of a luxury and more of a necessity.

Australian flag carrier Qantas is set to launch non-stop flights from Sydney to London in 2027, which will take over 20 hours. And on June 3, Scoot launched flights from Singapore to Austrian capital Vienna, the low-cost carrier's longest non-stop route at roughly 13 hours.

With minimal adjustability and basic features, economy class seats embody what Mr Yogesh Tadwalkar, director of ergonomics consulting company Synergo Consulting and health tech start-up Balance Flo AI, describes as an “all-for-all design”.

“All-for-all designs are good for no one. This is a common design issue in the field of human factors where things get so generic that they don't work well for anybody,” he says.

Mr Zephany Chan, a director at Singapore consultancy Institute of Ergonomics and Hygiene (IEH), and Ms Phoebe Huang, IEH's head of ergonomics, agree.

They list “prolonged awkward and sedentary posture” among the ergonomic risk factors that contribute to physical malaise during flights.

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“Without proper lumbar, head or neck

support, some of the consequences are lower back and shoulder discomfort. Sitting still for long hours on a plane can also restrict blood flow and cause lower limb discomfort or, in more serious cases, deep vein thrombosis,” she says.

Today, nearly 80 per cent of all seats on commercial aircraft are economy class seats, according to a December 2024 article on travel booking platform Booking.com.

The article also said economy tickets typically cost between 30 and 50 per cent less than premium economy, and up to 80 per cent less than business class airfare.

In order to remain accessible, the design of economy seating is largely utilitarian. Seats are built to be durable and easy to clean, with comfort often taking a back seat to cost efficiency.

Psychiatrist and sleep physician Wong Sheau Hwa, who runs a private practice, says environmental factors like noise, lighting, air quality and temperature are heightened in economy class due to the shared, confined space. This may build stress and anxiety in passengers, and make it harder to fall asleep.

“The ideal setting for restful sleep is somewhere comfortable and familiar, and where you feel safe,” adds Dr Wong, who was the deputy chairman of the Civil Aviation Medical Board, a division within the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore, from 2019 to 2022.

Travellers who are light sleepers, like healthcare worker Natalie Lim, may also find it harder to sleep well on planes.

Ms Lim, 31, who travels two to three times a year and flies mostly in economy class, says small movements from other passengers – like using her seatback as support when getting up or shuffling to go to the washroom – often wake her easily.

She says: “Usually, I take along a hoodie and wear it backwards with the hood covering my face to block out light. I also listen to music on my earphones



Seats in economy are largely utilitarian in design with little need for constant maintenance.

instead of using ear plugs, so it drowns out cabin noise more effectively.”

A 30-year airport traffic forecast by global organisation Airports Council International World, released in February, projected that global passenger numbers will reach 22.3 billion by 2053. This is nearly 2.4 times its projected volume in 2024.

With traveller numbers set to grow exponentially, it is unlikely that economy seats will improve in comfort.

“Economy class seats are designed without many adjustable functions because airlines are trying to manage the high variability in population and keeping the maintainability of the seats low,” says Mr Tadwalkar, who also served as the president of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society of Singapore from 2007 to 2014.

“Technically, it's very easy to make economy class seats more adjustable. But if thousands of people are using the functions repeatedly – let's say, over a month – then it's more likely to break. That's why it's easier to just make a fixed product,” he adds.

While airlines such as Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific and Eva Air have introduced some ergonomic features in their seats – like six-way adjustable headrests and ergonomically designed backrest contours – the road to a fully supportive and comfortable economy class seat is long.

Global passenger traffic is set to increase exponentially over the coming decades. ST PHOTO: TARYN NG

Nonetheless, experts say there are ways to catch some good shut-eye without needing to upgrade to a premium class. Here are eight tips from the pros.

1. Do use sleep accessories

One of the biggest barriers to sleep on a plane is the sensory overload. Bright cabin lights, crying babies and the steady hum of the engines can make it hard to drift off. Pack a good quality eye mask and noise-cancelling headphones or earplugs to create your own sensory bubble.

Look for features that can more effectively counter environmental sleep disruptions, like total blackout eye masks with contoured eye cushions or earplugs that mould to the shape of your inner ear.

IEH's Mr Chan says these tools can help block out disruptions and help your body relax – even while your seatmate is still wide awake.

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2. Do keep your neck and spine aligned

Your spine is not built to sleep in an upright position and, when forced to do so, pressure builds in the neck and lower back – making it harder to maintain a comfortable posture for sleep.

Dr Kelvin Ng, clinic director at Family Health Chiropractic Clinic, says the amount of pressure on one's spinal discs increases significantly when sitting versus standing.

Standing subjects your spine to pressure equivalent to around 100 per cent of your body weight, while sitting upright increases that to 150 per cent and bending forward to pick something up can increase it to 275 per cent, he adds.

Dr Ng advises travellers to use a supportive travel pillow that allows the neck to remain in a stable position, and suggests they place a pillow or rolled-up article of clothing behind their lower backs to maintain lumbar support. Both can help create a more comfortable posture that will aid good rest.

3. Do recline your seat

While [some passengers may hesitate out of courtesy](#), the recline feature is meant to be used – especially on red-eye flights. Just be mindful of meal times or the person behind you before reclining all the way.

Mr Tadwalkar says that, ideally, seats should be reclined to achieve a resting angle of between 100 and 120 degrees for better sleep.

Online, aviation and traveller communities estimate the average economy class seat recline pitch to be between 5 and 15cm, or roughly between five and 19 degrees.

While attaining the optimal resting angle may be difficult in economy class, just a few centimetres of recline can help to take pressure off your lower back and reduce strain on your neck, he says.



Just a few centimetres of recline can help to take pressure off your lower back and reduce strain on your neck.

4. Do visit a chiropractor

If you frequently experience back or neck pain after flying, it might be worth consulting a chiropractor. Some travellers

have underlying posture issues that are made worse in cramped seating.

Dr Ng says travellers can consider visiting a chiropractor before their trip to identify misalignments and get recommended exercises or support tailored to their bodies to ensure better spine health.

For instance, for those with forward head posture – a condition in which the head extends forward from the shoulders, and is common among people who use their devices for extended periods – doing a neck retraction exercise by drawing the chin back several times can help to improve neck strength and flexibility.

5. Don't rely on your footrest

Economy class footrests – if available – make for good temporary relief, especially when trying to improve circulation.

But Mr Tadwalkar advises keeping your feet flat on the floor and avoiding prolonged use of footrests.

He explains that propping one's feet up on footrests often strains the knees and closes the hip angle – the angle between the upper body and thighs – to less than 90 degrees.

“The less-than-90-degree angle has three effects. First, it compresses your internal organs, resulting in discomfort. Second, it hampers the natural blood circulation to the lower body, causing soreness in the feet. And most importantly, it takes away the natural 'S' curve of your back, and instead puts it in kyphosis, which is an excessive rounding of the spine into a 'C' shape, leading to backache,” he says.

Dr Ng also discourages passengers from sleeping with their feet on their seats and hugging knees to their chests, as it increases pressure on the spine and unnecessarily strains muscles.

6. Don't take sleep medication excessively

It may be tempting to take a sleeping pill, but Dr Wong cautions that sleep aids may impair cognitive function and affect one's ability to respond adequately in the event of an emergency.

“While sleep aids may improve the ability to get to sleep, the sleep obtained may not necessarily be restful,” he says, adding that people often consume melatonin – a supplement used to promote sleep – in the hope that it will induce sleepiness in the same way sleeping pills do.

“If you use melatonin like a sleeping pill, you'll be utterly disappointed. It does help with sleep but if one uses it wrongly, it might create more problems, like pushing your natural sleep timing back,” he explains.

Consume melatonin supplements a few hours before sleep instead of immediately before bedtime.

He observes that people often self-medicate with melatonin and take various

doses at different timings. “The correct window to take it is at a natural, physiological timing before sleep, which could be at around 8 or 9pm, rather than immediately before sleep,” Dr Wong says.

Consult a doctor before consuming sleeping aids and test it on land before using it in the air.

7. Don't keep your arms on the armrest

While armrests may feel like the only place to rest your elbows, leaving your arms there for hours can restrict blood flow and cause shoulder or neck tension.

Mr Tadwalkar says most armrests in today's commercial aircraft are typically built too high for the average Asian person.

It props their elbows up and creates more tension in the shoulders and thoracic spine, which includes the mid-back region between the neck and lower back. Instead, he suggests supporting your arms on a pillow or relaxing them on your upper thighs.

Using a small blanket or scarf to create a cradle for your arms by draping the fabric over your shoulders, and loosely tying it at the front or back, can also relieve muscle strain while you sleep.

8. Don't refuse food or snacks

Many passengers skip meals to try sleeping through the flight, but an empty stomach can make it harder to fall asleep – and stay asleep.



Hunger can make it harder to fall asleep, so have a meal or keep snacks handy on flights.

“If you're hungry, it's often impossible to sleep because it feels very uncomfortable. Keep snacks handy and have something here and there before you fly or somewhere in the middle of the flight,” Dr Wong says.

Opt for in-flight snacks like cheese and crackers, or take along your own. Avoid caffeine and sugar close to bedtime, as these can disrupt sleep cycles.

Steer clear of greasy and spicy foods too close to bedtime, as foods high in fat are harder to digest and may cause indigestion, while spices can trigger heartburn.



