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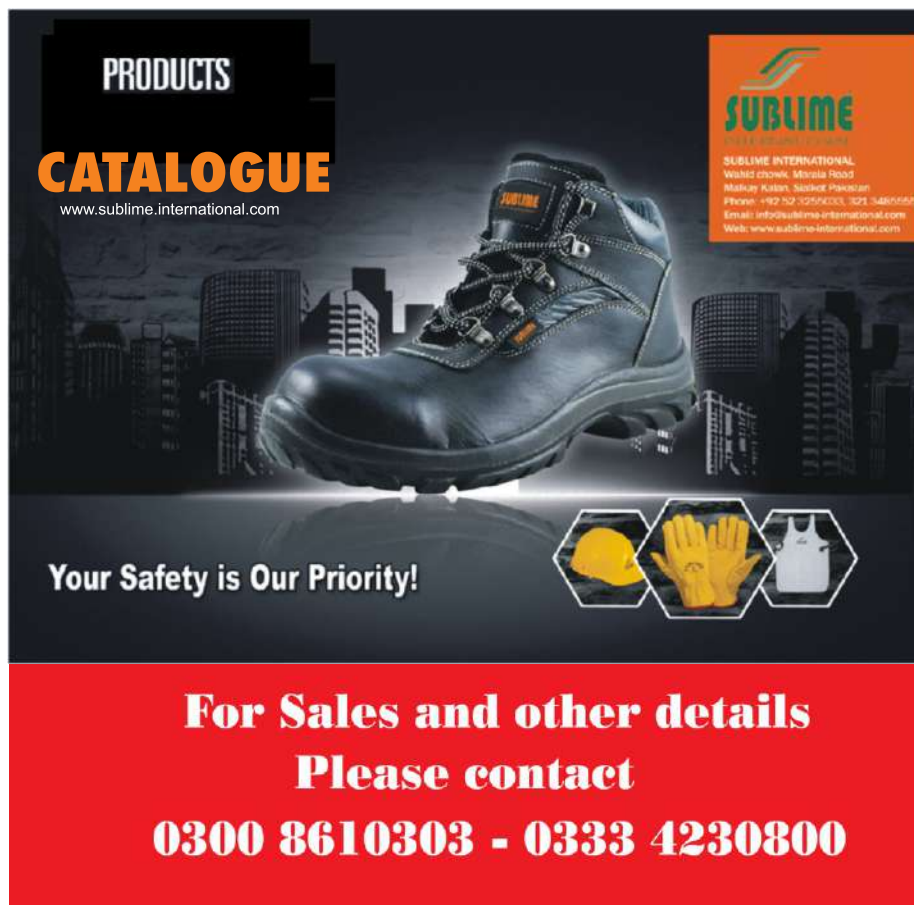
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ACAAP Secures the DIP Program of IATA Through UIC

Mr. Rana Tariq Mahmood, Chairman of ACAAP, stated, "I consider it a significant highlight of my career that, after a two-month-long effort and with the blessings of Allah, we successfully secured the DIP program of IATA through UIC. This achievement is a testament to the unwavering confidence, support, and prayers of our members. I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all our friends and supporters, especially, Mian Shahid (CEC, UIC), Shakeel Ahmed (MD, UIC), and Waqas Riaz (UIC) for their tireless efforts. I am also deeply thankful to my entire Executive Committee team for their steadfast support throughout this journey. However, one individual deserves special recognition—my partner and well-wisher of ACAAP, Mr. Shujaat Ali. His unmatched dedication and efforts were pivotal in making this milestone possible."



Sialkot International Airport marks progress in the first half of 2025

Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) has concluded a remarkable first half of 2025, marked by steady operational growth, infrastructural advancements, and strengthened diplomatic and business relations. In the last six months, nearly 450,000 passengers travelled through SIAL, facilitated by the smooth operation of more than 1,300 flights. Complementing this impressive passenger flow, over 4,350 tons of cargo were exported to international markets, reaffirming Sialkot's pivotal role in Pakistan's economic landscape, especially for the business community and export sector. With a vision to expand and elevate passenger experience, SIAL top brass has formally initiated the expansion of its International Passenger Terminal, a forward-looking step that aligns with the airport's commitment to modernity, capacity enhancement, and world-class services. In a show of compliance and operational readiness, SIAL successfully conducted a full-scale Airport Emergency Exercise, strictly adhering to the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority's (PCAA) safety regulations and protocols, ensuring the airport's preparedness for any contingencies. The first half of the year also witnessed high-level diplomatic engagements. Chairman Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman Faraz Akram Awan & CEO of SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R) met with the U.S. Consul General, fostering potential bilateral aviation cooperation. Moreover, the Ambassadors of Saudi Arabia and Ethiopia to Pakistan paid significant visits to the airport, highlighting SIAL's growing stature on the diplomatic and global aviation map.

During the recent Pak-India conflict, SIAL promptly took all precautionary measures to cautiously tackle the crisis situation, complying to the directions of the Pakistan Airports Authority & Civil Aviation. SIAL also underscored unconditional support to the Armed Forces of Pakistan with all possible resources and later paid tribute to the heroic victory by the Defence Forces.

In a notable achievement on the commercial aviation front, SIAL Management actively pursued for additional increased flights frequency and new airline partnerships. This effort bore fruit as Salam Air increased the frequency of its flights followed by AirSial formally announced additional international flights on the Sialkot-Dubai route, alongside the initiation of domestic operations between Sialkot and Karachi, which is another big milestone. These additions are expected to significantly

benefit both business and leisure travellers. Furthermore, SIAL is expecting anticipatedly on grounds of concrete information/intimation leading international carriers, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, FlyaDeal, Jazeera Airways, Turkish Airlines, and several other operators are anticipated to begin services from Sialkot in the near future, ushering in a new era of connectivity for the region.

In recognition of logistics excellence, SIAL also hosted the Cargo Terminal Business Partner Award Ceremony, celebrating the unwavering support and performance of its business partners, airlines, and freight operators who have consistently contributed to the airport's success.

SIAL continues to rise as a model of public-private partnership, driving economic growth and regional connectivity while upholding the highest standards of professionalism, service, and safety.

Chairman SIAL Hassan Ali Bhatti stated that the six-month review of Sialkot International Airport reflects our unwavering commitment to growth,

operational excellence, and service to the nation. It is with immense pride that I acknowledge the resilience of our teams, whose collective efforts have translated into tangible progress in airline expansion, infrastructural development, and passenger facilitation.

Vice Chairman SIAL Faraz Akram Awan said that in the past six months we as team have seen remarkable developments, from increased airline interest to the launch of new domestic and international routes. These successes are not just milestones; they are a proof to SIAL's growing strategic importance in Pakistan's aviation landscape.

Chief Executive Officer SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R) said that the first half of the year has been defined by decisive progress at SIAL. We have expanded flight operations, attracted new carriers, strengthened safety and security protocols, and remained focused on passenger convenience. I thank entire management of SIAL and every department, employee whose professionalism and drive kept SIAL ahead of the curve. Together, we aim higher.





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PIA resumes Islamabad-Manchester flights as UK lifts ban on Pakistani Airlines

In a major breakthrough for Pakistan's aviation industry, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is officially returning to the United Kingdom skies after a five-year hiatus. The announcement follows the UK government's decision to lift its flight ban on Pakistani carriers, allowing PIA to resume direct passenger services to Britain. The airline's first restored route will be a nonstop service between Islamabad and Manchester, set to launch on August 16, 2025.

This move marks a turning point in PIA's international operations and provides a crucial link for the millions of Pakistani expatriates, students, and business travelers who regularly travel between the UK and Pakistan.

Background: Why the UK Banned PIA in 2020

The UK banned PIA and other Pakistani airlines in mid-2020, shortly after a devastating PIA crash in Karachi claimed 97 lives. Investigations revealed serious irregularities in pilot license verification, triggering international safety concerns. The UK Civil Aviation Authority, along with the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), immediately suspended PIA's authorization to operate flights to Europe and the UK.

However, over the past few years, Pakistan's aviation authorities — particularly the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) — implemented sweeping reforms, overhauled pilot licensing systems, and improved compliance with international safety protocols. These steps were recognized by both the European Union (which lifted its ban earlier in 2025) and the UK, which has now reinstated operating permissions for Pakistani airlines.

PIA will restart its UK operations with a four-times-weekly direct flight between Islamabad International Airport (ISB) and Manchester Airport (MAN)—a major hub in the UK's north and a city with one of the largest Pakistani diaspora populations in Europe.

Flight Schedule (from August 16, 2025):

Flight P K 7 0 1 :
Departs Islamabad at 12:05 PM PKT
Arrives in Manchester at 5:00 PM GMT

Flight P K 7 0 2 :
Departs Manchester at 7:00 PM GMT
Arrives in Islamabad at 6:50 AM PKT (next day)

Flights will run on Thursdays, Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays, operated by a Boeing 777-200ER, PIA's



flagship long-haul aircraft.

Aircraft Details: Boeing 777-200ER

PIA's Boeing 777-200ER is a long-range wide-body aircraft well-suited for non-stop transcontinental flights. The aircraft is configured with:

- 35 Business Class seats with lie-flat functionality

- 294 Economy Class seats

- Typical range: 13,000+ kilometers

- Onboard services: Pakistani and international meal options, in-flight entertainment (on select aircraft), and ample baggage allowance

The aircraft type is already in use on PIA's other long-haul routes to Toronto, Paris, and Kuala Lumpur, making Manchester a strategic addition to the airline's global network.

Why Manchester Matters

Manchester isn't just another UK city—it is home to one of the largest and most connected British-Pakistani communities, with strong cultural, economic, and familial links to cities in Punjab and Northern Pakistan, especially Islamabad, Mirpur, Sialkot, and Jhelum.

Manchester Airport is the UK's third-busiest airport, handling over 31 million passengers in 2024 and offering extensive onward connections to Europe and North America.

The direct route eliminates the need for connecting flights via Doha, Dubai, Istanbul, or Amsterdam—making travel more time-efficient and cost-effective for both leisure and business passengers.

PIA's Operational Comeback

The launch of this route reflects PIA's gradual recovery from years of regulatory, financial, and operational setbacks. With part of its long-haul fleet now reactivated, the airline is:

- Rebuilding its European and UK network

- Resuming direct connectivity to key international markets

- Enhancing aircraft maintenance and safety protocols

- Preparing for privatization efforts backed by the Pakistani government

The move comes at a time when the national carrier is being restructured for privatization, aiming to attract strategic investors by showcasing operational revival and renewed international access.

Economic & Community Impact

This development offers significant benefits to both Pakistan and the UK.

For Pakistan:

- Boost to international travel and tourism

- Enhanced foreign exchange inflows

- Improved national image following years of aviation-related setbacks

- Job creation in aviation and allied services

For the UK:

- Strengthened diaspora connections with Pakistan

- Easier travel for students, families, and business professionals

- Economic stimulus to cities like Manchester through tourism and trade

What's Next? More UK Destinations Ahead

While the Islamabad–Manchester route is the first to return, PIA has plans to eventually resume services to London and Birmingham, which were previously central to its UK operations. Expansion will depend on:

- Fleet availability and upgrades

- Performance of the Manchester route

- UK-Pakistan bilateral air service agreements

- Market demand and load factors

Bookings and Travel Advisory

Bookings for the new Manchester service are expected to open soon via PIA's website, call centers, and travel agencies. Passengers are advised to book early for peak seasons like Eid, summer holidays, and student intake periods. Travelers must comply with updated visa, COVID, and travel requirements from both UK and Pakistani authorities.

Conclusion: A Milestone in Pakistan's Aviation Comeback

The lifting of the UK ban and the restart of direct PIA flights to Manchester is more than just a route announcement—it's a symbol of Pakistan's aviation sector regaining international credibility. It also reaffirms the enduring ties between the UK and Pakistan, driven by generations of shared heritage, economic cooperation, and family connections.

As PIA's Boeing 777 takes off from Islamabad on August 16, 2025, it carries not just passengers, but the hopes of an industry on the mend and the promise of renewed trust across borders.

A brand new private airline, Air Karachi set for takeoff!



Air Karachi, a new private airline backed by Karachi's top business tycoons, is gearing up to launch domestic flight operations in Pakistan, promising affordable, reliable, and high-quality travel. Having secured its Regular Public Transport (RPT) license from the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on June 5, 2025, the airline is poised to take off soon with an initial fleet of three leased aircraft. Led by retired Air Vice Marshal Syed Imran Majid Ali and supported by prominent investors like Aqeel Karim Dhedhi and Arif Habib, Air Karachi aims to revolutionize Pakistan's aviation sector, starting with domestic routes and eyeing Middle East destinations by 2026.

Key Details of Air Karachi

Launch Timeline: Domestic flights expected to start in late 2025, pending final aircraft acquisition and Air Operator's Certificate (AOC) approval. International flights to the Middle East planned after a mandatory one-year domestic run.

Leadership:

CEO: Retired Air Vice Marshal Syed Imran Majid Ali, former Southern Commander of the Pakistan Air Force, bringing decades of aviation expertise.

COO: Retired Air Vice Marshal Imran Qadir, supported by a team of ex-Pakistan Air Force officials for operational excellence.

Investors: Backed by Karachi's business elite, including Aqeel Karim Dhedhi (AKD Group), Arif Habib (Arif Habib Limited), Bashir Jan Muhammad, Khalid Tawab, Zubair Tufail, Hanif Gohar, Hamza Tabani, and Atif Ikram Sheikh (President, FPCCI). Initial investment: Rs. 5 billion (\$17.5 million), with each of 100 shareholders contributing Rs. 50 million.

