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Mr. Fazal E. Khuda and Mr. Tanvir from Bangladesh visited PCS Headquarter, and Air SIAL Corporate Office, Sialkot as well to explore the vast possibilities of business collaboration among two brotherly countries offering tremendous potential. Picture shows Chairman AirSial Mr. Fazal Jilani presenting a model of aircraft to the visiting guest.



From home to the skies, a perfect duo
Mother and daughter proudly representing
SriLankan Airlines as Cabin Crew.

PIA gets all-clear for direct flights to United Kingdom, announces non-stop Islamabad to Manchester flights from 25th Oct.

The country's national flag carrier has received the go-ahead to resume direct flights to the United Kingdom, after a gap of nearly five years.

A Pakistan International Airlines spokesman said on Wednesday 24 Sep. the airline had received Third Country Operator (TCO) approval for the UK, and plans to start direct flights from next month.

"In the first phase, flight operations to Manchester will be resumed, after which Birmingham and London will be included," a statement said, adding that the carrier was informed about the approval a day earlier.

The development comes after Britain's Department of Transport concluded that security arrangements in the country were "satisfactory and in line with international standards".

The British Department of Transport has also issued an ACC3 certificate to PIA for five years. "These certificates are a reflection of complete confidence in PIA's air operations and safety," the spokesman said.

Teams from Britain's Department of Transport visited Pakistan a number of times over the past five years to assess the security arrangements and implementation of safety measures at airports, with focus on measures being adopted for direct flights to the United Kingdom.

The spokesman further said PIA was given "comprehensive and all-round approval", allowing it to operate direct passenger and cargo flights.

The European Union's Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) had barred PIA from operating in EU countries in June 2020 over safety concerns after a flight from Lahore to Karachi crashed near the Jinnah International Airport, killing around 100 passengers.

EASA lifted the ban after more than four years on Nov 28 last year. After this decision, PIA approached the British government seeking clearance to operate flights to the UK.

As part of its preparations, PIA has grounded two Boeing 777 aircraft - one for the replacement of landing gear and the other for change of seats and cabin lights of the executive economy class.

According to the PIA spokesman, one of the Boeing 777 aircraft will be operational by the end of this month, while the new landing gear shipment will arrive soon.



Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will return to British airspace this month for the first time since 2020, as the carrier announced on Saturday 4 Oct. that it will offer nonstop flights from Islamabad to Manchester starting October 25.

The resumption follows Friday's confirmation from the Pakistan High Commission in London that the state Aircraft Operating Permit from the

UK Civil Aviation Authority and Third Country Operator approval crucial regulatory clearances that had been withdrawn following safety concerns.

The airline marked what it described as its 'historic return' with a statement on X, declaring: 'The wait is finally over! Pakistan International Airlines

proudly reconnects Manchester and Islamabad, bringing loved ones closer once again.

According to the high commission, the Manchester route marks the first phase of PIA's UK return, with services to Birmingham and London expected to follow, though no timeline has been specified for these additional routes.





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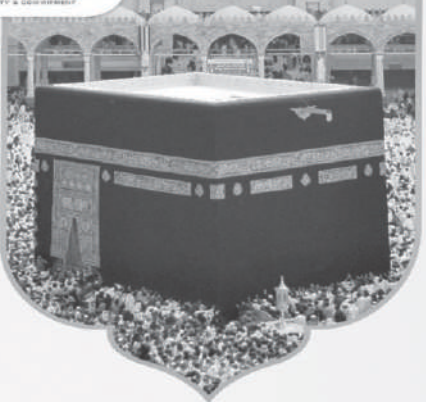
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PCAA gets UN aviation award

PCAA gets UN aviation award. Separately, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) awarded the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) the 'Council President Certificate (CPC)' in recognition of significant improvements made in the country's aviation security.

The award was received by PCAA Director-General Nadir Shafi Dar during the 42nd session of the ICAO's Assembly, which concluded its session in Montreal.

Expressing his views on the occasion, Mr Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's continued commitment to ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices. The importance Pakistan attaches to aviation security is evident from the results of the ICAO audits, he said.

The PCAA's effective implementation percentage rose to 84.69pc in the 2024 ICAO Coordinated Validation Mission, a figure higher than both the regional and global average. Effective implementation is a measure of a state's safety oversight capability. Furthermore, in the last Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme of ICAO in 2024, Pakistan secured an effective implementation score of 86.79pc, also surpassing regional and global averages.

The assembly, attended by 192 member states, adopted major updates to global frameworks for aviation safety, security, and air navigation.

Director General inaugurates PAA Data Center at Jinnah International Airport

The Director General of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed, inaugurated the state-of-the-art PAA Data Center at Karachi's Jinnah International Airport Karachi.

The Data Center represents a major leap forward in the Authority's digital transformation journey. It will serve as a centralized platform connecting airport operations data from across Pakistan - including Headquarters and Karachi Airport - for enhanced efficiency, real-time decision-making, and improved service delivery.

During his visit, the director general interacted informally with the project team and officials, exchanging views on the technological and operational benefits of the new system. He appreciated the dedication and professional work of the technical staff who made the project possible.

The facility will also accelerate the implementation of upcoming passenger service initiatives such as e-gates, free Wi-Fi, and 5G-enabled connectivity.

Shields were presented to the Additional Director IT, Project Director, and members of the technical team in recognition of their contributions. The Airport Manager and other members of the Jinnah International Airport administration were also present on the occasion.



Etihad Airways returns to Peshawar after a decade



Etihad Airways has returned to Bacha Khan International Airport (BKIAP), Peshawar, the first time after 2014, marking an important development in the aviation sector.

After a gap of more than 10 years, flight EY 276 from Abu Dhabi landed in Peshawar recently and was welcomed with a traditional water salute by airport authorities.

Etihad Airways will now operate five weekly flights between Abu Dhabi and Peshawar on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday, departing Peshawar as EY 277 at 8 AM.

With this development, Etihad became the third international carrier to commence operations from BKIAP in 2025, following the successful launches of Fly Dubai and Flyadeal earlier this year.

These new connections provide passengers with greater choice, improved convenience, and enhanced global connectivity, reflecting PAA's commitment to ensuring safe, efficient, and world-class airport operations.



Director General Pakistan Airports Authority, Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed, inaugurating the PAA Data Center. On this occasion, Project Director Waseem Ahmed and Additional Director IT Taha Iqbal are standing to his right, while Airport Manager Adnan Khan is standing to his left.

Riyadh Air announces to Starts Flights to London



Paul has had a career of 25+ years focused on the international technology sector, which has taken him to over 100 countries. Along the way, he developed a deep love for aviation, with a travel bucket list measured by aircraft types flown rather than destinations reached. Now he is bringing that avgeek passion, along with the journalism experience he accumulated early in his career, to write insightful pieces for Simple Flying.

Riyadh Air the Saudi start-up airline announced two years ago, will launch its first route from Riyadh's King Khalid International Airport to London Heathrow later this month. Flights will start on October 26 using a Boeing 787-9 that the airline is currently leasing for crew training, certification, and regulatory approvals.

The service will initially only be available to employees and families of the airline and its owner, the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF). These first passengers are able to acquire tickets by enrolling in Riyadh Air's new loyalty program, Sfeer, which also launched recently. Ticket sales to the public will open once Riyadh Air takes delivery of its first two 787-9s from Boeing later this year.

Initial Flights For 'Launch



Members' Only

Back in June, Riyadh Air managed to acquire a pair of slots at London Heathrow for the start of the Northern Hemisphere winter season on October 26. The problem is that the airline doesn't have possession

of its own aircraft yet. When it originally placed its order with Boeing for 72 787-9s (39 firm, 33 options), deliveries were expected to begin in December 2024, but production delays have pushed this schedule back to Q4 2025.

London Heathrow's slot rules are 'use it or lose it', so Riyadh Air needs to fill the new slots with active flights this month. As a result, it has chosen to begin flights with 'Jamila' (registration HZ-RXX), the technical spare 787-9 currently leased from Oman Air. Airline and PIF staff, along with their families, will be eligible to purchase tickets through Sfeer and will be surveyed for feedback on their experience.

Speaking at a press conference to announce the new route and the launch of the Sfeer loyalty program, Riyadh Air's chief executive, Tony Douglas emphasized that his team is "standing up an airline from zero." As a result, the airline will use the first few weeks of the new route as proving flights and "testing absolutely everything" in order to be fully ready for public flights later this year.

"If you go big bang on day one and assume everything will work perfectly on the first day, well, the reality is it won't. So we will use that short period to trial everything and make sure the feedback gives us the opportunity to polish every last little detail before I actually sell a ticket to you."

A New Entrant On The RUH-LHR Route

Ticket sales on the RUH-LHR route will be available to the public once the carrier takes delivery of its first two 787-9s, which Douglas says will be "just weeks after" the October 26 first flight date. Riyadh Air's first 787-9 recently emerged from the paint shop at Boeing South Carolina in Charleston, and the second is currently going through the final assembly line and is expected to be completed in a month.

The new 3,070-mile RUH-LHR route will have a flight time of approximately seven hours, and will have the following schedule (all times local):

RX401: Departs RUH at 03:15, arrives LHR at 07:30

RX402: Departs LHR at 09:30, arrives RUH at 19:15

Riyadh Air will become the fourth airline on the route, which is already served by British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, and Saudia, although the latter will be withdrawing from Riyadh in the coming years to make way for Riyadh Air. The current schedules for the route are as

follows:

Airlines Operating The RUH-LHR Route

Airline	Peak Frequency	Aircraft Used
British Airways	2x daily	777-200, 787-8/9/10
Riyadh Air	Daily	787-9
Saudia	3 x daily	777-300ER
Virgin Atlantic	Daily	A330-900

Douglas also shared that once Riyadh Air has its new 787-9s operating on the first route to London, it will be launching a second route to 'Dubai International Airport. This is already a very busy air corridor, with more than 30 flights daily at peak times due to the extensive operations of Saudi and Emirati low-cost carriers. However, it will also be the first time that Riyadh Air goes head-to-head against fellow premium carrier Emirates, which flies the route three times daily with its Boeing 777-300ERs.

Islamabad international Airport secures the top position and Multan is disclosed the best

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has announced the results of its annual performance audit, in which Islamabad International Airport secured the top position among major hubs, while Multan International Airport was declared the best regional airport.

Islamabad International Airport outshined Karachi and Lahore in the 2024 audit, while Multan International Airport outperformed Peshawar, Faisalabad, and Quetta.

The PAA audit assessed a wide range of criteria, including passenger facilities, terminal cleanliness, airside safety standards, lighting systems, lifts, baggage handling systems, compliance with security protocols, and the effectiveness of Rescue & Firefighting Services (RFFS).

PAA Headquarters commended the administrations of Islamabad and Multan airports for their remarkable operational achievements. In recognition of their efforts, appreciation letters were issued by the leadership of PAA to the airport managers of both airports.

Turkish Airlines, Gulf Air sign memorandum to boost cooperation



A Turkish Airlines (THY) logo on an office building, Istanbul, Türkiye.

Turkish Airlines (THY) and Bahrain's flag carrier, Gulf Air, have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to boost their cooperation in various areas, Türkiye's flag carrier said on Tuesday 30 Sep., adding that the accord aims to drive mutual growth and business development.

"This MoU establishes a framework for comprehensive cooperation across multiple fields, encompassing a strategic partnership agreement, potential joint ventures, reciprocal loyalty program benefits and ground handling services," it said.