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Nasa's oldest active astronaut returns to Earth



Nasa astronaut Don Pettit is carried to a medical tent shortly after landing in the Soyuz MS-26 space capsule in a remote area near Zhezkazgan, Kazakhstan, on Sunday 20 April.

Cake, gifts and a low-key family celebration may be how many senior citizens picture their 70th birthday. But Nasa's oldest serving astronaut Don Pettit became a septuagenarian while hurtling towards the Earth in a spacecraft to wrap up a seven-month mission aboard the International Space Station (ISS).

A Soyuz capsule carrying the American and two Russian cosmonauts landed in Kazakhstan on Sunday 20 April, the day of Pettit's milestone birthday.

"Today at 0420 Moscow time (0120 GMT), the Soyuz MS-26 landing craft with Alexei Ovchinin, Ivan Vagner and Donald (Don) Pettit aboard landed near the Kazakh town of Zhezkazgan," Russia's space agency Roscosmos said.

Spending 220 days in space, Pettit and his crewmates Ovchinin and Vagner orbited the Earth 3,520 times and completed a journey of 93.3 million miles over the course of their mission.

It was the fourth spaceflight for Pettit, who has logged more than 18 months in orbit throughout his 29-year career.

The trio touched down in a remote area southeast of Kazakhstan after undocking from the space station just over three hours earlier.

Nasa images of the landing showed the small capsule parachuting down to Earth with the sunrise as a backdrop.

The astronauts gave thumbs-up gestures as rescuers carried them from the spacecraft to an inflatable medical tent.

Despite looking a little worse for wear as he was pulled from the vessel, Pettit was "doing well and in the range of what is expected for him following return to Earth," Nasa said in a statement.

He was then set to fly to the Kazakh city of Karaganda before boarding a Nasa plane to the agency's Johnson Space Centre in Texas.

The astronauts spent their time on the ISS researching areas such as water sanitisation technology, plant growth in

various conditions and fire behavior in microgravity, Nasa said.

The trio's seven-month trip was just short of the nine months that Nasa astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams unexpectedly spent stuck on the orbital lab after the spacecraft they were testing suffered technical issues and was deemed unfit to fly them back to Earth.

Space is one of the final areas of US-Russia cooperation amid an almost complete breakdown in relations between Moscow and Washington over the Ukraine conflict.

France names first Concorde jet as a historical monument

The first Concorde supersonic passenger aircraft has been named as a historical monument, France's culture minister said on Monday 5 May.

Concorde 001, which was the first of the 20 aircraft built and the first to take to the skies in a test flight in 1969, is now housed in the Aeroscopia museum outside of the southern French city of Toulouse.

"This plane embodies France's innovation and industrial strength in the aviation sector," Culture Minister Rachida Dati said in a statement on X announcing the designation.

The Concorde entered into commercial service in 1976, and to date is the world's only supersonic passenger plane, travelling faster than sound at speeds that whisked an elite class of travellers between London or Paris and the US east coast in just over three hours.

The service was definitively retired in October 2003, three years after a devastating crash outside Paris that killed 113 people. "This plane, a pioneer in supersonic flight, remains in our memories," said Dati.

The plane, which was developed by French and British firms that became part of Airbus and BAE Systems, was operated by Air France and British Airways.

"Its preservation will provide future generations an example of our aeronautical expertise and futuristic vision."

The French culture ministry said 18 of the 20 Concorde have been preserved, including six located in France.

Pakistan Customs detects import fraud at AHICT, KICT



Pakistan Customs has detected tax fraud involving mis-declaration of high-value electronic goods and machinery in two separate cases at Al-Hamd International Container Terminal (AHICT) and Karachi International Container Terminal (KICT).

According to the details, the Collectorate of Customs, Appraisement, West has registered two separate FIRs for high-value import frauds through mis-declaration of goods. The first fraud was reported at Al-Hamd International Container Terminal, where customs officials discovered severe discrepancies between the declared items and actual contents during examination.

"The accused attempted to evade approximately Rs. 74 million in taxes and duties through falsified documentation," the documents said. "The mis-declared goods, valued at Rs. 213 million, included concealed high-value electronics and switched items." The investigation revealed the importer had submitted manipulated invoices and bills of lading through the WeBOC system.

In another case, the accused company allegedly attempted to pass off advanced computerized injection moulding machines as older, less valuable equipment by affixing fake identification plates.

Customs officials conducting a re-examination at Karachi International Container Terminal discovered undeclared equipment, including vertical colour mixers and hoppers. The scheme attempted to evade Rs. 2 million in duties on goods valued at Rs. 15.23 million.

Multiple individuals have been implicated, including company directors, clearing agents, KICT, and AHICT staff. The investigation remains ongoing with further arrests expected as authorities work to identify all involved parties.

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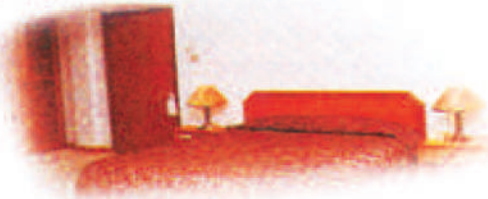
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The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan visits SIAL

Sialkot International Airport (Sial) had the distinct honour of receiving His Excellency Mr. Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Malkiy, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, who was graciously welcomed upon arrival by the Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Chief Executive Officer of Sialkot International Airport. Following a warm reception, His Excellency engaged in a cordial meeting with the airport leadership, where matters of mutual interest were discussed in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill. The

dialogue was both meaningful and forward-looking, with special focus on enhancing bilateral ties through aviation connectivity. The Ambassador while appreciating the pivotal role of Sialkot's business community in the development and continued success of the airport, acknowledged its high standard of services being provided to the passengers. He expressed optimism about future collaboration and assured that Saudi Airlines (the Kingdom's national carrier), is actively considering commencing its operations from Sialkot, a move poised to

strengthen air connectivity and deepen economic and cultural relations between the two brotherly nations.

The meeting concluded on a positive and promising note, symbolised by the exchange of souvenirs/ gifts and sharing appreciation for the growing partnership. His Excellency was seen off with profound respect and gratitude, marking a memorable moment in the ongoing friendship between the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.



Photo taken on the occasion shows HE Nawaf Bin Saeed Al-Malkiy Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, Chairman, Mr. Faraz Akram, Vice Chairman and Air Vice Marshal (R) Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti CEO, SIAL in a meeting.

Seat 1C: a second chance

STILL strapped to his plane seat, unconscious and falling from a crashing Airbus 320, he rammed into the rooftop of a three-floor building before landing on the bonnet of a Suzuki Cultus. Ninety-seven out of the 99 people on board lost their lives. Zafar Masud is one of the two survivors.

Recently, he wrote a book revisiting this horrific near-death experience and his miraculous survival. He has candidly and thoughtfully shared what he has been through, and how it has changed him and his perspective on life.

The book largely consists of 10 lessons gleaned from this extraordinary experience. Each lesson has a dedicated chapter. In describing these lessons, he has, through the lens of his personal ordeal, explored systemic problems, the goodness and arrogance of human beings, and evolving worldviews. He has drawn on history, literature, research and his perspectives on personal and societal development. The titles of the 10 chapters reflect the approach: 'Arrogance'; 'Dues'; 'Goodness'; 'Sincerity'; 'Miracles'; 'Willpower'; 'Rituals'; 'Bold Steps'; 'Communication'; and 'Legacy'.

We all remember the breaking news about the crash of PK-8303 on May 22, 2020, as the plane approached Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. It was the last Friday of Ramzan and Eid was approaching. The plane crashed into the high and illegally constructed buildings of Model Colony adjacent to the airport. Zafar Masud, president and CEO of the Bank of Punjab, was seated in aisle seat 1C, now the name of his book.

It was an entirely manmade disaster. An overconfident and negligent pilot tried to descend sharply from an unusual height close to the airport, apparently disregarding repeated advice from air traffic control to descend gradually by taking another round. The staff in aerodrome control had failed to notice that the plane's landing gear was not extended. The plane descended to make a belly landing, scraped the ground and tried to go up again; it was too late, its fate was sealed a mile away from the runway. The pilot and ground staff's attitude was a reflection of the "systemic arrogance" and "large-scale institutional decay" that has permeated all levels of our society.

This was the sixth plane crash in Pakistan's airspace within a decade. According to the writer, the stories of the previous five illustrate that the crash was not an isolated tragedy but the outcome of systemic negligence.

Just before he fainted, he describes a

voice telling him that he was going to survive. In those 30 seconds, his whole life flashed before him. He felt no significant regrets but there were things he wished he could have done earlier. "Emotional dues" towards his loved ones stood out. He explains how this realisation changed his perspective on life: "I no longer suppress things".

Inherent selfless human goodness and sincerity become evident during times of emergency. There are always Waqases, Rizwans, Tahirs, and Farhans who come to the rescue. Masud has explained in detail how these individuals from Model Colony rescued him and Zubair, the only other survivor, from the wreckage.

In hospital, recovering from a painful burnt back, a broken hand, and a splintered knee, he was wracked by survivor's guilt. He started contemplating why he had survived and whether it was a miracle. He eventually concluded that he had been saved for no reason other than his parents' prayers. His survival has since led him to a frenzied search for meaning.