Fleet: Starting with three leased aircraft, expanding to seven within a year for domestic and international growth.

Routes:

Domestic: Focus on major cities (Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Multan, Peshawar, Quetta) and underserved routes to boost connectivity.

International: Middle East destinations (Dubai, Jeddah, Riyadh) planned post-2026.

Business Model: Inspired by AirSial's success, Air Karachi emphasizes affordability, punctuality, and customer-centric service, aiming for operational efficiency without price gouging.

Regulatory Status:

Registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) in November 2024.

RPT license issued June 5, 2025, after meeting CAA's capital requirements (Rs. 600 million paid-up capital), safety standards, and environmental compliance. License fee: Rs. 500,000; security deposit: Rs. 100 million.

Mission: Enhance Pakistan's aviation market, create jobs, boost tourism, and strengthen foreign exchange reserves through competitive pricing and quality service.

Why Air Karachi Matters

Air Karachi enters Pakistan's aviation sector at a critical time, as the national carrier, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), faces privatization challenges after a failed Rs. 10 billion bid for a 60% stake in 2024 (reserve price: Rs. 85 billion). With only three private airlines—Airblue, SereneAir, and AirSial—currently operating domestically alongside PIA, Air Karachi's entry promises increased competition, better fares, and improved services. Karachi, Pakistan's economic hub, generates significant travel demand, yet lacks sufficient airline options. Air

Karachi aims to fill this gap, modeled on AirSial's success in Sialkot, which expanded to international routes since 2020.

Economic and Social Impact

Job Creation: Expected to generate employment in aviation, ground handling, and tourism sectors.

Economic Boost: More flight options could attract international travelers, increasing foreign exchange reserves and supporting Pakistan's tourism sector, which could earn billions annually.

Connectivity: Focus on underserved cities will improve access, benefiting students, professionals, and businesses.

Competition: Likely to pressure existing airlines (PIA ranked fourth in punctuality at 89.32% in 2023) to enhance services and lower fares.

Challenges

Aircraft Acquisition: Securing three leased aircraft and AOC approval may delay the launch.

Competition: Faces rivalry from Airblue, SereneAir, AirSial, and emerging airlines like Jet Green, Q Airways, and Go Green Air.

Infrastructure: Limited airport facilities in smaller cities could hinder underserved route plans.

PIA's Shadow: Ongoing PIA privatization (four companies shortlisted, final bids by end-2025) may overshadow new entrants.

Tips for Travelers

Stay Updated: Follow sastaticket.pk or Air Karachi's official channels for flight schedules and bookings once operations begin.

Book Early: Expect competitive fares on domestic routes; subscribe to newsletters for flash sales and discounts.

Verify Routes: Check for confirmed routes (Karachi-Lahore, Karachi-Islamabad).

Prepare for Travel: Arrive 2.5 hours early for domestic flights; baggage allowances (up to 30 kg for Flex fares) vary by fare type.

Outlook

Air Karachi, set to launch in late 2025, is a bold step toward revitalizing Pakistan's aviation landscape. With Rs. 5 billion in backing, a seasoned ex-Air Force team, and a focus on affordability, it aims to connect Karachi and beyond, challenging PIA's dominance and boosting Pakistan's economy. As the airline finalizes aircraft leasing and AOC approval, travelers can expect more options and better services.

JF-17 jets arrive in UK for airshow



HE JF-17 Thunder aircraft will participate in the Royal International Air Tattoo, two months after they gained spotlight following Pakistan's conflict with India.

A Pakistan Air Force contingent with JF-17 Thunder Block-III fighter aircraft landed in the UK on Thursday 17 July to participate in the Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT), according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The aircraft, accompanied by a C-130 Hercules transport plane, arrived at Royal Air Force Base Fairford for what is considered one of the world's largest military airshows.

The participation “underscores Pakistan Air Force's commitment to showcasing its professional excellence, operational capability and the indigenous strength of its aviation industry,” the ISPR said in a news release.

En route to the United Kingdom, the JF-17 jets executed air-to-air refuelling operations with a PAF IL-78 tanker.

The military said the manoeuvre demonstrated the air force's “long-range operational capabilities and the proficiency of its air and ground crew in conducting extended operations beyond national borders”.

The JF-17 Block-III is a 4.5-generation multi-role fighter jet equipped with an advanced radar and long-range, beyond-visual-range missiles capable of undertaking a wide variety of combat missions.

“There is a palpable sense of enthusiasm across the United Kingdom... as aviation enthusiasts and defence observers are eagerly looking forward to the arrival of the Pakistan Air Force's JF-17 Thunder Block-III,” the press release said.

“The aircraft's combat-proven capabilities and operational excellence have garnered significant global attention, making its appearance at RIAT a highly anticipated highlight in the aerospace and defense community.”

'Strong argument' for video in cockpit: IATA chief

There is a “strong argument” for putting video cameras in airline cockpits to assist in accident investigations, the head of global aviation industry group IATA said on Wednesday 16 July.

The comments by Willie Walsh, director general of the International Air Transport Association, followed the release of a preliminary report on last month's Air India [crash](#), which found that the plane's engine [fuel switches](#) had been turned off.

The report, issued Saturday by India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), did not offer any conclusions or apportion blame for the June 12 disaster, but indicated that one pilot asked the other why he cut off fuel, and the second pilot responded that he had not.

The crash killed all but one of the 242 people on board as well as 19 people on the ground. Walsh, a former commercial airline pilot, said he understood the reluctance of pilots to put video cameras in the cockpit.

But “on a personal basis, because we've not discussed this at IATA, I can see that there is a strong argument for the inclusion of video in the cockpit to assist in accident investigations”, he told reporters.

“It's quite possible that a video recording, in addition to the voice recording, would significantly assist the investigators in conducting that investigation,” Walsh added.

UK audit approves Pakistan aviation security

A three-member team from the United Kingdom's Department for Transport (DST) concluded an aviation security inspection at Islamabad International Airport on Thursday 10 July, declaring Pakistan's security arrangements “satisfactory and in line with international standards”, a spokesman for the Airport Security Force said.

The team arrived on July 8 for a three-day aviation security inspection.

Accompanied by a representative of the British High Commission, the UK team began its assessment with an inaugural meeting attended by the Chief

Security Officer and all relevant airport stakeholders.

“All aviation security stakeholders including PAA officials, ASF personnel, and representatives from PIA, British Airways, Air Blue, Kitchen Cuisine, Ras Menzies and others attended the initial briefing,” the PCAA said.

Saudi auditors to assess seven major airports next month

The inspection focused on security deployment, internal controls, screening procedures, issuance of passes, vehicle and staff checks, CCTV operations, perimeter security, deployment of quick response forces, drone arrangements, and the ASF's emergency response capabilities.

The team also reviewed catering and flight operations.

At the conclusion of the visit, the UK inspectors commended the efforts of the Airports Security Force to ensure safe air travel.

Saudi visit soon

Meanwhile, a Saudi aviation security team is scheduled to conduct a security audit of seven major Pakistani airports—including Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Faisalabad, Sialkot, and Multan—starting in August, according to PCAA spokesperson Shahid Qadir.

“Director General of Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has approached Pakistan's DG PCAA, Nadir Shafi Dar, to conduct an aviation security audit of seven Pakistani airports,” PCAA spokesperson Shahid Qadir said. “A Saudi aviation security team will visit Pakistan in August and October to conduct the audit,” he added.

The Saudi team will coordinate closely with the Directorate of Aviation Security (AvSec) of the PCAA, which will host the visiting delegation. The audits come as Pakistan's civil aviation sector shows marked improvement in international benchmarks.

Pakistan achieved a score of 86.73 per cent in the International Civil Aviation Organisation's Universal Security Audit Programme (USAP), significantly higher than the global average of 71pc and India's 73pc, according to the CAA.

Direct US flights

PCAA Director General Nadir Shafi Dar, a veteran aviation specialist, has also initiated engagement with the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in pursuit of direct flight operations to the United States.

The move follows the recent restoration of flights to the European Union and progress toward re-entry into the United Kingdom's aviation network



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Punjab to spend Rs250bn in three years on Pindi-Lahore fast train

The Punjab government has allocated Rs250 billion over the next three years for the Rawalpindi-Lahore fast train project aimed at reducing the travel time between the two cities to two hours.

Speaking at a meet the press programme at National Press Club, Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi: "Under this project, modern signaling and tracks will be laid. An additional Rs100 billion has also been set aside for the improvement of branch lines in other cities."

Under the anti-encroachment campaign, more than 170 acres of railway land worth about Rs10 billion had been reclaimed by adopting the model announced by the chief minister of Punjab.

He said in the last 77 years, no province has invested in the railways, but under the leadership of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, projects worth Rs350 billion have been started.

Says modern signaling, tracks will be laid to reduce travel time between two cities to two hours

Mr Abbasi said we recently defeated an enemy many times bigger than Pakistan, in which the entire nation played a role alongside the Pakistan Army.

"India has allocated Rs7 trillion for railways and Rs3 trillion for roads in its development budget. We also have to adopt the same model so that the pace of national development can be increased," he said.

Due to the special attention of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, great good news will soon come out in Pakistan Railways sector. Without the upgradation of railway tracks, coaches, braking system and ML 1, 2, 3, the dream of development is unfulfilled, he said.

The minister said that the government was going to run a suburban rail service in Punjab on eight routes - Shahdara-Narowal, Narowal-Sialkot, Lalamusa-Malikwal-Sargodha, Faisalabad-Chak Jhumra-Shahinabad, Shorkot-Jhang-Sargodha and Sheikhupura-Jharanwala-Shorkot, Raiwind-Kasur-Pakpattan-Lodharan and Kot Addu-DG Khan-Kashmor.

He said the Punjab government had allocated Rs9 billion for level crossings and a green belt was being built from Shahdara to Kot Lakhpat.

Mr Abbasi said that efforts were being made to improve the railways. Major railway stations are being upgraded and ticket booking is being made easier through mobile apps. Moreover, Khushhal Khan Khattak Express had been restored, he added.

He said six hospitals and 14 schools



and colleges of the railways were being outsourced along with golf and country clubs, rest houses and sleeper factories.

He said that there will be no tolerance regarding train timings, adding efforts were being made to improve the railway sector. Steps are also being taken to improve the railway tracks.

"We have introduced the facility of train hostesses. The quality of food and drinks at the railway stations has been

improved and steps will be taken to increase the revenue of freight trains."

He said solar panels were going to be installed at 355 stations while work had been completed in 155 railways stations. He said elevators and escalators will be installed at three major stations in Punjab, including Shahdara and Kot Lakhpat, adding only ticketholders will be allowed to enter the stations.

In Balochistan, he said a plan had been formulated to upgrade the railway line from Sariat to Kuchlak and introduce a shuttle service. He said a railway ground was being given to the Balochistan government for construction of an international stadium.

For Sindh, the minister said, consultations were underway with the provincial government for the restoration of branch lines.

He said all sports complexes in Rawalpindi and Lahore will be equipped with modern facilities. Railway teams will play in football grounds in Balochistan while a plan to rehabilitate the railway cricket ground in Lahore was also under consideration.

Etihad's stunning Airbus A321LR with new first- and business-class



The A321LR is the first single-aisle jet in Etihad's fleet to feature a proper first-class product and lie-flat pods in the business-class cabin. This plane also ushers in several other upgrades that flyers will undoubtedly enjoy during their journeys onboard the A321LR.

Better yet, the A321LR allows Etihad to expand to several new destinations that it couldn't reach with smaller planes or that didn't have enough demand to fill a much-larger twin-aisle jet. (The A321LR offers about 1,000 mile more range than "standard" A321s.)

In anticipation of the jet's inaugural flight on Aug. 1, I traveled to the Airbus manufacturing facility in Hamburg,

Germany, to get a first look at this jet (and to join the delivery flight to Abu Dhabi).

Here's everything you need to know about Etihad's A321LR — and why it's such a big deal for the airline.

Etihad Airbus A321LR first class

The star of the show is undoubtedly the all-new first-class product on this plane, which is located in the bulkhead row 1 right at the pointy end of the plane.

There are two first-class suites spread across the aisle in a 1-1 configuration.

The 22.5-inch-wide seats feature 20-inch 4K TVs, a buddy seat for a companion to join for a meal, Bluetooth audio connectivity, Qi wireless charging and much more.

'Climate resilience': govt cuts export cargo handling charges by 50% at Karachi Port

Pakistan government announced on Saturday 19 July a 50% cut in port handling, vessel, and storage charges for dry bulk exports at the Karachi Port, a step that Maritime Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry believes will reduce the carbon footprint of trade logistics and foster sustainable growth.

The move is expected to benefit exporters of dry bulk goods and reduce emissions through faster and less congested port activities.

Chaudhry announced the major reduction in port charges "as part of a broader strategy to decarbonise the maritime sector and improve energy efficiency in port operations", according to a ministry statement.

"By lowering operational costs and streamlining logistics, we are not only boosting trade competitiveness but also contributing to climate resilience," he was quoted as saying in the statement.

According to details, the newly introduced reforms include a 50% cut in port handling, vessel, and storage charges, while scrapping the previously planned annual 5% hike in these fees.

"This isn't just a financial measure; it's a pivot toward low-impact, future-ready maritime trade," said Chaudhry. "A more efficient port reduces idle time for vessels, lowers fuel consumption, and supports greener supply chains."

The minister highlighted that the changes were part of a national strategy to modernise port infrastructure, enhance sustainability, and transition towards smart maritime practices.