With this collaboration, the two airlines aim to foster mutual growth, provide opportunities for economic development and increase cultural and social interaction between Türkiye and the Middle East region.

Turkish Airlines CEO Bilal Ekşi emphasized that this partnership with Gulf Air is a significant milestone in strengthening the relationship between the two companies.

"As the airline that flies to more countries than any other airline in the world, we continue to enrich our economic collaboration in various areas and offer our passengers more travel opportunities and advantages. We believe this agreement will pave the way for growth and long-term collaboration between Türkiye and Bahrain," he said.

Gulf Air Group CEO Jeffrey Goh stated: "Thanks to this agreement, we will combine our flight networks and offer our passengers additional travel destinations. This strategic partnership will both enhance our company's existing partnerships and significantly contribute to the increase in the number of connections to Bahrain."

Furthermore, the memorandum of understanding will explore the potential expansion of the two airlines' flight networks by evaluating opportunities that

could generate additional revenue in addition to the existing direct flights between Manama, the capital of Bahrain, and Istanbul.

AirSial signs a deal with Amadeus



Amadeus Altéa debuts in Pakistan with new AirSial collaboration

AirSial has signed a new deal with travel technology provider [Amadeus](#) as the Pakistan-based airline embarks on an ambitious expansion. The carrier will deploy the Altéa Departure Control – Customer Management solution, designed to enhance both passenger and agent experiences at the airport.

The solution delivers personalized services for passengers while increasing operational efficiency for agents.

Fazal Jilani, Chairman for AirSial, said: "We are currently focused on enhancing regional connectivity for the Pakistani population both within the country and beyond.

Our relationship with Amadeus is the latest step in this journey, deploying cutting-edge solutions to reduce stress, adapt to individual needs and enhance efficiency for all."

Integrated with other Amadeus Altéa tools, Altéa Departure Control – Customer Management provides a unified platform where all aspects of flight management can be managed, from check-in through to

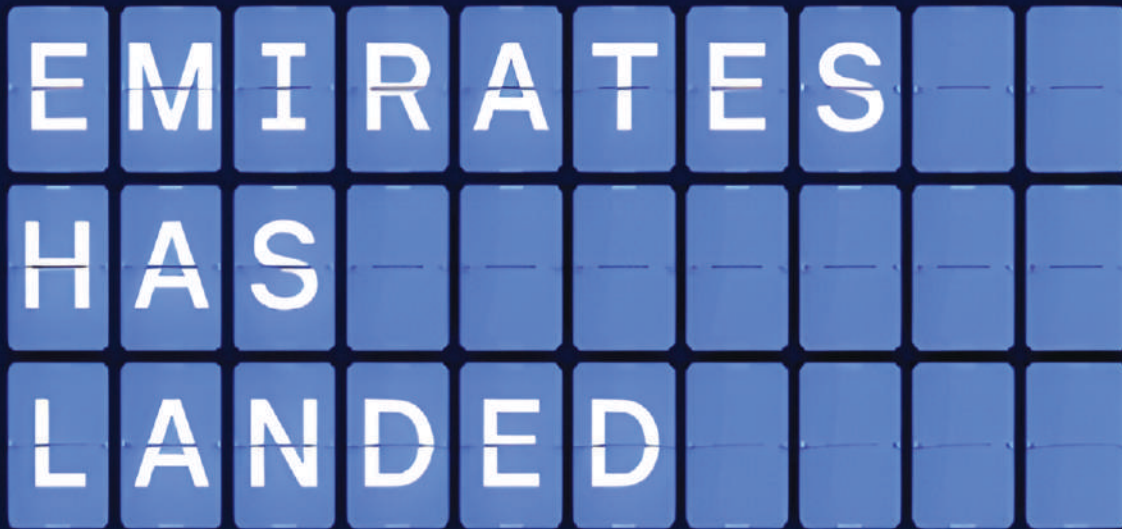
baggage handling. By simplifying and automating many of the common airport tasks, travelers benefit from online check-in options, seamless payments, and digital boarding passes, gaining greater autonomy and reduced waiting times.

Yassine Mellak, Vice President, Middle East Cluster, Account Management, Amadeus, said: "Our new agreement with AirSial not only deepens the strategic partnership between our two organizations, but also marks a significant step in Amadeus' vision to expand its footprint within the Pakistani aviation sector. Working together, we are well-positioned to drive growth, innovation and value for travelers across the destination."



AirSial ranked number 1 in domestic flight departures punctuality (least delays) at major Pakistani airports in the first half of year 2025.

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India, China to resume air links in Oct. 2025

Direct air services connecting designated points in China and India will resume at the end of this month, Indian and Chinese media said on Friday 3 Oct.

They said the resumption of air links would be in keeping with the winter season schedule. India's Ministry of External Affairs said the agreement was subject to the commercial decisions of the designated carriers from the two countries and fulfilment of all operational criteria.

Since earlier this year, as part of the Indian government's approach toward gradual normalisation of relations between India and China, the civil aviation authorities of the two countries have been engaged in technical-level discussions on resuming direct air services between the two countries and on a revised Air Services Agreement, according to the Indian press release.

It said the decision of the civil aviation authorities would further facilitate people-to-people contact between India and China, contributing toward the gradual normalisation of bilateral exchanges, said the press release.

There have been no direct flights between China and India since 2020.

When Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, held talks with Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar in New Delhi on August 18, they agreed to resume direct flights between China and India as soon as possible, revise the bilateral civil aviation transport agreement and provide visa facilitation.

The Global Times gave the news greater space. It noted that on August 14, in response to media inquiries regarding reports that India and China are set to resume direct flight connections as soon as next month, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian stated: "We noted relevant reports."

The total population of China and India combined is over 2.8 billion. Resuming direct flights between the Chinese mainland and India helps facilitate cross-border travel, exchanges and cooperation. For some time, the Chinese side has been in close communication with India to promote the early resumption of direct flights between the two countries."

The Chinese daily quoted Himadri Suwan, chairman of the Confederation of Young Leaders of India as saying the

resumption of direct flights was an encouraging sign in the gradual normalisation of bilateral ties.

"It marks a welcome and pragmatic step toward enhancing connectivity and deepening mutual understanding between our two nations. It will not only strengthen people-to-people exchanges, but also open new avenues for cooperation in trade, education, tourism and youth-led engagement.

"At a time when the global community faces unprecedented challenges, building bridges of trust and connectivity between India and China will contribute to regional stability and shared prosperity," Suwan told the Global Times on Thursday 2 Oct.

Long Xingchun, a professor from the School of International Relations at Sichuan International Studies University, also views the resumption of direct flights as a vital criterion to test whether China-India relations normalize, as China-India relations have notably warmed up recently.

Long told Global Times that the move serves the interests of Indian people more.

Visa holders can perform Umrah while in S. Arabia

Saudi Arabia has announced that visitors and residents holding any type of visa will now be permitted to perform Umrah while in the kingdom, media reported.

According to Saudi Press Agency, the Ministry of Haj and Umrah said in a statement on Sunday 5 Oct. that people holding 'personal and family visit visas, electronic tourist visas, transit visas, work visas, and other types of visas' will be able to perform Umrah in the kingdom during their stay.

The ministry said the move was part of the kingdom's efforts to streamline procedures for Umrah performers and broaden access to services within the Haj and Umrah system, in support of the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030.

"This step reflects the kingdom's ongoing commitment to facilitating the arrival of Muslims from around the world to perform their rituals with ease and tranquillity," the statement said.

Pakistan receives one of the highest

Haj quotas from Saudi Arabia.

In July, the federal cabinet formally approved the Haj Policy 2026, outlining key procedural, financial and logistic measures for the pilgrimage season.

Global Air to start flights

Global Aviation Services Inc. proudly introduces Global Air, Pakistan's upcoming airline, set to begin flight operations very soon.

Backed by strong international partnerships and industry expertise, Global Air is committed to providing safe, reliable, and world-class travel experiences for passengers across Pakistan and beyond.

Stay tuned for updates as we prepare to take off and connect Pakistan with the world!



Travelport Partner

Travelport Pakistan's Lahore team visited the newly inaugurated Wego office in Pakistan to extend their best wishes.

The event was graced by Mr. Ross Veitch – CEO & Co-Founder Wego, Mr. Dean Wicks – Chief Flight Officer, Mr. Alex Astafiev – Product Director Flight OTA, Mr. Ziad – BO Lead Flights, Mr. Ubaidullah – Director Wego Pakistan and Mr. Nabeel Sheikho – Director BD & Commercial Operations.

Representing Travelport were Mr. Khurram Tufail – Regional Manager Central, Mr. Tauqeer Asad Khan – Assistant Sales Manager Lahore and Mr. Raheel Akram – Sales & Support Executive Lahore.

This visit reflects the strong partnership and shared commitment between Travelport and Wego in shaping the future of travel in Pakistan.

Logistics inefficiencies hamper trade

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has identified the logistics sector as a major structural constraint to trade and investment, with inefficiencies costing the economy significantly more than in advanced economies.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said Pakistan's logistics sector accounts for 15.6pc of GDP, compared to 8-9pc in developed economies such as the United States, Japan, and Singapore. He warned that this high cost continues to erode Pakistan's trade competitiveness.

Citing the FPCCI Policy Advisory Board's latest policy brief, "Pakistan's Logistics Performance and Its Impact on Trade Competitiveness," Mr Sheikh highlighted the country's steep fall in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index (LPI) — from 68th position in 2016 to 122nd in 2018. Notably, Pakistan was excluded altogether from the 2023 index.

He noted that regional peers like India, Vietnam, and Bangladesh have improved logistics infrastructure and performance, which has helped them better integrate into global value chains.

Pakistan's logistics cost 15.6pc of GDP, double that of advanced economies

In Pakistan, over 94pc of cargo is transported by road, while rail carries just 6pc — despite being a cheaper and more sustainable option. Operational locomotives have declined from 528 in 2011 to 449 in 2025. Freight volumes dropped from 7.4mn tonnes in FY20 to 5.8mn tonnes in FY25.

Port inefficiencies are also a drag. Karachi Port and Port Qasim, which handle over 95pc of external trade, operate at just one-third of their capacity. The average container dwell time ranges from 5.5 to 6.5 days, compared to India's 2.6 days for imports, Bangladesh's 1.6 days for exports, and Vietnam's four days for exports.

Gwadar Port remains marginal, handling less than 0.5pc of total trade, mainly due to weak hinterland connectivity and limited integration into the national supply chain.

Post-harvest losses further add to inefficiencies. Mr Sheikh estimated that 30-40pc of fruits and vegetables are wasted due to inadequate warehousing and cold-chain facilities.

Fraud involving goods clearance without duties unearthed

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has unearthed a fraud at Karachi airport, where consignments of high-value electronic items were being cleared illegally without filing Goods Declarations (GDs) or paying customs duties and taxes.

The scam was orchestrated allegedly by some employees of a foreign ground-handling company, which was also the custodian of the goods, in collusion with some importers, allegedly involved in the use of fake and forged documents issued by the company employees to remove electronic goods from the airport.

The FBR said in a statement that the fraud came to light after credible intelligence was received and promptly acted upon by authorities to strengthen controls at the Karachi airport.

"The timely intervention led to the seizure of a consignment valued at Rs103 million, including laptops, iPads, iPhones, MacBooks, PlayStations, and memory cards, before it could be spirited away."

Apart from this, two consignments were found fraudulently cleared on the basis of fake gate passes.