He recounts the ordeal of the families of the victims as they identified the bodies of their loved ones, in many cases just scattered in small, unidentifiable parts. DNA testing was cumbersome and families ran from pillar to post for many days, full of grief and frustration. Streamlining the correct identification of the bodies of the victims must become a part of our national emergency preparedness plan.

We underestimate the willpower that comes to our rescue in times of trauma and struggle. He talks about the willpower and cognitive reframing which sustained him during long, painful sojourns in hospitals, on surgery tables and with physiotherapists.

Inherent willpower is fortified when mental health advice is sought to deal with

post-traumatic stress, instead of facing internal turmoil with a stiff upper lip. There is no shame in reaching out for psychological counselling, which Masud did while in hospital. He talks about it in his chapter on 'Bold steps', and in so doing takes on the stigma attached to mental health issues. He now associates himself with mental health promotion initiatives across the country such as the Milkar media campaign. To overcome the fearful hesitation that might have persisted for the rest of his life, he returned to Lahore on the same flight, with the same airline, in the same seat only four months after the crash.

In Seat 1C's final chapter on 'Legacy', he wants to leave behind something concrete. He attaches a lot of importance to literature. His own experience of growing up in a family of creative artists convinces him of the importance of art and literature. He is the son of well-known TV and film actor Munawar Saeed, who is closely related to famous poets Rais Amrohvi and Jon Elia and filmmaker Kamal Amrohvi. He promotes art and literature by sponsoring literary festivals through his organisation. Since the crash, he has begun to work towards the economic betterment of poor people around him with a sense of urgency. He has also set up the Zafar Masud Foundation as a dedicated organisation that works on passenger safety.

All in all, he has done a great service by writing and sharing his experience and thoughts. In his own words, writing this book was a labour of love and catharsis. His book will continue as a sustained aftershock for his readers. Thank you, Zafar Masud, for opening your heart to us.

The writer is a former health minister and currently a professor of health systems & population health at the Shifa Tameer-i-Millat University.



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India-Pakistan battle changes global understanding of modern air warfare

THE recent clash between India and Pakistan marks a significant development in the regional air power constellation. This event has sparked strategic concerns about Indonesia's procurement of advanced weaponry and its unresolved airspace sovereignty issues, particularly in critical border regions such as the Strait of Malacca.

This essay argues that the development of a national air defense system cannot be separated from full operational control of national airspace. Without sovereign authority over its own skies, investment in advanced air defence weaponry becomes strategically irrelevant. This is a strategic framework for building Indonesia's air defence system in a comprehensive, gradual and geography-informed manner, based on real threats.

The air battle over Kashmir between India and Pakistan delivered a jolt to the global understanding of modern air warfare. Pakistan's Air Force (PAF), operating Chinese-made J-10C fighter jets, claimed to have shot down several Rafale combat aircraft, long considered a symbol of Nato-standard technological superiority, belonging to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

This event not only showcased Pakistan's combat capabilities and China's growing technological prowess but also provoked a broader discourse on the effectiveness and relevance of arms acquisitions by developing countries, Indonesia included, within the wider defense system context.

Indonesia's ongoing [purchase](#) of Rafale aircraft has drawn attention, especially when contrasted with the current status of its national airspace, parts of which remain under foreign management.

The 2022 agreement between the Indonesian and Singaporean governments, which delegated the management of airspace over the critical border area of the Strait of Malacca to Singapore, presents a stark paradox: Indonesia is investing in high-cost military assets while lacking the full authority to operate them strategically in its most vulnerable airspace. This area, in fact, should be the primary focus in the blueprint of any air defence system.

A primary obstacle in building a robust national air defence system is Indonesia's limited authority over its own

airspace. The airspace above the Riau Islands and the Strait of Malacca, from sea level to 37,000 feet, has remained under Singapore's operational control for air traffic services for 25 years and is subject to extension, as stipulated in the 2022 bilateral agreement.

This dependency directly undermines the operational capacity of the Air Force to conduct patrols, training exercises and air law enforcement in this strategically vital zone. Without sovereign operational authority, air defence development becomes ineffective, akin to owning advanced weapons but lacking the right to carry or train with them on the actual battlefield.

Air defence is not merely about fighter aircraft or anti-aircraft missiles; it is an integrated system that forms a subsystem of the broader national defence system. Its effectiveness relies on long-term planning, geographical awareness and integration with various elements: radar networks, command and control systems, main and forward airbases, and air surveillance intelligence.

As many military experts have highlighted, air defence is only effective when based on geographic mastery and field-tested operational experience. The system requires years to develop and demands inter-regime consistency. Thus, air defence is not an instant project to be accomplished within a five-year political term, but a strategic process grounded in a strong national doctrine and full sovereignty as fundamental prerequisites.

There is a common misconception, among the public and even among policymakers, that air power is defined by the number of fighter jets a country possesses. In reality, fighter aircraft are merely one component of a comprehensive air defence system. As main weapon systems (*alutsista*), fighter jets cannot generate strategic effects without being supported by a complete network: reconnaissance radars, early warning sensors, tracking systems and an integrated command-and-control structure.

In Indonesia's case, owning aircraft like the Rafale does not automatically confer air superiority, especially if those jets cannot be flown freely in the critical airspace they are meant to defend. Thus, air defence development must start from building the system, not merely buying the platform.

The most strategic step in enhancing Indonesia's air defence is to regain full control over its national airspace, particularly in critical border zones such as the Strait of Malacca. Without this step, Indonesia will remain strategically impotent.

This reclamation effort requires a multifaceted approach, diplomatic, technical and military. The government must pursue assertive yet lawful renegotiations based on international aviation law, referencing the 1944 Chicago Convention and Law No. 1/2009 on aviation, which affirms that a state holds full and exclusive sovereignty over its airspace. Persuasive efforts are also needed to end the colonial legacy of foreign control over sovereign territory. International relations must be guided by mutual respect and understanding, with full recognition of each nation's strategic interests.

The success of a nation in building its air defence system is the product of dedication, political will, and a deep understanding of operational sovereignty. Pakistan, for example, did not simply purchase J-10C fighter jets from China, but also built supporting doctrine, training systems and operational structures to integrate them into a formidable air defence apparatus.

Indonesia should learn from this approach and end the pattern of acquiring military assets without first establishing the systems to utilise them. Instead of chasing "symbolic prestige", Indonesia's defence strategy must be grounded in geographic reality, threat perception and the capacity to control its own airspace. Indonesia cannot fully develop its air defence without achieving operational sovereignty over its national airspace.

The procurement of advanced fighters like the Rafale will only carry strategic value if the country is able to deploy them freely and effectively in its critical air zones, zones that constitute the front lines and center of gravity of national defense.

Therefore, the current defence policy priority must be to reestablish sovereign control over national airspace and develop an air defence system that is gradual, integrated and rooted in a strong national doctrine.

The writer is a former Air Force chief of staff and chairman of the Indonesian Air Power Studies Centre.

Some Bitter Facts of History

"Feel what it's like to truly starve, and I guarantee that you'll forever think twice before wasting food" - (Criss Jami)



Prof. Safdar Sandal

It is estimated that more than three million people died due to the extreme starvation during the infamous Bengal famine in 1943, caused by the British colonialists in the Indian sub-continent only four years before its independence in 1947 from the cruel clutches of British colonial regime that had extended for over 200 years. The famine of Bengal was considered to be one of the most catastrophic events in human history. The studies that followed revealed that the famine catastrophe was solely caused by mismanagement by the British colonial regime itself which ravaged, burned and looted all of Bengal (especially the eastern part which predominantly consisted of Muslim population) out of the fear that a feared Japanese invasion would make use of the resourceful land and weaken the foundations of the Colonial empire in India. The man in Charge was the Governor of Bengal Sir Robert Clive as figured below. Despite this dismal situation, Bengal continued producing enough food but all that was being supplied to England, where each citizen got their ration and the locals especially in Indian Eastern Bengal (now

Bangladesh) also continued dying one after another. The little amount of food that was made available in the region was out of the reach of the downtrodden masses. This was the economic scene in our younger brother Bangladesh's house created by the British dacoits garbed in white skin and good dresses. Now prosperous 'Bangladesh' country has



Robert Lord Clive

become much dearer to our hearts in Pakistan, caused due to numerous congenial circumstances that have happened in the meantime.

Food starved, hunger stricken Bengalis, caused by the British loot of food from their land Lord Clive who looted the wealth of Bengal and transferred it to London

Vikings

Ironically, Lord Clive, the Governor of Bengal admitted in his autobiography, published after his death in England that he had looted worth Stg. Pound 180,000 (equal to Stg. Pound 40,000,000 in 2500) which he had remitted through the 'Dutch East India Company'. Pity is that this 'British legacy' among many other colonial satanic practices has continued till even today after the British have left the sub-continent since nearly 80 years by now. Along with many other vices this heinous legacy has continued till today in one form or another as the looters do not bother the economic destruction but care for only transferring their money to London and live there luxuriously. This specific class was again created by the British before leaving and the practice had intentionally been encouraged, till now. The legacy though has been encouraged and sponsored by them because that would help the economy of England for all

times to come. London has till then been the hub and epicenter of this looted money from nearly all foreign lands, wherever they were in, as colonialists in the past three centuries.

