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Main Tel: +92 21 35642400 9

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Chief Editor Abdul Sattar Azad
 Managing Editor Muhammad Faryal Azad
 Assistant Editor Musharrarf Azad
 Associate Editor Shahida Hameed
 Resident Editor Waqas Masood
 Reporter Bazla Sardar
 Photographer S. Shahid Ikram
 Contributors Prof. Safdar Sandal
 Chief Correspondent Prof. Karamat Rajput.

Address B-65 Ablagh-e-Aamma
 (media) Cooperative
 Housing Society
 Block-8, Gulistan-e-Jauhar
 Karachi-75290

Phone 34615924
 Cell 0333-2194853
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Issue Monthly
 Price Rs.1000/=

Annual Subscription Pakistan Rs.10000/=
 Other Countries US \$100/-

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

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

Lahore Waqas Masood
 123 HH Phase 4
 DHA, Lahore
 Cell: 0333-3872222

Islamabad 8-Huma Plaza Block-25
 Blue Area
 Tel: 2275946-7,
 Fax: 2279975

Peshawar 5-Biloor Plaza Saddar
 Tel: 284649-50
 Fax: 284614

Sialkot S. Shahid Ikram
 Pervaiz Plaza Near
 Railway Crossing
 Kutchary Road
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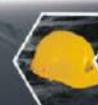
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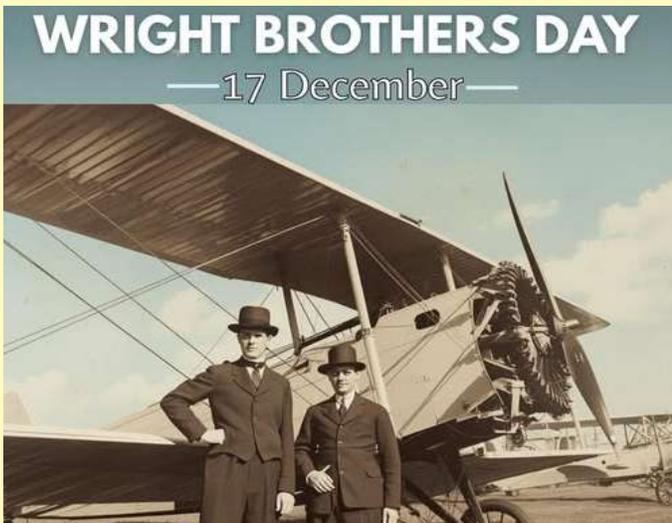
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International

Monthly Magazine of Aviation and Tourism

Vol 33 DECEMBER 2025 No.03

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CATI commemorates Wright Brothers Day

On 17 December, CATI (Civil Aviation Institute) Hyderabad celebrated Wright Brothers Day, which commemorates the first successful flights of a heavier-than-air, mechanically propelled airplane. Orville and Wilbur Wright achieved that historic flight on 17 December 1903 near Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. While other inventors built planes that flew, the Wright brothers created the first mechanically propelled aeroplane. The pioneers who preceded them also inspired the Wrights in many ways

Strengthening air connectivity at Multan International Airport

The Pakistan Airports Authority is pleased to announce major developments that further elevate the strategic importance of Multan International Airport (MIAP) as a growing aviation hub for South Punjab.

Revival of Domestic Flight Operations

Fly Jinnah has commenced of direct domestic flights on the Multan - Karachi - Multan route starting 10 December 2025. Operating 03 weekly flights, this resumption restores vital connectivity with Karachi and marks the revival of domestic flight operations from Multan Airport, greatly benefiting passengers and business communities of the region.

Enhanced International Connectivity

In a significant step for international travel, Qatar Airways has increased its operations from Multan by adding 02 additional weekly flights on the Multan - Doha sector, bringing the total to 06 flights per week. This enhancement strengthens MIAP's role as a key gateway for global travel, offering greater flexibility and improved connectivity for passengers flying to the Middle East and beyond.

These developments represent a major boost for passenger facilitation, regional mobility, and economic activity, reaffirming Multan International Airport's position as a critical aviation node serving Multan and the surrounding areas of South Punjab.

[9:31 PM, 12/8/2025] +92 335 1003137: Pakistan Airports Authority Marks International Civil Aviation Day with Major Infrastructure Advancements.

As the global aviation community celebrates International Civil Aviation Day, the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has highlighted a series of major infrastructure upgrades and modernization initiatives aimed at strengthening the nation's aviation landscape. With a renewed focus on safety, efficiency, and sustainability, PAA is rapidly advancing projects that will reshape airport operations across the country.

One of the Authority's flagship undertakings is the expansion of the terminal building at Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, scheduled for completion by September 2026. This development is expected to significantly enhance passenger-handling capacity and improve overall service quality. In parallel, runway upgradation at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi is progressing steadily, with completion targeted for January 2026, ensuring improved aircraft operations at Pakistan's busiest airport.

To address the long-standing



PCAA is delighted to announce a major boost to domestic travel. Congratulations to FlyJinnah on launching exciting new flights from Karachi to Multan, Faisalabad, and Sialkot! "We celebrated the cake-cutting ceremony at Jinnah International Airport (KHI) with DG PAA, DG PCAA, and the Fly Jinnah team. Enhancing connectivity is our priority".

operational challenges posed by weather in northern regions, PAA is set to introduce RNP-AR instrument flight procedures for Skardu, Gilgit, and Chitral by June 2026. Depending on the feasibility studies, once implemented, these advanced procedures are expected to drastically reduce weather-related delays and cancellations, improving flight safety and reliability for both passengers and airlines.

Looking further ahead, feasibility studies are underway for new Greenfield

airports in Dera Ismail Khan, Sukkur, and Faisalabad - a strategic move that reflects the growing demand for enhanced regional connectivity and future aviation capacity.

Additional upgrades planned for 2026 include improvements at Skardu International Airport, the development of Phase II of the General Aviation Aerodrome at Lahore (Muridke), the Phase-II expansion of Lahore Airport, and the final expansion phase of Karachi Airport.

In a significant milestone, the PAA has also approved the sites for a new state-of-the-art Air Traffic Control Tower and a Rescue & Fire Fighting Station at Karachi Airport after extensive site evaluations. These facilities will play a critical role in strengthening air traffic management and emergency response capabilities at the nation's busiest aviation hub.

Together, these projects reflect Pakistan's commitment to meeting global aviation standards and support the vision of a safer, more accessible, and modern aviation environment for future generations. As the aviation community worldwide observes International Civil Aviation Day, Pakistan's progress underscores its determination to build a robust and internationally competitive aviation sector.





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SIAL welcomes Fly Jinnah inaugural flight

Sialkot International Airport Marks 18 Years of Service and Welcomed Fly Jinnah's inaugural flight from Karachi to Sialkot on 11th December, 2025.

Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) commemorated a landmark day as it celebrated its 18th anniversary alongside the inaugural Fly Jinnah flight from Sialkot to Karachi. The occasion brought together Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman Mr. Waqas Afzal, former Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of SIAL, the CEO of Fly Jinnah, distinguished guests, and travelling passengers who became part of this memorable moment.

The first Fly Jinnah aircraft received a traditional water-cannon salute upon arrival, symbolising a new chapter of connectivity for the region. A special cake-cutting ceremony added warmth to the celebration, marking both the airport's journey and the beginning of a new partnership in Pakistan's aviation landscape.

Speaking on the occasion, Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti shared that the day held exceptional significance. He reflected on SIAL's 18 years of dedicated service to the nation, adding that the airport remains committed to offering a seamless travel experience to the people of Pakistan. He further expressed delight in witnessing Fly Jinnah's inaugural



Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti welcomes Mr. Armaan Yahia CEO and other guests of Fly Jinnah's inaugural flight at Sialkot International Airport.

operation from Sialkot, calling it a step that strengthens the connection between provinces, cities, people, and cultures.

Vice Chairman Waqas Afzal echoed this sentiment, noting that the 18-year milestone stands on the unwavering resolve of the Sialkot business community, who first envisioned the airport. He highlighted the tireless efforts of SIAL's directors and management, whose commitment transformed that

vision into the thriving gateway the region relies on today.

With the celebration of 18 successful years and the launch of Fly Jinnah's service, SIAL continues to expand opportunities for travellers while honouring the spirit of collaboration and progress that has driven it since inception. Later, Chairman, Vice Chairman, and CEO Fly Jinnah boarded the first flight to Karachi.



Cake cutting ceremony arranged at Sialkot International Airport to celebrate Sialkot to Karachi flights started by Fly Jinnah (FJ). The airline will operate four weekly flights between Sialkot and Karachi with Airbus A320.

Air traffic projected to reach 12.4bn passengers by 2050

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) projects that air travel will reach 12.4 billion passengers by the year 2050.

Launching its Strategic Plan for the next quarter century, in an announcement that coincided with International Civil Aviation Day on Sunday 8 Dec, the body noted that the impending entry of new types of highly automated aircraft into service would necessitate measures to ensure their safe integration into an already complex airspace environment.

This integration, alongside the projected growth in air traffic, presents new safety, security and cybersecurity challenges that must be addressed.

Being the UN civil aviation organisation, ICAO reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to reducing aviation's carbon footprint.

Its strategic plan for 2026-2050 also delivers on the long-term global aspirational goal of net-zero carbon emissions for international aviation by 2050.

The latest plan has identified a set of high priority enablers, focusing on key areas which are essential for addressing the complex challenges facing the aviation industry.

By prioritising these enablers and integrating them into the implementation of the strategic goals, ICAO aims to create a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive international civil aviation system.

The progress and impact of the high priority enablers will be regularly monitored and assessed to ensure their effective contribution to the overall success of the strategic plan.

15th RASG-APAC Concludes at the ICAO APAC Office, Bangkok

The 15th meeting of the Regional Aviation Safety Group – Asia Pacific (RASG-APAC) was held on 26–27 November 2025 in Bangkok, bringing together States and industry partners to advance collaborative, data-driven aviation safety across the region. As the regional arm for implementing ICAO's Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), RASG-APAC plays a vital role in harmonizing safety efforts and helping States address emerging operational risks.

PCAA Delegates provided valuable inputs, particularly on strengthening safety-data collection and enhancement initiatives. These contributions were acknowledged by the APAC Secretariat and incorporated into the final draft report, reflecting Pakistan's active and constructive role in regional safety improvement.

Why RASG-APAC matters:

It offers a unified platform for regulators and industry to manage safety risks, align with global standards, and drive measurable safety improvements across the Asia-Pacific region.

Qatar Airways named best airline in the world for 2025 as business traveller banking lands again

Qatar Airways keeps its place at the top of Business Traveller's 2025 ranking, a result that reflects how consistently it delivers a polished experience from takeoff to touchdown. Passengers highlight the balance it strikes between precision and warmth, with service that



feels smooth, attentive and quietly confident.

Hamad International Airport reinforces that reputation with easy connections, clear layouts and lounges that many travellers regard as among the best in the world. Those ground touches set the tone before anyone even boards.

Onboard, Qatar's crews continue to set industry standards for calm professionalism blended with a natural approachability. Whether it is a short regional hop or a long stretch across continents, the airline manages to make the journey feel comfortable, predictable and genuinely premium.



Rs 13bn bid finally takes PIA off govt hands

A consortium led by the Arif Habib group won the auction for a controlling stake in Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd (PIACL) with a bid of Rs135 billion after a competitive, televised process, marking the country's first major privatisation in nearly two decades.

The sale, a central plank of the government's plan to offload loss-making state-owned enterprises, drew three pre-qualified bidders: a group led by Lucky Cement, private airline Airblue and the ArifHabib-led consortium.

After sealed bids were submitted in the morning, the process moved to an open auction round in the afternoon.

In the first round of bidding, Lucky Cement offered Rs101.5bn, Airblue submitted a bid of Rs26.5bn and the Arif Habib consortium put up Rs115bn. Airblue then exited the race after its offer fell below the government's reference price of Rs100bn, leaving the contest to the top two bidders.