The collectorate of Customs Airport Karachi lodged two FIRs and said that five consignments in total were illegally removed through the fraudulent methods.

These consignments, packed in two pallets, weighing around 900-1,000kg each, were "deliberately concealed from the Customs WeBOC system, preventing GD filings and enabling their clearance through fake gate passes".

The total estimated value of the evaded duty and taxes involved in illegal removal of the five consignments is stated to be at Rs384 million. "The employees of the company manipulated their

computerised iCargo system to conceal airway bills for issuance of fake gate passes for illegal removal of high-value electronic goods."

Customs investigators have also highlighted the foreign-based company's "refusal" to provide CCTV footage and critical records despite repeated requests, raising serious suspicion of "complicity at the senior management level".

Test flight of 'flying car' unveiled to public in Japan

The public can now view test flights of a so-called flying car at the 2025 Osaka-Kansai Expo in Osaka City.

The technology is expected to be the next generation of transportation.

The first public flight took place on Wednesday 1st Oct. and was conducted by ANA Holdings Inc. and the US-based company Joby Aviation Inc.

The flying car, a Joby, is a five-seater S4 aircraft and is considered the frontrunner for practical flying cars.

ANA plans to launch the aircraft as an "air taxi" service from fiscal 2027 or later.

Developed in the United States, the S4 has a top speed of 320 kph, a range of 160 kilometres and has accumulated 64,000 kilometres of flight experience.

It is characterised by its quiet ride, as its noise level during flight is said to be about 45 decibels, which is a level similar to that of museums and libraries.

The aircraft flew for about four minutes on the day, flying over the ocean to the west of the Expo venue. Although the second planned flight was canceled due to ground communication equipment checks, the aircraft itself reportedly had no issues.

The public can see the aircraft until the last day of the Expo on Oct 13. Test flights will continue till Oct 8.



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James lives and breathes route development. Educated in Air Transport Management at Loughborough University and Cranfield University, James has a PhD in airline strategy. James was Market Opportunity Analyst at London Luton Airport and Chief Analyst at anna.aero. He taught airline strategy and economics to undergraduate and postgraduate students for five years and has worked closely with multiple carriers on route and market intelligence projects. He is based near London, UK.

Turkish Airlines is the world's 13th-largest carrier by flights. When only international services are considered, it rises to fourth. The Star Alliance member is known for its extensive network. Between September and December, its passenger jets will fly to 285 destinations on a scheduled basis, which are in 124 countries. Of course, it'd be more significant still if its freight services were included.

In September, three more cities joined Turkish Airlines' network from its Istanbul Airport hub: Misrata, Seville, and Port Sudan. In October, it will return to Mombasa and Yanbu. In December, the carrier will begin its first passenger flight to Phnom Penh (via Bangkok). While outside the scope of this article's focus, it is already known that it will fly to Bissau and London Gatwick in 2026, with more places coming.

Turkish Airlines Began Flying To These 3 Cities In September

The carrier returned to Misrata on September 2. While flights previously operated daily on the Boeing 737-800/900, they now run three times weekly on the same equipment. The relaunch came nearly 1.5 years after Mitiga (which serves the country's capital, Tripoli) joined its network in April 2024, and nine months after the return of Benghazi, in January 2025.

On September 17, Turkish Airlines took off for Seville, which is Spain's fourth most populous metro area and an important tourist destination. It has become its sixth passenger destination in the country. The year-round service runs daily on the 737 MAX 8. To



accommodate the press, dignitaries, etc., the first round-trip flight used the 777-300ER (as shown above). To maximize global connectivity, a split schedule is available.

Port Sudan joined its map on September 17 (the photo below is from this launch). Narrowbodies are critical to many of the airline's African routes, and this new link to the Red Sea city is no exception. 737-800/900 flights are nonstop in both directions and operate three times weekly. They currently leave Istanbul at 02:35 and get back at 11:35.

Turkish Airlines' Network From Istanbul Airport: September To December

It is worth briefly recapping the various countries that have joined or rejoined Turkish Airlines' map recently. These nations did so in 2024: Afghanistan (last served in 2021), Australia (new), Chile (new), and Libya (last served in 2015). These countries did so or will do so in 2025: Cambodia (new), Sudan (last served in 2023), and Syria (last served in 2012). Since 2023, and for obvious reasons, only Israel has stopped seeing the airline.

Turkish Airlines has passenger flights to 85 European airports. They are vital for its wider network and connectivity, including to Africa, Asia-Pacific, and the Middle East, without which that part of its business would be significantly smaller. Partly because of the large Turkish diaspora in Germany, that country has

more flights than anywhere else (except domestically).

Turkish Airlines Serves 54 Airports In Africa



The carrier's presence on the continent is enormous. In the final part of the year, its passenger aircraft will be seen in 54 airports—more than anywhere else except Europe. Vital to this is its considerable use of narrowbodies—they operate three in four of its African flights—and, like many carriers, multiple one-stop routings. In the 12 months to July 2025, booking data shows that more than 12,000 daily passengers connected to another flight in Istanbul en route to or from Africa. Given its global network, over 800 airport pairs had at least three passengers daily; the cumulative effect of hubs is clear.

The 15 most popular city-level markets were Guangzhou-Algiers; funnily enough, Air Algérie will begin nonstop flights in October. Dubai-Algiers was next, followed by London-Lagos, Los Angeles-Cairo, Algiers-Antalya, London-Accra, Dubai-Bamako, Algiers-Sharm El Sheikh, Nouakchott-Medinah, Kayseri-Cairo, Amsterdam-Cairo, London-Mogadishu, Paris-Bamako, London-Abuja, and Algiers-Jeddah.



France Produces 300th Rafale Multi-Role Fighter Jet



According to Dassault, the corresponding fuselage was assembled a few days earlier. In total, the Rafale production program brings together around 400 French companies.

"It is the cornerstone of France's industrial and military sovereignty, thanks to the development of critical technologies and its export success," Dassault said in a statement.

Production of Rafale fighter jets.

The company currently has firm orders from France and eight export customers for an additional 233 Rafale fighter jets. Production is expected to increase to four aircraft per month.

The first Rafales entered service with the French Navy in 2004 and the French Air Force in 2006. Export deliveries launched in 2015 with Egypt.

Dassault Aviation recently opened a new production line, its first since the 1970s, to meet rising demand for the Rafale. The new facility is located in Cergy, northwest of Paris.

The plant currently employs more than 600 engineers and will eventually enable annual production of 30 to 40 Rafale aircraft.

In the summer of 2025, France completed the first Rafale B fighter for the Indonesian Air Force. The aircraft was spotted at the end of July at Dassault's



factory airfield in Bordeaux

Taiwan, which is seeking to replace its aging Mirage 2000-5 fighters, may become a new buyer of the French aircraft.

For the history of the development and production of France's most advanced combat aircraft, read the article: "DassaultRafale: The Path to Europe's Most Successful Fighter and a Symbol of French Aviation Independence..

First flight from Riyadh lands in Russian capital



CREW members of Saudia look on during a welcoming ceremony at Moscow's Sheremetyevo international airport.

The first direct passenger flight from Riyadh to Moscow operated by Saudia, Saudi Arabia's national airline, touched down in the Russian capital recently amid warming ties between the two oil producers.

Saudia said it is planning three direct return flights per week to Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport in a move likely to spur travel in both directions from visitors, business people and government officials.

Russia has already seen an increase in tourists from Saudi Arabia, and Flynas, a Saudi budget airline, launched three direct flights a week between Riyadh and Moscow's Vnukovo airport in August.

Flynas is also due to launch a direct route between Jeddah and Moscow in December.

Ties between Russia and Saudi Arabia are close.

Russian President Vladimir Putin last year thanked Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for helping to organise the biggest US-Russian prisoner swap since the Cold War.

Putin and Mohammed bin Salman, also known as MbS, have fostered a close personal relationship since 2015 when the prince visited Russia for the first time.

The relationship has helped the leaders of the world's two biggest oil exporters conclude and maintain the Opec+ energy deal.

Pakistan Army test launches new Fatah-IV missile



Pakistan's new Fatah-IV surface-to-surface cruise missile. (Janes)

The Pakistan Army has conducted a training launch of its newly developed and inducted Fatah-IV land-attack surface-to-surface cruise missile.

The Pakistan military's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) announced the launch on 30 September, officially confirming the existence of the missile for the first time.

"A successful training launch of [the] newly inducted indigenously developed Fatah-IV ground-launched cruise missile was conducted today by [the] Pakistan Army at a range of 750 km," ISPR said.

ISPR also confirmed that the missile, which it said is equipped with new avionics and navigational aids, forms part of the Pakistan Army's newly established Army Rocket Force Command (ARFC).

"This weapon system is capable of evading [the] enemy's missile defence system due to terrain-hugging features and engaging targets with high precision," ISPR said.

"As part of [the] Army Rocket Force Command, Fatah-IV will further enhance the reach, lethality, and survivability of [the] Pakistan Army's conventional missile systems."

ISPR provided no additional information about the Fatah-IV missile.

Unofficial images of the Fatah-IV emerged on social media for the first time in August 2025 at an event held by the Pakistan Army marking Pakistan's 78th Independence Day. However, these images were not released by the Pakistan Army, ISPR, or any official agency.

These images also showed an information board next to the missile that indicated that Fatah-IV has a range of 750 km, a maximum altitude of 50 m, a length of 7.5 m, and a weight of 1,530 kg.

Why ICAO rejects IATA's proposal to raise pilot age limits



On Friday, October 3, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) rejected a proposal by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) to raise the mandatory retirement age for commercial airline pilots. The proposal, debated during ICAO's 42nd General Assembly in Montreal, sought to extend the global age limit for multi-crew international operations from 65 to 67.

The aviation industry continues to face a pilot shortage as airlines expand their networks and fleets. Forecasts now estimate that between 2024 and 2043, the sector will require between 649,000 and 674,000 pilots globally, which is a notable increase from earlier projections.

According to Boeing's latest Pilot and Technician Outlook, around 660,000 new pilots are needed over the next two decades to operate and maintain the growing global fleet. Thus, several airlines supported IATA's proposal to raise the retirement age, saying it would help retain qualified and experienced pilots for longer and buy time while the next generation of aviators enters the workforce.

Furthermore, the association highlighted that when the limit was raised from 60 to 65 in 2006, there was no increase in safety incidents. It also noted that countries such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada have no upper age limit for pilots. Even so, ICAO member states voted to maintain the global retirement age at 65 for international

operations, citing concerns about aviation safety and age-related health risks.

The decision means pilots reaching 65 will remain ineligible to operate multi-crew international flights. The Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA), which represents more than 80,000 pilots in the United States and Canada, welcomed ICAO's decision, saying that focus should remain on training, safety, and modernization rather than regulatory age changes. ALPA President Jason Ambrosi explained that:

"Raising the pilot retirement age is a solution in search of a problem that distracts from the pressing needs of our industry, like modernizing the air traffic control system. The United States leads the world in aviation, and we should resist any political attempts, especially those not backed by data and science, that would disrupt the US aviation system and put us outside international standards."

However, not all industry voices share this view. Speaking to Aviation Metric, Managing Director of Aero Contractors, Captain Ado Sanusi, said he supported IATA's argument to raise the age limit, noting that advances in healthcare and longevity had changed the outlook for older pilots. *"People are now doing preventive medicine rather than curative medicine. People live longer, and they are quite strong even at the age of 65,"* he said, adding:

"I think IATA has a very good argument. I don't know what ICAO's reason is to reject it, but scientifically, of

all major medical journals, the innovation over the past five decades has shown that people are living longer, healthier, [and] are more productive even after 60. (...) We want to keep the well-experienced pilots to make sure they train the incoming ones."