"The announcement follows recent efforts of the maritime minister to enhance port efficiency, including forming a high-level committee to cut container dwell time by 70% and deploying advanced technologies such as AI and drones for monitoring operations, further underlining the government's proactive stance in modernizing maritime trade logistics," Maritime ministry said.

As sea-level rise, extreme weather

events, and maritime pollution intensify, the minister stated that climate adaptation was being increasingly integrated into trade logistics as "part of a broader strategy to establish the country as a sustainable maritime hub in the face of climate change".

A similar 50% reduction was announced for export-oriented cargoes at the Port Qasim.

Istanbul Airport named world's best for 2nd time in a row



In this undated photo, Istanbul Airport complex is seen from above, Istanbul, Türkiye.

Istanbul Airport has been named the world's best for the second consecutive time, Türkiye's Transport and Infrastructure Minister Abudlkadir Uraloğlu announced Saturday 19 July.

"Istanbul Airport achieves double success," Uraloğlu wrote on X.

"Istanbul Airport topped the 'World's Top 10 International Airports' survey conducted by Travel and Leisure for the second consecutive time. Additionally, on July 18, it reached its highest daily flight count since its opening with 1,695 air traffic movements," the minister said.

"And if it's possible, the airport got even better – securing a 98.57 score compared to last year's 95.79," Travel and Leisure said in a statement earlier.

It said this year's result is "extra impressive" considering Istanbul Airport came in at number seven in the 2023 survey, with a reader score of 83.36.

According to Travel and Leisure readers, airports were evaluated based on accessibility, check-in experience, security, dining options, shopping and overall design.

IGA Istanbul Airport, which first entered the magazine's prestigious

ranking in 2021 – the first Turkish airport ever to do so – has once again proven its excellence by being named the best in the world for 2024.

Istanbul Airport was Europe's second-busiest airport last year and began simultaneous triple runway operations this April.

With this infrastructure, it became the first in Europe to have three runways and the second in the world, after the U.S.

The airport handled about 80 million passengers in 2024, making it Europe's largest and second-busiest airport, according to the State Airports General Directorate (DHMI).

It also became Europe's busiest air cargo hub last year, according to the Airports Council International (ACI) Europe's 2024 Annual Traffic Report.

According to data from the European Organization for the Safety of Air Navigation (Eurocontrol), Istanbul Airport frequently topped the list in Europe in terms of daily flights.

Pakistani Airport wins International Award



Quetta International Airport's newly reconstructed runway was honoured with the prestigious FIDIC Asia-Pacific Engineering Excellence Award during a ceremony in Islamabad.

Officials say the runway—completed without closing the airport and at a cost of around PKR 5 billion—now ranks among the region's longest and strongest rigid-runways.

The award recognizes the Pakistan Airports Authority and project consultancy teams for their exemplary planning, technical skill, and safety record.

The runway saw its first landing by PIA Flight PK-3250 from Islamabad on 31 May 2023.

(FOR MEMBERS INFORMATION ONLY)

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Cargolux: First half of 2025 better than expected



Richard Forson, Cargolux

Cargolux says the air cargo market has performed better than expected so far this year and adds that it will maintain its core network as a priority.

At the start of the year, the air cargo world was eyeing the next 12 months with caution as incoming US president Donald Trump during his election campaign had promised a wave of tariffs to help recalibrate the country's trade deficits.

Since taking office, Trump hasn't gone back on his word, implementing various tariffs on countries from across the globe, particularly production powerhouse China.

Indeed, in April, when Cargolux revealed its results for 2024, it warned that the imposition of import tariffs by the US on its trading partners was expected to negatively affect demand for air cargo capacity and disrupt traditional trade lanes.

"The resulting geopolitical uncertainty coupled with the ongoing war in Ukraine and conflicts in the Middle East also impact operations as well as customer confidence," the airline said at the time.

However, Cargolux president and chief executive Richard Forson says that the industry, including Cargolux, has actually fared better than expected.

"The first half of the year has been a lot better than we had originally thought at the beginning of the year, when we thought it was going to be flat," says Forson.

"People have been moving goods before the tariffs came in, and then also when the tariffs have been changed and then been reduced and pushed out into the future by president Trump. It has all had an impact. It provides an opportunity to front-load shipments coming in without knowing what the final position is going to be."

To capitalise on shifting supply chains, Forson says that Cargolux has

made some tweaks to its network, but not to the extent that they would impact operations to any significant extent.

Looking ahead to the rest of the year, Forson says it is hard to predict how demand will develop as market performance will depend on how trade negotiations with the US progress.

With the outlook uncertain, Forson says that maintaining Cargolux's core network will continue to be a priority, as long as routes remain profitable.

"You can either think positive or you can think negative, but the market is going to be what the market is. The important thing is how you respond to those changes," explains Forson.

"We try to maintain our core network," he says. "Everything over and above that, we are flexible in being able to deal with that demand. For me, the breaking point is that we will not be in a position where we are going to make losses and not cover variable costs. That is a red line in the sand for us."

Fleet update

Cargolux is one of the airlines that has placed an order for the new Boeing 777-8 freighter aircraft as it looks to replace its ageing Boeing 747-400 aircraft.

In total, Cargolux ordered 10 777-8Fs with options for six more.

The project has faced delays as Boeing has come under scrutiny after a series of incidents and faced supply chain issues. As a result, the first of the model is not expected to be delivered until 2028 from an initial target of 2027.

However, Forson isn't too concerned by the delays and says that Cargolux has some flexibility with its existing fleet.

"[The delay] doesn't really impact us to any great extent because we had already anticipated deliveries in 2027 and 2028," Forson explains. "So when we placed the orders, we had certain buffers built in."

"Also, we have been working very closely with Boeing, and I believe, the 777-9 certification programme is going well, which gives people confidence for the -8F. I think they seem to be turning the corner now."

Cargolux's current fleet is made up of 30 Boeing 747s - 14 747-8Fs and 16 747-400Fs. Forson says the -400Fs are expected to retire over the coming three to five years, but adds that despite their age, they continue to offer high levels of utilisation, with some even matching the

levels achieved by the -8Fs.

Asked whether there are plans for further aircraft orders, Forson says: "We will see how the market develops and if there is long-term need for expansion."

He explains that Cargolux would not look to chase short-term gains and will always take a long-term view of how the market will progress to avoid having to park aircraft if the market turns.

NA panel endorses PIA privatisation

The National Assembly's Standing Committee on Defence on Thursday 15 July reaffirmed its support for the government's decision to privatise Pakistan International Airlines Company Ltd (PIACL), while underscoring the need to preserve the airline's heritage and protect the rights of its employees.

Chaired by Fateh Ullah Khan, the committee emphasised that any future operator must ensure that PIA aircraft continue to display the Pakistani flag and the iconic PIA logo, symbols regarded as representations of national pride and continuity.

Members urged that employees be treated with fairness and compassion throughout the privatisation process, with their rights and livelihoods protected.

The committee expressed strong appreciation for the recent [resumption](#) of PIA flights to the United Kingdom and France after a five-year suspension, calling it a major step towards restoring Pakistan's international aviation presence. It commended the Ministry of Defence and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) for facilitating the development.

Urges flag and logo retention, protection of workers' rights

During the meeting, the panel reviewed PIA's operational status and discussed broader strategies to strengthen the aviation sector. The PIACL director-general briefed the committee on fleet development, organisational structure, and plans for expanding domestic and international networks.

Noting positive management steps aimed at reclaiming the airline's lost stature, members voiced concern over the continued absence of domestic flight operations, which they said affects mobility for a large segment of the population. The committee called for urgent restoration and expansion of domestic air routes.

Beyond Block-3: Why the JF-17 Thunder Remains Crucial for the PAF's



RIAT 2025: Pakistani JF-17 Block III Fighter Jet makes first European debut to enter global defense market



High-profile debut of the JF-17C Block-3 at the 2025 Royal International Air Tattoo (RIAT) served as a key signal of Pakistan's continued commitment to its flagship fighter program.

While the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) accredited all of its aerial victories against the Indian Air Force in the May 2025 conflict to its J-10CE fleet, its interest in promoting the JF-17 Thunder on the international stage remains undiminished. This commitment is not merely a matter of national pride; it is a strategic imperative rooted in industrial capacity, long-term fleet planning, and an evolving concept of air warfare.

The Thunder program recently received critical momentum from a multi-billion-dollar order for 40 units from the Azerbaijan Air Force. This deal is significant on two fronts. Firstly, it is Pakistan's single-largest defence export order to-date, providing a substantial financial and reputational boost.

Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it is a probable catalyst for supporting the JF-17's continued development. Pakistan possesses a growing portfolio of original and sophisticated subsystem projects, including active electronically scanned array (AESA) radars, guided munitions, and other core inputs.

There is a strong domestic incentive to integrate these indigenous systems into the Thunder, especially since Pakistan

Aeronautical Complex (PAC) has already invested heavily in the infrastructure required for such complex work. The revenue from the Azeri order could prove instrumental in funding this next phase of development, particularly as the PAF itself appears to be recalibrating its own procurement priorities.

With an eye on expanding its air defence footprint and bolstering its offensive air warfare capabilities, the PAF had trimmed its domestic JF-17C order from an originally planned 50 aircraft to just 30.

Export success, therefore, offers a vital alternative funding stream to keep the program's evolution on track. The first glimpse of this future has already emerged: Project PFX Alpha, which appears to be the first designated post-Block-3 upgrade path for the JF-17. It is a program that could, despite the PAF's shifting focus, merit a place in its future fleet.

The PAF's Reference Point is Systems, Not Platforms

The future composition of the PAF's combat aircraft fleet is far from certain. The operational lessons from the recent conflict with India will undoubtedly inform key decisions, but a more fundamental shift is also underway. The PAF is moving towards a new approach to air warfare, one built on integrated systems rather than the capabilities of individual platforms.

Pakistan's JF-17 Block III made a rare and striking appearance at the Royal International Air Tattoo 2025 (RIAT 2025), held at British RAF (Royal Air Force) Fairford in Gloucestershire, United Kingdom, marking its inaugural static display in Europe and underscoring its growing export appeal. Pakistan Air Force's 8 Squadron deployed two JF-17C Block III fighters to the show, supported logistically by an IL-78 air-refueler and a C-130E Hercules, reinforcing the PAF's international operational capability and signaling a calculated move to introduce the aircraft to Western and international defense audiences.

Pakistani Air Force JF-17 Block III makes first European appearance at RIAT Royal International Air Tattoo 2025 to boost international export potential. (Picture source: Pakistan Strategic Forum X account)

The JF-17C Block III, also known as the JF-17 Thunder Block III, is the most advanced variant of the lightweight multirole fighter jointly developed by Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and China's Chengdu Aircraft Corporation. The Block III version is a major step forward compared to the previous Block I and II variants, positioning the JF-17 not just as a cost-effective fighter, but as a genuinely competitive 4.5-generation combat platform. The "C" designation reflects export-focused customization, modular systems integration, and avionics upgrades that bring it closer in capability to modern fighters such as the F-16V or even the Chinese J-10C.

Emirates is the most recommended global brand

Based in Dubai International Airport (DXB), has been named the **Most Recommended Global Brand for 2025** by YouGov, with an impressive Recommend score of **88.4%**. This recognition places Emirates ahead of all other international brands surveyed across 28 markets.

The airline is the **only carrier** in the **global top 10 list**, reaffirming its brand strength and the global trust placed in Emirates by millions of travelers.



Emirates is the Most Recommended Global Brand

YouGov's 2025 Recommend Rankings, driven by insights from BrandIndex, evaluate customer advocacy by measuring the percentage of current customers willing to recommend a brand to others.

Emirates' standout performance — 88.4% — significantly exceeded that of the next closest brand, Toyota (84.7%), underlining its dominance in customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Over one million surveys were conducted from June 1, 2024, to May 31, 2025, across 28 global markets. Scores were weighted by market size and customer base, giving Emirates a data-backed lead over competitors such as Levi's, adidas, Nintendo, and Nike.

President Sir Tim Clark credited this success to the airline's unwavering focus on quality, innovation, and customer care:

"This recognition underscores the deep connection and loyalty we've built with passengers... to do so with care, reliability, and excellence."

Strategic Expansion and Customer-Centric Investments

In the first half of 2025, Emirates (EK) demonstrated strong operational momentum. The airline:

Launched new routes, including three fresh destinations, with Hangzhou (HGH) set to follow.

Opened nine redesigned retail stores across Asia, Africa, and Europe.

Deployed its new Airbus A350 to 10 cities, offering expanded premium seating options.

Became the world's first Autism Certified Airline™, highlighting its commitment to inclusive travel.

By December 2025, Emirates plans to have upgraded aircraft (Boeing 777, [Airbus A380](#), and A350) on nearly half its global network, covering 70+ cities, and will offer 2 million Premium Economy seats, making luxury more accessible to travelers.

Recognition Across Regions and Demographics This global recognition comes on the heels of multiple regional accolades:

Most Recommended Brand in the UAE (YouGov Recommend 2024) with a score of 92.6%.

Most satisfied customers among US flyers in YouGov's 2024 US Airlines Report.

Strong brand consideration among Millennials and Gen Z in the United States.

These achievements further cement Emirates' standing as a consistently top-rated airline across demographics and geographies.

Peak Travel Advisory – Home Check-in Service.

Global Brand Benchmark and Industry Comparisons

Following Emirates in the YouGov 2025 Global Rankings:

Toyota (84.7%) – Despite global trade challenges, Toyota maintained brand strength with models like the bZ4X and Prius.