Officials announced a short break to allow consultations by the remaining bidders before the auction resumed. The second round started from a base bid of Rs115bn — set at the level of the highest first-round offer — with a minimum increment of Rs250 million.

The bidding quickly turned into a tight contest. Lucky Cement raised its offer to Rs134bn, prompting an immediate counter from Arif Habib at Rs135bn. With the gap narrowed and the price pushed above its last offer, Lucky Cement withdrew and congratulated the winning consortium, bringing the auction to a close.

The entire process was broadcast live and streamed on official social media channels, with representatives of the bidders, the Privatisation Commission and government officials present at the venue.

After securing the winning bid, Arif Habib described PIA as a national institution and said the privatisation would help promote investment.

"PIA is our national institution," he said, recalling its past reputation and praising its workforce.

He said the new owners planned to expand the airline's fleet in phases, initially to 38 aircraft and later to 65,

depending on demand. He also assured employees that the new ownership would aim to build confidence and help them realise their potential.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, speaking at the bidding ceremony, hailed the transparency of the bidding process.

"It takes a lot of time and effort to get to a good place where we are today," he said.

He lauded Pakistan's biggest conglomerates for "vying for the best airline" and said that the flag carrier would be led by investors and some of Pakistan's



most experienced businesspeople. "The fact that they have stepped up is a doubtless sign that anyone who is the successful bidder will take it not only to where we were, but where we need to be in the comity of nations," Mr Aurangzeb added. The adviser to the prime minister on privatisation, Mohammad Ali, also addressed the ceremony, thanking bidders for participating.

He said the government wanted a competitive field to strengthen confidence in the process and claimed the privatisation would open new paths for investment. He said the government had engaged with bidders throughout the process and that variations in stake preferences were discussed during consultations.

The auction was the government's second attempt to sell the airline after a televised bidding exercise last year collapsed when a solitary offer fell well below the government's benchmark, derailing what would have been the first

major privatisation in nearly two decades. This time, officials said, the presence of three bidders helped create genuine competition.

'Historic day for Pakistan'

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif hailed the sale as "a historic day for Pakistan".

"It was our firm commitment to the people of Pakistan that speedy and concrete steps would be taken to privatise loss-making state-owned enterprises that have been a burden on the economy," the premier said.

"The successful completion of the transparent and highly competitive bidding process for the privatisation of PIA marks an important milestone in fulfilling that commitment."

The PM added that he had always maintained that regardless of which consortium won the auction, "Pakistan would be the ultimate winner and today's outcome fully vindicates that belief".

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also offered his congratulations on the successful privatisation of PIA.

He also extended felicitations to Adviser on Privatisation Mohammad Ali and his team, the prime minister and those who "secured PIA".

The Ministry of Privatisation also congratulated the consortium for winning the auction.

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif celebrate the sale, calling it a "growing vote of confidence in the national economy".

Mr Asif added that Europe and the UK lifting bans on PIA's operations was a major contributor to the success of today's deal.

Cabinet meeting

Separately, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, while addressing a meeting of the federal cabinet, thanked government officials and the Privatisation Commission for their role in the national carrier's privatisation.

He stressed that the process has been made "transparent", stating that it will be the "largest transaction" ever in Pakistan's history.

The PIA privatisation has been closely watched by investors and lenders, including the International Monetary Fund, which has urged Pakistan to reduce fiscal pressures by restructuring or divesting state-owned firms that drain public resources.

Historic twin-engine aircraft landing at new General Aviation Aerodrome, Lahore

The New General Aviation Aerodrome, Lahore achieved another significant operational milestone on 13 Dec. Sat. with the successful landing of a twin-engine aircraft, following the recent arrival of a single-engine aircraft.

The flight was onboarded by Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed, Director General Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), reflecting strong institutional confidence in the aerodrome's safety standards, operational capability, and overall readiness.

The landing was conducted with exceptional precision and professionalism, demonstrating the aerodrome's robust operational framework, technical preparedness, and effective airside coordination in accordance with contemporary aviation requirements.

This achievement represents a major advancement in Pakistan's general aviation sector and underscores the Pakistan Airports Authority's commitment to enhancing regional aviation capacity, strengthening infrastructure, and promoting excellence in national aviation development.



South Air



Pakistan is getting another new airline with the launch of South Air based in Multan. The airline plans to begin operations with a fleet of ATR 72 aircraft. This type of aircraft is commonly used on short routes and is well suited for regional flights in Pakistan. South Air aims to serve tier two cities and destinations that are usually not covered by major airlines. This includes cities such as Bahawalpur Sukkur and Rahim Yar Khan as well as popular hill station destinations like Skardu Gilgit and Chitral.

With this plan South Air hopes to make air travel easier and more accessible for passengers in these regions. Many of these cities rely on long road travel due to limited flight options. Introducing flights to these destinations can reduce travel time and improve connectivity across the country. The airline also aims to support tourism by offering easier access to scenic locations in northern Pakistan.

Starting operations with ATR aircraft allows the airline to focus on short runways and airports where larger jets cannot operate. As Pakistan's aviation market continues to grow South Air is expected to add more destinations and expand its network. The airline's focus on underserved routes may also help boost regional development and tourism in the coming years.

GCC unified civil Aviation Authority

The Gulf Cooperation Council has announced the creation of a unified GCC Civil Aviation Authority. The announcement was made on December 3, 2025, during the 46th GCC Summit held in Bahrain by GCC Secretary General Jassem Mohamed Al Budaiwi. The new authority will be headquartered in the United Arab Emirates and will serve all GCC member states under one aviation regulatory system.

This major decision follows recommendations made earlier by the GCC Executive Committee for Civil Aviation during its meeting in Kuwait City. The committee proposed the formation of a single aviation authority along with the development of a Unified Upper Airspace and Advanced Air Mobility projects. These proposals were then presented to the GCC Supreme Council for approval.

The primary objective of this unified authority is to enhance coordination across GCC airspace and enhance aviation safety and efficiency in the region. By working under one system, the member countries will be able to manage air traffic more smoothly and support future aviation technologies.

This move is expected to boost regional cooperation, reduce operational delays, and support the long-term growth of aviation in the Gulf. It also reflects the GCC's commitment to modernizing air transport and preparing for the future of regional and global air travel.





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Karachi airport reopens major facility for passengers after years of closure



The Jinnah International Airport will reopen its long-closed passenger pickup lane in order to end passenger inconvenience.

The decision comes after years of the lane being blocked, causing significant challenges for passengers and increasing traffic congestion around the airport.

Reports said the airport administration has started removing the barriers that have been in place for several years, following instructions from the Director General of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA).

This move is expected to alleviate the traffic bottlenecks that often resulted in long queues of vehicles outside the airport, particularly during peak times.

The passenger pickup lane had been closed under the direction of former PCAA Director General Khakan Murtaza. However, its closure led to serious inconveniences for passengers, with vehicles unable to pick up passengers in a designated area, further adding to the chaos and disorder in the vicinity of the airport.

Reports have confirmed that the passenger pickup lane will be reopened, bringing relief to travelers and improving the flow of traffic at the busy airport.

Jinnah International Airport (JIAP) Karachi is Pakistan's largest international and domestic airport. It consists of four terminals, Terminal-I, II, III and the Jinnah Terminal.

The airport is named after Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan and its first Governor General, who was popularly known as the Quaid-e-Azam.

AD Ports Group, LDC partner to upgrade Karachi Port agricultural logistics

AD Ports Group, a UAE-based Logistics company, announced on Friday 5 Dec. that Karachi Gateway Terminal Multipurpose Limited (KGTML), part of Noatum Ports, the international ports operating arm of AD Ports Group, and Louis Dreyfus Company Pakistan (Private) Limited, a subsidiary of leading global merchant and agricultural goods processor Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC), has inked a long-term commercial agreement to develop and operate a modern clean bulk handling and storage facility for agricultural goods at Karachi Port.

Under the agreement, KGTML will invest in the design and construction of a highly efficient, food-grade clean bulk facility, including a handling and conveyor system along with associated infrastructure and utilities, to support the efficient handling and storage of dry agricultural bulk cargo, while LDC has committed to providing an inbound volume of agricultural commodities, according to a press statement.

"LDC will leverage the new infrastructure as part of its plans to grow its presence in Pakistan. The investment is in addition to the \$75 million previously committed by AD Ports Group during phase one of the KGTML project," it said.

The company was of the view that the partnership brings together two companies within the portfolio of ADQ to strengthen Pakistan's agricultural supply chain and port logistics ecosystem.

A Strategic Investment and Infrastructure Utilisation Agreement was signed in Abu Dhabi by Mohammed Al Tamimi, CEO of Noatum Ports, and Rubens Marques, Head of South and

Southeast Asia for LDC.

"The new facility will enhance efficiency, reduce handling times and improve the resilience of Pakistan's agricultural logistics network, in line with international food safety and operational standards," it said.

Moreover, the agreement marks another significant milestone in advancing bilateral trade and economic development between the UAE and Pakistan.

"This collaboration reflects a shared commitment to strengthening Pakistan's agricultural supply chain and port logistics ecosystem," said Mohammed Al Tamimi, Chief Executive Officer of Noatum Ports.

"As a key gateway for regional trade, KGTML plays a vital role in enhancing connectivity and driving efficiency across Pakistan's maritime sector. This development will significantly upgrade the country's logistics infrastructure, creating new growth opportunities, and reinforcing Karachi Port's position as a critical hub for international commerce."

Rubens Marques, LDC's Head of South and Southeast Asia, said: "This development reflects our long-term commitment to the country, where we have been operating for over 15 years, and our confidence in its growing role in global agricultural trade. The facility will be a key lever as we work to enhance our supply chain capabilities for the benefit of our business partners upstream and downstream in Pakistan, the region and beyond."

In addition to KGTML, AD Ports Group is also developing, operating and managing the Karachi Gateway Terminal Limited (KGTL) container terminal at Karachi Port.



THE terminal has a handling capacity of 12 million tonnes of imports and four million tonnes of exports per annum.

Pakistan Airports Authority launches ATC Tower and Fire Station project at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi



The design phase will be completed in six months, followed by a 24-month construction period.

Karachi - Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) has launched the construction of a state-of-the-art Air Traffic Control (ATC) Tower and a modern Rescue & Fire Fighting Station (RFFS) at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, aimed at improving air traffic management, operational safety, and airport readiness.

The facilities will be designed and constructed by MM Pakistan in joint venture with CEMOSA and Fairbanks Architects from Spain, bringing international expertise in airport planning and Communication and Navigation/Air Traffic Management (CNS)/(ATM) systems integration.

A four-day inception workshop at JIAP Karachi brought together a two-member team of international aviation experts - senior architect Bruce Fairbanks and CNS/ATM specialist Juan Cruz Cañabate - who met local aviation professionals to refine project requirements and design parameters.

After evaluating three potential locations, sites for both the ATC Tower and the new fire station have been finalized, ensuring alignment with operational, safety, and future development considerations.

This initiative underscores PAA's commitment to developing critical aviation infrastructure in accordance with international standards and global best practices

Airspace ban for India extended until Jan 23

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) on Wednesday 17 Dec. extended the airspace restrictions on Indian aircraft for another month, until January 23, according to a Notam (notice to airmen) issued on Wednesday 17 Dec.

The extension was notified a week before the previous one was set to expire on December 24.

“Pakistan airspace will remain closed to Indian-registered aircraft, including all aircraft owned, operated, or leased by Indian airlines, as well as Indian military flights,” the authority said,

“According to the NOTAM, the restriction, which has already been in force, will continue until January 23, 2026, as per the specified timings,” it said.

Pakistan's airspace is divided into two flight information regions (FIRs) — Karachi and Lahore, according to a Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) document from 2022. The Notam applies to both the Karachi (OPKR) and Lahore (OPLR) FIRs.

India and Pakistan have closed their airspaces to each other's airlines since tensions between them escalated in late April in the wake of an attack in India-held Kashmir's Pahalgam that killed 26 people.