ICAO To Revisit Pilot Age Policy In Future Evidence-Based Review



Furthermore, in its proposal, IATA described raising the age limit from 65 to 67 as a *"cautious but reasonable step"* that countries could consider maintaining safety while supporting the long-term viability of commercial air transport operations. As previously mentioned, the association noted that several nations already allow Pilots to fly beyond 65 under their own regulations. Argentina, for instance, increased its limit to 68 in 2024, provided that more than one pilot is present in the cockpit.

The country's National Civil Aviation Administration said the decision reflected advances in medical technology and the need to meet growing demand. Japan also permits extended flying careers, allowing pilots to work until their 68th birthday, though those aged 66 and 67 are generally restricted to domestic operations, as international routes remain subject to ICAO's current standards.

Both countries have reported no rise in safety incidents among pilots over 65, which strengthens the case that higher limits can be introduced without undermining safety. Following these discussions, ICAO's assembly agreed to continue reviewing pilot age limits through an evidence-based process. The organization confirmed that any future change to extend the limit to 67 will be guided strictly by comprehensive data analysis and safety consideration.

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Football season kicks off; where the big 3 US airlines are expanding the fly fans



Prachi is a London-based journalist with extensive experience in the aviation industry. She has worked for several leading industry publications, covering a broad range of topics. Her expertise lies in aircraft maintenance, emerging technologies, and advanced air mobility. She is currently pursuing a PhD in Journalism, focusing on data journalism and its potential to transform conventional aviation reporting.

The fall football season has kicked off across the United States. The National Football League's (NFL) 2025 season started earlier this month, and college football is also underway. Airlines are seizing the opportunity by targeting traveling fans and scheduling additional flights for key weekends.

The country's three largest carriers, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, and United Airlines, have each added dozens of flights to match the seasonal demand. Many of these services are timed around games in major cities, giving supporters the chance to combine a football trip with a short getaway.

American Airlines Has Added More Than 185 Flights For NFL & College Football Fans

American Airlines has scheduled more than 185 additional flights between August 28 and January 5, offering over 22,000 extra seats for football fans. The carrier has expanded service on 24 domestic routes tied to professional football games, which are mainly played on Sundays. Thus, most of the added flights are scheduled for Fridays or Saturdays with returns on Monday. Las Vegas is one of the major draws this season. For four Raiders home games, American will operate flights from visiting teams' cities, including Cleveland, Jacksonville, Kansas City, and Nashville.

Florida will also see five weekend routes, including three to Miami from Baltimore, Buffalo, and Cincinnati. Additionally, from its Philadelphia hub, the airline has scheduled additional flights for the Super Bowl champion Philadelphia Eagles' away games, with extra services to Green Bay, Minneapolis, and Tampa. Most of the NFL routes will

see one added flight, but the Charlotte Green Bay route will receive two additional services on November 1 and 2 to support the Panthers-Packers game.

At the same time, the airline has also scheduled extra flights to international destinations hosting NFL games this season, including Madrid, London, Berlin, and Dublin. Besides, for college football, the one world Alliance member has scheduled more than 40 routes, primarily as Friday-Sunday roundtrips. These include rare services in college towns such as Gainesville, Northwest Arkansas, and Knoxville. In addition, the airline is also flying from New York LaGuardia and Washington National to South Bend, Indiana, on seven weekends between September 12 and November 23 to cater to University of Notre Dame games.

Delta Will Operate Atlanta-Berlin Route For The First Time In November



Delta Air Lines has added around 37 new flights to increase nonstop options between key cities, including Detroit, Kansas City, Miami, Grand Rapids, Green Bay, New Orleans, Baltimore, Seattle, Jacksonville, Buffalo, and Philadelphia. In addition, the airline will deploy larger aircraft on 12 existing services to boost capacity for several big Lions games, such as Lions at Eagles, Lions at Chiefs, and Lions at Packers. But the most notable addition is an international route.

For the first time, Delta will operate a nonstop service between Atlanta and

Berlin, Germany, for the NFL game between the Atlanta Falcons and Indianapolis Colts on November 9. The airline will run two outbound flights from Atlanta on November 5 and 6, with returns on November 10 and 11, according to the schedule. Service will be operated with a mix of Boeing 767s and Airbus A330-300s. Currently, the SkyTeam member operates a seasonal Berlin service from

New York JFK.

Alongside the NFL boost, the airline has also added more than 40 flights to support major college football games (between August 30 and November 30), including the LSU Tigers at the Clemson Tigers and the Texas Longhorns at the Ohio State Buckeyes. Markets such as South Bend, Austin, Knoxville, Gainesville, and Columbus will benefit from this seasonal uplift. On some of these routes, including Austin-Gainesville, Delta will face direct competition from American Airlines.

United Airlines Has Added Nearly 3,500 Extra Seats For College Football

Furthermore, **United Airlines** has also added additional capacity for college football this fall. The airline is offering nearly 3,500 extra seats across 24 games. Last year, the airline already operated flights into a number of unique college towns, and this year it is again flying into many of them while adding select new or rarely served cities. The schedule includes cities like Knoxville, Sarasota, South Bend, Rapid City, Bentonville, State



College, Reno, Baton Rouge, and Greenville-Spartanburg.

Many of the additional flights are tied to Notre Dame fixtures. This month, on September 26, United will operate Newark Liberty-Bentonville service for Notre Dame vs Arkansas game. The same day it will operate Columbus-Seattle service for Ohio State vs Washington. In October, services will run into South Bend, Knoxville, Eugene, State College, and Lincoln, among others.

Besides, the Star Alliance member is also assigning larger aircraft on select routes where traffic is expected to remain high. For instance, Houston-Bentonville for Texas A&M vs Arkansas on October 17, Newark-Boston for Notre Dame vs Boston College on October 31, and Newark-Pittsburgh for Notre Dame vs Pitt on November 14..



Khawaja Masood Akhtar, the CEO of Forward Sports in Sialkot, holds the official FIFA World Cup 2026 ball, named "Trionda." His company, Forward Sports, has also manufactured the official balls for the FIFA World Cups in 2014, 2018, and 2022. Sialkot is famous for its sports goods and produces 83% of the world's soccer balls.



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Asia-West Coast container rates plummet; demand seen waning through year-end



Container rates on the eastbound trans-Pacific continued their plunge as ocean lines increase blank sailings amid weak demand that's expected to persist through the end of this year.

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The SONAR Inbound Ocean TEUs Volume Index for Oct. 1 was down less than 1% from the previous week, but off 14.58% year-on-year.

Demand got a small bump from frontloading ahead of China's Golden Week holiday, but nothing substantial enough to shore up falling rates



(SONAR chart traces year-on-year decline of Inbound Ocean TEUs Volume Index from October 2024 (far left) to today (right))

Forecasts cite consumer concerns over rising prices, tariff concerns and trade shifts for a muted outlook through the end of the year.

The second pause of retaliatory China tariffs announced by the Trump administration in August has so far failed to generate sustained improvement in the busiest Asia-U.S. trade lane. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer termed a "good status quo" China tariffs of around 55% as the two countries continue to seek a mutually beneficial trade agreement.

But absent a deal or another pause, tariffs on Nov. 14 would boomerang back to around 145% on Chinese goods and 125% for U.S. shipments entering China, which all but shut down trade between the

countries earlier this year.

Further complicating matters, China this week said it could levy costly port fees and bar some ships from its ports, in retaliation for punitive U.S. charges on China-linked ships set to take effect Oct. 14.

Asia-U.S. West Coast rates fell 15% to \$1,853 per fort foot equivalent unit last week, according to the Freightos Baltic Index, while Asia-U.S. East Coast prices increased 16% to \$3,967 per FEU.

The last time West Coast prices were this low was around December 2023, when spot rates dipped to approximately \$1,744 per FEU.

Carriers have blanked, or withdrawn, about 13% of scheduled sailings on the trans-Pacific, as of Oct. 5, according to Sea-Intelligence. But that's less than a year ago, which saw a 15.4% capacity reduction for the West Coast and 11.9% for the East Coast during Golden Week, against just 3.8% and 4.8% reductions planned for 2025.

Putin admits Russian role in crash of Azerbaijani jet

Russian President Vladimir Putin has recently admitted for the first time his country played a role in the 2024 crash of an Azerbaijani passenger plane, describing it as a "tragedy".

The Azerbaijan Airlines flight crash landed in Kazakhstan on December 25, killing 38 of the 67 people on board, after being diverted from a scheduled landing in the southern Russian city of Grozny.

In a meeting with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, Putin said Russia had deployed two missiles to destroy Ukrainian drones on the morning of the incident, and that they exploded "a few meters away" from the aircraft.

"The two missiles that were fired did not directly hit the aircraft. If that had happened, it would have crashed on the spot," Putin said.

Russian air traffic controllers advised the pilot attempt a landing in the Russian city of Makhachkala, but he instead attempted to land at his home airport and then in Kazakhstan, where the plane came down, Putin said.

"Russia will do everything necessary in such tragic cases to provide compensation, and the actions of all officials will be legally assessed," he said.

Aliyev previously accused Russia of attempting to conceal the true cause of the crash.

Initial statements by Russia's air transport agency suggested that the plane, an Embraer, was forced to divert after a bird strike.

Airspace ban for India extended until Nov 25

Pakistan has extended the closure of its airspace to Indian aircraft for another month, until November 24, according to a NOTAM (notice to airmen) issued by Pakistan Airports Authority on Wednesday, Oct. 15.

'Pakistani airspace will remain closed to Indian registered aircraft,' the NOTAM said.

Neither aircraft owned or leased by Indian airlines nor Indian military flights are allowed to use Pakistan's airspace, the authorities said. The ban on the use of airspace will be in effect from Oct 15 to Nov 24.

The restriction was imposed due to ongoing tensions between the two nations. Pakistan initially shut its airspace on India in April this year and it has maintained the closure ever since.

Earlier on Tuesday, amid escalating tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Pakistani authorities issued a Notam to restrict multiple air routes over its territory, for operational reasons.

Several routes were limited on Oct 15 and 16 between 7:30pm and 9:30pm each day. However, the restriction notice was withdrawn by Wednesday afternoon.-

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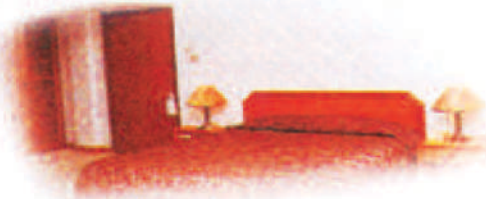
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Sialkot International Airport holds a meeting with Travel Agents



On 15th October, 2025, Chairman Sialkot International Airport, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Waqas Afzal, Dy-Conveyner Business Development Committee SIAL Mr. Mian Naeem Javed & Mr. Fazal Jilani followed by CEO SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf

Bhatti (R) presided over a detailed deliberative meeting with regional travel agents Sialkot. The session was attended by a number of travel agents focused on fostering mutual collaboration and exploring avenues to enhance service standards, streamline passenger facilitation, and strengthen coordination

between the airport and travel industry stakeholders. The meeting reflected SIAL's commitment to continually improving the passenger experience and addressing operational challenges through constructive engagement with its valued partners in the travel sector.