Levi's (83.1%) – Boosted by creative campaigns, including a high-profile partnership with Beyoncé.

adidas (82.5%) – Gained popularity with its AE1 sneakers, which earned "Sneaker of the Year."

Nintendo (82.1%) – Captured global attention with the release of Switch 2 and upcoming titles.

Nike (82.0%), Mercedes-Benz (81.8%), BMW (81.4%), trivago (81.0%), and Neutrogena (80.8%) rounded out the top 10.

In this prestigious company of iconic consumer brands, Emirates stands out not only as the sole airline but also as a symbol of premium travel excellence.

Dubai aims to beat traffic with 2026 air taxi liftoff



A PILOT walks while technicians handle an experimental Joby Dubai aerial taxi aircraft after it landed in Dubai.

Dubai commuters may soon have a new way to skip traffic: air taxis. Joby Aviation conducted the first test flight of its fully-electric air taxi in the emirate soon, a major milestone in the city's efforts to integrate airborne transport into existing mobility networks as early as next year.

Joby hopes its air-taxis will ease pressure on existing ground transportation and offer travelers a faster alternative as Dubai faces increasing congestion. "We want to change the way people commute," Anthony Khoury, Joby's UAE General Manager, said.

A journey from Dubai's main airport DXB to Palm Jumeirah aboard the Joby Aerial Taxi will take roughly twelve minutes, the company predicts, as opposed to 45 minutes by car.

While Joby's long-term ambition is to make its aerial taxis "affordable for everybody to use," Khoury says, they acknowledge early pricing will likely target higher-income travelers.

"As with any novel technology, early days might be a bit more premium." The demonstration flight was held recently at an isolated desert site southeast of Dubais downtown and was designed to emulate a typical aerial taxi journey, according to Joby Aviation officials.

In a ceremony attended by senior government officials, transport executives and company representatives, the experimental aircraft executed a vertical takeoff, flew for several miles, and then returned for a vertical landing.

The Joby Aerial Taxi, the flagship electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) aircraft developed by the California-based company, can fly distances of up to 160 kilometres at speeds reaching 320km/hr (200mph).

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Garuda in talks to buy 50 Boeing Jets under US tariff deal

Jakarta. National flag carrier Garuda Indonesia is in talks with Boeing to acquire 50 aircraft as part of a US-Indonesia tariff agreement aimed at boosting Indonesian imports from the United States, a senior government official said.

“The aircraft procurement is currently under business-to-business negotiations between Boeing and Garuda,” Chief Economic Affairs Minister Airlangga Hartarto told reporters at his office in Jakarta on Monday 21 July.

The planned aircraft deal is linked to Indonesia's commitment to increase imports from the US following a new tariff agreement that lowered duties on Indonesian goods to 19 percent from a planned 32 percent.

“We will wait for further technical developments,” Airlangga said regarding the timeline for Garuda's planned purchase.

The agreement was reached after the Indonesian government submitted a negotiation proposal pledging to ramp up imports of American goods, including energy commodities, agricultural products, and aircraft.

How Much Could the Garuda-Boeing Deal Cost?

Garuda Indonesia's planned purchase of 50 Boeing aircraft could carry a price tag of \$3 billion to \$4 billion, industry estimates suggest, depending on the final aircraft mix and negotiated discounts.

Boeing 737 MAX jets typically list at around \$121 million each, but airlines often secure discounts of 40–60 percent. If Garuda opts for mostly narrowbody 737 MAX aircraft at an average of \$55–60 million each, the deal would land near the lower end of the estimate. Inclusion of any widebody jets, such as the Boeing 787 or 777, could push the deal closer to \$5 billion.

Garuda plans to gradually increase its fleet to around 120 aircraft by 2030, up from about 100 currently, including its budget carrier Citilink, and to add at least 100 new routes by 2029.

The airline's consolidated operating revenue rose 1.6 percent year-on-year to \$723.56 million as of March 31, supported by higher passenger and cargo volumes. Garuda Indonesia Group carried a total of 5.12 million passengers in the quarter, including 2.64 million on Garuda Indonesia and 2.48 million on Citilink, with seat load factors improving to 78.8 percent, up five percentage points from

the previous year.

Garuda also reported a significant

improvement in cash flow, with net cash from operating activities rising 87.2 percent to \$162.27 million. The airline narrowed its net loss by 12.5 percent to \$75.93 million from \$86.82 million a year earlier, although financial expenses of \$124.57 million, largely tied to long-term restructuring commitments, continued to weigh on its bottom line.

Two flight attendants hurt after jet dives to avoid mid-air collision

Two flight attendants on a Southwest Airlines flight departing Burbank, California, were injured on Friday 25 July after pilots took evasive action to dodge another aircraft on takeoff, the airline said.

Southwest Flight 1496 sharply descended nearly 500 feet, according to flight tracking websites, marking the second time in a week that a US commercial jet was forced to make abrupt flight maneuvers to avoid a potential mid-air collision.

The incident also appeared to be the fourth involving military aircraft since March.

The airline and the Federal Aviation Administration said the Southwest pilots took action after receiving cockpit alerts of other aircraft traffic being dangerously close. The Southwest Boeing 737 continued on to Las Vegas, where it landed uneventfully.

Flight-tracking service Flightradar24 identified the other aircraft as a Hawker Hunter fighter jet — British-built aircraft — that crossed in front of the Southwest flight.

The planes came within 4.86 miles (7.82 km) of each other laterally and 350 feet (107 m) vertically.

Two flight attendants were treated for injuries, the airline said, without providing detail. No injuries were immediately reported by passengers, according to Southwest. But one passenger told Fox News Digital the sharp descent stirred panic onboard.

“It was terrifying. We really thought we were plummeting to a plane crash,” Caitlin Burdi said in an on-camera interview. After the incident, “the pilot came on (the intercom), and he told us we almost collided with another plane.”

According to a statement from Southwest, the incident began when its crew responded to “two onboard traffic alerts” while taking off from the Hollywood Burbank Airport north of Los Angeles, “requiring them to climb and descend to comply with the alerts.”

In a separate incident one week ago, a SkyWest Airlines jet operating as a Delta Connection flight from Minneapolis reported taking evasive action to avoid a possible collision with a US Air Force bomber during a landing approach over North Dakota on July 18.

The FAA said it was investigating near-miss incident involving SkyWest Flight 3788, an Embraer ERJ-175 regional jet, which landed safely at Minot, North Dakota. The Air Force confirmed a B-52 jet bomber assigned to Minot Air Force Base had conducted a ceremonial flyover of the North Dakota State Fair around the time of the SkyWest incident.

The Air Force said the bomber cockpit crew was in contact with local air traffic control before, during and after the flyover, and that the Minot International Airport control tower “did not advise of the inbound commercial aircraft” as the B-52 was departing the area.

The FAA has said that air traffic services were provided by the Minot air traffic control tower, which is run by a private company and not FAA employees. The National Transportation Safety Board and FAA are investigating a March 28 close call involving a Delta Airbus A319 jet and a group of Air Force jets near Reagan Washington National Airport. The four Air Force T-38 Talons were heading to nearby Arlington National Cemetery for a flyover at the time.



Iran Air to start flights to Quatta



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Air Arabia Abu Dhabi launches direct flights to Sialkot



In a major boost for regional air connectivity and bilateral relations, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi—the UAE capital's first low-cost carrier—has officially launched direct flights to Sialkot, Pakistan. The new route not only strengthens the airline's presence in South Asia but also offers significant economic, social, and logistical benefits for both nations.

With three weekly non-stop flights—on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays—the route is now operational from Zayed International Airport in Abu Dhabi to Sialkot International Airport, a city known as Pakistan's industrial and export powerhouse.

Route Details & Schedule: Convenience in Every Departure

Flight 3L 311: Departs Abu Dhabi at 1:35 AM, arrives in Sialkot at 6:00 AM

Flight 3L 312: Departs Sialkot at 6:50 AM, arrives in Abu Dhabi at 9:20 AM

Flights are operated by Airbus A320 aircraft, offering comfort, efficiency, and affordability. This schedule is ideal for both business travelers and families—providing a seamless overnight journey with a morning arrival that aligns perfectly with onward travel plans or daily routines.

PCAA Approval: A Regulatory Green Light

This route was made possible with the official approval of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA), ensuring that Air Arabia Abu Dhabi meets all regulatory and safety standards. The PCAA's endorsement reaffirms its commitment to safe, secure, and internationally-compliant air operations.

Why Sialkot Matters: Pakistan's Export Engine

Sialkot is no ordinary city—it is the first privately-operated international airport in Pakistan and sits at the heart of

the country's manufacturing sector. Known globally for producing:

- Sporting goods (used in FIFA World Cups and Olympics)

- Surgical instruments

- Leather products

- Apparel and textiles

Sialkot contributes significantly to Pakistan's \$30+ billion annual exports. The city's connectivity with the UAE—a hub of global trade and logistics—offers immense potential to accelerate trade, shorten supply chains, and enhance export competitiveness.

The airport handles nearly 800,000 passengers annually and features a 3,600-meter runway capable of accommodating wide-body aircraft, making it a prime destination for commercial and cargo flights alike.

Benefits for Travelers: Faster, Easier, and More Affordable

The introduction of non-stop flights between Sialkot and Abu Dhabi provides a game-changing advantage for:

- Migrant workers commuting between homes and jobs in the Gulf
- Families seeking affordable and time-efficient travel

- Tourists and students benefiting from direct international links

- Entrepreneurs and exporters with fast access to markets and meetings

Eliminating layovers cuts down travel fatigue and uncertainty, especially for elderly passengers and those with children. Business travelers now have the ability to arrive early in Sialkot and immediately engage in meetings, factory visits, or trade negotiations—all in the same day.

Strengthening UAE–Pakistan Relations

According to Adel Al Ali, Group CEO of Air Arabia:

“The launch of direct flights to Sialkot reflects our ongoing commitment to expanding Air Arabia Abu Dhabi's network. This new route enhances our presence in Pakistan and provides customers with greater connectivity, convenience, and affordability.”

More Than Just a Route—It's a Lifeline

Imagine a young graduate from Sialkot beginning a new career in Abu Dhabi, or a grandmother flying in to meet her newborn grandchild—both without the stress of long layovers or multiple connections. The launch of this route simplifies lives and strengthens emotional and economic ties between communities.

It also opens the door for tourism, educational exchange, and small business opportunities, positioning Sialkot not just as an export hub but a key participant in Pakistan's global engagement.

Flights can fill up quickly, especially around holidays—early booking is advised

Departures from Zayed International Airport offer seamless connections to other global destinations.

Tickets are available via Air Arabia's website, call centers, and authorized travel agencies

More Than a Flight—A Connection Between Futures

The launch of Air Arabia Abu Dhabi's direct service to Sialkot is a landmark development in South Asian aviation. It empowers travelers, energizes trade, and connects two vibrant economies with shared histories and future aspirations. As more such routes open, the UAE–Pakistan corridor becomes not just a bridge for commerce, but a runway for opportunity.

Air Arabia plans to increase operational capacity by 40% in 2025

Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, the capital's first low-cost carrier, has expanded its fleet with the addition of two Airbus A320 aircraft, bringing its total fleet size to 12 aircraft. This expansion is part of the airline's ongoing growth strategy.

The carrier also announced plans to add two more Airbus A320 aircraft before the end of the year. This planned fleet increase will boost total capacity by 40% in 2025, further reinforcing Air Arabia Abu Dhabi's commitment to the growth of Abu Dhabi's aviation sector and the emirate's broader economic development.

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer, Air Arabia, said: “The addition of new aircraft and our strategic fleet expansion reflect our ongoing commitment to enhancing operational efficiency and expanding our network reach. This growth supports the rising demand for air travel to and from Abu Dhabi.” He added: “The planned capacity increase in 2025 will further contribute to the capital's broader economic and tourism vision while continuing to offer value-driven air travel to our customers.”

Air Arabia Abu Dhabi's recent network expansions include new routes to Yerevan, Almaty, and Sialkot, further broadening its reach. The airline now connects Abu Dhabi with non-stop service to over 30 destinations across the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, the Indian Subcontinent, and Eastern Europe, offering seamless travel options for residents, businesses, and visitors alike.

Since its launch in 2020, Air Arabia Abu Dhabi has emerged as a key enabler of air connectivity from the UAE capital, providing its customers with affordable and reliable air travel.

Glimpses of Air Arabia's inaugural flight to Sialkot



Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti Chairman SIAL talking to the crew of Air Arabia on the occasion.



Photo taken on the occasion shows Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti Chairman and Air Vice Marshal (R) Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti CEO SIAL with other guests.



Vision Air to start chartered cargo flights from SIAL

Chairman SIAL Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman SIAL Waqas Afzal, Ex-Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed, and AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R) CEO Sialkot International Airport Ltd (SIAL) held meeting with top management of Vision Air International on 8th July 2025. During the meeting, representatives from both the esteemed organizations discussed matters of mutual interest / exploring business opportunities. Expressing strong confidence in SIAL, the Vision Air management Led by Capt Aijaz Ali Faizi (Chairman & CEO of Vision Air) committed to commence Chartered Cargo Flight operations from Sialkot Airport.



Group photo taken on the occasion of a meeting shows Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti Chairman SIAL along with others presenting a memento to Capt. Aijaz Ali Faizi CEO Vision Air.