Of course they have honoured their own culture and history of having been 'Sea Pirates' and more correctly as 'Vikings' who had practiced loot but also established a fake trade and commerce for using it as a pretext for landing in the foreign lands in the name of trade. The British had inherited in their blood this 'Viking' trait. (The 'Royal Family' of Britain has a genetic descent from the 'Vikings'). Vikings were the marauders

The Vikings



who originally came from Scandinavian countries like Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and the northern hemisphere. Very soothing to say that the left-overs i.e., the people of Scandinavia are now the most civilized people of the world today and they have established best 'well-fare states' of modern times. Denmark has gained the first ranking in well fare tenants established in this country.

The founder of a well-fare state was Umari bnal-Khattab of the Islamic world (also spelled as Omar) fourteen hundred years ago. One of my customers in Iceland happens to have the name Umar and I did ask him once, what is the reason of his name being of an Islamic origin; he replied in his simple way that in his country, there are many Umars. For that moment this reply was enough for me to hear and remember until today, as I believe that it dated back to the 'welfare state' of Umar and that only, Umar bin Khattab.

The 'Vikings' voyaged in very long boats and wore long horned helmets on their heads. They were strong and sturdy sea-farers and warriors. But these countries are now the most civilized and are honored as 'welfare states' of the world. The Vikings had marauded England in the final decade of the eighth century. They had stayed there for all times in one way or another and became part of the society. Later they embraced Christianity, the religion prevailing in England and became part of the society.

In Gothenburg (Sweden), I was once amused to see a statue of a Viking-warrior in its full original attire carrying arms of his age. The statue was made to stand at the entrance door of "Goteborg's Bank", supposedly guarding the security of the bank; it was very amusing for me to see this scene. What an interesting and purposeful joke depicting the present peacefulness and crime-free society of the country that Sweden has!! The bank branch also helped me in a memorable professional way; the statue was meant to depict a crime-free country for which Sweden has been known for, from centuries. (*Viking's period of Scandinavia had ended nearly 1,000 years ago*).

Robert Clive had become a drug addict and eventually had committed suicide because of an over dose of opium. His corpse was found in his bath room with his throat cut by his own razor. This is the end of a cruel man, the killer of millions of innocent Bengali children, men and women folk. He lived a short miserable life of 49 years of a detestable period of sway, later having a mental distress and depression while he was back in England and met his deserved end. *The law of nature works automatic; Clive faced a horrible unnatural death end with*

a more disgraceful political career. No more could be said of an example of an ignominious ending of a person, a Governor, a so-called Lord but a richest man made so through plunder at the cost of millions of people of Bengal driven to hunger and famine, the hitherto richest state of India. He turned the turtle and made Bengal the poorest state in the history of mankind by the wretched Englishman that 'Robert Clive' was.

In their mischievous planning, the first thing in India the British did was to build a strong railway-network through which they would be at ease to carry the looted goods to the developed Indian sea-ports which they had made for the purpose for an onward journey to England by ships. What an intelligent nation (rather more correctly an evil genius) to have befooled whole of innocent Indian public for more than two hundred years, in the name of development. In return through this maneuver they had developed England which was devoid of basic

Joan of Arc



resources for life and had a lowest per capita income. Subsequently they produced 'Pirates' and 'Vikings'. Vikings had a different strategy. They were pirates too but their modus operandi was different. They looted the indigenous resources of their subjected territories through warfare and later by occupation and through a mock trade and commerce in the same fashion as the British did in India and elsewhere since they had inheritance from the Vikings this feature. By having formed an 'East India Company' before landing in India and they named it 'British East India Company' which entered in India as a trading company and then establishing a foothold in the state of Gujarat (specifically 'Surat') in 1608 AD and then started their journey of sway by ruling whole of India through 'Machiavellian tactics'. On the contrary, the Indian people of the sub-continent have been kind, polite and a welcoming people by their nature and culture, because of which they accommodated the guests, without knowing that the guests were the

biggest fraud of the world. Pitifully the Hindu community cooperated with the British dacoits and thus became milliners at the cost of Muslims who were led to be extremely poor, uneducated and mere labourers. What a crueler example in human history can be more mentionable than this one.!! The said repercussions still continue in Pakistan and India.

The type of trade which was designed to maneuver out circumstances for occupation of lands was foreign to the local people. The Viking-piracy was engineered mainly by Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium and the sundry from Western Europe. They carried out in return huge amounts of looted wealth from the economic resources of their subjected countries to their home countries in the guise of trade and commerce, the fundamental policy maneuver of the Vikings who had originated in Scandinavia (not precisely from nations of current day Scandinavia that inhibit today countries of this region, as marked on the map of today. It was a separate 'Viking age' that ended not in the present form of 'Scandinavian' countries as we know them but wherever they lived, the 'Viking-age Scandinavians' shared common features such as house forms, jewelry, tools and everyday equipment. With all the respect in my mind (being the writer) that I have for these countries of the present day; which are have remarkable modern societies. They are the best 'welfare states' of the modern world.

Adolf Hitler (originally from Austria) who had not joined the band wagon of dacoits of Europe at that time, thought fit to snatch the wealth accumulated by the European nations mentioned above and to loot it in the end viz from its neighboring countries in Europe from their homes which was more logical perhaps for the Germans to do (the most genius people as they have always been). But it did not work for them ultimately. The real cause of the two World Wars and the present-day loss of peace in the world and the political turmoil are mainly due to this thinking and endeavour.

India which was known as the "golden sparrow" because of its rich resources of wealth was reduced to ashes in the 18th-19th centuries by the usurpers and dacoits coming from Europe of its wealth. But the law of nature reverses all these activities and takes its own turn when considered ripe or fit. Now it has started to take a turn and reverse or change positions the way it deems fit, when and where. The cycle has begun to start in a

reverse gear; the future, it is estimated by the prophets of history now belongs to the East back again. The Western Pirates and Vikings are gone and evaporated until only in books. The 'Law of Nature' has started to take its natural course shifting from the West to the East. At present more growth is being seen in the East than in the West. Power of the hardworking and intelligent youth in Asia is coming up predominantly. They are much more in numbers and in skill than in the West. The emerging economies of China, Korea, whole of Far East, Pakistan and India not with standing their differences, but all have good time and resources to overwhelm the world scenario in the not too far future.



"One life all we have and we live it as we believe in living it. But to sacrifice what you are and to live without belief, that is a fate more terrible than dying" --Joan of Arc

There have been fewer moments in history which have evolved the course of life in a particular angle. Joan of Arc, a young French peasant girl, played a pivotal role during the 'Hundred Years' War', a conflict between England and France. Claiming to have received divine guidance, she rallied French forces and displayed remarkable military leadership, contributing to several important victories.

But a series of missteps, including her failure to liberate Paris followed, and on May 23, 1430, she was captured by the Duke of Burgundy's men, jailed for more than a year and put on trial for charges of hearsay and witchcraft and eventual execution by the English, resulted in her becoming a martyr. She became a symbol of French nationalism and rightly so, a legendary figure in history, with her story inspiring countless portrayals in literature, art, and film. Joan of Arc's impact on French morale during a time of significant turmoil remains significant to this day.

China makes Afghanistan regime, Pakistan agree on ties upgrade

Pakistan and Afghanistan on Wednesday 21 May agreed in principle to upgrade their diplomatic relations by exchanging ambassadors — a key step towards normalising ties after years of strained relations between Islamabad and the Taliban administration in Kabul.

The understanding was reached during an informal trilateral meeting of foreign ministers from Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan in Beijing. The talks were part of Beijing's broader effort to ease regional tensions and advance connectivity through its Belt and Road Initiative.

"Afghanistan and Pakistan expressed clear willingness to elevate diplomatic relations and agreed in principle to exchange ambassadors as soon as possible," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in a statement released by China's foreign ministry.

"China welcomes this and will continue to provide assistance for the improvement of Afghanistan-Pakistan relations," Yi said.

China, Pakistan agree on CPEC extension to Kabul

Also, Pakistan and China noted that there was an agreement on the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan.

Although no country has formally recognised the Taliban regime since its return to power in 2021, several including China, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia maintain ambassadors in Kabul. China and the UAE also host Taliban-appointed ambassadors, while Russia last month agreed to accept a Taliban ambassador in Moscow.

Pakistan and Afghanistan currently only have chargés d'affaires posted to each other's capitals.

Wednesday's meeting followed a thaw in Pakistan-Afghanistan ties, which have been marred by deep mistrust, cross-border attacks, and sharp disagreements over the presence of the banned Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants operating from Afghan territory. Islamabad has long accused Kabul of harboring TTP fighters, who were blamed for a 70pc increase in attacks inside Pakistan in 2024.

Recent diplomatic efforts have aimed to turn the tide. In March 2025, Special

Envoy for Afghanistan Mohammad Sadiq visited Kabul for the first time in over a year. His mission was followed by a high-level visit by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on April 19, where both sides pledged to prevent their territories from being used for terrorist activities and agreed on trade facilitation measures.

The trilateral meeting in Beijing further built on this momentum. China, which has strategic interests in regional stability and economic integration, hosted the gathering to help resume the China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral dialogue, which had been paused since 2023.

The key outcomes from the Beijing meeting, besides the agreement on the appointment of ambassadors in each other's capitals, included commitments to enhance cooperation in security and counter-terrorism, including joint action against militant groups and external interference; support for extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into Afghanistan; and an understanding to formally resume the trilateral process by convening the sixth China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Dialogue in Kabul.

"Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to promoting close, cooperative ties with Afghanistan, especially in trade, transit, health, and connectivity," Pakistan's Foreign Office said in a statement following the meeting.

China emphasised that all sides must "safeguard their sovereignty, security and national dignity" and reiterated its support for regional partners pursuing development paths "suited to their national conditions."

With Wednesday's developments, Pakistan and China appear to be betting that deeper engagement and economic incentives can draw Kabul closer and temper instability in the region.

CPEC extension

Wang Yi noted Chinese and Pakistani support for Afghanistan's reconstruction and development, and readiness to expand trade exchanges with Afghanistan. He further said that there was an agreement on "the extension of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to Afghanistan."

The same was echoed by FO, which

said, "China and Pakistan reiterated their support for extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to Afghanistan under the broader framework of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation."

All three sides appeared cautiously optimistic about the progress toward normalised ties between Islamabad and Kabul.

"The process of normalisation will not be quick," commented a diplomat not authorised to speak publicly, "but the fact that Islamabad and Kabul are talking again at this level and agreeing in principle on ambassadors is a significant

development."

For Beijing, which has maintained an ambassador in Kabul and recognised a Taliban-appointed envoy last year, the meeting reflects a strategy of "mini-multilateralism", which is a targeted diplomatic format aimed at tackling specific regional challenges.

The meeting's significance is heightened by India's recent diplomatic overtures to the Taliban, including a call last week between Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Amir Khan Muttaqi. This comes amid growing Taliban frustration with Pakistan over refugee deportations and border closures.

Pakistan, US agree to diversify trade partnership

The United States Charge d'Affaires in Pakistan, Ms Natalie A. Baker, said on Tuesday 6 May that the resumption of US soybean exports to Pakistan signifies the growing partnership between the two countries.

Ms Natalie accompanied the delegation of the US Chamber of Commerce and the US-Pakistan Business Council (USPBC), which met Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan.

Senior Vice President Charles Freeman led the delegation.

An official announcement said that Ms Natalie emphasised that the renewed trade underscores the ability of both countries to find pragmatic solutions for enhancing agricultural cooperation and diversifying trade.

She appreciated positive developments in agricultural trade, such as the resumption of soybean exports from the US to Pakistan, demonstrating the strength of the partnership and the ability to find practical solutions and encouraging avenues for deeper agricultural cooperation and trade diversification.

She further said that enhanced cooperation in the cotton sector is also a key area for mutual growth, given Pakistan's textile industry's demand for high-quality cotton and the US's position to meet this demand.

It is worth mentioning that US President Donald Trump has recently imposed enhanced tariffs on Pakistan and demanded reciprocal market access for US products such as soybean, cotton, etc.

According to the announcement, Pakistan and the US are pleased to strengthen their long-standing strategic and economic partnership, which has been marked by recent high-level engagements and a mutual commitment to enhancing

trade and investment linkages.

Mr Kamal stated that the visit would further cement economic relations between the two countries and appreciated the role of USPBC over the past two decades in advancing US commercial engagements with Pakistan, actively working to increase trade and investment flows and creating opportunities for businesses in both nations.

He said that Pakistan values the US as its largest export destination and deeply appreciates this strategic trade relationship. Efforts are underway to address trade deficit and market access issues through a comprehensive strategy involving relevant stakeholders.

The minister said the recent 90-day pause in reciprocal tariffs is seen as a significant opportunity for constructive engagement and building a sustainable, mutually beneficial roadmap.

He assured that Pakistan is committed to creating a predictable and conducive trade environment for US businesses and investors, upholding transparent, rules-based, and fair-trade practices. The government of Pakistan is dedicated to establishing the best working relationship with the United States, particularly in trade and investment, to ensure progress on bilateral and multilateral levels.

Charles Freeman appreciated the warmth of the Government of Pakistan, which is fully committed to facilitating businesses and looks forward to continued dialogue and technical cooperation to support economic growth and job creation in both countries.

The visit of the US-Pakistan Business Council delegation from May 5-7 serves as a valuable platform for dialogue, partnership-building, an opportunity creation.

Pakistan Railways to provide free Wi-Fi service in 40 trains

Pakistan Railways announced to provide free Wi-Fi service in 40 trains very soon.

Minister for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has said under the directives of Prime Minister, Pakistan Railways is working towards extending both passenger and freight services to central Asia.

Addressing a news conference in Multan recently, he said that uplifting Pakistan Railways has become indispensable for development of the country.

He said that 155 railway stations will be shifted on solar system within two months and free Wi-Fi service also be provided in over 40 trains very soon.

Earlier, Pakistan Railways achieved a record revenue of approximately Rs 83 billion over the past 11 months, representing an increase of almost Rs 6 billion compared to the same period last year, officials stated.

Out of the total revenue, passenger trains contributed Rs42 billion, while freight trains generated Rs29 billion. According to Pakistan Railways officials, an additional Rs12 billion was earned through other sources.

Giving breakup, the officials said that Karachi Division led with Rs13 billion from passenger trains and Rs25 billion from freight trains.

Lahore Division stood second, earning Rs10 billion revenue from passenger trains and Rs0.75 billion from freight trains. Both Rawalpindi and Multan Divisions recorded around Rs4 billion each from the passenger sector.

The Pakistan Railways witnessed an improvement as compared to the same period last year, when it earned around Rs77 billion.

Railway Minister Hanif Abbasi said that Pakistan Railways will be put back on its feet with hard work and dedication.

Earlier, the Pakistan Railways has inducted 30 new high-speed and high-capacity freight wagons into its network to modernize Pakistan's freight transport system and support the business community.



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Exports to Europe rise to \$6.8bn

Pakistan's exports to European countries grew 8.18 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal year from a year ago, mainly due to higher shipments to western and southern states.

In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$6.782 billion in July-March FY25 from \$6.269bn 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. The revival of export proceeds to these countries shows a rising trend for Pakistani textile and clothing products.

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.

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 9.42pc to \$3.403bn in 9MFY25, up from \$3.110bn in 9MFY24.

There is also a slight increase in exports to eastern and northern Europe. The exports to the north of Europe saw a rise of 17.49pc to \$559.52m in 9MFY25, up from \$476.22m in the corresponding months last year.

Exports to southern Europe saw a paltry growth of 2.88pc to \$2.281bn in 9MFY25 from \$2.217bn in the corresponding period last year.

In this region, exports to Spain record a paltry growth of 1.85pc to \$1.10 billion in 9MFY25 from \$1.08bn in the preceding year.

Exports to Italy increased 1.95pc to \$841.69m in 9MFY25 compared to \$825.53m in the same period last year. Exports to Greece increased 9.7pc to \$107.21m during the year under review against \$98.02m over the previous year.

However, exports to eastern Europe grew 15.57pc to \$539.21m from \$466.53m 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 \$1.624bn in 9MFY25 from \$1.531bn over the corresponding period of last year, an increase of 6.07pc.

Pakistan's exports to western Europe increased by 9.42pc to \$3.403bn in 9MFY24 from \$3.110bn last year.

Exports to Germany surged 13.54pc

to \$1.274bn in 9MFY24 from \$1.122bn. Similarly, exports to the Netherlands, the second biggest market for Pakistani goods, increased 9.35pc to \$1.122bn in

Food exports increase to \$5.75bn in July-March

Pakistan's raw food exports rose 1.62 per cent to \$5.75 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year compared to \$4.66bn a year ago, mainly driven by a significant rise in sugar and basmati rice shipments.

Exports have increased for 20 straight months despite unparalleled food inflation in the country's history. Because of supply and demand imbalances, consumers nationwide pay more for food items, particularly sugar, meat, and poultry.

In June 2024, the government announced a policy allowing the export of 150,000 tonnes of sugar, conditional upon maintaining stable retail prices. However, this target was significantly surpassed, with sugar exports reaching 757,779 tonnes by March.

According to data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the monthly export figures were as follows: 39,158 tonnes in July, 46,990 tonnes in August, 51,452 tonnes in September, 49,643 tonnes in October, 166,283 tonnes in November, 279,273 tonnes in December, 124,793 tonnes in January, and 180 tonnes in February. However, no sugar exports were reported in March.

The PMLN-led coalition government again allowed sugar exports, which increased retail prices to Rs180 per kg, further fuelling inflation.

In FY23, the government permitted the export of 212,896 tonnes of sugar in three months.

Official figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed that rice significantly contributed to food exports.

However, the overall rice shipments fell 5.91pc to \$2.76bn in value during 9MFY25 from \$2.93bn, mainly due to a decline in non-basmati rice exports.

The product-wise details show that the quantity of basmati rice shipments rose by 21.78pc to 663,980 tonnes year-on-year and its value by 8.78pc to \$676.96 million.

Exports of non-basmati rice dipped 9.87pc in value to \$2.08bn in 9MFY25.

9MFY25 from \$1.026bn over the corresponding period of last year.

Exports to France rose 10.88pc to \$420.56m in 9MFY24 from \$379.29m, followed by a 4.72pc rise to Belgium's \$424.61m against \$405.44m. There is a rising trend in exports to France in the past few weeks.

However, 0.14pc increase was recorded in quantity to 4.02m tonnes.

New markets like Bangladesh opened up for Pakistani rice, further underscoring the sector's growth potential. The rice sector is a major contributor to exports, especially in the European Union and the United Kingdom.