New Delhi, without evidence, had alleged that Islamabad backed the attack. Pakistan strongly denied any involvement and offered a neutral probe.

Then, in early May, the nuclear-armed nations fought their fiercest military conflict in decades. Pakistan says it downed seven Indian jets during the conflict.

Amid a financial toll from a ban on Indian carriers flying over Pakistan, it was reported in November that Air India was lobbying the Indian government to convince China to let it use a sensitive military airspace zone in Xinjiang to shorten routes.

India caps fares as flight chaos cripples travel

India capped airfares on Saturday 6 Dec. as hundreds of passengers gathered outside Bengaluru and Mumbai airports after IndiGo cancelled 385 flights on the fifth day of a crisis at the country's biggest airline that has crippled air travel.

IndiGo has cancelled thousands of flights recently due to a shortage of pilots after it failed to plan adequately for new rules limiting pilots' work hours.

The government responded on Friday 5 Dec., announcing special relief for the carrier and the operation of additional trains to help clear the backlog. The Delhi airport posted on X on Saturday 6 Dec. that flight operations were steadily resuming, but cancellations remained rife elsewhere.

With IndiGo's spate of cancellations, fares rose on flights operated by other airlines on popular routes. The government said it was capping fares to maintain pricing discipline.

The Civil Aviation Ministry said it would “continue to closely monitor fare levels through real-time data and active coordination with airlines”.

Fares were last capped during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The Indian government said a one-way fare for a journey up to 500 kilometers cannot be more than 7,500 rupees (\$83), whereas for journeys between 1,000 and 1,500km — like one that would apply to the New Delhi-Mumbai route — it should be capped at 15,000 rupees (\$167).

That was well under the 20,419-rupee (\$227) price advertised by Air India on its website for a Delhi-Mumbai flight on Saturday 6 Dec.

'Waiting for my luggage'

The flight cancellations are the biggest crisis ever for 20-year-old IndiGo, which has an over 60 per cent market share in the world's most-populous country and has prided itself on on-time performance while luring passengers with lower fares.

IndiGo acknowledges failing to plan properly for the November 1 deadline to implement the stricter rules on night flying and weekly rest for pilots, though it only suffered a roster crisis this week as air travel approached a December peak.

On Friday 5 Dec., more than 1,000 IndiGo flights were cancelled.

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US okays sale of tech worth \$686m for Pakistan's F-16s



THE sale aims to modernise Pakistan's F-16 fleet and address operational safety concerns.

The United States has approved the sale of advanced technology and support for Pakistan's F-16 fighter jets, valued at \$686 million, according to a letter sent by the US Defence Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) to Congress.

The package includes Link-16 systems, cryptographic equipment, avionics updates, training, and comprehensive logistical support.

The DSCA letter makes clear the rationale for the sale, stating that it "will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by allowing Pakistan to retain interoperability with US and partner forces in ongoing counterterrorism efforts and in preparation for future contingency operations".

The proposed sale is also aimed at modernising Pakistan's F-16 fleet and addressing operational safety concerns. The letter notes that it will "maintain Pakistan's capability to meet current and future threats by updating and refurbishing its Block-52 and Mid Life Upgrade F-16 fleet".

Pakistan had requested upgrades to its F-16 fleet in 2021 amid strained relations, but Washington delayed its response.

The country is now less dependent on the F-16s, having acquired and jointly developed other platforms, which proved their worth during the May 2025 air war by inflicting significant damage on the Indian fleet.

However, "Pakistan still welcomes the US offer, as it will enhance the shelf life of its F-16s until 2040," a diplomatic source said.

According to the DSCA letter, the updates will provide more "seamless integration and interoperability between the Pakistan Air Force and the US Air Force in combat operations, exercises, and training, and refurbishment will extend the aircraft life through 2040 while addressing critical flight safety concerns".

The letter also emphasises Pakistan's readiness to absorb the technology, stating that the country "has shown a commitment to maintaining its military forces and will have no difficulty absorbing these articles and services into

its armed forces." It also addresses regional concerns, asserting that "the proposed sale of this equipment and support will not alter the basic military balance in the region."

Lockheed Martin Company of Fort Worth, Texas, will serve as the principal contractor for the sale. The US defence agency pointed out that "implementation of this proposed sale will not require the assignment of any additional US Government or contractor representatives to Pakistan" and that there will be "no adverse impact on US defense readiness as a result of this proposed sale."

The total estimated value of the sale is \$686m, with major defense equipment valued at \$37m and other items at \$649m. The major defence equipment (MDE) component includes 92 Link-16 data link systems and six inert Mk-82 500-lb general purpose bomb bodies; the latter will have no explosive payload and will be used for weapons integration testing.

Link-16 is an advanced command, control, communications and intelligence system. It is a secure, real-time communication network that shares tactical data among allied forces and is used by US and allied Nato forces. The system is also resistant to electronic jamming from enemy air and ground assets.

"It provides the warfighter key theatre functions such as surveillance, identification, air control, weapons engagement coordination, and direction for all services and allied forces," the letter read.

The rest of the deal consists of \$649m worth of non-MDE equipment, including the AN/APQ-10C Simple Key Loaders and AN/APX-126 Advanced Identification Friend or Foe system — used to identify hostile and allied aircraft.

It also includes hardware and software modifications to support the Operational Flight Program and mandated avionics updates, as well as KY-58M and KIV-78 cryptographic appliques, which are National Security Agency (NSA)-certified modules used in military aircraft and other tactical systems for secure communications and identification.

The equipment also covers additional secure communications, precision navigation and cryptographic devices, Joint Mission Planning Systems and support, Common Munitions Built-in-test Reprogramming Equipment, and ADU-981 missile adaptor units.

Other weapons integration, test and

support equipment, spare and repair parts, software delivery and support, publications and technical documentation, full motion simulators, personnel training, and training equipment are also included.

The package will also provide Pakistan with US government and contractor engineering, technical, and logistics support services, studies and surveys, and other related elements of logistical and program support.

The DSCA letter, sent to the Speaker of the House and the chairmen of the relevant congressional committees, concludes that the sale "will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States" while ensuring that Pakistan can continue to operate its F-16 fleet safely and effectively.

Civil Aviation Training Institute- CATI's

On the 17th Experience Sharing Platform held at CATI Haiderabad on 4 December, the chief guest, Mr. Iftikhar Ahmed Mir, former Additional Secretary (Aviation Division), Ministry of Defence, and other guests visited CATI's facilities. Pictures of their visit are shared below.



Air India seeks China airspace access as Pakistan ban bites

Air India is lobbying the Indian government to convince China to let it use a sensitive military airspace zone in Xinjiang to shorten routes as the financial toll from a ban on Indian carriers flying over Pakistan mounts, a company document shows.

The unusual request comes just weeks after direct India-China flights resumed after a five-year hiatus following a Himalayan border clash between the nations.

Air India has been seeking to rebuild its reputation and international network after a London-bound Boeing 787 Dreamliner crashed in Gujarat in June, killing 260 people and forcing it to briefly cut flights for safety checks.

But that effort is being complicated by the closure of Pakistan airspace to Indian carriers since their diplomatic tensions erupted in late April.

For Air India, the country's only carrier with a major international network, fuel costs have risen by as much as 29 per cent and journey times by up to three hours on some long-haul routes, according to the previously unreported document submitted to Indian officials in late October and reviewed by Reuters.

The Indian government is reviewing Air India's plea to diplomatically ask China to allow an alternative routing and emergency access to airports in case of diversions at Hotan, Kashgar and Urumqi in Xinjiang, aiming to reach US, Canada and Europe faster, the document said.

"Air India's long-haul network is under severe operational and financial strain ... Securing Hotan route will be a strategic option," it added.

The airline, owned by Tata Group and Singapore Airlines, estimated the Pakistan airspace closure's impact on its profit before tax at \$455 million annually — a significant amount given its fiscal 2024-25 loss stood at \$439m.

The Chinese foreign ministry said it was not aware of the situation and referred Reuters to the "relevant authorities".

Air India and civil aviation authorities in India, China and Pakistan did not respond to Reuters' queries.

'Unviable' routes

The Chinese airspace Air India is seeking to access is ringed by some of the

world's highest mountains of 20,000ft (6,100m) or more, and is avoided by international airlines due to potential safety risks in case of a decompression incident.

More critically, it also falls within People's Liberation Army's Western Theater Command, which is equipped with extensive missile, drone and air-defence assets and shares some airports with civilian aircraft, military analysts say.

The Pentagon's December report on China's military said the command's responsibilities include responding to any conflict with India.

Open-source intelligence tracker Damien Symon said China's military has recently expanded an airbase at Hotan.

Data from AirNav Radar shows no non-Chinese airlines departed or arrived at Hotan airport in the last 12 months.

Airspace globally has been constricted due to proliferating conflict zones.

US carriers have been banned from flying over Russia since the Ukraine war began in 2022 and pulled out of many US-India routes. That gave Air India a near-monopoly on non-stop flights from India.

But after the Pakistan airspace closure, Air India's Delhi-Washington route was suspended in August. Now other routes are under review, with the direct Mumbai- and Bengaluru to San Francisco routes "becoming unviable" due to an additional three hours of travel time, including a technical stop in Kolkata, the document said.

A flight from San Francisco to Mumbai on Lufthansa via Munich is now only five minutes longer than on Air India.

"Passengers (are) shifting to foreign carriers due to shorter flight time as they have the benefit of Pakistan overflight," the document said.

Air India estimates the requested Hotan route in China could substantially cut extra fuel requirements and flight times, help restore passenger and cargo capacity it trimmed by as much as 15pc on routes like New York- and Vancouver-Delhi, and reduce losses by an estimated \$1.13 million per week.

With no signs of airspace ban easing, Air India also wants "temporary subsidy till Pakistan airspace opens", the document said.

Malaysia to resume search for missing flight after a decade

The search for missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 will resume at the end of December, Malaysia said on Wednesday 3 Dec., more than a decade after the plane disappeared.

The nation's Transport Minister Anthony Loke told media that the decision to continue the efforts now is based on the season, which is favourable for the search (to resume).

The Boeing 777 carrying 239 people vanished from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing in one of aviation's greatest enduring mysteries.

Two-thirds of the passengers were Chinese, while the others included Malaysians, Indonesians and Australians, as well as Indian, American, Dutch and French nationals. Despite the largest search in aviation history, the plane has not been found.

Search operations were called off in April because of changing weather, with Loke at the time saying the work would resume later in the year.

China and victims' relatives on Wednesday 3 Dec. welcomed the announcement.

We have noted relevant reports and appreciate the efforts made by the Malaysian side, Beijing's foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian said.

Jiang Hui, whose mother was on the plane, said his family welcomes the continued search by the Malaysian government and Ocean Infinity!



Global airlines race to fix jets as Airbus apologises after A320 recall



A Latam Airlines Airbus A320 sits on the tarmac at El Dorado airport in Bogota.

More airlines around the world announced delayed or cancelled flights on Saturday 29 Nov., following an Airbus alert that up to 6,000 A320 jets may require upgrades after evaluating a technical malfunction on board a JetBlue flight in October.

Global airlines scrambled to fix the glitch as Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury apologised to airlines and passengers after the surprise recall of 6,000 planes or more than half of the global A320-family fleet, which recently overtook the Boeing 737 as the industry's most-delivered model.

"I want to sincerely apologise to our airline customers and passengers who are impacted now," Faury posted on LinkedIn.

The alert followed an unintended loss of altitude on an October 30 Jet Blue flight from Cancun, Mexico, to Newark, New Jersey, which injured 10 passengers, according to France's BEA accident agency, which is probing the incident.

Airlines worked through the night after global regulators told them to remedy the problem before resuming flights.

That appeared to help head off the worst-case scenario and capped the number of flight delays in Asia and Europe. The U.S. will face high demand after the Thanksgiving holiday period.

"It's not as chaotic as some people might think," said Asia-based aviation analyst Brendan Sobie. "But it does create some short-term headaches for operations."