Uzbekistan Airways orders up to 22 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners



Uzbekistan Airways has placed an order for up to 22 examples of the mid-sized Boeing 787-9 from the US planemaker's Dreamliner family of widebody twinjets. Consisting of both firm orders and options for more down the line, the carrier plans to use the type to modernize its fleet of twin-aisle aircraft.

Boeing 787
Launch Customer
All Nippon Airways
First Delivery
September 25, 2011
Number Delivered 1,138
Production Sites
Everett, Washington, United States;
North Charleston, South Carolina, United States

Launch Customer(s)
All Nippon Airways
Manufacturer
Boeing

Having already made history by being the first Dreamliner operator in Central Asia by putting the Boeing 787-8 into service, Uzbekistan Airways is now looking to upgauge this side of its operations by putting the 787-9's additional range and capacity into action. These factors will allow it to expand its international network, with routes to the United States of America among those being considered for the type.

Uzbekistan Airways' Largest-Ever Order

According to a corresponding statement released yesterday by Boeing in order to announce the deal, this transaction represents the single largest order in the history of Uzbekistan Airways. The 22 examples of the 787-9 that the carrier has put its name down for are split between 14 firm orders and eight options.

The deal marks part of a wider

initiative between Boeing and the Uzbekistan Ministry of Transport, with the US manufacturer also noting that it has "signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to explore opportunities to further expand the country's aviation ecosystem." Shukhrat Khudaikulov, the airline's Chair, said:



"With this new contract, we are further strengthening both our airline's and our nation's position as a leading aviation hub in Central Asia, while providing our passengers with greater global connectivity. This step reaffirms our ambitions and strategic commitment to sustainable growth."

Eyeing An International Expansion

Uzbekistan Airways' order for as many as 22 units of the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner was commemorated at a ceremony at the United Nations General Assembly. Here, representatives from the airline and the manufacturer were joined by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, underlining the deal's importance. According to Uzbekistan Airways, the 787-9 will help it position Tashkent as an Asian transit hub.

As previously noted, Uzbekistan Airways already flies the smaller Boeing 787-8, but the mid-sized 787-9 Dreamliner trumps this model in terms of both range and capacity. Indeed, Boeing's data shows that the former can fly 7,305 NM (13,530 km) with 248 passengers in a

two-class configuration, compared to 7,565 NM (14,010 km) with 296 passengers. For this reason, the 787-9 has far outsold the 787-8.

With these improved metrics in mind, Uzbekistan Airways is eyeing an international expansion with its larger and longer-range Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, which ch-aviation says will begin to be delivered in 2031. Indeed, Boeing says that Uzbekistan Airways will use the type to "expand international routes to the US and other long-haul destinations as demand for international travel continues to rise."

The Carrier Already Flies The Boeing 787-8

As far as Uzbekistan Airways' current operations of the smaller Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner area concerned, present fleet data made available by ch-aviation shows that the carrier has seven units of the type at its disposal. These widebody twinjets are 7.5 years old on average, and have two different seating layouts. According to aeroLOPA, the first of these configurations has space for 270 passengers onboard.

This figure is split between 24 business class flatbeds and 246 economy class seats. Meanwhile, the second setup has 24 business class flatbeds and 222 economy class seats, giving it a total capacity of 246 passengers. In both instances, the lie-flat business class seats are laid out six-abreast in a 2-2-2 configuration, but the latter's cabin is spread across two sections, hence the lower capacity in economy class.

This month, scheduling data made available by Cirium, an aviation analytics company, shows that Uzbekistan Airways has penciled in a grand total of 344 flights with its existing fleet of Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner aircraft. Seoul (ICN) is the only destination served daily by the type from Tashkent (TAS), although Istanbul (IST) isn't far behind, with 27 rotations. New York (JFK) ranks third on the list, with 22 round trips.



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Accord announces peace in the Middle East



Flanked by world leaders, including US President Donald Trump and Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi speaks at a landmark peace summit following the official signing of the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire agreement, in Sharm El Sheikh.

US President Donald Trump declared an end to the two-year-long war on Gaza, hours before four guarantors signed a declaration on Monday 13th Oct. 2025 meant to cement a ceasefire in Gaza – although both Israel and Hamas were formally absent from the occasion.

Addressing a ceremony following the signing of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas at the Sharm El Sheikh Peace Summit in Egypt, Trump hailed a “tremendous day for the Middle East”, declaring the assembled leaders had “achieved what everybody said was impossible”.

According to the document, signed by Trump and the leaders of Egypt, Qatar and Türkiye, the signatories pledged to “pursue a comprehensive vision of peace, security and shared prosperity in the region”, and also welcomed “the progress achieved in establishing comprehensive and durable peace arrangements in the Gaza Strip”.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said the Gaza deal “closes a painful chapter in human history” and sets the stage for a two-state solution.

As part of Trump's plan to end the Gaza war, Hamas on Monday freed the last 20 surviving Israeli prisoners, while around 2,000 Palestinians captives were also freed from Israeli prisons.

“The skies are calm, the guns are silent, the sirens are still and the sun rises on a Holy Land that is finally at peace,” Trump said during an earlier address at

the Knesset.

“For so many families across this land, it has been years since you've known a single day of true peace,” Trump told Israel's parliament, where he received a lengthy standing ovation.

“Not only for Israelis, but also for Palestinians and for many others, the long and painful nightmare is finally over.”

The US leader has repeatedly signalled he is confident the ceasefire will hold, saying at a joint appearance with Sisi in Sharm El Sheikh that talks on the next steps of the plan had already “started, as far as we're concerned”.

Although Trump wanted Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu to attend the summit, he expressed his inability to attend due to “Jewish holidays”. No Hamas representative was present at the event, either.

The summit in Egypt brought together leaders from the Muslim and Arab world, as well as top European heads of state, including UN chief Antonio Guterres, French leader Emmanuel Macron, British PM Keir Starmer, Canadian PM Mark Carney, Italian PM Giorgia Meloni and several others.

PM Shehbaz Sharif, who was representing Pakistan at the summit, called President Trump ‘genuinely a man of peace’, and offered to nominate him for the Nobel peace prize once again for his efforts to bring peace to Gaza.

“I would say that Pakistan had nominated President Trump for the Nobel Peace Prize for his outstanding and

extraordinary contributions to first stop the war between India and Pakistan and then achieve a ceasefire along with his very wonderful team,” he said, after Trump invited him to deliver a special address.

“And today again, I would like to nominate this great president for the Nobel Peace Prize because I genuinely feel he is the most genuine and the most wonderful candidate for the peace prize because he has not only brought peace in South Asia, saved millions of people, their lives, and today, here in Sharm el-Sheikh, achieved peace in Gaza and saved millions of lives in the Middle East.”

PM Shehbaz said he wanted to salute Trump for his “exemplary [and] visionary leadership”.

“It took his single-minded pursuit of peace to end the needless killing and destruction,” he wrote in an earlier post on X.

“You are the man this world needed the most at this point in time. The world will always remember you as a man who did everything [and] went out of the way to stop seven and today eight wars,” he added during his remarks at the peace summit.

The premier also thanked the Qatari emir for his efforts in securing peace in Gaza and the wider region, along with the efforts of the Turkish, Saudi and Emirati leadership.

Retaking the podium, Trump quipped: “Wow! I didn't expect that. Let's go home, there's nothing more I have to say. Goodbye everybody. That was really beautiful and beautifully delivered, thank you very much.”

He especially thanked PM Shehbaz and “my favourite” Field Marshal Asim Munir for their efforts in helping achieve peace in Gaza.

During his trip, PM Shehbaz also held bilateral discussions with other leaders, including King Abdullah II of Jordan, King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa of Bahrain, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, President Prabowo Subianto of Indonesia, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, and Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud.

The premier also met Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who thanked Pakistan for its “unwavering political and diplomatic support”.



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Islamabad, Beijing sign three pacts to boost trade ties



President Asif Ali Zardari witnesses an exchange of documents between Beijing Asia-Africa Longyue Culture Company Vice President Hao Jiaolong and ASM Services Director Dr Ammad Hussain, for the construction of a modern textile industrial park in Pakistan.

Pakistan and China have signed three additional memorandums of understanding (MoUs) to enhance bilateral cooperation in the fields of livestock, fire truck manufacturing, and textiles.

The MoUs were witnessed by President Asif Ali Zardari in Urumqi on Friday 19 Sep.

Earlier in the week, President Zardari and his delegation, which included several provincial ministers from Sindh, had signed three MoUs in the areas of agricultural production, farmer training, and maritime affairs.

According to a statement from the Presidency, the first MoU, signed between Loyang Modern Biotechnologies and the Government of Sindh, aims to modernise Pakistan's livestock industry. Sindh Minister Nasir Shah represented the provincial government in the agreement.

The second MoU, signed between Beijing Asian Africa Longyue and ASM Services, outlines plans to develop a modern textile industrial park in Pakistan, which is expected to support industrial growth and export development.

MoUs inked in livestock, textiles and fire truck manufacturing

The third MoU, involving Sichuan Chuanxiao Fire Trucks Manufacturing Company and ASM Services, establishes a framework for the supply, distribution, sales, and after-sales services of fire trucks and advanced emergency equipment in Pakistan.

President Zardari highlighted that these agreements would foster economic growth and public welfare in Pakistan.

He emphasised that modernising the livestock sector would improve food security and create job opportunities in rural areas. He also noted that the textile

park would stimulate industrial development and enhance exports, while the fire truck partnership would strengthen disaster response capabilities.

Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, and the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan were present at the signing ceremony. Later in the day, President Zardari travelled from Urumqi to Kashgar, the final destination of his official visit to China.

The vice governor of Xinjiang province bid farewell to the president at the airport, with senior officials from both countries attending the event.

Islamabad, Tehran sign protocols, eye \$10bn trade



Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Iranian Minister for Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq exchange the notes after signing protocols at the Pak-Iran 22nd JEC meeting.

Pakistan and Iran have signed a series of crucial protocols aimed at dismantling tariff and non-tariff barriers, expanding electricity exchanges, and strengthening communication channels to increase bilateral trade volume significantly.

The protocols were signed at the conclusion of the Pakistan-Iran Joint Economic Commission (JEC) held in Tehran. Pakistan's Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Iran's Minister for Roads and Urban Development Farzaneh Sadeq led their respective delegations during the signing ceremony.

An official announcement of the commerce ministry released on Wednesday 17 Sep. said that the signing of the protocols will help achieve a \$10 billion trade target between the two countries.

In a separate engagement, Mr Jam Kamal held talks with Iran's First Vice President Mohammad-Reza Aref to advance bilateral trade cooperation. The meeting centred on removing trade barriers, exploring export-import opportunities, and strengthening regulatory alignment between the two countries.

Agreements cover trade, energy,

transport and labour mobility

Under the newly signed protocols, Pakistan and Iran reaffirmed their commitment to deepening trade and investment ties by eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers, activating cross-border markets, and encouraging regular Business-to-Business (B2B) engagements to strengthen commercial linkages.

In the energy and infrastructure sectors, both sides reached consensus on expanding electricity exchanges, including the revival of construction on a 220-kilovolt transmission line to Gwadar.

Discussions also included joint exploration of renewable energy initiatives. A dedicated Joint Working Group will facilitate investment in the power sector, while enhanced cooperation in water resource management and sustainable urban development was identified as a strategic priority.