Due to sustained export growth over the past two years, the average price of basmati rice has surged to Rs400 per kg from Rs150, restricting buying from domestic consumers.

Meat exports increased by 0.99pc in 9MFY25 compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. The opening of new markets, participation of new companies in meat exports and approvals for additional slaughterhouses have contributed to this growth.

Meat prices in the domestic market have experienced an unparalleled surge in recent years. In the past three and a half years, the average cost of buffalo meat has jumped from Rs700 per kg to Rs16,00. The price of chicken has also experienced an unprecedented surge. Exports of vegetables have recorded a negative growth of 17.09pc in July-March FY25 from a year ago, mainly due to a drop in exports of onions, potatoes, and tomatoes. The export of fruits declined by 5.04pc during the months under review. The export of fish and fish products record a paltry growth of 8.15pc during the months under review.



Picnickers cool off at a stream at the Shahdara picnic spot in Islamabad

Nadir Magsi emerges winner in jeep race as Derajat festival concludes



A driver participates in an off-road jeep rally on the final day of Derajat festival in Dera Ismail Khan recently.

Cultural and recreational event 'Derajat Festival 2025' came to a vibrant close with a spectacular ceremony held at Ratta Kulachi Sports Stadium recently.

Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur attended the event as the chief guest. The closing ceremony featured the distribution of awards among participants, who showcased exceptional performances in events such as off-road jeep challenges and various other competitions.

The 40-day festival included a variety of traditional and modern sports such as jeep racing, tent pegging, horse riding, boxing, kabaddi and wrestling. The festival also hosted livestock shows, horse parades, pet exhibitions, art displays and numerous cultural and literary events, including Quran recitation and Naat competitions.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said Derajat festival promoted the region's rich culture, traditions, sports and tourism. "The overwhelming participation of people is truly encouraging," he said.

He said that peaceful execution of multiple events over 40 days sent a strong and positive message to the world. "It proves that this region holds immense importance in terms of cultural, historical, and tourism value," he added.

He commended the sacrifices and contributions of security forces and local

community. "Our people and our forces have made the greatest sacrifices and bravely faced difficult times. Their efforts have made this peace possible," he added.

Mr Gandapur announced a cash reward of Rs10,000 for each police, rescue and other security personnel involved in ensuring the festival's security and success. He also emphasised the government's commitment to merit-based decisions and policies.

"All decisions in the province are being made on merit. Since taking office, we have been organising regular sports events and not a single complaint of unfairness has been reported. This is the path of justice and we must ensure all departments follow it," he said.

Nadir Magsi won the off-road challenge jeep rally organised under Derajat festival. The thrilling finale of the rally concluded with high-octane performances in the prepared category as Pakistan's top racers battled across a rugged 69-kilometre track.

The event featured four sub-categories with Nadir Magsi claiming first position in Category-A by completing the track with an impressive time of 44 minutes and 18 seconds. In Category-B, Gohar secured the top slot by completing the track in 49 minutes and one second. Bewar Mazari triumphed in Category-C with a time of 50 minutes and 59 seconds.

Shakeel clinched first position in Category-D, finishing the track in 49 minutes and 59 seconds.

A total of 22 racers from across the country showcased their driving prowess, drawing a large and enthusiastic crowd of spectators, who gathered to witness the action-packed finale.

Strict security measures were in place for the festival, with monitoring and checkpoints established at various locations to ensure a smooth and safe experience for all participants.

Margalla station's dry port to be outsourced to ICCI

Pakistan Railways has decided to outsource its dry port at Margalla Railway Station to the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) under a partnership agreement.

Speaking to a delegation of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) recently, Railways Minister Mohammad Hanif Abbasi announced the approval of a freight train project that will reduce the delivery time of goods between Karachi and Rawalpindi to less than four days.

The initiative aims to alleviate the growing burden on roads and provide better transportation facilities for the public. The freight train project will not only increase Pakistan Railways' revenue but will also accelerate the country's economic growth, Abbasi hoped.

The railways minister stated that in just 18 months, the government has achieved what was not accomplished in the last twenty years. "We are utilising our resources in the best possible way to guide Pakistan Railways towards a new and powerful path," he said.

The minister announced the holding of roadshows across all the divisions of Pakistan Railways to open doors for new partnerships, and asked all divisional superintendents of Pakistan Railways to hold dialogue with their respective chambers of commerce to establish strong collaborations and work together for mutual benefit. "Together, we will enhance the future of Pakistan Railways and open new doors for partnerships," he remarked.



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LHC again places heritage sites under control of archaeology dept

The Lahore High Court on Wednesday 23 April ordered the Punjab archaeology department to take over administrative control of Lahore Fort and other heritage sites which were earlier transferred to the Walled City Authority of Lahore (WCLA).

Justice Shahid Karim was hearing a petition challenging the handover of the heritage sites, including Lahore Fort, Shalamar Gardens and Jahangir's tomb, to the WCLA by the provincial government.

At the outset of the hearing, a written reply was filed on behalf of WCLA Director General Kamran Lashari, in which he admitted holding of private functions at the heritage sites despite restraining orders passed by the court.

An apology on behalf of the WCLA DG was also tendered, which the judge rejected for the time being and immediately summoned the director general of the archaeology department.

Law officer told to forward court order to CS for action against WCLA DG for holding private events at monuments

Justice Karim resumed the hearing at 1pm when archaeology DG Zahir Abbas Malik appeared before the court. He stated that the conditional transfer of the management of Lahore Fort, Hazoori Bagh and Shahi Hamam was made to the WCLA following a notification issued on Oct 20, 2014.

He said, as per the condition, the ownership of the fort and Hazoori Bagh was to remain with the directorate general of archaeology, however, the WCLA was vested with the management and control of the monuments for all practical purposes.

The DG also presented a 2023 notification, which required the archaeology department to withdraw all officials/staff posted at fort, Shalamar Gardens and Qutubuddin Aibak's tomb in Anarkali.

He said complete administrative control of the sites was also transferred from the archaeology department to the WCLA.

However, Justice Karim observed that it did not mean at all that the overall authority over the Lahore Fort was conceded by the directorate general of archaeology, Punjab, which inherently vests in the department of archaeology according to the primary law.

"The transfer of administrative control does not mean that ownership too has come to vest in WCLA," the judge maintained.

The judge observed that the admission made by the WCLA DG about holding private functions in the monuments in violation of the court's orders cannot be tolerated.

The judge suspended the impugned notifications of 2014 and 2023, which transferred the control of the heritage sites to the WCLA.

Justice Karim directed the archaeology DG to take over administrative control of Lahore Fort and other sites till the next hearing.

The judge instructed a Punjab government's law officer to forward the order to the chief secretary, who shall initiate action against WCLA DG Lashari and other officers, and inform the court regarding appropriate action at the next hearing.

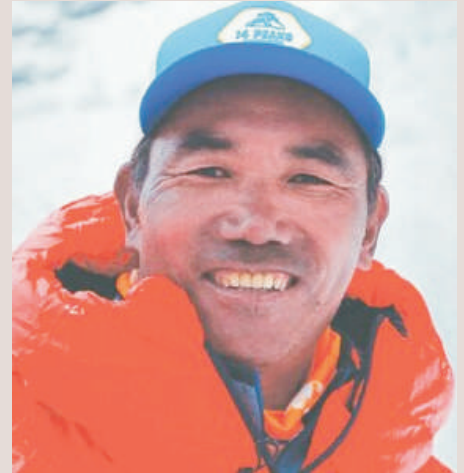
"This action ought to include revocation of appointment of these officers as they have fallen in breach of the public trust reposed in them," Justice Karim observed in his order.

The judge further directed the law officer to assist the court regarding action under the law that may be applicable to the violations committed by the WCLA.

The judge would resume further hearing on Thursday 24 April.

Rana Irfan Ali, an employee of the archaeology department, filed the petition.

Nepali 'Everest Man' completes record summit



A 55-year-old Nepali climber dubbed "Everest Man" reached the peak of the world's highest mountain for a record 31st time on Tuesday 27 May, more than three decades after his first summit.

"Massive congratulations to the legendary Kami Rita Sherpa on his 31st successful ascent of Everest, the highest number of ascents by anyone in history," expedition organiser Seven Summit Treks said.

"Kami Rita Sherpa needs no introduction. He is not just a national climbing hero, but a global symbol of Everest itself," it added.

Sherpa first stood on the top of Mount Everest in 1994 when working for a commercial expedition.

He has climbed Everest almost every year since, guiding clients.

Sherpa, speaking a year ago after he had climbed the 8,849-metre (29,032-foot) peak for the 29th and 30th times, said that he was "just working" and did not plan on setting records.

"I am more happy that my climbs help Nepal be recognised in the world," Sherpa said. Seven Summit Treks said he completed the climb on Tuesday as the leader of an Indian army team, adding that he "not only reached the summit himself, but also led and guided the last remaining members of the team to the top".

Another Nepali climber, Tashi Gyalzen Sherpa, 29, returned to Kathmandu on Tuesday 27 May after he made a record-breaking four summits of Everest in just 15 days.



Archeologists and other experts conduct a fresh survey of a selected part of Mohenjodaro

Symbol of Pakistani resilience Sirbaz makes history



Sirbaz Khan raises Pakistani flag after summit of Cho Oyu last year.