SIAL presents awards to Cargo Agents in Sialkot

Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) hosted the Cargo Terminal Business Partner Award Ceremony, honoring the valuable contributions of its cargo associates. Chairman Hassan Ali Bhatti, the then Vice Chairman Faraz Akram Awan, Esteem Member Board of Directors, Chief Executive Officer SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R), followed by valuable cargo associates, participated. The event celebrated excellence, dedication, and collaborative efforts that have significantly contributed to the growth of air freight operations at SIAL. The management expressed gratitude to all partners for their continued support and commitment to making SIAL a thriving hub of cargo logistics.



ACAAP Sialkot awards certificates to new members



The ACAAP Membership Subcommittee Region 'B' announced the induction of new members. Mr. Amjad Fakhri, Convener, and committee members extended a warm welcome and presented membership certificates to the new Members.

Boeing still 'finalising' 737 Max 7 and 10

Boeing has not yet completed work related to an engine anti-ice system redesign it must finish before achieving certification of the 737 Max 7 and Max 10.

That is according to a 24 July Boeing internal employee newsletter that says company engineers are still evaluating design-change options ahead of bringing proposals to the Federal Aviation Administration.

The company has not provided a recent update on the certifications timelines, but comments made by airline customers in recent days suggest certifications and deliveries remain some time off.



A trio of Boeing 737 Max, including a Max 7 (foreground), at Boeing Field in Seattle in 2022

“Assessing a design challenge like this requires an exacting and diligent effort from our teams,” Boeing programme manager of 737 development Chris Payne said in the 24 July internal Boeing news article. “Not only do we look at the physical components, but we also look at how each design option integrates with the engine, the systems and the airplane overall.”

“What’s next: The team is finalising its analysis of options before further engaging with the FAA,” says the Boeing News Now article.

In January 2024, Boeing said redesigning the type’s engine anti-ice system would take one year. Then in July 2024, Boeing Commercial Airplanes chief executive Stephanie Pope said Boeing had “decided on a design and we will be working through the flight test”.

One-and-a-half years have now passed since Boeing’s one-year estimate and its redesign is ongoing.

“An effective engine anti-ice system requires a complex, integrated design as it

touches different airplane systems,” the Boeing article says. “The development team is maturing a technical solution that is one of the last steps to certify the 737-7 and is important to certify the larger 737-10.”

Asked to comment about the redesign, Boeing says, “We are maturing a technical solution that includes design updates... The modifications would be included in the baseline certification of the [Max 7] and [Max 10]”.

Boeing has long said it plans to certificate the 737 Max 7, the smallest variant of the narrowbody family, before completing that of the Max 10, the largest variant.

“We are finalising our analysis and will present the information to the FAA,” Boeing adds. “We will continue to work under their rigorous oversight to meet safety and regulatory requirements.”



Boeing has said its 737 Max 10, seen at Boeing Field in 2022, will be the last of the family to be certificated

The manufacturer may provide more information on 29 July, when executives are scheduled to discuss the company’s second-quarter financial results.

FlightGlobal reported in recent days that two US airlines do not expect to receive their first Max 10’s anytime soon.

United Airlines chief financial officer Michael Leskinen said on 17 July that his airline is “hopeful” to start receiving Max 10’s in 2027, but the carrier is making contingency plans in case that does not happen. United holds orders for 167 Max 10s, according to fleet data provider Cirium.

On 24 July, Alaska Air Group chief commercial officer Andrew Harrison said Alaska Airlines will “hopefully” receive its first Max 10s in late 2026 or early 2027.

Also on 24 July, Southwest Airlines

CEO Bob Jordan said the airline’s first 737 Max 7 will “maybe” arrive in the first half of 2026. But Jordan hedged, noting he had received no “new” update on the Max 7’s certification.

Alaska holds orders for 56 Max 10s and Southwest has orders for 305 Max 7s, Cirium shows.

Trouble with the 737 Max’s engine anti-ice system came to light in mid-2023 when the FAA ordered operators of in-service models – Max 8s and 9s – to instruct pilots against using the system unless flying in ice conditions or anticipating doing so.

Keeping the engine anti-ice system on more than 5min in dry air could “cause overheating of the engine inlet inner barrel beyond the material design limit, resulting in failure of the engine inlet inner barrel and severe engine inlet cowl damage”, the FAA’s order said.

It added that Boeing was developing a modification and that the problem had caused no known in-flight inner-barrel failures.

But the issue threw a wrench into Boeing’s certification of the Max 7 and Max 10, which were to have the same engine anti-ice system and were, even several years ago, badly delayed.

Boeing soon determined that the engine anti-ice system did not meet airworthiness requirements and would therefore prevent the jets from clearing certification.

The company therefore in November 2023 asked the FAA to exempt the Max 7’s engine nacelle inlet structure and engine anti-ice system, through May 2026, from certification rules related to durability, strength and failures. Boeing said the exemption would not erode safety, calling a failure “extremely improbable.”

If approved, the exemption would have allowed the Max 7 to be certificated and to enter service with the original engine anti-ice system. Boeing had planned in the interim to complete the redesign and to update the in-service fleet (including all Max variants) with the fix.

But Boeing changed course two months later, in January, when it withdrew the exemption request, saying instead it would first complete the redesign and then seek certifi.

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Airbus' long-haul blended-wing body hydrogen plane: everything we know so far



Airbus Plans A380 hydrogen flights in 2026 after successful power on of ZEROe Engine.



3 Key reasons airlines feel sustainable aviation fuel production is too slow sign in to your simple flying account



The ZEROe is Airbus' proposition for the aircraft of the future. Carbon-neutral, powered solely by hydrogen, and capable of flying long distances with up to 200 passengers onboard, the ZEROe looks set to send shockwaves around the aviation industry when it enters commercial service.

In this article, we take a look at the development of the Airbus ZEROe, some of the previous designs and propulsion technologies that were considered, what place the ZEROe might occupy in the market, and the future of hydrogen-powered aircraft.

Development Of The Airbus ZEROe

The Airbus ZEROe project was launched in September 2020, with the goal of being in service by 2035. The ZEROe is billed as a hydrogen-powered, zero-carbon commercial aircraft that will help to decarbonize the aviation industry and will support airlines across the world with their ambitious sustainability goals.

Initially, the plan considered two

primary options for hydrogen propulsion: hydrogen combustion and hydrogen fuel cells. Among the engines for the hydrogen combustion systems that were considered by Airbus were the turbofan and the turboprop. One of the options for the Airbus ZEROe also features a blended-wing body, which not only gives the aircraft a unique and unmistakable appearance, but also makes it more streamlined and able to fly more efficiently.

After extensive research and testing, hydrogen fuel cell technology was selected in 2025, with the European manufacturer turning away from the hydrogen combustion that had previously been favored. This choice was driven by the operational performance of hydrogen fuel cell technology, but does not rule out the future use of hydrogen combustion should it be deemed suitable.

Hydrogen fuel cell technology is very efficient, but generates a smaller amount of power compared to hydrogen combustion, therefore somewhat limiting the range of the Airbus ZEROe. When it comes to hydrogen combustion, the technology required is deemed easier to retrofit onto existing infrastructure and creates more power, but still produces some harmful emissions, albeit lower than those created by traditional jet fuel.



Airbus is hoping to be able to power its ZEROe aircraft with hydrogen.

2 Water Is The Only Byproduct

The Airbus ZEROe features an electric propeller propulsion system that is powered by hydrogen fuel cells developed in partnership with ElringKlinger. These hydrogen fuel cells transform the hydrogen into electricity through a chemical reaction, which then, in turn, drives the propellers to create the movement needed to fly. Each of the aircraft's four propellers has its own hydrogen fuel cell stack.

Hydrogen fuel cell technology is not

new, but there are currently none large enough to power an aircraft while maintaining a low enough weight to allow the aircraft itself to fly. The overwhelming positive hydrogen fuel cell technology is that this process only creates one byproduct: water. This means that as long as the hydrogen has been sourced in a sustainable manner, the process is completely carbon-neutral.

Airbus has also teamed up with MTU Aero Engines, signing a memorandum of understanding at the Paris Air Show in June 2025. MTU is one of the world's leading experts in aircraft engines, generating annual revenues in excess of \$8.75 billion. The partnership aims to combine the expertise of Airbus and MTU, both leaders in their fields, to develop the most suitable plans for the ZEROe. The European manufacturer's Head of Future Programmes, Bruno Fichet, celebrated the agreement, saying:

"Our focus on fully electric fuel cell propulsion technology for future hydrogen-powered aircraft underscores our confidence and progress in this domain. Collaborating with MTU, a leader in engine manufacturing and innovation, is a perfect complement to our own advancements. This partnership will allow us to pool our collective knowledge, accelerate the maturation of critical technologies, and ultimately deliver a revolutionary hydrogen-powered propulsion system for future commercial aircraft. Together, we are not just imagining a sustainable future of flight, we are actively pioneering it."

10 Sustainability Achievements
Delta Air Lines Made In 2024

The airline aims to achieve industry-wide net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

4 Greater Hydrogen Infrastructure Is Needed

The idea of a carbon-neutral, hydrogen-powered aircraft like the Airbus ZEROe sounds like an attractive option for many airlines. However, the fact remains that in order to facilitate the aircraft's entry into commercial service, the majority of airports around the world will need to completely overhaul their hydrogen infrastructure.

For example, hydrogen needs to be stored at temperatures as low as -253°C. This is currently impossible at many



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airfields, with a significant amount of technological investment still required to reach such temperatures on a regular and consistent basis.

In order for the hydrogen fuel cell technology onboard the Airbus ZEROe to be considered a carbon-neutral solution for aviation, the hydrogen used must be made from electrolysis using renewable energy. Currently, demand for this renewable hydrogen vastly exceeds the supply. For this reason, the hydrogen supply chain needs to be considered, covering all the lifecycle steps from production and liquefaction to transport and storage.

What are the chances of Airbus building a widebody hydrogen aircraft on the back of its narrowbody aircraft currently in production?

Airbus's 'Hydrogen Hubs At Airports' Program Denver International Airport

That is why Airbus has launched its 'Hydrogen Hubs at Airports' program, which is working in partnership with more than 220 airports around the world, as well as multiple energy providers and airlines. In a statement, Airbus said:

"Hydrogen has the potential to be a transformative energy source for aviation. However, we recognize that developing a hydrogen ecosystem – including infrastructure, production, distribution and regulatory frameworks – is a huge challenge requiring global collaboration and investment."

Airbus describes the program as a collaborative initiative that "brings together airlines, airports, industry players, energy providers and technology specialists to address the key questions around producing, storing and distributing hydrogen." Among the airlines currently involved in Airbus' Hydrogen Hubs at Airport program are:

Air New Zealand.

All Nippon Airways.

Korean Air.

You might also like:

How Soon Will Blended Wing Commercial Aircraft Fly?

Several companies, including Airbus, JetZero, and Boeing, are actively developing prototypes.



12 Delays In The Development Of The Airbus ZEROe

P Christchurch Airport

Despite the concept coming to fruition in 2020, Airbus has since put the estimated delivery date of the first ZEROe aircraft back to 2035 at the earliest. The European manufacturer was previously testing technology on a modified Airbus A380 aircraft. However, this testing program has reportedly since been shut down, according to a report from Aerospace Testing International.

Apparent delays in the development of the technology needed to power the Airbus ZEROe have also been causing concern among some industry insiders, leading to questions about Airbus's ability to dominate in the future sustainable aircraft market. We will have to watch this space, with the coming months and years being crucial as several different manufacturers battle it out to produce hydrogen-powered commercial aircraft at scale.

Airbus Plans A380 Hydrogen Flights In 2026 After Successful Power On Of ZEROe Engine

The ZEROe demonstrator is also the first-ever A380, also known as MSN001, produced.

6 Shifting Focus On Sustainable Aviation Fuel

With much skepticism surrounding the viability of programs like Airbus ZEROe hydrogen cell-powered aircraft, there are calls within the industry to focus efforts instead on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). These are already available and can be produced from various sustainable resources, including used cooking oil, agricultural and forestry waste.

Currently, sustainable aviation fuels are generally blended with conventional jet fuel so that they can be used in existing aircraft without the need for engine modifications. However, future investments may lead to the development of large-scale commercial aircraft capable of flying on 100% sustainable aviation fuels. Work will also need to be done to bring down the cost of such fuels, which currently put them out of reach of many operators worldwide.

3 Key Reasons Airlines Feel Sustainable Aviation Fuel Production Is Too Slow

So far, SAF production and use has been too slow but could be accelerated in coming years.

1 Has Airbus Unlocked The Aircraft Of The Future?

ZeroAvia

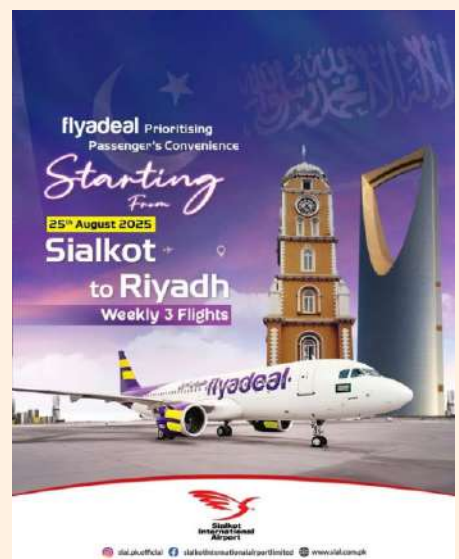
Iconic aircraft such as the Airbus A380 and modern, fuel-efficient long-haul



aircraft such as the A350 are among the most celebrated aircraft in the European manufacturer's catalog. As such, there is no denying that Airbus is leading the way when it comes to traditional aircraft powered by jet fuel. However, it remains to be seen whether Airbus can live up to its reputation when it comes to more sustainable initiatives such as the ZEROe program.