In the domains of agriculture and environmental sustainability, both countries pledged to implement agreements on veterinary health standards, pest control measures, and joint development of agricultural seeds and equipment. Collaborative efforts will also target climate-related challenges, including mitigation of sand and dust storms and the conservation of mangrove ecosystems.

Transportation and connectivity emerged as strategic priorities, with accords to reinforce road, rail, air, and maritime links. Key initiatives include boosting rail cargo capacity, upgrading air navigation systems, and exploring passenger ferry services — particularly for Zaireen — between designated seaports.

Cultural and educational exchanges received renewed momentum through planned cultural festivals, joint media productions, academic collaborations, student mobility programs, and vocational training initiatives aimed at deepening people-to-people ties.

Agreements on joint training programmes, harmonisation of pharmaceutical registration protocols, and coordinated cross-border disease surveillance mechanisms marked progress in health sector collaboration.

Labour mobility received a boost through the establishment of a Joint Committee on Labour Cooperation, tasked with facilitating workforce movement in key sectors including construction, textiles, and agriculture. Both countries also reiterated their commitment to counter-narcotics efforts, agreeing to intensify intelligence-led operations and strengthen border coordination. Proposals to streamline visa procedures for businesspersons and commercial drivers were tabled, aimed at easing cross-border movement and enhancing trade facilitation.

Pakistan to install 'TEDs' to boost shrimp exports to premium markets



Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry has announced the launch of a Rs90 million initiative aimed at protecting sea turtles during shrimp trawling operations, as part of broader efforts to sustain marine biodiversity and ensure the long-term health of ocean resources.

The minister, in a statement on Thursday 9 Oct., said the project includes the distribution and installation of standardised Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs) at no cost to fishermen, alongside capacity-building workshops, hands-on training for trawler crews, and data collection to monitor the devices' impact on shrimp catch efficiency and net performance.

A TED is a specialised mechanism fitted into shrimp trawl nets that allows sea turtles and other large marine animals to escape while retaining shrimp. The minister emphasised that the introduction of TEDs would help significantly reduce the accidental capture of endangered sea turtles, mitigate concerns from fishermen over shrimp loss and net damage, and pave the way for Pakistan to regain US certification, which is essential for resuming shrimp exports to the American market.

He said the project aligns with Pakistan's international commitments on marine sustainability and biodiversity conservation, ensuring compliance with global seafood traceability and sustainability standards.

"This initiative will showcase Pakistan's commitment to responsible marine resource management, enhancing its reputation in global seafood trade," Chaudhry added.

The minister explained that shrimp trawling often results in the capture of large quantities of non-target marine

species. When sea turtles become trapped in nets, they are unable to surface for air and can drown. He urged the Karachi Fisheries Harbour Authority, Sindh Fisheries Department, and Marine Fisheries Department to ensure immediate and full TED compliance, both at sea and at dockside.

"One hundred percent TED compliance and credible enforcement will be ensured. Continued non-compliance risks further deterioration of Pakistan's seafood exports under international traceability regimes," he warned.

Highlighting the economic significance, Chaudhry noted that Pakistan's current shrimp exports stand at around \$100 million annually.

Full TED compliance and US recertification could potentially triple export volumes and open access to premium markets such as the European Union and Canada. The US shrimp market alone is valued at over \$6 billion annually, he added.

The project is being supported by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), Pakistan Fisheries Exporters Association (PAKFEA), Sindh Trawler Owners Fisheries Association (STOFA), Karachi Fish Harbour Authority (KFHA), Sindh Marine Fisheries Department (SFD), and Fishermen's Cooperative Society (FCS).

Junaid Chaudhry said Pakistan currently sells shrimp at a comparatively low rate of about \$2 per kilogram. With TED compliance and improved international certification, the price could rise to \$6 per kilogram, unlocking new opportunities in lucrative markets including the US, EU, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Maritime plan positions Gwadar as regional hub

Pakistan has reaffirmed its focus on integrating the New Gwadar International Airport with the port as part of the five-year Maritime Affairs Action Plan (2025-2029), aiming to transform Gwadar into a regional trade and transit hub.

The commitment was made during a high-level meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Wednesday 17 Sep. The plan, aligned with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), seeks to enhance maritime cooperation with China while promoting economic connectivity with Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

The framework emphasises infrastructure development, including the expansion of Gwadar Port, completion of Free Zone Stage II, and acceleration of East Bay Expressway Phase II to improve inland accessibility. A key component is the integration of the airport with the port to support multi-modal transit and regional logistics.

The plan also supports the adoption of electronic data interchange systems and smart port technologies to integrate Gwadar with Chinese and international shipping networks. Development of port-related industries, cold storage facilities,

and warehousing is part of the strategy to facilitate transshipment and regional trade.

Govt plans strategic leap with port and airport integration

Beyond logistics, the framework outlines initiatives for scientific cooperation, industrial development, and maritime tourism. Proposed projects include joint marine science research centres, CPEC-linked industrial parks for fisheries, shipbuilding and aquaculture, as well as tourism ventures along Balochistan's coast.

Education and human resource development are positioned as cross-cutting priorities, with proposed academic partnerships and training exchanges between Pakistani and Chinese institutions to develop skilled manpower in logistics, port management, and fisheries.

The plan aligns with the Belt and Road Initiative's "green energy and ocean" objectives, emphasising sustainable use of marine resources and environmental protection. The minister stated that the 2025-2029 action plan reflects Pakistan's commitment to building a resilient maritime economy and strengthening strategic maritime ties with China under the CPEC framework.

Pakistan offers 1,000 acres to Turkiye for Export Processing Zone in Karachi



Pakistan has offered 1,000 acres of land free of cost to Turkiye for the establishment of a dedicated Export Processing Zone (EPZ) in Karachi Industrial Park, The News reported, citing official sources.

The initiative, first proposed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif during a bilateral meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in April 2025, aims to attract Turkish investment in Pakistan's manufacturing and export sectors and support a \$5 billion bilateral trade target.

A high-level Pakistani delegation, including officials from the Foreign Office, Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), Board of Investment (BoI), and Sindh Export Processing Zone Authority, recently visited Istanbul and Ankara to make the case for the EPZ.

During the visit, the delegation studied Turkish EPZ models, which have over six decades of experience. Initially government-run, Turkish EPZs have been developed and managed by the private sector since 1995, with the government playing a regulatory role.

These zones offer highly attractive incentives, including 20-year tax holidays, nominal land charges, and uninterrupted utilities such as electricity, water, and gas. Pakistani officials said these practices would guide the development of the Karachi EPZ.

The delegation highlighted Karachi's strategic location, developed infrastructure, and proximity to Middle East and Central Asian markets. "Karachi Industrial Park offers immense potential. Turkish companies relocating here could cut freight costs from \$4,000 to just \$1,000 per ton for exports to the region," a senior official said.

Ongoing discussions also aim to expand Pakistan's Preferential Trade Agreement with Turkiye and explore a

Free Trade Agreement with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to open new channels for Pakistani exports and investment partnerships.

The EPZ is seen as a potential game-changer, offering a streamlined, investor-friendly environment that could encourage Turkish manufacturing units to relocate to Karachi, taking advantage of cost reductions and regional market access.

Pakistan, Iran border in Mashkel reopens after four years

The government of Pakistan on Wednesday 8 Oct. officially reopened the Katager Zero Point border crossing with Iran in the Mashkel area of Washuk district, ending a four-year closure that had halted cross-border movement and trade.

The prolonged closure had severely impacted the lives and livelihoods of residents on both sides of the border, particularly those living in the remote areas of Mashkel.

The reopening follows persistent efforts and demands by local leadership, including MPA Mir Zabid Ali Reki of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl, and other community leaders.

A resolution urging the federal authorities to reopen the border was also passed in the Balochistan Assembly.

The inauguration ceremony was led by Inspector General of Frontier Corps (South) Balochistan, Maj Gen Bilal Sarfraz, who formally reopened the Katager Zero Point gate to public movement and trade. He was joined by MPA Reki and a large gathering of local officials, religious scholars, and residents.

The JUI-F leader said the reopening was a moment of immense relief for the people of Mashkel.

"Residents will now be able to travel to and conduct business with neighbouring Iran without difficulty," he said.

He also highlighted the critical importance of the Guzzar border point, which remained closed, saying it played a vital role in the economic sustenance of

thousands of families in Mashkel and surrounding areas.

"The continued closure of the Guzzar border has caused significant hardship," he said.

Later, the IGFC assured the public that efforts were underway to reopen the Guzzar border this month.

Beijing offers new visa to lure foreign tech talent

China kicked off on Wednesday 24 Sep. a new visa programme aimed at attracting foreign talent in science and technology, part of ongoing efforts to position itself as a world leader in those sectors ahead of the United States.

The Chinese measure stands in stark contrast to recent US policy, with the Trump administration suddenly introducing new and expensive changes to its own skilled worker visas last month. China's new K visa significantly simplifies the immigration process for those eligible, according to state media.

"Against the backdrop of some countries retracting, turning inward, and sidelining international talent, China has keenly seized this important opportunity and promptly introduced this policy," state newspaper People's Daily said in a comment piece on Tuesday 30 Sep.

The K visa does not require a domestic employer or entity to issue an invitation to the applicant. "K visas will offer more convenience to holders in terms of number of permitted entries, validity period and duration of stay," state news agency Xinhua reported in August.

The official description for those able to apply is "young foreign scientific and technological talents", but the exact age, educational background and work experience requirements needed are as yet unclear.

Xinhua said visa-holders will be able to "engage in exchanges in fields such as education, culture, and science and technology, as well as relevant entrepreneurial and business activities".

The US tech industry has been rattled by unexpected changes made by the Trump administration to the H-1B visa procedure. H-1Bs allow companies to sponsor foreign workers with specialised skills to work in the US for three to six years.

Such visas are widely used by the tech industry, but the new H-1B visa policy now requires a one-time \$100,000 fee.



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Pakistan launches sea turtles project

Pakistan has launched a project to protect endangered sea turtles, which will also help boost shrimp exports from the country.

The Ministry of Maritime Affairs will initiate the Rs90 million initiative aimed at protecting sea turtles during shrimp trawling operations.

The project is part of efforts to sustain marine biodiversity and ensure the long-term health of ocean resources. It includes the free distribution and installation of standardised Turtle Excluder Devices (TEDs), along with capacity-building workshops, hands-on training for trawler crews, and data collection to monitor the devices' impact on shrimp catch efficiency and net performance.

A TED is a specialised mechanism fitted into shrimp trawl nets that allows sea turtles and other large marine animals to escape while retaining shrimp. The introduction of TED is expected to help Pakistan regain US certification, paving the way for the resumption of shrimp exports to the American market.

Pakistan's shrimp exports currently stand at around \$100 million annually. TED compliance and US recertification could potentially triple export volumes and open access to premium markets such as the European Union and Canada. The US shrimp market alone is valued at over \$6bn annually.

The average sale price of Pakistani shrimp is comparatively low at about \$2 per kg. With TED compliance and improved international certification, it could rise to \$6 per kg.

In a statement, Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar said talks were underway with key stakeholders to ensure immediate and full TED compliance both at sea and dockside. He said shrimp trawling often results in the capture of large quantities of non-target marine species. When sea turtles become trapped in nets, they are unable to surface for air and can drown.

Largest-ever container ship berthed

Ports Pakistan, the country's only deep-water container terminal, has berthed MSC MICOL, the largest vessel in the country's history.

The 400-metre-long container ship has a capacity of 24,070 TEUs, making it one of the most advanced vessels globally and the largest to call at a Pakistani port.