Renowned Pakistani climber Sirbaz Khan on Sunday 18 May successfully summited Mount Kangchenjunga (8,586 metres), the world's third highest peak situated in Nepal, without supplemental oxygen.

With this latest accomplishment, he becomes the first Pakistani to complete all 14 of the world's 8,000-metre peaks — commonly referred to as the eight-thousanders — without any additional oxygen support, a feat achieved by only a handful of elite mountaineers globally.

In his 30s, the mountaineer from Aliabad area of Hunza had earlier in October 2024 summited all the 14 peaks, though some with support of bottled oxygen.

Pakistani climbers including Naila Kiani, Sajid Sadpara, civil society members and political leaders have congratulated Sirbaz for his historical feat.

Imagine Nepal, the tour organisers of Sirbaz, said, “We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Sirbaz Khan — our dear friend, client, and partner from Pakistan — on his incredible achievement of summiting Kanchenjunga (8,586m), the world's third-highest mountain, without supplemental oxygen this morning, May 18, 2025.”

Alpine Club of Pakistan Secretary Karrar Haidri, said, “Sirbaz Khan has made the entire nation proud. Completing all 14 eight-thousanders without oxygen is a rare and heroic achievement. He is a symbol of Pakistani resilience, skill, and courage.”

Sirbaz achieved a landmark in the history of high-altitude climbing by successfully summiting Mount Kangchenjunga at 4:15am. What makes this feat extraordinary is that Sirbaz scaled the world's third-highest mountain without the use of supplementary oxygen — marking a defining moment in

Pakistan's mountaineering legacy. His accomplishment was made in the spirit of pure alpine climbing — minimal gear, no fixed ropes or camps set by Sherpas, and no additional oxygen support — a style that represents the truest and most demanding form of mountaineering.

Sirbaz's journey to this historic milestone has spanned over a decade of determination, discipline, and sheer courage. He has successfully scaled the following 14 peaks over 8,000m — all without bottled oxygen: Everest, K2, Kangchenjunga, Lhotse Makalu, Cho Oyu, Dhaulagiri, Manaslu, Nanga Parbat, Annapurna-I, Gasherbrum-I, Broad Peak, Gasherbrum-II and Shishapangma.

On four of these expeditions, he had been accompanied by late Muhammad Ali Sadpara.

Mayor opens British-era Denso Hall after renovation

Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday 25 May formally inaugurated the historic Denso Hall building on M.A. Jinnah Road, marking the completion of the restoration and renovation of the colonial-era heritage structure.

“Following the restoration of Khaliq Dina Hall, Frere Hall, and Empress Market, today the historic Denso Hall and Library has been reopened after renovation,” he said while talking to reporters.

The Denso Hall now includes a digital library, a coffee shop and a well-equipped event hall.

“It's our commitment to fulfil promises, digitising all KMC assets, and preserving the city's heritage to educate the younger generation about Karachi's rich history,” he said.

Restored heritage building includes digital library, coffee shop and event hall

He recalled that Denso Hall and Library, built in 1886, was the first public library accessible to locals, whereas previously such libraries and halls were reserved for British officials and their families.

He regretted that the building was converted into a government office in the 1980s, depriving children and students in the area of its use.

“In 2007, the building was handed over to a private party, after which it

Before setting on the mission to summit Dhaulagiri peak last year, he had said: “I am looking forward to his expedition and reaching closer to the dream of my mentor Ali Sadpara, who had the similar dream of scaling the 14 highest peaks, but tragically lost his life during a winter expedition on K2.”

He began his climbing career in 2016, but this record-breaking summit of Mount Kangchenjunga not only cemented his place among the top mountaineers of all time but also brought immense pride to the nation, particularly the mountaineering community of Gilgit-Baltistan from where Sirbaz hails.

Sirbaz's mission has always been to represent Pakistan on the world's highest stages and inspire the next generation of climbers to follow his path with the same passion and perseverance.

Later, in post on X, former foreign minister and minister for state on foreign affairs, Hina Rabbani Khar, said, “Scaling all fourteen 8000-ers Alpine style, Sirbaz Khan makes Pakistan proud.”

remained closed until December 31, 2023. Now, it has been reopened for citizens as promised. We encourage the public to use the space for literary, academic and cultural events,” he added.

He said that the budget of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation was used in a transparent manner for the renovation of buildings which highlighted the spirit of the city's past. “The KMC itself is historically significant, having registered its first birth and death in 1872,” he said.

The mayor promised to revive the city's glory and said that past neglect would be rectified.

About future challenges, the mayor mentioned plans for proper disposal of animal waste during Eidul Azha and preparation for monsoon rains. He also announced the reconstruction of Mohammad Ali Hoti Market and upcoming restoration plans for Lea Market and Machhi Miani Market.

He said that the Sindh government had been requested to allocate funds for these projects.

Referring to the renovated Denso Hall and Library, Mayor Wahab expressed gratitude to Habib Bank for its financial support and invited further collaboration from other organizations for Karachi's development.

Deputy Mayor Salman Abdullah Murad, Parliamentary Leader Karamullah Waqasi and others were also present.

Sajid summits world's seventh highest peak



SAJID Ali Sadpara holds Pakistan's flag at the summit of Dhaulagiri in Nepal.

Renowned Pakistani climber Sajid Ali Sadpara summited Dhaulagiri Peak, 8,167 metres and the world's seventh highest mountain in Nepal, without oxygen and porter support.

This extraordinary feat, confirmed by the Alpine Club of Pakistan, marks his ninth 8,000-metre peak, all climbed without bottled oxygen and completely unsupported.

In a statement, Seven Summit Treks said the team successfully reached the summit starting at 9:35am on Sunday 10 May, marking the first confirmed ascent of Dhaulagiri in the Spring 2025 season.

The expedition team had previously fixed ropes up to 8,050 metres and launched their final summit push during a favourable weather window.

Dhaulagiri is the ninth 8,000m Sajid Sadpara has climbed without bottled oxygen, porter support.

The team began their summit push from Camp IV at 6:15pm on Saturday, making relentless efforts to reach the top while simultaneously securing the final section of the route by fixing over 350 metres of rope.

This year, Kangchenjunga has seen an impressive turnout, with nearly 70 international climbers and an equal number of Sherpas taking on the challenge.

Seven Summit Treks confirmed that Sajid Ali Sadpara summited the peak without bottled oxygen and porter support and congratulated to all climbers on the feat.

According to a statement issued Karrar Haidri Secretary, Alpine Club of Pakistan,

this is another proud moment for Pakistan and the mountaineering world.

It said in a landmark achievement for Pakistan's climbing community, Mr Sadpara successfully summited Dhaulagiri on May 10, without supplemental oxygen or external support.

The Club said that Sajid, 29, has displayed remarkable endurance, resilience, and dedication to high-altitude mountaineering. His Dhaulagiri expedition was organised by Seven Summit Treks Nepal and Sabroso Pakistan, with technical gear sponsored by Kailas.

Sajid Sadpara is the proud son of the legendary Muhammad Ali Sadpara, who tragically lost his life during a winter ascent of K2 in 2021. Carrying his father's legacy with honour, the junior Sadpara has emerged as a powerful symbol of Pakistani mountaineering strength and global excellence. Karrar Haidri, Secretary of the Alpine Club of Pakistan, also congratulated Mr Sadpara, calling it "a historic milestone that reflects the strength and courage of Pakistani climbers on the world stage".

Mr Sadpara had reached the base camp of the peak on April 6 and started his rotation.

In his official social media page of Facebook and Instagram, he said: "Alhamdulillah standing at the top of Dhaulagiri, the world's 7th highest mountain without oxygen and external support.

Sikh pilgrims return to India via Wagah

Thousands of Sikh pilgrims have begun their return journey via the Wagah Border after completing their religious rituals in Pakistan.

More than 7,000 Sikh pilgrims from India and other parts of the world were provided with full security and facilitation by the Punjab government.

Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Operations Faisal Kamran visited Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to oversee the departure preparations and monitor the security arrangements.

Speaking to the media, he stated: "All arrangements for the safe return of our guests have been completed. Over 1,500 police officers and personnel were deployed at key points from residences to the Wagah Border to maintain high security."

He highlighted that Dolphin Force, PRU (Police Response Unit), and Elite Force units were patrolling the designated routes to ensure smooth and secure transportation.

"Sikh pilgrims are our honored guests. We are leaving no stone unturned to protect them with full responsibility and

hospitality," DIG Kamran affirmed.

During their stay, the pilgrims attended rituals at major gurdwaras, including Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Nankana Sahib and Dera Sahib. This pilgrimage took place during Baisakhi, which marks the start of the Sikh New Year and commemorates the establishment of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. It also coincides with the wheat harvesting season in Punjab.

Shandur Polo in Chitral

CM aide for brisk arrangements for mega sports, cultural gala Advisor to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister on Tourism and Culture Zahid Chanzeb has announced that mega sports and cultural gala Shandur Polo Festival would be held at the scenic Shandur valley in Upper Chitral district from June 20-22.

Issuing directives to the relevant authorities for finalising arrangements for the event at a meeting, he said that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur had set the date for the spectacular three-day festival where polo matches and cultural activities would feature from June 20-22.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KPCTA) Director General Habibullah Arif, Event Manager Muhammad Ali Syed and other officials also attended the meeting. Zahid Chanzeb said that special teams had been constituted to finalise all arrangements for the festival. In line with the chief minister's directives, he said that all possible facilities would be provided to tourists and local people attending the festival.