The idea certainly holds much potential, and if it comes off, it could well be a game-changer for an industry that is constantly looking at ways to become more sustainable and meet its ambitious net-zero targets. The Airbus ZEROe may well be the key to long-range, hydrogen-powered air travel, but before its planned entry into service in 2035, the global hydrogen supply chain and infrastructure will need to be overhauled in order to support the regular use of such technology.

ZeroAvia is another manufacturer hoping to get its slice of the pie. The UK-based manufacturer was founded in 2017, and hopes to develop a 9-19 seat aircraft with a range of up to 300 miles by the mid-2020s, scaling the aircraft up to accommodate 40-80 passengers by 2027, and ultimately creating a hydrogen-powered aircraft capable of carrying up to 100 passengers on flights of up to 1,000 miles in length by 2030.



Maritime minister underscores \$850m export potential of Gwadar's value-added seafood, date industries

Maritime Minister Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry stated on Friday 25 July that the Gwadar Port had the potential to generate over \$850 million in annual exports through consistent investment, strategic policymaking, and improved infrastructure, a press release issued by the ministry said.

Gwadar Port is a deep-sea port located in Balochistan, strategically positioned near the Strait of Hormuz. Touted as a game-changer for Pakistan's economy, the port is meant to boost regional trade, create jobs, and attract foreign investment.

Speaking during a high-level meeting on the operationalisation of Gwadar Port, Minister Chaudhry stated that “with consistent investment, strategic policymaking, and improved infrastructure, the port had the potential to generate over \$850m annually through value-added fisheries and date exports.”

According to the statement, the meeting was attended by officials from the Ministry of Maritime Affairs (MoMA) and representatives from relevant ministries and organisations, including Gwadar Port Authority and the ministries of commerce, industries, and communication.

The minister laid out a comprehensive strategy to boost economic activities in Gwadar, reaffirming the government's commitment to utilising local resources and empowering local businesses to operationalise the port and stimulate the regional economy.

He emphasised that fisheries and dates were the key economic drivers of the region, saying, “Gwadar has a rich fish catch potential, and we must focus on local value addition to maximise benefits.”

The minister pointed out that 34 fish processing units are currently operating in Balochistan, but most require technological upgrades to meet export standards.

“Transforming these units to add value through packaging and processing before exporting is critical for uplifting the sector,” he said.

He added that Balochistan's coastline makes up 76.2 per cent of Pakistan's total coastal length, yet its fish production significantly lags behind its actual potential.

“Balochistan has an estimated annual fish catch potential of around 300,000 tonnes. With proper value addition, this could generate approximately \$645m each year. However, current production is



nearly half of that due to limited fishing capacity, obsolete technology, and regulatory hurdles,” he said.

The minister also stated that the Panjgur and Turbat (Kech) districts together produce over 225,000 tonnes of dates annually — more than half of Pakistan's total. He said that with value addition, the sector could generate “up to \$200-\$205m in revenue each year”.

To support business and connectivity

in the region, the minister announced steps to improve air travel, saying that Pakistan International Airlines would increase its weekly flights to Gwadar from one to three.

“Two weekly flights between Gwadar and Karachi and one between Gwadar and Islamabad are under consideration,” he said. He added that the possibility of introducing a chartered flight mechanism to facilitate travel for businesspersons and investors was also under consideration.

Earlier this month, MoMA announced an ambitious plan to expand Gwadar Port's operational capacity by introducing additional shipping lines and launching a ferry service connecting Pakistan with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Speaking on the development of the plan, Chaudhry said that the initiative was part of the government's strategy to “enhance regional connectivity, boost maritime trade and position Gwadar as a major hub in the Arabian Sea”.

“We aim to transform Gwadar into a strategic transshipment and logistics centre, benefiting Pakistan and the wider region,” he said.

Pakistan, Afghanistan sign trade agreement



The deal, which has slashed tariffs on eight agricultural items to 27 per cent for one year, will pave the way for a preferential trade agreement.

Pakistan and Afghanistan on Wednesday 23 July an Early Harvest Programme (EHP) to reduce tariffs on eight agricultural items for one year, laying the foundation for a broader preferential trade agreement (PTA) between the two countries.

The EHP, which takes effect on Aug 1, will remain in force for one year and is renewable. It also allows for the future inclusion of additional items, making it the first tangible step towards launching negotiations on a comprehensive PTA.

The agreement was signed by Pakistan's Commerce Secretary, Jawad Paul, and Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce, Mullah Ahmadullah Zahid, who was accompanied by a delegation of senior technical officials. The Afghan delegation arrived in Islamabad on Monday 21 July to hold detailed negotiations with Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce.

Under the agreement, tariffs on four Afghan agricultural exports to Pakistan — grapes, pomegranates, apples, and

tomatoes — and four Pakistani exports to Afghanistan — mangoes, kinnows, bananas, and potatoes — will be reduced to 27pc, down from over 60pc previously.

A senior official at the Ministry of Commerce told media eement will serve as a catalyst for reviving formal PTA negotiations, which had been dormant for nearly a decade. “We will now resume talks to discuss the details of the PTA,” the official added.

In 2014, both countries agreed to initiate PTA talks, and Pakistan subsequently shared a draft agreement. However, progress stalled when the Afghan side, under then-President Ashraf Ghani, linked further talks to allowing the import of Indian goods via the Wagah border — a proposal repeatedly rejected by Islamabad. As a result, negotiations remained suspended in the following years.

In the meantime, Pakistan has taken several steps to facilitate bilateral trade, including offering transactions in Pakistani rupees and allowing limited barter trade in the wake of Afghanistan's banking crisis.

Official data shows that Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan surged 38.68pc to \$773.89m in FY25, up from \$558.03m in the previous fiscal year. Imports from Afghanistan more than doubled to \$25.89m from \$11.96m in FY24, an increase of 116.47pc. Pakistan's key export to Afghanistan this year has been sugar, with over 700,000 tonnes shipped in the past four months alone.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan ink deal on railway project

Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed an agreement on Thursday 17 July for a joint study on a major railway project intended to connect Central Asia with Pakistani seaports via Afghanistan, a move officials say will boost regional trade and connectivity media.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar made the announcement in a post on X from Kabul, where he arrived earlier on a day-long visit for the signing.

“I congratulate the people and governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan on the signing of the Framework Agreement on the Joint Feasibility Study for the Naib-abad–Kharlachi rail link under the UAP Railway Corridor.

“I also thank the foreign ministers of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan for their support and commitment for timely signing of the agreement. We remained closely engaged throughout the negotiation process to finalise the details.”

Scheme intends to boost regional trade and connectivity

The railway is designed to be a “major milestone in advancing regional connectivity and economic integration,” Mr Dar said, by giving Central Asian countries access to Pakistan’s seaports.

The proposed rail line will pass through Termiz in Uzbekistan, Mazar-i-Sharif and Logar in Afghanistan, and enter Pakistan via the Kharlachi border crossing in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The project aims to facilitate regional and bilateral trade with both passenger and freight services.

The agreement builds on a decision made by the three countries in 2023 to pursue the project.

During his day-long visit to the Afghan capital, Mr Dar met with the acting Afghan foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi. Mr Dar’s delegation included Pakistan’s Railways Minister Hanif Abbasi and other senior officials.

According to a statement from Pakistan’s Foreign Office, both sides called for maintaining “the momentum in bilateral relations” and expanding cooperation in trade, transit and security.

“They agreed to remain engaged to achieve the full potential of regional economic development, including through [the] realisation of trans-regional



Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Afghan and Uzbek counterparts, Amir Khan Muttaqi and Baxtiyor Saidov, witness the signing of the tripartite agreement.

connectivity projects,” the Foreign Office said.

Mr Dar credited the agreement to the

leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who had tasked him as finance minister in the previous government to lead the effort. “We collectively laid the foundation for this transformational project,” Mr Dar said.

According to the Foreign Office, during the visit, the deputy prime minister was expected to meet with the Afghan acting foreign minister.

The plan also included him calling on the acting prime minister of Afghanistan to discuss bilateral matters and exchange views on regional and international developments.

Despite tensions, trade with India continues



Trucks cross into Pakistan through the Wagah border.

Despite a brief military conflict and the continued closure of borders, trade between Pakistan and India persisted in May, with official data showing that imports from India reached a three-year high during July-May FY25.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), imports from India totalled \$211.5 million in the first 11 months of FY25 — surpassing \$207m in FY24 and \$190m in FY23. In May alone — when the four-day conflict broke out in the first week—imports stood at \$15m, slightly down from \$17m in the same month last year.

However, Pakistan’s exports to India remained negligible. In May, they were recorded at just \$1,000, while total exports during July-May FY25 were only \$0.5m. In FY24 and FY23, exports stood at \$3.44m and \$0.33m, respectively —highlighting the highly one-sided nature of bilateral trade.

Traders were reluctant to discuss the continuation of imports during the tense period. One trader suggested the goods might have arrived through third countries, with payments made prior to the hostilities.

“It may have come from a third country and the payment for the May imports would have been made before the war,” he said.

Pakistan’s imports from New Delhi hit 3-year high

Although official data reflects limited trade, Indian research institutions claim actual trade is far higher. The India-based Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) reported last month that India’s unofficial exports to Pakistan are estimated at \$10bn annually, routed primarily through Dubai, Colombo, and Singapore.

Analysts say the unofficial trade remains robust due to Pakistan’s high cost of production and industrial dependence on foreign inputs.

“We should not ignore smuggling from India since the cost of production in Pakistan is the highest in the region, which creates space for goods from India, China, and Bangladesh,” said an exporter.

Formal trade relations between Pakistan and India have remained frozen since 2019, but the data and ground realities suggest economic interdependence persists, albeit through unofficial channels.

"No Song must go unsung"

(The Silent Soldiers)



"Story of a Pakistani Exporter".

He isn't a politician. He isn't a bureaucrat.

He doesn't wear medals. But behind every shipment he sends, he is quietly defending his country's economy. He is an exporter. Born in a modest home, with dreams bigger than his surroundings, he aims to take the skills of his people and the name of his country to the global market.

He travels from city to city, Show to Show, with nothing but a few samples in his bag with unwavering determination and hopes in his eyes. He stands in long queues, waits in cold 'Hotel Lobbies' quite often faces rejection or stereotype attitudes and sometimes doors that slam shut again and again. But he never gives up.

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He's creating livelihoods.
He's bringing precious foreign exchange to Pakistan.

And just when he starts competing with regional competitors, matching their prices, beating their quality. The real battle begins. Not abroad..but at home.

Every day, he fights a new war.

A severe shortage of skilled labor with no national training program in place.

Millions paid upfront to workers — just to keep the supply chain running.

Zero R&D support from his own government.

In a nuclear nation, he imports even the smallest accessory — because local industries scarcely exist or care not to p



Exporter's Cherished Surroundings

produce minor necessities for him.

Electricity bills rising without logic, eating into survival.

Sudden tax hikes doubling overnight

without warning, justification or seeking his advice.

And then the final blows:

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The 'Export Facilitation Scheme' (EFS) — instead of being improved — becomes a burden, with its shortened timelines pushing honest exporters to the brink.

All this, in a country that runs on exports.

While other governments empower their exporters with subsidies, grants, innovation hubs, and long-term trade strategies. His government only watches as he struggles... in silence and ultimately at the end scraps him.

Still, besides the odds, he continues. Because behind him are hundreds of workers who rely on him.

Because his mission isn't just about profit -- it's about purpose. He asks for no rewards. He needs no titles.

All he wants is a fair chance.

He is not just a businessman.

He is the most unrecognized backbone of Pakistan's economy.

'He is a silent soldier'.

He is... an exporter.

The song needs to be sung, albeit figuratively **.



Exports to China'



'Markhor Chowk' (the gateway)



'Stall in China-Exhibition'

Pakistan, Azerbaijan set to launch freight train services



Pakistani delegation, led by Minister of State for Railways and Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, and Azerbaijani team discuss the launch of two freight train services in a video conference on July 19, 2025.

Pakistan and Azerbaijan are expected to launch two freight train services, namely the 'Pakistan-Azerbaijan Express' and the 'Pakistan-Iran-Azerbaijan', aimed at promoting bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

These two pilot cooperation projects were discussed in detail by delegations of both countries during a video conference in Islamabad on Saturday 19 July.

Minister of State for Railways and Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani and Deputy Chairman of Azerbaijan Railways Closed Joint Stock Company Arif Aghayev led delegations of their respective countries during the talks.

The meeting discussed opportunities for cooperation in increasing freight volumes, port integration, joint investment projects, and transport routes that pass through Azerbaijan and Pakistan within the Middle Corridor, according to a press release by the Ministry of Railways.

Delegations of both countries agreed to establish joint working groups to finalise freight transport initiatives and advance mutual cooperation in rail and trade sectors. These working groups will comprise officials from railways, commerce, finance and communication ministries.

Secretary of Railways Board Muhammad Yusuf provided an overview of Pakistan Railways' network. Discussions also took place regarding the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan Rail Agreement.

The Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR), known as the Middle Corridor, is a multilateral institutional development that links the containerised rail freight transport networks of China and the European Union through the Central Asia, the Caucasus, Turkiye, and Eastern Europe, a press release of Azerbaijan Railways says.