The berthing of MSC MICOL marks a significant milestone, highlighting the terminal's capacity to handle ultra-large vessels, said a press release.

Handling larger vessels enhances trade efficiency and helps reduce freight costs, supporting the country's export competitiveness and lowering import expenses.

Maritime Minister Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry termed the berthing a historic event that strengthens Pakistan's position as a regional shipping hub.

Separately, two subsidiaries of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation — Karachi Shipping and Lahore Shipping — signed agreements to acquire two

Aframax tankers, LORAX and NAFSIKA, with deadweight tonnage of 109,990 and 112,051 tonnes, respectively.

PNSC earlier approved a \$193.1 million plan to expand its fleet to 30 vessels by 2026.

Kenyan designers transform used clothes into art



Models walk on the catwalk during a fashion show, 'Wasteland Gikomba fashion', in Nairobi.

Every year, thousands of tonnes of used clothes from Europe, the United States, and beyond make their way to Kenya. In 2023, Kenya overtook Nigeria to become Africa's largest importer of second-hand clothing, according to a study from the US-based Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Kenya's largest open-air market, thousands of these bales land in Gikomba market near central Nairobi where tin-roofed stalls stretch across a five-acre labyrinth, one of the city's major economic hubs. Fashion models strut down a makeshift runway in bold, upcycled outfits made from waste collected at dumpsites and market cast-offs—proof that even trash can dazzle. “What? They've upgraded our clothes,” one of the traders said with delight as he watched the show.

Gikomba Runway Edition brought together young, underground Kenyan designers and stylists for the first time, including 25-year-old “upcycling” specialist Morgan Azedy and Olwande Akoth, a designer showcasing her upcycled kimonos at the fashion show.

Kenya imported about 197,000 tonnes of second-hand clothes worth \$298 million in 2023, according to the MIT study. Although the influx of second-hand clothes has employed hundreds of thousands of people across East Africa, from port handlers to traders, and provided a lot of affordable clothing, it has also made it hard for domestic textile firms to get off the ground.



MSC MICOL is seen at the deep-water container terminal, which is reshaping the country's logistics landscape and regional connectivity.

The world's largest cruise ship takes to the sea for the first time and will start operating in 2026



The world's largest cruise ship has just made a spectacular splash, setting the stage for a new era in ocean travel. Known as Legend of the Seas, this enormous vessel recently floated out of dry dock for the first time at the Meyer Turku shipyard in Finland. Scheduled to begin operations in 2026, it promises travelers an unforgettable adventure filled with luxury, thrills, and eye-popping scale.

The historic moment the ship met the water

What happens if you fire a gun in space? Here's what science says

Ocean voyages Cruises in 2026

A warning too often ignored: what the green dot on your smartphone screen really means

On September 2, 2025, the Legend of the Seas was gradually lowered into the sea after a meticulous 12-hour procedure. The process involved filling the dry dock with an astonishing 92 million gallons of water—equivalent to more than 140 Olympic-sized swimming pools. This was not just about making a splash; it was a critical test to ensure the ship's balance and stability before the next stages of outfitting.

This floating giant tips the scales at over 250,800 gross tons, featuring 18 decks, 22 elevators, and seven pools. Watching this colossal creation slide into the water felt like seeing a new floating metropolis come to life—a testament to cutting-edge engineering and the craftsmanship of the Meyer Turku shipyard.

Luxury cruises Ship cruises

What makes legend of the seas so special

Part of Royal Caribbean's Icon class

of ships launched since 2024, the Legend of the Seas expands on its sister vessel, the Icon of the Seas, with even larger size and more sophisticated features. It's designed to carry up to 7,600 passengers along with a crew of 2,350 to handle its daily operations and guest needs.

Among its many standout attractions is the unprecedented Category 6 water park, reportedly the largest water park ever installed on a cruise ship. Imagine enjoying slides, splash zones, and pools all while sailing across the open ocean! Another jaw-dropping feature is the Crown's Edge, an adrenaline-pumping suspended walkway and ropes course that hugs the outer edge of the ship, offering breathtaking views and heart-racing fun.

Best vacation packages

Royal Caribbean cruises

Personally, what caught my attention the most is the ship's strong focus on accessibility. With thoughtfully designed facilities and activities for travelers with mobility challenges, the cruise experience becomes inclusive and truly welcoming. From my own travels, I can attest that having easy access and supportive amenities can make or break a vacation.

Running a floating city at sea

Scientists uncover 34-million-year-old lost world hidden beneath Antarctic ice

Ocean voyages Ship cruises

One-hour delivery: a spacecraft could transport goods anywhere in the world

Operating a ship this size involves complexities you might not expect—essentially managing a town floating on water. Coordinating daily meals, waste disposal, and hospitality services for thousands of guests demands extreme precision. Ports will also have to

upgrade their infrastructure to accommodate such a massive influx of visitors arriving simultaneously.

Sustainability is a big part of this new ship's design. The energy-efficient propulsion systems help reduce fuel consumption, while modern wastewater treatment ensures compliance with strict international maritime pollution standards. These efforts align perfectly with the goals of the International Maritime Organization to lower emissions and protect our oceans.

Luxury cruises Book a cruise

Additionally, smart automation technology onboard handles everything from navigation and safety systems to passenger entertainment and reservations. This high-tech approach not only enhances safety but also creates a smooth and enjoyable experience from embarkation to disembarkation.

Where to catch your first voyage aboard

The Legend of the Seas is set to launch its inaugural season in summer 2026, starting with cruises in the beautiful western Mediterranean, departing from Barcelona, Spain. By November, it will reposition to the Caribbean, sailing out of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and stopping at Royal Caribbean's private island, Perfect Day at CocoCay, in the Bahamas.

Best vacation packages Ship cruises

Guests can expect trips ranging from six to eight nights, immersing themselves in vibrant cultures and exotic destinations during peak travel times. The ship itself measures an impressive 1,200 feet long and 164 feet wide, boasting five main restaurants plus multiple snack bars dotted throughout its public areas.

Before welcoming passengers, the ship will complete rigorous sea trials and safety inspections to ensure every system performs at its best. This isn't merely about being the largest—it's about crafting a remarkable travel experience that blends family-friendly fun, daring adventures, and upscale comfort in a single incredible voyage.

Having followed this ship's progress, I find myself wondering which feature excites you most—is it the gigantic water park, the thrill of Crown's Edge, or the seamless, tech-savvy onboard comforts? Share your thoughts and join the conversation as we look ahead to a bold new chapter in cruising!

Ocean voyages

Royal Caribbean cruises



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Planning Hajj 2026? Saudi Arabia unveils new rules for accommodations



Saudi Arabia has unveiled a new temporary licensing system for pilgrim accommodations in Makkah and Madinah during the 2026 Hajj season, aiming to ease housing shortages and improve service quality for millions of worshippers.

The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah announced Wednesday 1st Oct. that the initiative will allow property owners to obtain seasonal licenses for hosting pilgrims.

Developed in partnership with the ministries of tourism and municipalities and housing, the scheme is designed to expand capacity during the pilgrimage without compromising safety or standards.

Applicants will need to register through the Nusuk Masar platform, with approvals processed via the Ministry of Tourism's online portal. The contracting period will close on 13 Sha'ban 1447 AH (February 1, 2026). Hotels that already hold year-round tourism licences will not be affected by the new rule.

Officials say linking licensed facilities to the Nusuk booking system will streamline reservations, prevent overcrowding, and create a safer, more organised experience for pilgrims.

For Pakistan, where Hajj is seen as a once-in-a-lifetime spiritual calling, the move is especially significant. Families save for years to afford the journey, and securing suitable accommodation has long been one of the biggest challenges for

pilgrims and tour operators alike.

In 2025, about 189,000 Pakistanis were able to perform Hajj, their largest quota yet, split evenly between the government scheme and private operators. But demand continues to grow. The federal government is now drafting a new Hajj policy that seeks to raise Pakistan's quota to 255,000 for 2026.

Officials are also considering reviving Hajj travel by sea and extending Saudi Arabia's "Road to Makkah" immigration clearance service to more airports in Pakistan. Both steps could cut costs and reduce the strain of long journeys for elderly and first-time pilgrims.



A man passes by the archaeological site of Madain Saleh, Saudi Arabia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, in Hegra, Jan. 30, 2025.

Saudi authorities approve new tourism sector rules to boost employment of nationals

Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism on Wednesday 1st Oct. approved new regulations for worker registration that it said prioritize the employment of Saudis in licensed tourism organizations, in an effort to enhance the sector and empower its workforce.

The new rules prohibit the outsourcing or subcontracting of jobs that are subject to Saudization policies to organizations or workers from outside the Kingdom. The exception to this is outsourcing or subcontracting through organizations licensed by the ministry that employ Saudi nationals.

All tourism and hospitality facilities in the Kingdom will also be required to have a Saudi receptionist on duty during working hours.

The new rules include the introduction of strict compliance checks for workers in the sector, the Saudi Press Agency reported. The ministry said all employers will have to register employees before employment begins, using platforms provided the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development.

All contracts for workers engaged in contracting, secondments or seasonal work must be submitted through the Ajeer system or other approved platforms. Tourism establishments with several types of licensed facilities must register workers separately for each one.

The ministry urged all businesses and organizations to comply with the new rules and said it will be monitoring for any violations.

UN Tourism celebrates World Tourism Day 2025 in Melaka, Malaysia



Tourism Day 2025 in Melaka has shown the world that tourism can be a force for good when guided by sustainability and inclusivity. By working together, we can transform tourism into a tool for empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental protection.”

By working together, we can transform tourism into a tool for empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental protection

Highlights of World Tourism Day 2025

Affirming this commitment, the Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, The Right Honourable Dato' Sri Haji Fadillah bin Yusof, on behalf of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, today officiated the opening of World Tourism Day 2025 and the 7th World Tourism Conference in Melaka.

Highlighting tourism's role as a unifying force, the Deputy Prime Minister stressed that growth must be inclusive and resilient, underpinned by sustainability, innovation, and global cooperation. He outlined Malaysia's initiatives – from expanding high-value tourism segments and digital nomad hubs, to investments in

UN Tourism celebrated World Tourism Day 27 Sep. 2025 in the historic city of Melaka, Malaysia, under the theme “Tourism and Sustainable Transformation.” This global Day of Recognition for the sector and its vital importance marked a pivotal moment in advancing tourism as a catalyst for positive change, resilience, and sustainable development worldwide.

The celebrations, hosted with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia, brought together global leaders, policymakers, industry experts, and local communities to share innovative ideas and chart a sustainable future for the tourism sector. The celebrations aligned with the 7th edition of the World Tourism Conference (WTC), showcasing Malaysia's rich cultural heritage, breathtaking landscapes, and commitment to sustainable tourism.

A Global Call for Sustainable Action

This year's theme, “Tourism and Sustainable Transformation,” underscored tourism's potential to drive social progress, economic growth, and environmental stewardship. The event highlighted the need for good governance, strategic planning, and inclusive policies to ensure tourism benefits all while preserving cultural and natural heritage. Malaysia's Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, H.E. Dato Sri Tiong King Sing, welcomed participants from around the world to Melaka at the opening of World Tourism Day 2025 and the 7th World Tourism Conference.

In his official message, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized, “Tourism is a powerful driver of transformation. It creates jobs, fuels local economies, and builds bridges across cultures. Yet, it must be sustainable to protect the very places

and communities it celebrates. Let's harness tourism as a force for resilience, sustainability, and shared progress.”