He also stressed the need for launching a promotional campaign to raise awareness among both domestic and international tourists about the event.

Expressing his views on the festival, the advisor said that the Shandur Polo Festival was a reflection of the vibrant culture and traditions of the region. Teams from Lower Chitral and Upper Chitral will compete with teams from Gilgit-Baltistan, presenting a spectacular display of sportsmanship and brotherhood. On this occasion, KPCTA DG reaffirmed his commitment to make best possible arrangements in collaboration with the KP Police, Chitral Scouts, Pak Army, district administrations of Lower Chitral and Upper Chitral.

The Shandur Polo Festival, renowned for being held at the world's highest polo ground, attracts thousands of tourists every year, and an increase in the number of visitors is expected this year. The provincial government is determined to further promote the festival and boost tourism in the province.

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Restaurants to be set up in Golra, Margalla railway stations; museum to be upgraded

Pakistan Railways will establish restaurants at the historical Golra and Margalla railway stations to attract tourists by next month and upgrade the railway museum.

This was decided in a meeting held to discuss renovation of Golra and Margalla [stations](#) presided over by Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi 19 May. The meeting was attended by Pakistan Railways officials.

“Our aim is to provide a better environment to the public. Modern style restaurants will be built at Golra and Margalla stations and their management would be outsourced,” the federal minister said.

He said the public would be able to come and enjoy there whenever they want, adding that “modern style electric poles will also be installed and clean and comfortable benches will be provided”.

Mr Abbasi said a modern cafeteria would also be built for students of the surrounding area in Margalla as more than four universities are located in the H sector.

Apart from this, he said steps were being taken to make the railway stations public-friendly and modern.

A senior official of the Pakistan Railways said there was a plan to set up tea and coffee café on wheels at Golra Railway Station, and a bogie would be prepared where sitting facility would be made available for more than 50 people. A corner at Golra Railway Station will be allocated and a private restaurant will be established to serve people traditional and continental food.

At Margalla Railway Station, the official said, it would be a picnic point for families and we would develop the site for families.

“The green environment already attracted the people and Pakistan Railways will facilitate the students and families to come enjoy the environment especially in the evenings and rainy days,” he said.

Golra Railway Station is more than 140 years old and is named after a small village famous for a shrine of renowned saint, religious scholar and poet Pir Mehar Ali Shah.

The Heritage Museum at Golra Railway Station, which consists of two main galleries, was established in 2003 to preserve more than 150 years of rail heritage. Railway equipment dating back to 1860s, including signals, meters, mode of communication, emergency

equipment, Victorian-era furniture with classic crockery, piano, long-arm rest chairs, clocks, watches and medical kits, are displayed at the museum.

Margallah Railways Station, on the other hand, was established in Islamabad in the early 1970s by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto-led government, which wanted to connect Islamabad with the main railway system but it was not further expanded. However, due to its location, it was an ideal place to attract tourists.

Khurd station to be turned into tourist hub

Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi 19 May said that the British-era Attock Khurd railway station would be transformed into modern tourist destination through a comprehensive renovation plan, including setting up high-standard food stalls and luxury inns for travelers, and launching a plantation drive to improve the station's environment.

He expressed these views while talking to newsmen during a visit to Attock railway station.

Member Punjab Assembly Sher Ali Khan, Sardar Iftikhar Ahmed Khan, member district monitoring committee and former provincial minister Jahangir Khanzada, PML-N leader Malik Hameed Akbar Khan, and officials of railways and district administration were also present on the occasion.

Responding to a question, he said that trains punctuality had increased from 18pc to 84pc.

He reaffirmed the government's commitment to providing a more comfortable and welcoming environment to passengers at railway stations across the country.

He noted that the chief minister had directed him to enhance the capabilities of Pakistan Railways. In line with this directive, Abbasi said several major initiatives were currently under consideration.

Among them is a project aimed at reducing travel time between Lahore and Rawalpindi to just two hours. He said that the country's economy is gaining momentum and expressed confidence that the prime minister's vision will elevate Pakistan to new heights.

The minister also attended a briefing by the district administration in which Attock Deputy Commissioner Rao Atif Raza informed him about development projects, especially the promotion of eco-tourism.

Polish man to cycle to K2 after permission from GB court



PAWEŁ Małaszko

A Polish cyclist, granted permission by the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court to cycle up to the K2 basecamp, will start his journey within the next few days.

Paweł Małaszko arrived in Gilgit on Saturday 3 May as part of his adventure to cycle across Pakistan — from the shores of the Arabian Sea to the K2 Base Camp.

However, his adventure was stalled as the required permit to go to the popular tourist destination couldn't be issued due to an ongoing legal battle.

On Friday, the GB Chief Court ordered the government to issue the trekking permit to Mr Małaszko.

Last year, the GB government hiked permit fees for mountaineering and trekking expeditions by 300 per cent under the GB Finance Act, 2024.

The region's tour operators challenged the decision in court, which issued a stay order, effectively suspending the issuance of new permits.

Mr Małaszko had filed an appeal in the GB Chief Court for the trekking permit, according to Asghar Ali Porik, a tour operator.

An official of the GB tourism department said the Polish cyclist has been granted a trekking permit after the court order.

However, permits to other foreigners couldn't be issued until the court gives a clear directive, the official added.

Talking to *media* Mr Małaszko confirmed his journey to the K2 basecamp would begin in the next couple of days.

Before his journey to the K2 Base Camp, the cyclist travelled to the Khunjerab Pass from Gilgit on Saturday.

He arrived in Gilgit after cycling from Karachi, covering a distance of around 1,900 kilometres.



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Thousands of tourists flock to Jab Valley



Peaceful sites, gushing waterfalls, untouched by commercialisation, enhance its appeal.

In a striking display of Pakistan's growing eco-tourism potential, thousands of tourists from across the country flocked to Jab Valley in Haripur during the Eid holidays, turning the once-obscure locale into one of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's most sought-after destinations.

Located approximately 80 kilometres from Islamabad and 170 kilometres from Peshawar, Jab Valley has quietly evolved into a nature lover's haven, home to a chain of eight waterfalls that cascade in succession through forested cliffs. The valley lies just a short drive from Khanpur Dam, making it a convenient addition to traditional tourist itineraries.

The waterfalls, some plunging from heights of up to 200 metres, were first discovered and documented in 2021 by Hassan Nisar, a YouTuber and founder of Metrix Pakistan. His efforts not only brought the natural beauty of Jab Valley to the forefront but also helped promote the region nationally and internationally through digital media. The viral videos and widespread coverage that followed played a central role in establishing Jab Valley as a new hub for eco-tourism.

"I still remember hiking into the valley for the first time and hearing the roar of the waterfalls echoing through the cliffs. I knew instantly that the world needed to see this," said Nisar, smiling as

he watched families pose for photos near the cascading waters. "Today, seeing so many people here appreciating the natural beauty of this place fills me with pride. This is exactly what I dreamed of - tourism that uplifts communities and brings people closer to nature."

He added that Jab Valley now needs targeted government investment and infrastructure development. "With official support, this place can become a signature site of Pakistan's tourism in the new era - a model for sustainable, community-led and eco-friendly travel."

"I came here with my friends from Lahore after seeing a video online. It's nothing like Murree or the usual tourist spots. It's peaceful and untouched," said Areeba Malik, a visitor from Punjab.

Jab Valley's charm lies in its resistance to commercial trappings. With no mega resorts, plastic waste or urban noise, it offers a rare sensory retreat: the gushing of the waterfalls, the call of native birds and the whisper of the wind through towering pine trees and centuries-old wild olive groves, known locally as zaitoon.

The ecological diversity of the region is remarkable. Migratory birds, porcupines, and foxes roam freely, while local flora includes medicinal plants long used by villagers for traditional healing. The valley's discovery has not only enriched Pakistan's natural tourism map. It has also revived the local economy.

Shoukat, a roadside daba owner in the area, credits the influx of tourists for a

threefold increase in his daily earnings since 2021. "Before, I used to make around Rs400 a day. Now during peak season or Eid, I can earn up to Rs1,200. That's a big difference for someone like me," he said, flashing a grateful smile.

Despite the growing footfall, infrastructure remains minimal. Access roads are unpaved in sections, and there are no formal visitor facilities beyond a few local tea stalls and makeshift seating areas. While this lack of development adds to the valley's rustic appeal, it also raises questions about sustainability.

Environmentalists caution that without regulated tourism, the fragile ecosystem could suffer. "We need eco-conscious tourism, guided hikes, proper waste disposal and limited human interference," said an environmental science student from Hazara University visiting the site.

For now, Jab Valley remains a rare window into what tourism in Pakistan could be: rooted in nature, sustained by communities and appreciated with reverence.

Train Travel Between Lahore and Rawalpindi to Take Just 2 Hours



Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi recently announced a major development for passengers travelling between Rawalpindi and Lahore, revealing that the train speed on the route will be increased to 160 kilometers per hour, cutting travel time down to just two hours.

Speaking to the media at the Ministry of Railways, Abbasi said that the upgrade in speed was part of broader efforts to modernize the railway network and enhance passenger convenience.

The minister also shared several upcoming projects, including the launch of an international freight train service from Lahore to the Iranian border, ultimately reaching Russia.

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