Airbus recall lucky for some

The alert landed at a time of day when many European airlines and Asian airlines are winding down their schedules, which mostly do not require the short-to medium-haul jets like the A320 to be flying at night, leaving time for repairs.

In the United States, however, it came during the day ahead of the busy Thanksgiving holiday travel weekend.

Steven Greenway, CEO of Saudi

carrier Fly a deal, said that the recall had hit late in the evening, which had avoided more serious disruption. The airline said it had fixed all 13 affected jets and would resume normal operations by midnight.

"It was a great team effort but our luck also held up in the timing," Greenway told Reuters.

Airlines must revert to a previous version of software in a computer that helps determine the nose angle of the affected jets and in some cases must also change the hardware itself, mainly on older planes in service.

By Saturday 29 Nov., Airbus was telling airlines that repairs to some of the A320 jets affected may be less burdensome than first thought, industry sources said, with fewer than the original estimate of 1,000 needing the hardware changes.

Even so, industry executives said the abrupt action was a rare and potentially costly headache at a time when maintenance is under pressure worldwide from labour and parts shortages.

There were also unresolved questions about the impact of solar flare radiation blamed for the JetBlue incident, which is being treated by French investigators as an "incident," the lowest of three categories of potential safety emergency.

"Any operational challenges that comes at short notice and affecting a large part of your operation is tough to deal with," said UK-based aviation consultant John Strickland.

Fix is simple but necessary

The fix must be completed before the planes can fly again with passengers, a process needing two to three hours per jet.

Globally, there are about 11,300 of the single-aisle jets in service, including 6,440 of the core A320 model. Those include some of the largest and busiest low-cost carriers.

Tracker data from Cirium and Flight Aware showed most global airports operating with good-to-moderate levels of delays.

Wizz Air said updates had been implemented overnight on all its affected jets. The European low-fare airline had already been hit hard by groundings caused by long waiting times for engine repairs rather than safety concerns.

AirAsia, one of the world's largest A320 customers, said it aimed to complete fixes in 48 hours.

US carriers Delta Air Lines, JetBlue and United Airlines are also among the biggest A320-family operators. Although Thanksgiving is critical for airlines in the US, Strickland said financial impact for European carriers would be cushioned by the fact that the recall happened during a lull before end-year holidays and the ski season.

Delhi, Kabul plan air cargo services to boost trade

Air cargo services between India and Afghanistan will be launched soon, an Indian foreign ministry official said on Friday 21 Nov., as the two countries seek to reset ties amid soured relations with Pakistan.

The announcement came during a visit to New Delhi by Afghanistan's Taliban Trade Minister Nooruddin Azizi, who has urged India to boost trade and open cargo hubs as Kabul seeks access to grains, medicines and industrial goods following the closure of its border with Pakistan after military clashes.

Kabul's air freight corridors with Delhi and the northern Indian city of Amritsar have been "activated", and cargo flights will operate on the sectors "very soon", said Anand Prakash, a joint secretary in the Indian foreign ministry.

"All formalities from our side are over. We are waiting for all the papers from their (Afghan) side ... Once they complete them, the cargo flights will start," Prakash told media on the sidelines of an India-Afghanistan business conference.

Indian airlines do not fly to Afghanistan as Pakistan has shut its airspace for them as tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad soared this year. Afghan carriers have regular passenger connections between Kabul and Delhi.

India and Afghanistan have historically had friendly relations but New Delhi does not recognise the Taliban government, which came to power in Kabul after the withdrawal of US-led Nato forces in 2021.

But they have moved quickly to recalibrate ties in recent months, which experts attribute to souring relations with Pakistan — a buffer between the two countries — and to India's concerns about rival China making inroads in Afghanistan.

Afghan Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi visited New Delhi last month in the first such trip to India by a Taliban leader since 2021.

The two countries have upgraded ties since, with India reopening its embassy in Kabul that was shut in 2021.

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Tejas crash dampens export hopes for homegrown Indian jet



THE HAL Tejas was supposed to serve as a replacement for IAF's aging fleet of Russian-era jets, but it is facing production issues.

The crash of India's Tejas fighter in front of global arms buyers at the Dubai Airshow is the latest blow to a key national trophy, leaving the jet reliant on Indian military orders to sustain its role as a showcase of home-built defence technology.

The cause of Nov 21st crash was not immediately known but it capped a week of jockeying for influence at the event, attended by Pakistan as well, nearly six months after the neighbouring foes faced off in the world's largest air battle in decades.

Such a public loss will inevitably overshadow India's efforts to establish the jet abroad after a painstaking development over four decades, experts said, as India paid tribute to Wing Commander Namansh Syal who died in the crash.

Crash at showcase event

"The imagery is brutal," said Douglas A. Birkey, executive director of the US-based Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, referring to the history of crashes at air shows where nations and industries seek to tout major national achievements.

Indian Air Force worried about its shrinking fighter squadrons, with early variants of MiG-29, Anglo-French Jaguar and French Mirage 2000 set to retire in coming years

Dubai is the world's third-largest air show after Paris and Britain's Farnborough, and accidents at such events

have become increasingly rare.

"A crash sends quite the opposite signal: a dramatic failure," he said, adding, however, that while the Tejas would suffer negative publicity, it would most likely regain momentum.

In 1999, a Russian Sukhoi Su-30 crashed after touching the ground during a manoeuvre at the Paris Airshow, and a Soviet MiG-29 crashed at the same event a decade earlier. All crew ejected safely and India went on to place orders for both jets.

Fighter sales "are driven by high order political realities, which supersede a one-off incident", said Birkey.

The Tejas programme began in the 1980s as India sought to replace vintage Soviet-origin MiG-21s, the last of which retired as recently as September after numerous extensions due to slow Tejas deliveries by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL).

The state-owned company has 180 of the advanced Mk-1A variant on order domestically but is yet to begin deliveries due to engine supply chain issues at GE Aerospace.

A former HAL executive who left the company recently said the crash in Dubai "rules out exports for now".

Target markets included Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and HAL also opened an office in Malaysia in 2023. "The focus for the coming years would be on boosting production of the fighter for domestic

use," the former executive said, requesting anonymity.

Shrinking squadrons

But the Indian Air Force is worried about its shrinking fighter squadrons, which have fallen to 29 from an approved strength of 42, with early variants of the MiG-29, Anglo-French Jaguar and French Mirage 2000 set to retire in coming years.

"The Tejas was supposed to be their replacement," an IAF officer said. "But it is facing production issues."

As an alternative, India is considering off-the-shelf purchases to fill immediate gaps, with options including more French Rafales, two Indian defence officials said, adding that India still plans to add to about 40 Tejas already in service.

India is also weighing competing offers from the US and Russia for fifth-generation F-35 and Su-57 fighters — two advanced models also rarely sharing a stage in Dubai this week.

India has for years been among the world's biggest arms importers, but has increasingly projected the Tejas as an example of self-reliance with Prime Minister Narendra Modi taking a sortie in the fighter in November 2023.

Like most fighter programmes, the Tejas has fought for attention at the intersection of technology and diplomacy.

Regional rivalry plays out

Both India and Pakistan were present in force at the show, where the Tejas performed multiple aerial displays in the presence of the rival Pakistani contingent.

Pakistan disclosed the signing of a provisional agreement with a "friendly country" to supply its JF-17 Thunder Block III fighter, co-developed with China.

On the ramp, a JF-17 was flanked by arms including PL-15E, the export variant of a family of Chinese missiles that US and Indian officials say brought down at least one French Rafale used by India during an aerial battle with Pakistan in May.

At an exhibition stand, manufacturer PAC distributed brochures touting the JF-17, one of two models deployed by Pakistan during the four-day conflict, as "battle-tested".

India is a lot more careful with the Tejas, which was not actively used in the four-day conflict in May, Indian officials have said, without giving any reasons.

Nor did it participate in the annual Republic Day aerial display in New Delhi on Jan 26 due to what officials said were safety reasons associated with single-engine aircraft.



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SIAL handles a million passengers and thousands of tons of cargo in 2025

Sialkot International Airport (SIAL), Pakistan's first privately owned international airport, stands as a testament to the far-sighted vision of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the dynamic business community of Sialkot. Since commencing operations in 2007 and successfully completing 18 years of service, the airport continues to scale new heights in aviation excellence. During the year 2025, Sialkot International Airport served nearly one million passengers, offering premium travel facilities and seamless services. The consistent growth in passenger traffic reflects the airport's strong operational performance and service quality. Throughout the year, nearly 3,000 international & domestic flight operations were conducted to and from SIAL. In 2025, domestic flight operations commenced at SIAL by Pakistani-origin airlines AirSial and Fly Jinnah, further enhancing national connectivity. Beyond passenger services, Sialkot International Airport continues to play a vital role in strengthening Pakistan's economy by facilitating the export of thousands of tons of cargo annually.

With 11 airlines operating to multiple international destinations, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) recorded the highest number of operations, conducting

over 700 flights during the year. The airport also demonstrated resilience and operational maturity by effectively managing the challenge posed by a natural calamity. Marking another milestone in 2025, four new airlines commenced operations from Sialkot International Airport, including KSA-based Flyadeal, UAE-based Air Arabia Abu Dhabi, Pakistani-origin Fly Jinnah, and Vision Air International, further expanding the airport's global footprint.

Chairman SIAL, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, stated that Sialkot Intl Airport follows a strong passenger-centric philosophy and remains committed to delivering world-class facilities. He emphasized that SIAL represents a unique, privately developed aviation model in the region, which remains unmatched even across Southeast Asia. He further shared that the expansion of terminal infrastructure is currently underway to enhance passenger comfort and operational capacity. Chairman SIAL added that several international airlines are expected to commence operations from Sialkot International Airport in the near future, further strengthening its global connectivity.

Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. Waqqas Afzal, stated that Sialkot International Airport stands as a landmark achievement in Pakistan's aviation industry. He noted

that its establishment has provided a new direction to the country's aviation economy while continuing to facilitate growing passenger traffic, operational excellence, and the creation of significant employment opportunities for the people of the Sialkot region. He added that SIAL remained a trusted gateway for the passengers for their departures, arrivals, reunions, and homecomings.

The Chief Executive Officer Sialkot International Airport (SIAL), Air Vice Marshal Tanveer Ashraf Bhatti (R), stated that the Sialkot Intl Airport is committed to its tireless efforts to ensure safe departures & arrivals with an aim to carry a dependable gateway for the region. CEO SIAL said that the airport's continued success is a collective achievement, driven by the strategic guidance of the Board of Directors, their exemplary leadership, the unwavering commitment and round-the-clock efforts of SIAL employees, and the valued cooperation of all government and private stakeholders operating at the airport. He expressed gratitude to Almighty Allah for the achievements realized during 2025 and conveyed optimism that, Insha'Allah, the year ahead will bring further growth, operational excellence, and sustained success for Sialkot International Airport.





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An interview with CEO SIAL

SIAL strides towards progress and profitability

Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) has completed 18 years of successful operations this month. Since commencing operations in 2007, the airport has witnessed multifold growth in passenger traffic and cargo handling. The continuous increase in airline operators, flight frequencies, and infrastructure development reflects SIAL's steady progress toward long-term profitability and operational excellence.

The Flyer International recently had the opportunity to interview SIAL's Chief Executive Officer, Air Vice Marshal (Retd) Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti.

Air Vice Marshal Bhatti joined Sialkot International Airport as CEO on February 15, 2024. Prior to this role, he served as Additional Director General of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority from 2018 to 2020. Commissioned into the GD (P) Branch of the Pakistan Air Force in December 1988, he has accumulated over 3,800 flying hours. He holds a Master's degree in National Security and War Studies and is a graduate of the Combat Command School, Air War College, and the National Defence University. In recognition of his services, he has been awarded the Sitara-i-Imtiaz (Military).

Speaking to *The Flyer International*, AVM Bhatti stated that SIAL has made significant progress since he assumed office. Several new airlines have commenced operations from SIAL, while others are in the planning stages. Currently, the airport hosts 11 airlines operating about 74 flights per week.