Both sides emphasised the potential use of various routes along the South Asia-Caucasus-Europe corridor for

mutual cargo exchange and expressed support for the development of a multimodal transport corridor connecting continents via Azerbaijan, passing through China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan.

Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have already signed a framework agreement which will usher the region into a new era of prosperity. This agreement is considered a game-changer for the regional connectivity with a trade potential of \$292 billion. Pakistan and Uzbekistan will finance the feasibility study by contributing \$5 million each.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister Bilal Azhar Kayani stated that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is implementing a comprehensive strategy for the development and modernisation of Pakistan Railways. He emphasised that Pakistan attaches great importance to expanding trade relations with Azerbaijan through rail connectivity.

Karachi-Rohri track

Meanwhile, transport experts from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) inspected the 480km railway track between Karachi and Rohri, which is a part of the Main Line-1 (ML-1) upgrade package.

The track, when upgraded, will provide easy access to Reko Diq and speed up uninterrupted supply of coal from Thar.

US stresses deeper trade ties at mango festival

The Trump administration's point person for South and Central Asia, Mary Bischooping, on Wednesday 9 July expanding US-Pakistan economic cooperation, with a particular focus on Pakistan's emerging critical minerals emphasised sector.

Speaking at the annual Pakistani Mango Festival, held this year at the University of the District of Columbia, Bischooping said: "Looking ahead, we are poised to continue growing our cooperation across a range of shared interests. On the economic front, we hope to expand mutually beneficial trade and commercial opportunities, especially in Pakistan's growing critical minerals sector."

Bischooping noted that US businesses were taking note of Islamabad's reform agenda.

"We welcome Pakistan's efforts to implement reforms that will enable private sector-led economic growth across numerous sectors. US firms seeking opportunities are drawn to a predictable and fair investment and regulatory environment. Supporting these deals is good for business — for both the United States and Pakistan."

The annual festival, which promotes Pakistan's prized mango exports, has also become a cultural and diplomatic gathering point. This year's event drew US

officials, lawmakers, business leaders, think tank experts, journalists — and even some undeclared PTI supporters — all under one roof despite a tornado warning and torrential rain that caused the Potomac River to flood nearby streets.

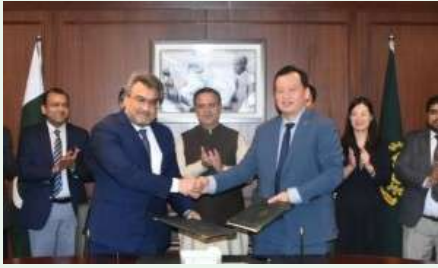
Pakistan's Ambassador Rizwan Shaikh opened the evening with humor: "Mango, a majestic fruit, seems to have magical qualities as well. Mango and monsoon arrive together in Pakistan. Today, we brought the mangoes only — but the fruit brought the monsoon."

Looking out at the stormy sky, he added: "We can see that mangoes have transported the monsoon to Washington as well."

The event showcased signature Pakistani mango varieties — Chaunsa, Sindhri, Langra, and Anwar Ratol — alongside mango ice cream, mango kheer, and gift boxes, each including at least one prized mango.

Bischooping, while celebrating the occasion, also acknowledged enduring security ties: "As we pursue economic opportunities, we must also remain focused on our shared interest in counterterrorism. The United States and Pakistan share a common interest in combating terrorism, including threats from groups like ISIS, to keep both Americans and Pakistanis safe."

Pakistan's PNSC partners with Chinese firm to explore maritime investments



Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) has signed a non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with China's ShangdongXinxu Group Corporation to explore investment and business opportunities in the maritime and international shipping sectors.

The company disclosed the development in its notice to the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) on Thursday 24 July.

"PNSC signed a non-committal MoU with ShangdongXinxu Group Corporation Company, (a company formed and existing under the laws of China) for 12 calendar months.

"This MoU establishes a relationship of mutual cooperation and trust between the parties for the objective of commercial benefits to each party and to create favourable conditions for investments primarily in the maritime sector of Pakistan and to explore business opportunities of mutual interest in international shipping sectors," read the notice.

Meanwhile, in an official statement released following the MoU signing, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said that the Pakistani shipping sector is set for a major transformation.

"The signing of this MoU symbolises a growing partnership between Pakistan and China in the maritime domain, paving the way for future cooperation, investment, and development in Pakistan's shipping industry", he added.

The maritime minister emphasised that the collaboration will boost regional trade, enhance connectivity, and strengthen Pakistan's role in the global maritime industry through mutual cooperation and shared economic goals.

He said this MoU establishes a framework of mutual trust and cooperation between the two entities, aimed at pursuing commercial benefits

and creating favourable conditions for investment in Pakistan's maritime sector.

The understanding primarily focuses on collaborative efforts in several key areas. These include the sale and purchase of merchant cargo vessels such as liquid bulk tankers, dry bulk carriers, and containerised ships under joint or individual ownership, as well as through profit and loss sharing arrangements.

The MoU also encompasses the leasing of such vessels by Xinxu to PNSC through various charter mechanisms, including time, spot, and bare boat charters.

Another major component of the MoU involves PNSC offering commercial, technical, and administrative management services for vessels as mutually agreed, covering areas such as chartering, marketing, revenue optimisation, maintenance, dry-docking, crewing, and regulatory compliance.

Furthermore, the MoU includes provisions for financing arrangements by Xinxu to PNSC for investments in ships and other floating platforms. These arrangements will be governed by commercially competitive terms, ensuring mutual benefit and financial viability.

Shandong Xinxu Group, located in Shandong Province, China, is a leading Chinese enterprise engaged in international trade and shipping.

Meanwhile, PNSC is Pakistan's national flag carrier, primarily engaged in the transportation of dry bulk and liquid cargoes globally.

It was established in 1979 by merging the National Shipping Corporation (NSC) and the Pakistan Shipping Corporation. PNSC operates under the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Government of Pakistan.

Last month, a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, announced that PNSC is expected to increase its freight earnings by expanding its cargo fleet to 34 vessels over the next three years.

The PNSC currently manages approximately 11% of the country's cargo by volume and 4% by value. However, the national carrier is now targeting to increase its cargo handling to 52% by volume and 43% by value (excluding containerised cargo) within three years.

Port Qasim halves export cargo charges



The reduced rates, effective immediately, apply to wharfage and transshipment container charges for a period of one year.

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs on Tuesday 1st July a 50 per cent reduction in port charges for export-oriented cargo at Port Qasim in a move aimed at facilitating exporters and enhancing the port's competitiveness.

The reduced rates, effective immediately, apply to wharfage and transshipment container charges for a period of one year.

The decision also includes concessions at Marginal Wharf Berths 1 and 2, as well as at the Fotco and Fauji Akbar Portia terminals.

Speaking to media Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry said the government's move is intended to support exporters and attract more traffic to Port Qasim.

"While the ministry is working to attract cargo from Central Asian countries to Pakistani ports, it is crucial to make our ports regionally competitive," he said.

He added that Pakistan is in discussions with Uzbekistan to route its seaborne trade through Pakistani ports. At present, most Central Asian countries rely on European or Iranian ports for international shipments.

As part of the reforms, handling charges for LNG cargoes have also been reduced. Charges for containerised cargo at DP World terminal have been halved, though no concessions will apply to empty containers.

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs said the changes are designed to promote exports and trade activity.

A formal notification has been issued, with implementation beginning from Tuesday 1st July.



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Another batch of made in Pakistan cars exported to Japan



Honda Atlas has shipped another batch of 38 locally assembled Honda City 1.2L units to Japan, marking its second export consignment to the country.

The first batch—comprising 40 units—was sent in April 2025 and was widely seen as a milestone for Pakistan's auto manufacturing capabilities.

The move strengthens Honda's presence in the global supply chain and underscores growing confidence in the quality of Pakistan-assembled vehicles.

Company officials said the exports reflect both improved production standards and strategic steps to expand international market access.

Other automakers in Pakistan have also begun tapping into export markets. In July 2023, Toyota Indus exported 50 vehicles—including the Fortuner, Corolla Cross, and IMV models—while Changan Pakistan shipped 14 Oshan X7 SUVs to Kenya and Tanzania.

More recently, Hyundai Nishat joined the trend by exporting its Santa Fe Hybrid CBU to Sri Lanka, signaling increased momentum for Pakistani carmakers to compete beyond domestic borders.

Another big city is getting electric tram after lahore

Islamabad is preparing to launch an electric tram bus service designed to enhance public transportation for its residents.

The decision was made during a meeting at the CDA headquarters, chaired by Muhammad Ali Randhawa, who serves as both Chairman of the CDA and



Chief Commissioner of Islamabad.

As part of the initiative, work has already begun to upgrade 140 existing bus stops throughout the city, with plans to construct over 200 new stops in total.

Pakistan names Sheikhha Asma Al Thani brand ambassador for mountains and tourism

Qatari Princess recently scaled Nanga Parbat, counted among the most challenging peaks world over.

Pakistan appointed on Tuesday 13 July Qatari Princess Sheikhha Asma Al Thani as the brand ambassador for its Mountains and Tourism. The announcement follows her achievement of scaling Nanga Parbat, one of the highest and most challenging peaks in the world.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif took to X to congratulate the princess and laud her feat.

Earlier, Sheikhha Asma posted on Instagram, "My ninth 8000er and one of the toughest climbs I've faced. This mountain tested me in ways I didn't expect, from black ice beneath my feet to rockfall every few seconds".

Sheikhha Asma is the first Qatari woman to summit Mount Everest, Lhotse, Manaslu, and K2, as well as the first Qatari female to climb Ama Dablam.

She is also the first Qatari person to ski to the North Pole.

On her ascent of Manaslu, she became the first Arab person to summit an eight-thousander without supplemental oxygen. She achieved another milestone in May 2024 by climbing Lhotse for the second time, also without supplemental oxygen, making her the first Arab to climb two 8000ers without using oxygen.

Lahore-Islamabad distance to decrease by 100 kilometers



Federal Minister for Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has announced a major upgrade of the Lahore-Sialkot Motorway. The road will be widened from four to six lanes and extended to connect Kharian with Islamabad.

This strategic move is aimed at reducing traffic on the Lahore-Islamabad Motorway (M-2), cutting the travel distance by around 100 kilometers and saving nearly an hour of journey time.

The new link is expected to benefit commuters from several key districts including Gujranwala, Gujrat, Kharian, Jhelum, and Gujar Khan, improving overall regional connectivity.

The announcement came during a high-level meeting held at the National Highway Authority (NHA) Punjab Region Office. The minister directed officials to ensure timely completion of ongoing projects with top construction standards. He also called for a 30-year infrastructure plan to address future needs.

A key point discussed in the meeting was the urgent completion of development work along the Multan Road to Ring Road corridor. Abdul Aleem Khan made it clear that delays or substandard work would not be accepted.

The meeting was attended by the Federal Secretary for Communications, Chairman of the NHA, and the CEO of RUDA, who briefed the minister on various ongoing projects and upcoming infrastructure plans in Punjab.

UK launches eVisas for Pakistani students, workers

The UK government has introduced a new eVisa system for Pakistanis applying for study or works visas, replacing the complicated procedure which included submission of physical immigration documents.

After the new system, applicants travelling to the UK on study or work-related visas will no longer need a physical visa sticker on passports from July 15, according to an announcement by the British High Commission on Tuesday 15 July.

“These changes to the UK visa system will make it much simpler for students and workers to prove their identity and visa status. It also means applicants can hold onto their passports, saving them time,” said the British high commissioner in Pakistan, Jane Marriott.

The UK government is replacing physical immigration documents for most student and worker visas with a digital proof of immigration status.

An eVisa is an online record of a person's immigration permission in the UK, and any conditions which apply can be viewed by creating and accessing an online UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) account, said the High Commission's statement.

These eVisas are part of an enhanced border and immigration system that will “not only make the visa process easier, but is more secure, digital and streamlined”.

The eVisas are being rolled out for students, including those applying for short term study visas for 11 months; Global Business Mobility routes for senior or specialist worker, graduate trainee, UK Expansion Worker, service supplier, secondment worker; international sports person; skilled worker, including health and care workers; Temporary Work routes for charity worker, creative worker, government authorised exchange, international agreement, and religious work routes; and Youth Mobility Scheme.

Youth Mobility Scheme holders can link their travel document, such as passport, to their UKVI account for smoother international travel.

The statement added the update from a physical document to an eVisa will not

affect anyone's immigration status or the conditions of their permission to enter or stay in the UK. Travellers with existing physical visa stickers do not need to take any action, the statement explained.

As per the statement, travellers applying as a dependant or as a main applicant for visas other than study or work — like general visitor visas — will still need a physical sticker visa.

Major road in Lahore to get underground trackless tram



The Punjab government has decided to build the Yellow Line's “Cut and Cover” project underground along Lahore's Canal Road.

According to a private news channel, citing official sources, the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) and National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) have begun work on the design and cost estimation of the project, which will stretch from Thokar Niaz Baig to Harbanspura.

Officials say the underground corridor will feature a trackless tram system—similar in standard to the Orange Line stations on Mall Road—without disturbing the city's green areas or cutting any trees. The tram will run beneath Canal Road using the cut-and-cover method.

To accommodate the construction, both sides of Canal Road will be widened by 12 to 14 feet. A signal-free underground route will be created for the trackless wheel tram, after which the road will be restored and reopened for regular traffic. LDA's Chief Engineer stated that while the earlier proposed Yellow Line main track along Canal Road was estimated at Rs. 80 billion, the revised cost for the underground cut-and-cover alignment is currently being assessed.