UN Tourism Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili added, “World



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sustainable aviation fuel and community-led ecotourism – as examples of balancing economic progress with social and environmental responsibility. He also announced that Malaysia will join the UN Tourism International Network of Sustainable Tourism Observatories (INSTO) with a pilot project in Mersing, Johor.

The celebrations in Melaka featured a series of activities, including high-level panel discussions and cultural showcases focused on sustainable tourism practices and innovative strategies geared towards the resilience of the tourism industry. The focus was placed on building sustainable transformation through:

Investing in Education and Skills:

Programmes to empower women, youth, and marginalized communities through tourism-related training and employment opportunities.

Accelerating innovation and digital transformation: Identifying tourism game-changers, including entrepreneurs, innovators and start-ups and supporting them to transform ideas into action and scale-up. Investing in digital education and closing the 'digital gap' through empowering rural communities, youth and post-conflict societies.

Supporting Local Economies: Promoting micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises to ensure tourism benefits reach local communities.

Cultural Exchange: Showcasing Malaysia's vibrant heritage through performances, culinary experiences, and exhibitions, reinforcing tourism's role in preserving traditions.

World Tourism Conference 2025: A Framework for Collaboration

Held in the framework of World Tourism Day, the 7th edition of the World Tourism Conference (WTC) in Melaka served as a platform for fostering stronger bonds and innovative ideas for the global tourism industry.

The conference brought together stakeholders to discuss strategies for sustainable tourism development, focusing on resilience, inclusivity, and environmental stewardship. Key sessions explored topics such as digital transformation in tourism, community-based tourism models, and climate-neutral travel solutions, aligning with the theme "Tourism and Sustainable Transformation."

Looking Ahead

To conclude the official celebrations, Malaysia handed over the hosting of World Tourism Day to El Salvador. World Tourism Day 2026, will be held around the theme of "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to redesign tourism" and address the role of tourism in embracing digital transformation and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI).

Karachi Mayor opens country's first mangrove biodiversity park



City Mayor Murtaza Wahab and officials stroll along a "floating" walkway constructed over a pond in the mangrove biodiversity park at Korangi Creek.

Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Saturday 27 Sep. inaugurated the country's first Mangrove Biodiversity Park at Korangi Creek.

This is not only the first biodiversity park focused on mangroves in the country, but also the first park that floats on water, said a press release issued by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

It said that the park was established in collaboration with the Sindh forest department.

Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, Mayor Wahab said the establishment of this park is an important step towards the protection of mangroves and raising public awareness.

He welcomed the involvement of people from the real estate sector in environmental protection, calling it a positive sign for future generations.

The mayor mentioned that he brought his son to the event so that he could learn about the importance of mangroves and the environment from an early age. He appealed to civil society and the business community to join hands in making this project a success.

He also announced that the KMC will establish another mangrove park near the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) building.

He urged other authorities such as Port Qasim and KPT to set up similar parks in their respective jurisdictions to

further strengthen environmental protection efforts. The mayor pointed out that whenever steps are taken for the betterment of the city, various obstacles are created, but the administration will not back down from its mission.

He invited civil society, the media, and the business community to share their suggestions and collaborate to make Karachi a modern and environmentally friendly city.

Referring to Bagh Ibne Qasim, he remarked that despite being a 130-acre park, it hardly receives 130 visitors daily. "This raises a question for all of us — why do people prefer private clubs over public parks," he asked.

Located along Korangi Creek, the park was conceived and designed by environmentalist Shah Murad Aliani and developed in consultation with architect Tariq Alexander Qaiser.

Designed with minimal impact, it uses 80 per cent recycled and natural materials such as wood, bamboo, and upcycled fishing nets. Eco-sensitive features include floating pathways, interactive learning boards, and a floating education centre.

Beyond its design, the park is home to over 72 bird species, such as kingfishers, egrets, Eurasian curlews, and many other migratory birds. Mudskippers and Fiddler crabs are also nestled amongst the Avicennia roots.

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Lahore Museum to be restored to 1929 design



Lahore Museum to be restored to 1929 design

The Lahore Museum, one of South Asia's most important cultural and historical institutions, is set to undergo its first large-scale upgradation since its establishment in 1894.

After safeguarding the subcontinent's antiquities for over 131 years, the museum will temporarily close to visitors and researchers for two years as a comprehensive restoration begins under a UNESCO master plan.

The project, estimated to cost \$8 million, will restore the museum to its original 1929 design while equipping it with modern facilities.

Currently, the museum houses around 60,000 artefacts covering history, religion, fine arts, and archaeology, though only about 14,000 - mostly coins - are displayed. According to Lahore Museum spokesperson Asim Rizwan, all post-1929 alterations will be removed to return the building to its authentic form.

"This is the first project of such scale for the museum, and a milestone not only for Pakistan but also for the wider region," he said.

As part of the plan, a new three-story building will be constructed on the parking area of the historic Tollinton Market. The current museum structure will undergo roof and structural repairs, as well as upgrades to drainage, electricity, fire safety, lighting, visitor services, and galleries. Both buildings will be linked by an underground passage.

"These changes are not limited to

infrastructure; they are part of a larger vision," said Education Officer Humaira Mansha. "The Lahore Museum is a gateway to history for younger generations. Restoration and modern facilities will allow students of archaeology and ancient cultures not only to view artefacts in preserved condition but also to interpret them through advanced technology."

Students of archaeology also welcomed the initiative.

Zainab and Rabia Basri described the museum as a vital research institute that opens windows to the past, while Muhammad Mubashir called it a milestone for tourism.

Takht Bhai Buddhist site lit up

The Takht Bhai Buddhist site has been illuminated with cascades of lights, enhancing the grandeur of the Unesco world heritage site and paving the way for its greater global recognition.

"The illumination of Takht Bhai ruins is not only a tribute to the past but a living symbol for the future as well. This light proclaims that the spirit of history never fades; it simply seeks new colors and new melodies," provincial culture, archaeology and museums secretary Dr Abdul Samad said in a statement on Thursday 25 Sep.

He said the provincial government had turned a new page in the preservation of its historic and cultural heritage.

"Perched on the rugged hills of Mardan, Takht Bhai, a Unesco World Heritage Site and a silent storyteller for centuries, now shines as a radiant beacon of culture through state-of-the-art illumination," he said.

The secretary said the spectacle appeared as though time itself had lit lamps upon its ancient walls, surrendering history to a new dawn of brilliance. He said the illumination was not mere decoration but a herald of renewal.

"The ancient Buddhist monastic complex now glimmers in the night like a celestial star descended to earth. Each stone and pillar now narrates tales in the language of light—stories of love, peace, and civilization once buried in the rusted pages of time," he said.

Dr Samad said the project, completed under the KITE Project with the support of the World Bank, forged a golden bond between past and present, ensuring the eternal preservation of this heritage.

He said the glowing transformation of Takht Bhai would not only inspire awe among tourists but also kindle fresh avenues of research and reflection for scholars.



Newly-installed lights illuminate the historical Buddhist monastic complex, Mardan, enhancing grandeur of the world heritage site. The KP tourism department is promoting night tourism under the KITE project with support from World Bank.



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Life of a Showgirl shows Swift at the peak of her power



TAYLOR Swift fans listen to a song during an event at Melbourne's Astor Theatre.

Superstar Taylor Swift's 12th studio album, *The Life of a Showgirl*, arrived on Friday 3 Oct. with a promotional blitz, including midnight sales at Target stores, a release party at movie theatres around the globe and pop-up experiences in New York and Los Angeles.

It follows *The Tortured Poets Department*, which debuted at No 1 on the Billboard 200 album chart, and sold the equivalent of eight million albums in the United States, according to Luminate, a firm that tracks music sales. Swift's latest offering is expected to be similarly lapped up by her huge global fan base, even though the music press gave the release a mixed response. It became Spotify's most-streamed album of the year, hitting that milestone in less than 11 hours.

"With this album it's exactly where I am at in my life," Swift told Britain's Capital Breakfast radio show, kicking off promotional appearances.

"I am exactly in the same spot as I was when I made this record so it feels very accurate to my life experience right now."

Swift once again worked with Swedish producers Max Martin and Shellback. The duo also worked on records including her best-selling album, 1989, and *Reputation*. Many critics praised the upbeat songs and humour on the 12-song album, whose title track features Sabrina Carpenter.

Rolling Stone gave it five stars saying Swift "shoots into a fresh echelon of superstardom and hits all her marks", while BBC called it "a triumphant pop victory lap." Awarding it two stars.

The Financial Times and Guardian were cooler, with the former saying the album was "charismatic as ever, but lacks sparkle" and the latter describing it as "dull razzle-dazzle from a star who seems frazzled." Fans who went to the HMV store in London to buy the album were nonetheless enthusiastic.

Pakistan mulls razing Roosevelt Hotel to build skyscraper



Pakistan is considering options for the PIA-owned Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, including razing the iconic landmark and build a skyscraper in its place, as part of Islamabad's efforts to meet its commitments to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), according to Bloomberg, the American financial news service.

The 1,025-room hotel in mid-town Manhattan was shut down in 2020 due to a severe loss of revenue resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. Three years later, it briefly housed migrants, and has since been shuttered.

Muhammad Ali, adviser to the prime minister on privatization, who was speaking to Bloomberg in Islamabad, said the government is keen on a joint venture where Pakistan will contribute the land and the partner will bring in the equity.

JLL steps down as advisor for Roosevelt Hotel transaction citing conflict of interest

The other option is to retain the hotel if it makes economic sense, he said.

"We will have clarity on this in the next few months after finalization of the JV partner and market sounding," Muhammad Ali was quoted as saying.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government is making its most ambitious effort in years to restructure or sell state-owned companies as committed to the IMF under the terms of a \$7 billion loan agreement, Bloomberg said.

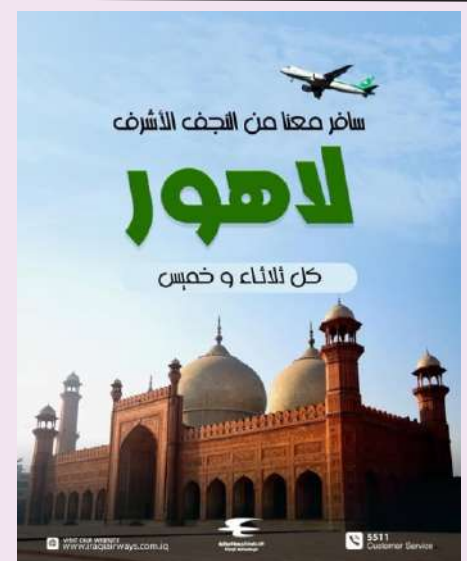
The first asset to be sold could be PIA, and the adviser is hopeful it would be done by November, according to Muhammad Ali.

He said the groups interested in

buying PIA are among the largest business groups in the country and have the capacity to run it. Ali estimated that an investment of about half a billion dollars would be needed to turn the airline around.

Pakistan is in the process of appointing advisers for the hotel transaction, dubbed by some as "the new Ellis Island" for its historical role as a migrant intake point, Bloomberg said. "The government will finalize a new adviser later this month after bids from seven groups, including Citigroup Inc., CBRE Group Inc., and Savills PLC."

The hotel, which opened in 1924, was named after President Theodore Roosevelt. It is located next to the Grand Central Terminal, the main train station



From Oct. 9, Iraqi Airways starting twice-a-week flight between Najaf and Lahore.

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