Recently, Fly Jinnah launched four weekly flights from Sialkot to Karachi starting December 2025, while Flyadeal increased its frequency to four flights per week from December 11. Turkish Airlines is also planning to begin operations from SIAL once hotel accommodation for crew becomes available. The Ramada Plaza Hotel structure has been completed, and furnishing work is progressing rapidly. The hotel is expected to become operational soon, which will further attract international carriers.

AVM Bhatti also highlighted that an agreement to establish Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) facilities through a joint venture between SIAL and RAMC UAE was signed in 2023. Recent meetings with RAS also have been held, and it is hoped that these facilities will become operational in the near future.

SIAL is equipped with modern

ground-handling equipment and a well-trained workforce, enabling foreign carriers to be cleared within 50 minutes and dispatched promptly. This efficiency serves as a major incentive for airlines and enhances passenger convenience.

Being located in one of Pakistan's leading export-oriented cities, SIAL plays a vital role in facilitating exporters and cargo agents. The airport has developed advanced cargo-handling facilities, including EDS (Explosive Detection System), TSA (Transport security Administration), and cold storage facilities. Vision Air has recently commenced cargo charter operations from SIAL. It operates daily flight except Sundays.

At present, SIAL has the capacity to handle 3,000 passengers per day, which is expected to double in the near future. Expansion work is underway, including widening of the departure lounge, increasing international passenger boarding bridges from two to three, and expanding the briefing hall.

These developments underscore SIAL's commitment to growth, efficiency, and its role as a key aviation hub supporting Pakistan's economy.

**SIAL Chairman,
Vice Chairman
meet GM
Turkish Airlines**

Chairman Sialkot International Airport, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, and Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. Waqas Afzal, met Mr. Sertan Yüce, General Manager Turkish Airlines Karachi. The discussion continued the momentum of strengthening cooperation and exploring future opportunities between SIAL and Turkish Airlines in the near future.



A meeting between SIAL and RAS was held to arrange MRO facilities at SIAL. Photo shows Chairman SIAL, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti Mr. Moetisam CEO RAS, Mr. M. Yousaf Director and Mr. Aamer Yaquab BDM SIAL.



**AirSial starts flight
to Abu Dhabi**



AirSial celebrates its inaugural Islamabad Abu Dhabi flight (PF-798)! Marking a pivotal expansion, the flight was launched amidst great enthusiasm from the key officials, and honored guests.



Photo taken at PCS head office Sialkot shows (R-L) Mr. A. S. Azad, Editor Flyer International Mr. M. Yousaf Chairman PCS, Mr. Rahil Jamil Cargo Sale Executive of Qatar Airways, Mr Naveed Ahmed and Mr. Khalil Alam of Pakistan Cargo Services.



The CAAP Region B Sialkot team comprising Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone (Vice Chairman) Mr. Anjad Fakhri (Member EC) Mr. Irfan Younas & Mr. Imran Safdar visited Pakistan Cargo Services Pvt. Ltd. and presented flowers to Mr. Muhammad Yousaf for as a gesture of well-wishes and good health.

Sialkot International Airport hosts Roadshow in Mirpur, Azad Kashmir



Sialkot International Airport organized a special roadshow in Mirpur, Azad Kashmir on Nov 20, 2025, bringing together prominent figures from the business, travel, business and media communities. The event was graced by the Chief Guest, Chairman of Sialkot International Airport, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti. Among the distinguished attendees were Vice Chairman SIAL Waqas Afzal, Former Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed, CEO SIAL Air Vice Marshal Tanveer Ashraf Bhatti (R), President Mirpur Chamber of Commerce Umar Shahzad Jaral, President Bhimber Travel Agents Association Syed Muddasir Hussain, and President Mirpur Press Club Abid Hussain. A large number of businessmen and citizens from various sectors also participated. During the road show, participants received a comprehensive briefing on Sialkot International Airport's operations, facilities, international airline partnerships, and the ongoing expansion projects shaping the airport's future. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman SIAL Hassan Ali Bhatti expressed his admiration for the people of Mirpur, stating,

“Every visit to Mirpur reaffirms my belief that this city is more than a geographical location; it is a mindset, a forward-looking community, and a rising economic force. Sialkot International Airport has always committed to public service. Our presence here is not just ceremonial; it reflects our sincere commitment to strengthening cooperation and building a long-term development partnership between Sialkot and Mirpur.” He further highlighted the vital support of travel partners, adding that more than one million passengers are now choosing Sialkot International Airport annually, an achievement made possible through the dedication and



collaboration of local travel agents. Addressing the audience, Vice Chairman Waqas Afzal said,

“Sialkot International Airport has become the most convenient and reliable option for the entire region. It has significantly reduced the travel challenges previously faced by passengers, eliminating the need to journey to Lahore, Islamabad, or elsewhere for international travel.” Former Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed thanked the people of Mirpur for their continued trust: “We are grateful to the residents of Mirpur who consistently choose Sialkot Airport for their travel needs. We look forward to strengthening this bond even further.” President of the Mirpur Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Umar Shahzad Jaral, applauded the visionary entrepreneurship of Sialkot's business community:

“Sialkot International Airport stands

as a remarkable model of self-reliance and commitment. Even after 18 years, no other city in Pakistan has replicated this success. It truly reflects the credibility and determination of Sialkot's business leaders.” CEO SIAL Air Vice Marshal Tanveer Ashraf Bhatti (R) shared updates on development plans, stating that the airport is progressing rapidly with expansion projects, including a five-star hotel and additional runways. He also highlighted that two new international airlines began operations at Sialkot Airport this year, with more expected to join soon. The event concluded with Chairman SIAL presenting appreciation shields to the President of Mirpur Chamber, the President of Mirpur Press Club, and the President of Bhimbar Travel Agents Association, along with certificates of appreciation to other participants.



MoU signing between UIC and Non-CASS Carriers concludes successfully

The Cargo Airline Representative Group (CARG) and United Insurance Company (UIC) proudly announce the successful conclusion of a landmark event held at the PC Hotel, Karachi.

The highlight of the luncheon was the formal signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between UIC and Non-CASS carriers. This pioneering agreement is the first of its kind in the cargo airline industry, designed to provide comprehensive protection for Non-CASS carriers against outstanding amounts and potential defaults.

Speaking at the ceremony, Shakil Ahmed, Deputy Managing Director of UIC, emphasized the importance of this milestone:

“This agreement ushers in a new era of trust and security for Non-CASS carriers. It reflects our commitment to strengthening partnerships and safeguarding the financial interests of all stakeholders.”

The event was attended by distinguished members of CARG, including Mr. Shujaat Ali (Chairman Al-Rahim Group) Mr. Hanif Zakria (COO Gerrys) Mr. Humayun Qamar (CEO International Freight & Aviation Pvt Ltd)



Mr. Yaseen (CEO Global Agencies Management) Mr. Imran Paracha (CEO Gul Aviation), all of whom welcomed this initiative as a transformative step toward greater stability and collaboration in the

cargo airline sector.

With this MoU, UIC and Non-CASS carriers have set a precedent for innovative risk management and partnership.

PIFFA signs MoU with Minhaj University



Mr. Jamil Ahmed Chairman PIFFA signs MoU.

PIFFA Training Institute and Minhaj University Lahore have officially signed an MoU to strengthen maritime education, industry-driven training, and collaborative research in Pakistan.

This strategic alliance between CRIMA and PIFFA aims to advance maritime studies, support blue economy

initiatives, and enhance professional capacity within the logistics sector.

The ceremony was attended by senior

officials including the Registrar MUL, Prof. Dr. Khurram Shahzad, and Director CRIMA, Dr. Muhammad Ishfaq.



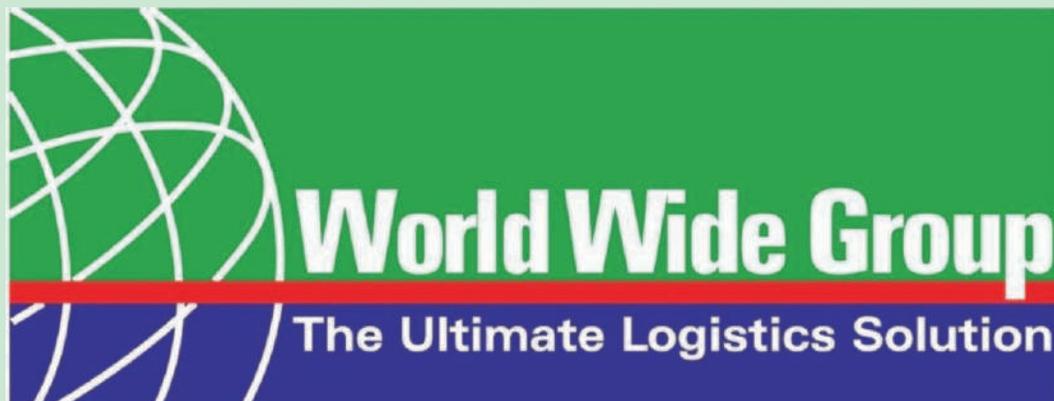
Heartiest Congratulations !



Sialkot International Airport

To SIAL and its management team on the auspicious occasion of its 18th anniversary, with best wishes for many more accomplishments in years to come.

Gratitude, Congratulation and best wishes on completion of eighteen years of operations.



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Amazon offers money-back guarantee to air cargo shippers



An Amazon Prime Air Boeing 767 freighter is seen at San Juan airport in Puerto Rico on Aug. 4, 2025.

Key Takeaways:

One year after launching an air cargo service for third-party shippers utilizing its parcel freighters, Amazon is offering a money-back guarantee to attract businesses that prioritize on-time delivery and upgraded its digital portal so customers can more easily quote, book and manage air shipments.

Amazon Air Cargo is the latest example of Amazon opening its logistics network and capabilities to outsiders using a model similar to how it sells access to cloud services through Amazon Web Services (AWS). More importantly, management is leveraging Amazon Web Services to further optimize outsourced logistics services, including the wholesale air cargo business.

Amazon has made a habit of commercially selling best-in-class services originally developed to support internal operations. The retailer built its own last-mile delivery and warehousing network to better control the customer experience, and now provides fulfillment and logistics service to other sellers on its marketplace. In 2016, it launched Amazon Air to enable next-day and second-day day delivery to more Prime members and now operates an air network with more than 100 cargo jets and more than 65 destinations. As e-commerce sales slowed to a more normalized growth rate and Amazon shifted towards more regional and local fulfillment centers, the company began offering excess air capacity to logistics providers and other businesses.

“With AWS we built massive computing capabilities for ourselves, and then learned how to share those with customers in really valuable ways. Air Cargo has a similar story. We built a dense, reliable, and interconnected air network to serve Amazon customers quickly — and now we’re discovering that many others can benefit from that same network,” said Kres Nielsen, director of business development at Amazon Air Cargo,

according to a transcript of his remarks on Oct. 21 at the Future of Freight Festival hosted by FreightWaves in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

Nielsen joined the Amazon Air Cargo team from AWS earlier this year.

“We’re working closely with AWS on integrated, cloud-based supply chain solutions — helping customers manage logistics more efficiently and intelligently. And I’m especially excited about how agentic AI can help — optimizing routes, identifying opportunities, and supporting customers with predictive insights,” he said during a Q&A session. “Our predictive and forecasting tools, the same ones that power Amazon Retail, can now help suppliers and retailers plan more efficiently across their supply chains. We’re connecting all of Amazon’s capabilities — freight, last mile, analytics — into unified, end-to-end solutions. Customers can now access analytics, visibility, and full supply chain support in one place.”

In September 2024, Amazon fully commercialized a wholesale air cargo service it had tested for years. Shippers can tender freight on an ad hoc basis, reserve regular blocks of space or charter entire aircraft. Amazon also offers air cargo service in Europe and India, where it operates more limited networks.