Saudi Arabia to launch 5-star luxury train in 2026



Saudi Arabia 5-Star Luxury Train 2026 With These 5 Most Scenic Stops

A new way to see Saudi is on the horizon - one that glides gently across red dunes, olive groves, ancient trade routes and forgotten fortresses. In late 2026, Saudi will unveil Dream of the Desert, the Middle East's first five-star luxury train, inviting travellers to swap airport queues and fast-paced itineraries for slow, scenic discovery.

Running along a 1,300-kilometre stretch of existing railway from Riyadh to Al Qurayyat, near the Jordanian border, the train promises an immersive journey through hidden gems and landscapes rarely explored, where time slows, and heritage comes quietly into focus. With just 34 suites across 14 carriages, the train is designed as a self-contained world. Interiors, conceptualised by Lebanese architect Aline Asmard'Amman, reflect Saudi craftsmanship and desert aesthetics: gold-laden ceilings, tile-fronted bars, rich velvet banquettes, majlis-style lounges, and curated regional art. The ambition is not just to connect cities, but to draw travellers into a cultural conversation about a country where ancient trade routes once crossed basalt plains, and agriculture bloomed where none was expected.

While the itineraries are still being finalised, five scenic and culturally rich stops are already generating buzz:

Iran advises pilgrims to seek Arbaeen e-visa by Aug 7

The Iranian embassy has issued an advisory for pilgrims intending to visit Iran and Iraq on for the Arbaeen pilgrimage, to mark the 40th day of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (RA).

The embassy has asked Pakistani pilgrims to register for the Arbaeen pilgrimage visa through Iran's electronic visa portal by August 7.

The guidelines have referred to the recent tripartite meeting of the interior ministers of Iran, Pakistan and Iraq, that all pilgrims must possess a valid Iraqi Arbaeen e-visa prior to entering Iraq. This measure is intended to prevent difficulties caused by crowd congestion at border entry points.

According to the statement, the government of Iran, in cooperation with its diplomatic and consular missions in Pakistan and the government of Pakistan, has made arrangements for the pilgrimage.

Tour organisers have been directed to observe the new guidelines, the statement said adding from July 26 to August 10, those pilgrims with a valid Iraqi Arbaeen visa will be eligible to receive a free double-entry Iranian Arbaeen visa along with a half-rate travel insurance, enabling them to travel through Iran by land en route to Iraq.

After August 10, the Arbaeen e-visa option will no longer be available.

Subject to the consent of Pakistan and the tour operators, the border crossings of Mirjaveh-Taftan and Rimdan-Gabd, will be operational for group travel by bus in accordance with previously issued technical regulations, it added.

The tour operator managers must submit details of transport vehicles, 'Carnet de Passage' (vehicle passport) documents, international driving licenses of the drivers, and a complete list of pilgrims. Entry through these borders will only be permitted after verification of the passenger list and vehicle registration plates, it added.

Tour operators have been directed to comply with the border and customs regulations of Iran, including adherence to the allowed number of passengers and ensuring that no prohibited goods or medicines are transported.

The statement added Pakistani pilgrims who obtain the Iranian Arbaeen pilgrimage visa must enter Iran by Aug 14, and they are required to proceed to Iraq only through the Chazzabeh (Al-Shayeb) border crossing. They must return via the same route. "Use of any other border crossing is not permitted," it said. In cases where a caravan intends to send pilgrims to Iran via air travel, it is mandatory to present flight tickets showing Iraq as the destination.

German climber paraglides down Nanga Parbat



David Göttler makes his way down from the Nanga Parbat summit.

Mountaineers have made history by ascending the formidable Nanga Parbat via its Rupal Face in alpine style, and descending in spectacular fashion.

German alpinist David Göttler made his way down via paraglider, while the French duo of Tiphaine Duperier and Boris Langenstein etched themselves into the history books by skiing down the peak, nicknamed 'The Killer Mountain'.

CEO of Adventure Tours Pakistan Naiknaam Karim told media that the three foreign climbers began their summit attempt on Nanga Parbat, via the Schell route.

The trio climbed from the approximately 3,600-metre-high base camp to the summit between June 21 and 24.

Göttler, 47, had planned to descend from the top by paraglider.

However, upon reaching the summit, strong winds forced him to launch his paraglider from 7,700 metres instead. He successfully flew from that altitude and landed at base camp in 30 minutes,

according to the organisers.

Michael Beek, a German tour operator, mountain guide, and paragliding instructor, congratulated Göttler in a Facebook post, writing that Göttler had made a historic first.

"Summitting Nanga Parbat in alpine style with Tiphaine Duperier and Boris Langenstein was incredible; but to be able to fly down from 7,700m all the way back to base camp on the same day has brought my joy to the next level," he said.

Meanwhile, his French companions, Duperier and Langenstein, camped the night at 7,625m, and later skied and trekked down the massive Rupal Face, which rises 4,600 meters from base camp, arriving three days later.

Theirs is considered the first ski descent of the Rupal Face, and a first from the summit of Nanga Parbat.



Sialkot, a city in Pakistan, holds the distinction of being the world's largest producer of hand-stitched footballs. Known for its long history of craftsmanship, the city manufactures over 70% of the global supply of footballs, including those used in major international tournaments like the FIFA World Cup. Skilled artisans in Sialkot meticulously stitch each ball by hand, ensuring high quality and durability. This thriving industry has not only put Sialkot on the map for sports equipment but also significantly contributed to the local economy, providing employment to thousands of workers.



Afghan Burqa-clad women sell locally made bread, called Naan, at a market recently.

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Sri Lanka returns orphaned elephants to jungle



BABY elephants are being released into a forest near Udawalawe, in Sri Lanka's south.

Sri Lankan authorities returned six orphaned and injured elephants to the wild on Thursday 13 July after nursing them back to health under a long-running conservation project, officials said.

Two females and four males, aged between five and seven, were released into the Mau Ara forest within the Udawalawe Wildlife Sanctuary, environment minister Dammika Patabendi said.

He said it was the 26th such release of rehabilitated elephants since the Udawalawe Elephant Transit Home began its programme in 1998. "We hope, in the interest of conserving elephants, we will be able to improve facilities at this transit home in the near future," Patabendi said.

The calves were transported in trucks and then allowed to walk free because they were deemed strong enough to fend for themselves or join wild herds. Baby elephants have minimal contact with humans at the transit home to ease their integration into wild herds.

All elephants at the facility were rescued after being found abandoned, injured or separated from their herds. Udawalawe, about 210 kilometres (130 miles) southeast of Colombo, is renowned for its wild elephants and is a major tourist attraction.

Sri Lankan authorities believe the transit home's strategy of rewilding rescued elephants, rather than domesticating them, has paid off. The centre's director, Malaka Abeywardana, said 57 elephants remain at the facility, which has released 187 back into the wild since the first release in early 1998.

Indian brothers marry same woman in ancient custom



A pair of brothers in rural India have married the same woman, upholding an ancient custom and sparking criticism from a women's rights group after photos of the wedding went viral.

Polyandry is banned in India but is legal in some of the tribal pockets, including Himalayan territories, allowing preservation of some ancient traditions. The grooms, Pradeep and KapilNegi, married Sunita Chauhan in a three-day wedding witnessed by hundreds of villagers and relatives on July 12 in the Himalayan state of Himachal Pradesh.

During the ceremony, the trio from the Hatti tribe circled a fire considered sacred as villagers sang folksongs. "We followed the tradition publicly as we are proud of it and it was a joint decision," Pradeep said, according to the Press Trust of India news agency.

His brother Kapil added: "We're ensuring support, stability and love for our wife as a united family." One of the brothers is a government employee and the other works overseas.

Under the custom, the wife shifts between brothers on a mutually agreed schedule and the family raises the children together. The eldest brother is named the legal father.

The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA), a women's rights group, condemned the wedding.

"Such acts of women's exploitation... go against the fundamental rights of a woman," AIDWA general secretary Mariam Dhawale told local media.

Around 300,000 members of the Hatti tribe live in small villages in the remote Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh. Local lawmaker Harshwardhan Singh Chauhan defended the practice, saying polyandry has long been a tradition of the Sirmaur people.

We have a customary law to protect polyandry, he told reporters, after photos of the marriage went viral on social media.

KundallalShashtri, a local Hattileader, justified the custom by citing the ancient Indian epic Mahabharata, in which the character Draupadi married five brothers.

Retrial opens for S. Korean woman who bit off attempted rapist's tongue



CHOI Mal-ja (centre), who was convicted 61 years ago for biting off the tongue of her attempted rapist, attends her retrial hearing at a court in Busan on Wednesday 23 July.

A South Korean court reopened a decades-old case on Wednesday 23 July after the country's #MeToo movement inspired a woman to challenge her conviction for defending herself against sexual violence 61 years ago.

Choi Mal-ja was 19 when she was attacked by a 21-year-old man in the southern town of Gimhae in 1964. He pinned her to the ground and forced his tongue into her mouth, court records showed.

Choi managed to break free by biting off about 1.5 centimetres (0.6 inches) of his tongue.

In one of South Korea's most contentious rulings on sexual violence, the aggressor received only six months in prison, suspended for two years, for trespassing and intimidation — but not attempted rape. But Choi was convicted of causing grievous bodily harm and handed a 10-month prison sentence, suspended for two years.

The court said at the time her action had "exceeded the reasonable bounds of legally permissible self-defence". Choi's case gained renewed momentum decades later after #MeToo movement, which took off globally in 2017 and inspired her to seek justice.

In South Korea, massive women's rights protests led to victories on issues ranging from abortion access to tougher penalties for spycam crimes. Choi filed for a retrial in 2020, but lower courts initially rejected her petition.

After years of campaigning and an appeal, South Korea's top court finally ordered a retrial in 2024.



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'Takeover' looms as two firms acquire 56% stake in PC hotels chain



In a move that appears to be synchronised, two firms have acquired about 56 per cent stake in the company that owns and manages the chain of Pearl Continental Hotels, sparking speculation about a possible takeover, it emerged on Sunday 13 July.

According to the information filed with the Pakistan Stock Exchange under the Securities Act 2015, Dawood Jan Muhammad purchased twenty-eight percent shares of Pakistan Services Limited on July 14, 2025. The investor has purchased 9,107,800 shares at the rate of Rs700 per share, which is worth over Rs6.37 billion.

AKD Holding has also submitted information to purchase 27.9 percent of shares of Pakistan Services Limited on July 14. According to the information, it has purchased 9,089,651 shares of Pakistan Services Limited at the rate of Rs700 per share, which is worth over Rs6.3 billion.

PSL's 18,197,550 shares have been purchased by two different individuals at the rate of Rs700 per share. The total value of the two purchases is over Rs12 billion.

According to experts, if the two different purchases are combined, it amounts to about 56 percent of the company's shares, which is enough to take over the management of the company's board. Topline Securities Chief Executive Mohammed Sohail said that yes, if two parties acquire 55.95 per cent of the shares of Pakistan Services Limited, they can take over the company. He further stated that while the deal could be considered hostile, there is also a possibility that it was carried out with mutual

understanding between both parties.

The company had informed the Pakistan Stock Exchange of the postponement of the board meeting on June 30. PSL has nine hotels and one subsidiary in the country. The price of PSL shares was Rs782 at the close of business on July 11 and it increased by 10pc to Rs1,050 at the close of business on July 20.

'King of fruits' takes centre stage at culinary contest

It was not any regular mango party. The Mango Tango Gala organised by Biz Today International in collaboration with Real Spice where as many as 28 contestants entered with a dish or dessert that had mango as the main ingredient took the "King of fruits" to the next level on Tuesday 8 July.



Besides adding flavour to their entrees, the contestants also focused on presentation. One contestant especially bought mango-shaped dishes to make her plating more pleasing to the eyes. (Right) An unlikely but flavoursome combination of chicken mango curry with lemon rice.

Among the delicacies entered in the competition were mango gol gappay, mango dahi baray, mango khow suey, mango rice, mango curry, mango barfi, mango rabri kheer, mango tarts, mango Swiss roll cake, mango tiramisu, mango salsa, mango habanero chicken wings, mango grilled chicken with garlic butter rice, mango colada mousse, mango trifle, mango delight and so much more.

Hadia Obaid, who made mango tiramisu, also thought that it needed a plate of mango salsa on the side. Therefore, she had two entries. Zainab Waseem, who made mango barfi said that she wanted to bring something different than the usual mango delight, mango ice creams, mango trifles, etc. But that was obviously also on the minds of the other contestants who came with mango dishes which many had not heard of or imagined.

Zainab Shabbir, for instance, entertained many questions about her mango curry with lemon rice. People wanted to know if preparing the mango curry involved the usual browning of onions before adding the tomatoes and spices. "Well, there are no onions but yes, there are spices and tomato paste in there," she told media. Then someone asked if she added salt or sugar to the dish, and she laughed. "I added salt because the mango is itself sweet and tangy by nature," she explained.

28 contestants enter the competition with sweet and savoury mango dishes

Some contestants put in extra effort in the presentation. Hina Imtiaz had brought with her two mango shaped dishes for her mango puree. "I only bought these yesterday," she said. And she was in luck as all the three judges there, namely, Chef Beenish, Chef Bilal Mansoor and Chef Asim Rasheed were looking to judge on flavour as well as presentation.

About the event, its main organiser, the Executive Editor of Biz Today International, Rafiq Vayani said that he has been covering the Gulfood event in Dubai for some 15 years now. "We also needed something like that here so I have been organising smaller competitions among local chefs here in Karachi on similar lines," he said.



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