Amazon Air, the internal cargo airline, doesn’t have its own pilots or an air operating certificate. It manages the in-house parcel flows, routes and capacity, while relying on contract carriers to operate its fleet of mostly Boeing 737-800 and 767 freighter aircraft, along with 10 Airbus A330-300 converted freighters. This year it acquired a used A330-300 from a leasing company that will be reconfigured by an aircraft conversion specialist before joining the fleet.

Since the start, executives have reassured freight forwarders their cargo won’t be held from full flights to preserve space for Amazon parcels, pointing to dynamic technology, a vast ground transportation network and millions of route combinations that allows the company to make real-time transit adjustments and ensure shipments reach their destination on time.

“That control gives us the ability to move things efficiently and prioritize customer needs,” Nielsen said.

Amazon Air Cargo has doubled its

customer base over the past 15 months, a spokesperson said via email, but the exact scale of the business remains unclear. Launch customers included logistics giant Kuehne+Nagel, which is using Amazon Air Cargo to relay e-commerce shipments from China to the U.S. mainland via Honolulu, and DHL Express.

In the spring, Amazon began operating daily flights between Miami and Bogotá, carrying e-commerce packages to Colombia and returning with flowers and other commodities tendered by the cargo division of flag-carrier Aviance. Several months later, Amazon Air Cargo extended third-party cargo service to the Dominican Republic to support Miami-based cargo agent ALK Global Logistics, opening opportunities in the perishables market. Both routes are flown by North Carolina-based 21 Air.

Air Premia, a passenger airline based in South Korea, in July entered into a transportation services agreement with Amazon Air Cargo under which it transfers belly cargo to Amazon at Honolulu airport for onward carriage to the continental United States. Once at U.S. hubs, the Air Premia shipments are relayed to 45 cities, including Atlanta and Houston, through the Amazon Air network.

The for-hire air carrier is also moving thousands of Maui Gold pineapples from Hawaii to the East Coast in about 12 hours every week. Nielsen said Amazon has also connected U.S. cherry growers with markets in Asia with its Hawaii flights.

Money-back guarantee

To prove it can follow through on its promise, Amazon Air Cargo in October began offering a money-back guarantee to new customers in the U.S. and Puerto Rico. If a shipment doesn’t arrive within two hours of its scheduled time due to a service failure, Amazon will refund shipping fees up to \$10,000 per flight, according to slides from a presentation Nielsen made at The International Air Cargo Association’s annual exhibition in Dubai early last month. The deal is valid for 12 months starting with the first shipment.

Money-back guarantees have historically been limited to premium express products offered by integrated carriers like FedEx, UPS and DHL because their business models are built around end-to-end control, time-definite



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networks, and the ability to manage liability on a closed system. They are rare in the traditional air cargo sector because multiple handoffs between forwarders, airlines, airport ground handlers, warehouse operators, trucking companies and other intermediaries creates more variability and less direct control for any one party.

Some forwarders do offer performance guarantees for key accounts, but they tend to be contract-specific, negotiated, not widely advertised and tied to very controlled routings or premium handling arrangements, Brandon Fried, executive director of the Airforwarders Association, explained in an email message.

Amazon Air Cargo's money-back guarantee "signals a push to position their air network more like a classic integrator product — tight control, predictable delivery windows, and enough confidence to put financial skin in the game. If they frame this as a broad commitment rather than a niche service feature, it could put competitive pressure on others in the e-commerce and express space," he said.

John Costanzo, the president and CEO of LDK Global Logistics, questioned whether Amazon needs to offer a money-back guarantee because few can reliably provide dedicated, express domestic air service.

"I see Amazon Cargo as a physical version of Amazon Web Services, which almost everyone uses as their IT platform today. Eventually, I believe most forwarders will utilize Amazon's cargo network as it's a much better option for capacity, scheduling and likely pricing since Amazon is filling excess capacity and building their network with this additional volume. They already have a great value proposition without having to offer guaranteed delivery service between point A & B," he said in an email exchange.

Shipments must be booked through the new self-developed Supply Chain by Amazon console. Amazon recently moved from a manual, offline booking process to a digital one. The digital system provides instant rate quotes and capacity availability; immediate reservations, with guaranteed space for any booked shipment three days; real-time shipment monitoring; billing and payments; and support services in a single dashboard.

"We're trying to remove all friction and worry from what's often a very time-sensitive process," Nielsen said.

International Cooperation Agency (JICA) team visits Multan International Airport

Multan International Airport (MIAP) welcomed the JICA team, along with Japanese consultants, contractors, and local sub-contractors, for soil testing in connection with the upcoming Upgradation of the Level-03 Baggage Handling System (BHS). Soil testing was conducted in the presence of officials from CNS, vigilance, and civil sections.

During the visit, the team handed over two CCTV cameras to be integrated and tested with the existing airport security infrastructure.

Following the field activities, the delegation met with COO/APM to share findings and discuss the next steps for the commencement of construction work. COO/APM assured full support and directed all sectional heads, including A/CSO ASF, to ensure smooth passenger screening during the installation of the new system.



PIA signs cargo agreement with Bangladesh airline

Pakistan International Airlines signed a landmark cargo interline special rate agreement with Bangladesh's Biman Airlines, a move aimed at boosting trade and streamlining air cargo between the two countries.

This agreement will enter into force on Dec 1.

A spokesman for the national flag carrier said on Monday 17 Nov. that the key objective of this partnership was to streamline the movement of air cargo between the two countries.

Under the agreement, Saudi Arabia's major cities, Jeddah, Medina, and Riyadh, will be used as transit gateways. This partnership will establish a strategic corridor for regional trade, the spokesman said.

The agreement will reduce the logistical complexities involved in transporting valuable goods such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural products.

Through the extensive networks of the national airlines of both countries, quality and low-cost cargo solutions will be provided.

PIA is committed to providing Pakistani exporters and importers with access to the most efficient cargo services in the region, the spokesman said. -Staff Reporter

Between love and life

Prof. Safdar Sandal



Subramanian Swamy, a hardline BJP leader and member 'RajiaSabha' (2016-2022) gave a shocking statement in an interview with an American media outlet. [If] "Muslims becomemore than thirty percent (of a population); that country is in danger", Swamy told 'Isobel Yeung' of 'VICE' .. All people, according to him, are not equal. Muslims "were not in an equal category" he added showing a little of humanity in him.

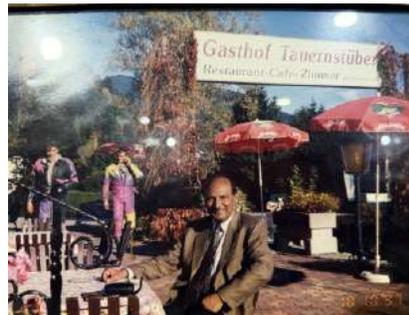


Since 'Partition', Hindu nationalists have been plotting to make India an ethnically Hindu-country, he declared. Their ideology called 'Hindutva', views Hindus only, as the legitimate inhabitants of this vast territory of land. The non-Hindus have no place here. The programmer and practicing it, is often dubbed by him as the 'saffronisation of India' (scenting the Hindus). The philosophy is based on divesting minority communities of all rights and privileges which are solely reserved for Hindus only. In a previous article, I had quoted an incident where a Hindu man had refused to sit and dine with my brother (being a Muslim), where he was invited as a chief guest by a Hindu business customer in Johannesburg (South Africa) upon former's visit. But as rightly said by Subramanian Swamy that all Muslims are not equal; I may conclude that all Hindus are also not equal. I have happened to make friends with some Hindu families living in Europe who astonishingly, prefer

to make friends with Pakistanis alone than with their own H i n d u community-people both of them living there. Below I wish to submit some pictures of a H i n d u (Punjabi)family who give to us greatest respect and hospitality, whenever we happen to visit them.

I call the madam as 'Bhabhi Ji' as per our common courtesies and culture, shared from centuries, by both of us. I remember my father had appointed some Hindu-matriculates to work as our travelling agents to travel throughout India and they were very nice, honest and serious in their liabilities. Most famous of them was Babuji Ram Chand. My own

private teacher who also used to come to our house to teach me on private tuition basis and there were many Hindu teachers who had worked in this capacity. I am talking of the period between 1940 – 47 when I was eight and half and have still memories afresh. I had tutors coming to our house on private tuition basis and they were really very nice teachers and good people. In fact I have very positive memories of them and their kind faces are still in my mind. I also had Hindu friends who commonly lived with us in Mohallah



Rangpura. When they departed we were not happy, rather cried over some good friends departing in bloodshed happening around not only in Pakistan but more severely on Indian side.

Besides, I have also friendliest of relations with my European friends plus customers. I feel really very happy lover this non-Swamy (or anti-Modi) teaching of my universal culture or belief which all civilized people of the world must adopt for a happy and good living.

'Between love and life' I can assuredly believe that I have enjoyed both of them and on this page, there are only a fragment of my recreation plus business activities. Both have run exquisitely successful together. This will be my cherished lesson to the younger generations, to build always, a fraternity among different peoples of the world with no communal, ethnic or religious prejudices, building affinities among all peoples of the world. This way, one will enjoy more his life ..

Islamabad, Ashgabat vow to strengthen bilateral relations



PM Shehbaz Sharif exchanges views with Turkmen President Serdar Berdimuhamedov.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday 4 Dec. met Serdar Berdimuhamedov, President of Turkmenistan, in Ashgabat.

According to the PM Office, the prime minister congratulated the Turkmen president on the 30th anniversary of Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan and on the UN designation of 2025 as the International Year of Peace and Trust.

While underscoring the importance of the historic and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Turkmenistan, the PM expressed his resolve to further strengthen ties between the two countries, particularly through enhanced trade and economic engagement.

He conveyed his deepest gratitude to the Turkmen leadership and government for the support extended to safely evacuate Pakistani nationals from Iran during the Iran-Israel war earlier this year.

The PM reaffirmed Pakistan's desire to enhance connectivity with Turkmenistan through land and sea routes and said that Karachi and Gwadar ports were ideally located to be utilised by the Turkmen side to enhance their outreach to South Asia and beyond.

While thanking the Turkmen president for the hospitality extended to him and his delegation by his government, the PM conveyed his warm wishes for H.E. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, National Leader of the Turkmen People, and reiterated his invitation to him as well as to

President Serdar Berdimuhamedov to undertake official visits to Pakistan next year, on mutually convenient dates, to be worked out by the two sides.

The Turkmen president thanked the prime minister for his visit and participating in the International Forum on Peace and Trust and assured that Turkmenistan was also keen to enhance its bilateral cooperation with Pakistan across multiple areas of mutual interest.

Earlier, upon his arrival at Ashgabat International Airport, the prime minister and his delegation were warmly received by Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Head of Transport and Communications, Mammetkhan Chakyyev.

The prime minister is undertaking the visit on the invitation of Turkmenistan president. He will participate in a high-level forum being held on Friday in connection with the International Year of

Peace and Trust 2025, the International Day of Neutrality, and the 30th anniversary of Turkmenistan's permanent neutrality.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Ishaq Dar, Minister for Power Sardar Awais Khan Leghari, Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar and prime minister's special assistants Tariq Fatemi and Talha Burki are accompanying Shehbaz Sharif during the visit.

Exports to five central Asian states contract

Pakistan's exports to five central Asian countries (CACs) shrank 9.59 per cent year-on-year during the first four months of the current fiscal year.

The country's exports to the region have yet to attain their full potential. Similarly, imports from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to Pakistan have dipped 63.59 percent despite regular high-profile visits to increase the volume of bilateral trade.

In absolute terms, the value of Pakistan's exports to the five central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — dipped by 9.59pc to \$62.545 million in July-October 2025-26 from \$69.183m. Imports from the region dipped by 63.59pc to \$15.795m in 4MFY26 from \$43.392m. The majority of these imports came from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Pakistan's trade with CACs is between \$400 and \$500m annually via Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has already implemented its transit trade agreement with Pakistan. Under the agreement, Uzbekistan has started importing goods under the transit agreement as well.

The exports to almost all countries posted a negative growth except Uzbekistan. Similarly, imports dropped during the first four months of the current fiscal year.

Exports to Turkmenistan stood at \$0.505m in 4MFY26 from \$0.663m over the corresponding months last year, showing a decline of 23.83pc. Imports from Turkmenistan rose 12.64pc to \$3.92m against \$3.48m over the corresponding months last year.

The export to Uzbekistan surged 51.63pc to \$32.95m in 4MFY26 against \$21.73m in the corresponding months last year. Imports plunged by 73.85pc to \$8.49m from \$32.47m.

Shipments to Kazakhstan dropped 16.72pc to \$24.54m in 4MFY26 compared to \$29.47m. Imports stood at \$0.263m against \$0.313m over the corresponding months of last year.

Pakistan needs to 'do more' ahead of GSP+ review



EUROPEAN Union Ambassador to Pakistan
Raimundas Karoblis

Pakistan needs to “do more” to meet its commitments under the GSP+ preferential tariff scheme, European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Raimundas Karoblis said on Wednesday 19 Nov., ahead of a review.

In an interview with DawnNewsTV, Ambassador Karoblis was asked whether Pakistan needed to do more to fulfil the scheme's requirements. “Yes, we are saying that,” he replied. “We are saying that it should be, well, needs to be, to do more.”

He said the visit would be a periodic monitoring mission to assess implementation of all necessary United Nations conventions, with “quite a lot” of meetings planned not only with state institutions but also with civil society organisations, human rights defenders, companies and workers.

A report would then be issued with recommendations based on findings of UN bodies that monitor the conventions, he added, stressing that implementation was “really important”. GSP+ status, granted by the European Union in 2014, has driven a 108 per cent increase in Pakistan's textile exports to the bloc through concessional tariffs.

In October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the arrangement until 2027, allowing Pakistan and other developing countries to continue enjoying duty-free or reduced-duty access for most exports.

The upcoming GSP+ monitoring mission, delayed from June because of the Iran-Israel conflict, will scrutinise Pakistan's compliance with 27

international conventions on human rights, labour rights, environment and good governance that underpin the trade scheme. Outlining areas of concern, the envoy pointed to human rights, the death penalty, blasphemy laws, enforced disappearances, minority rights, women's rights, child labour and forced labour.

“It will probably be the last monitoring mission of the present GSP+ scheme, because the new scheme will enter into force soon, probably from 2027, and Pakistan will need to reapply in order if it would like to continue with the GSP+ preferences,” he said.

“So it means that the report of the monitoring mission will be one of the most important sources assessing the progress and compliance with Pakistani commitments vis-à-vis the UN,” he added. Mr Karoblis said the EU had already identified the main issues it was asking Pakistan to address, while noting that Brussels did see “certain progress”.

On enforced disappearances, he said the issue was one of the EU's “priorities”. “We have questions and we see the problems in the context of the GSP+,” he said.

“Of course, we understand that some structures were established, such as the Commission of [Inquiry on Enforced] Disappearances. Of course, we will look into whether it is enough, whether it is sufficient, but of course, we will have a lot of questions on that for the institutions.”

Asked about the recently enacted 27th Constitutional Amendment, the envoy called it an “internal issue” but added that on judicial independence “we have different views”. He said the EU was seeking opinions from the opposition, think tanks, civil society and international organisations working in Pakistan. He also underlined the need to discuss recent military trials of civilians.

Noting a deteriorating human rights climate, former EU ambassador Riina Kionka had called on Pakistan in August to show 'credible' and 'visible progress' on human rights and labour reforms, signalling that the EU's next trade preference scheme would demand stronger compliance.

“Pakistan needs to show more visible progress, especially ahead of the upcoming GSP+ monitoring mission in November,” she said.

Similarly, in January, the EU had warned

Pakistan not to take its GSP+ status for granted. Olof Skoog, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, had urged the government not to use military courts to pursue cases against citizens, and opposed recent moves to restrict freedom of expression.

Istanbul train service to resume this year

Iranian Ambassador Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam called on Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi and discussed resuming the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) train this year.

During the meeting, both parties agreed to resume the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) train within this year, a key step towards revitalizing regional connectivity and boosting cross-border trade.

Iranian Commercial Counsellor Ms Kamali Moghaddam also attended the meeting. The meeting focused on strengthening Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations, enhancing political, economic, and trade cooperation, and appreciating the sustained goodwill between the two countries.

Both sides expressed gratitude for the positive engagement and mutual support.

Federal Minister Muhammad Hanif Abbasi emphasised the importance of increasing Pakistan-Iran trade volumes and enhancing mutual imports and exports. He noted that enhanced trade will significantly contribute to railway revenue and support Pakistan's national economy.

The railway minister said, ‘In line with the prime minister's vision, strengthening regional connectivity and linking the region through rail networks remains our top priority.’ Iranian Envoy Dr Amiri Moghaddam extended an invitation to the minister for an official visit to Iran.

Pak-Uzbek body to be set up for boosting pharma trade



Haroon Akhtar Khan, the special assistant to the prime minister on industries and production, chaired a meeting of the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Cooperation's 8th Review Session on Monday 17 Nov.

Pakistan and Uzbekistan decided on Monday 17 Nov. to establish a joint committee comprising the drug regulatory authorities of both countries and the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Association (PMA) to fast-track solutions aimed at boosting pharma-related trade between the two nations. The agreement was reached during the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Cooperation's 8th Review Session, chaired by Haroon Akhtar Khan, the special assistant to the prime minister (SAPM) on industries and production.

The meeting was attended by Uzbek Ambassador Alisher Takhtayev, as well as senior representatives from the federal and provincial governments, the Special Investment Facilitation Council, the business community, and diplomatic missions.

During the meeting, both sides held comprehensive discussions on expanding bilateral cooperation in key sectors, including textiles, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, mining, and information technology.

In line with the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan is accelerating its efforts to achieve the target of \$2 billion in bilateral trade with Uzbekistan.

Mr Takhtayev reaffirmed his country's resolve to deepen regional integration, stating that connecting the markets of Central and South Asia remained a central objective for both nations.

It was decided that a body should be set up that includes the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan, its Uzbek counterpart and the PMA to bolster the pharma trade between the two countries. The issue of slow certification of Pakistani medicines in Uzbekistan was raised by pharmaceutical stakeholders. In response, SAPM Khan assured the stakeholders that the certification process would be expedited.

Aviation ties

Aviation connectivity was another significant point of discussion.

The Uzbek ambassador expressed his interest in initiating direct flights from Karachi to his country, highlighting the potential for enhanced trade and tourism.

SAPM Khan emphasised that Pakistan-Uzbekistan air links were essential for unlocking commercial and travel opportunities. He added that Uzbekistan could serve as a new gateway for travel between the Gulf region and Europe.

Pakistan offers landlocked Kyrgyzstan access to its ports

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday 4th Dec. offered the landlocked Kyrgyzstan access to regional and global markets through sea ports of Karachi and Gwadar.

"No doubt, such initiatives will further reinforce the solid foundation of friendship and brotherhood between the two countries," he said while addressing a joint press stakeout along with Kyrgyz President Sadyr Nurgozhoevich Zhaparov.

"May the radiant suns of Kyrgyzstan and Pakistan unite to illuminate a future of enduring peace and shared prosperity for both nations, the region and the world beyond," the prime minister added.

Earlier, both the leaders witnessed the signing ceremony of the Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements between the two countries, reaffirming their resolve to elevate bilateral ties in trade, agriculture, defence, culture, connectivity, education, energy and political cooperation.

"We have just witnessed the signing ceremony of 15 MoUs and agreements, which will serve as a framework for structured, result-oriented engagements and closer institutional linkages between the two countries," he added.

PM Shehbaz expressed confidence that the Kyrgyz president's visit — taking place after a gap of two decades — would give a fresh impetus to the already strong bilateral relationship across all fields of mutual interaction.

"Since the establishment of our diplomatic relations in 1992, we have nurtured a relationship grounded in

Banking cooperation

The meeting also underscored the urgent need to strengthen banking cooperation between the two countries. The Uzbek side pointed out that the existing banking barriers were affecting trade transactions. Pakistan reiterated that financial integration was essential to sustaining economic cooperation.

Representatives of the State Bank of Pakistan assured the other side that banking challenges would soon be resolved and shared that several local banks were ready to facilitate bilateral trade.

It was announced that the National Bank of Pakistan would open a branch in Uzbekistan, enabling smoother financial operations for businesses on both sides.

mutual trust, respect, shared aspirations and common values," he said.

The premier further said that during his meeting with the Kyrgyz president, discussions highlighted the need to strengthen people-to-people exchanges through cultural initiatives, tourism promotion, and academic partnerships.

He said the two leaders also agreed to hold cultural events in Islamabad and other parts of Pakistan, along with similar activities in Bishkek. The PM said a business forum had also been scheduled during the visit to explore new pathways for collaboration in economic sectors.

At the business forum, he said, various trade agreements would be signed to increase the current bilateral trade volume of \$16 million to \$200m over the next two years.

'First official visit to Pakistan'

Speaking on the occasion, Kyrgyz President Zhaparov said it was his first official visit to Pakistan and the first by any Kyrgyz head of state in 20 years.

Calling Pakistan an important partner of Kyrgyzstan in South Asia, he said he viewed Islamabad's dynamic development, growing economic potential and ambitious infrastructure projects as a testament to PM Shehbaz Sharif's effective leadership.

During Thursday's discussions, he said, the two sides focused on activating collaboration in trade, economy, investment, transport, logistic, education and science.



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Pakistan enters bunkering market with first facility

The country has launched its first standardised bunkering operations at the Karachi Port, aligning Pakistan's largest port with global maritime safety and operational standards.

Bunkering at a port is the process of supplying ships with fuel (such as marine gas oil, heavy fuel oil, or alternative fuels like LNG) for propulsion and onboard machinery.

It is a critical, tightly regulated operation that involves transferring fuel from land-based facilities, tanker trucks, or bunker vessels to the receiving ship's fuel tanks.

Maritime Affairs Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Tuesday 18 Nov. said the initiative was launched to accelerate the modernisation of port services and a broader upgrade of Pakistan's maritime infrastructure.

He said the introduction of regulated bunkering would fill a long-standing gap in Karachi Port's service offering, enabling it to compete more effectively with established bunkering hubs in the region and beyond.

Vitol begins refuelling ships with its barge at Karachi Port as Cnergyico starts supplying low-sulphur fuel

The minister said the availability of safe, reliable, and efficiently managed bunkering facilities is expected to attract more international shipping lines to Karachi, particularly those seeking streamlined port calls and predictable service standards.

Earlier, there was no refuelling facility for commercial shipping in the country, and ships had to obtain fuel from Fujairah or Singapore.

The fuel supply and bunkering facility will be executed by Vitol, a Swiss-based Dutch multinational energy and commodity trading company, through its barge.

Meanwhile, the Karachi-based Cnergyico refinery has started producing world-class 'very low sulphur fuel oil' (VLSFO) for ship refuelling.

The facility has also become essential as India has banned ships that enter or leave its ports from calling at any Pakistani port.

Sources at the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) said that the availability of bunkering facilities would increase vessel traffic at the port, thereby improving revenue too.

Meanwhile, the maritime minister said that the move would translate into

higher foreign-exchange earnings through port fees, marine services, and ancillary commercial activity such as repairs, supplies and maritime logistics.

Mr Chaudhry added that the new service would enhance Pakistan's visibility in the international maritime market by demonstrating the country's commitment to modern, environmentally responsible and globally competitive port management.

He said compliance with international standards covering fuel quality, safety procedures, documentation and transparency was essential for building confidence among ship-owners and global trading companies.

The minister said the first phase of operations would begin in collaboration with one of the world's leading energy trading houses, which will conduct bunkering at Karachi Port in accordance with internationally certified practices.

He said the venture is expected to expand as domestic refineries supply larger quantities of refined fuel meeting global specifications, a development he described as a direct benefit to the national exchequer.

The minister noted that KPT had assessed existing bunkering practices, reviewed global procedures, drafted new documentation and engaged stakeholders to bring the service online.

He said the milestone reinforces KPT's ambition to operate as a leading regional hub and signals the government's intention to continue expanding port capabilities in line with international benchmarks.

SBP limits cash dollar transactions

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has decided to limit cash dollar transactions and instructed banks to transfer dollars directly into the accounts of the purchasers. Exchange companies, however, said the decision will not affect the purchase of dollars for travel or other purposes.

The SBP issued a circular with amended instructions related to foreign currency transactions for individuals. 'In order to promote cashless economy, it has been decided that, henceforth, all FCY (foreign currency) sale transactions to resident citizens of Pakistan for the purpose of deposit into FCY account will be executed through account-to-account transfer,' the SBP circular stated.

Exchange companies explained that the move means individuals buying dollars for deposits will no longer receive cash; instead, the amount will be transferred directly to their accounts. Those without foreign currency accounts will not be able to buy cash dollars. If you buy dollars from an exchange company for deposit in an FCY account, the company will issue a cheque of that amount, which will be deposited in the FCY account of the bank,' said the owner of an exchange company.

If a buyer receives a cheque from an exchange company, it will take at least five days for clearance when deposited into the FCY account. However, if the buyer has an FCY account in the same bank as the exchange company, the dollars will be transferred immediately.

There are restrictions for individual

buyers: they cannot purchase more than \$500 without providing the purpose, biometric verification and supporting documents. Travelers, students and individuals going for Haj or Umrah must provide complete documentation to buy over \$500.

Now, an exchange company cannot sell even \$500 cash to any individual without stating the purpose, said an exchange company representative.

Independent exchange companies said the circular will benefit bank-owned exchange companies, as the SBP has been encouraging banks to open their own outlets. The new rules will help banks' exchange companies attract more customers.

Currency experts said individuals buying euros or pounds will face longer delays. Any euro or pound purchased from an exchange company will be issued via cheque, which will take 20-25 days to clear if deposited in the buyer's FCY account.

Even if you buy foreign currency from a bank's exchange company, but your FCY account is in another bank, the transaction will take at least five days,' a currency expert said.

Money changers said the SBP circular prevents them from holding cash dollars in banks' accounts, meaning they will have to sell directly in the banking market.

We could perform the same transactions as banks' exchange companies, if we were allowed to hold dollars in our bank accounts,' said another money changer.

Exports to Europe rise to \$3.2bn

Pakistan's exports to European countries recorded a year-on-year growth of 5.66 per cent in the first four months of 2025-26, driven primarily by increased shipments to southern, eastern and northern European states.

In absolute terms, export earnings from the European Union (EU) rose to \$3.174 billion in July-October, up from \$3.004bn over the corresponding months of last year, according to figures compiled and released by the State Bank of Pakistan on Monday.

In FY25, the exports to the EU rose 7.44pc to \$8.863bn up from \$8.249bn in the previous fiscal year.

The uptick was due to a slight increase in demand for Pakistani goods, mainly textile and clothing products, in western, eastern and northern Europe.

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

Western Europe, which includes countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Belgium, accounts for the largest share of Pakistan's exports to the EU. Exports to this region declined slightly by 0.2pc to \$1.491bn in 4MFY26, up from \$1.494bn in FY25.

There is also a slight increase in exports to eastern, northern and northern Europe. Exports to northern Europe rose 9.84pc to \$257.388m in 4MFY26, up from \$234.322m in the corresponding months last year.

Exports to southern Europe grew by 12.19pc to \$1.159bn in 4MFY26, from \$1.033bn in the corresponding period last year.

In this region, exports to Spain recorded paltry growth of 11.35pc to \$533.37 million in 4MFY26, from \$479.01m in the preceding year.

Exports to Italy increased 9.07pc to \$431.02m in 4MFY26 compared to \$395.15m in the same period last year. Exports to Greece recorded a 4.27pc decline to \$45.02m during the months under review, compared with \$47.03m over the previous year.

However, exports to eastern Europe grew 10.03pc to \$267.071m in 4MFY26 from \$242.735m in the corresponding period last year.

Before [Brexit](#), Pakistan's major

export destination was the United Kingdom. In the post-Brexit period, Pakistan's exports to the UK slightly decreased to \$752.97m in 4MFY26 from \$760.834 over the corresponding period last year, a decline of 1.03pc.

In FY25, Pakistan's exports to the UK increased by 7.19pc to \$2.160bn from \$2.015bn in the preceding year.

Pakistan's exports to western Europe declined slightly by 0.2pc to \$1.491bn in

4MFY26, from \$1.494bn last year.

Exports to Germany surged 2.39pc to \$594.29m in 4MFY26 from \$580.41m. Similarly, exports to the Netherlands, the second-largest market for Pakistani goods, increased 0.54pc to \$504.88m in 4MFY26 from \$502.15m over the corresponding period last year.

Exports to France fell by 3.28pc to \$183.02m in 4MFY26 from \$189.24m, followed by a 5.69pc decline to Belgium's \$196.55m against \$208.41m.

Fruit, green exporters eye \$2bn target in three years



A file photo showing kinnos being processed.

A comprehensive plan has been finalised to boost the country's exports to \$2 billion within the next three years from \$700 million, announced Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters and Merchants Association (PFVA) Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed on Tuesday 2 Dec.

He said this year, 25 fruit, vegetable and value-added exporting companies participated in FoodAg, while buyers from 35 countries expressed interest in Pakistani produce and value-added items.

Addressing a joint press conference with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Secretary Sheharyar Taj, Mr Waheed claimed that for the first time, Pakistan received export orders from the United Kingdom, Germany and Oman during the FoodAg Pakistan held in the last week of November.

He said the Pakistan Horticulture Development Company (PHDC) and the TDAP would work together to strengthen the agricultural economy and achieve these export targets. The development company includes representation from the agricultural sectors of all four provinces and Gilgit-Baltistan, he said.

Mr Shehryar said expected business deals worth \$730m emerged at the expo, strengthening Pakistan's position as a reliable and strong partner in the global agricultural and food supply chain.

The exhibition had opened new avenues for cooperation, partnership and sustainable growth in the fruit and vegetable industry. He said the quality, capacity and global compliance of Pakistan's horticulture sector were once again proven through this event.



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Murad inaugurates Lost Cities of the Indus Delta



CM Murad Ali Shah inspects an artefact displayed at the exhibition

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has reaffirmed his government's commitment to promoting scientific literacy, innovation, and inclusive education across the province, saying Sindh's cultural heritage and scientific tradition form the foundation of one of the world's oldest civilisations.

He was speaking as the chief guest at a ceremony held at The Dawood Foundation's MagnifiScience Centre to mark Sindhi Cultural Day and inaugurate an interactive exhibition, Lost Cities of the Indus Delta.

TDF's Hussain Dawood, members of the Dawood family, educators, students, researchers and members of civil society attended the event.

Mr Shah said the exhibition was a powerful reminder that Sindh has been a cradle of knowledge, urban planning and creativity for thousands of years.

"Sindh is the birthplace of one of the world's oldest civilisations — the Indus Valley Civilisation — known for its scientific temperament, sustainable engineering, arts and craftsmanship," he said.

Says Sindh's heritage and scientific spirit go hand in hand

"Today, as we inaugurate the Lost Cities of the Indus Delta, we reconnect with our glorious heritage and present it to the new generation in a modern, scientific way," he said.

The CM praised The Dawood Foundation for its efforts in creating a national landmark that blends science, culture and community learning. He said that since its opening in 2021, the MagnifiScience Centre has welcomed more than 650,000 visitors and offers over 400 hands-on exhibits in physics, chemistry, biology, environmental sciences and everyday life concepts.

"What makes this centre truly special is its inclusivity — children, adults, teachers, differently-abled visitors, everyone feels equally welcomed and

inspired," he added.

Mr Shah particularly acknowledged TDF's contribution to public education through STEM programmes for government schools, teacher training initiatives and community outreach. "This is not just education — it is empowerment," he remarked.

The Sindh government, he said, shares the same vision of expanding digital skills, research culture, environmental awareness and future-ready learning.

He said that Sindhi Cultural Day is a reminder that culture is not limited to heritage alone but is also rooted in inquiry, creativity and openness, values on which the Indus Civilisation thrived. "This exhibition beautifully unites the scientific brilliance of our ancestors with the innovative potential of our youth today," he stated.

He appreciated the leadership of Hussain Dawood and the continued commitment of TDF to national development. "Centres like MagnifiScience are key partners in our

journey to build a knowledge-driven society," he noted.

He expressed the hope that the MagnifiScience Centre would continue to inspire future generations. "It is through science, culture and imagination that nations rise and prosper," he said.

The visit reaffirmed the provincial government's support for accessible science education and cultural preservation.

During the tour, the CM explored hands-on exhibits, interactive experiments, and immersive educational programmes.

Mr Hussain Dawood stated, "Science must be experienced, not memorised. MagnifiScience Centre provides that opportunity, a space where learning, discovery, and heritage intersect."

Vice Chair Sabrina Dawood added, "Karachi needed a place where children and families could engage with science in meaningful and enjoyable ways. MSC not only offers that experience but does so while staying connected to our cultural roots."

Sindhi Culture Day marked by messages of peace, tolerance



Artists perform on stage for a large crowd outside the Karachi Press Club on Sindhi Culture Day.

Sindhi Culture Day was celebrated across Karachi and the rest of the province with traditional zeal and fervour.

Rallies were staged in different parts of the provincial capital which later assembled outside the Karachi Press Club in the evening — the main venue of the celebrations. A musical programme was held outside the KPC and artists enthralled thousands of people, including women and children, participating in the festivities.

Wearing Ajrak, Sindhi cap and other traditional dresses, the participants danced to famous tunes and singers sang songs of great poets like Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, reflecting their longing for Sindh.

The singers — Ahmed Mughal, Komal Naz, Sindh Rani, Marvel Group, Dua, Faqir Mohammed Hasan, Kamran Solangi and others — sang traditional songs.

Organisers of the event said this time they have selected different themes of the

yearly event, like 'Empower women, prosper Sindh,' 'Free Sindh from narcotics', etc.

As compared to the past, this year leaders of different nationalist groups were conspicuous by their absence and speeches were delivered mainly by famous speakers and media persons.

They said that Sindh's culture reflects a centuries-old civilisation and rich Sufi traditions that promote humanity, love and tolerance.

They said that Culture Day renews the commitment to safeguard heritage and uphold the values passed down through generations. They also demanded expulsions of illegal immigrants and vowed to protect the unity of Sindh.

Poet Mahar Dribai said they were against any plan to divide Sindh. He urged Urdu-speaking brothers not to become part of any "conspiracy" to divide Sindh.

Anchorperson Mushtaq Sarki said IGP Punjab had announced plans to expel thousands of illegal Afghans from Punjab and asked the Sindh police to do the same.

Dodo Chandio, Aslam Haider Solangi, Bakhshan Mehranvi, Raja Memon, Ms Suhni Paras, Zulfiqar Ali Abro and others also expressed similar views.

They urged the participants to celebrate the day peacefully and demonstrate tolerance for other cultures and religions.

Colonial-era D.I. Khan Town Hall revived as modern Derajat Museum



The historical Town Hall of Dera Ismail Khan, a landmark built in the classic British colonial architectural style, has been given a new life after a major conservation and restoration effort.

Historical references place the construction of the building at around 1875, making it one of the oldest and most culturally significant heritage structures in the region.

For decades, the Town Hall served as the city's central space for social, cultural and community gatherings. It also housed a public library that remained an important intellectual hub for many years. With time, however, official neglect caused both the building and the library to fall into severe deterioration.

Recognising its historical value, the provincial government and the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums officially declared the Town Hall a heritage building. Instead of demolishing it, authorities opted for an "adaptive reuse approach." After careful restoration, the building has been transformed into a modern cultural institution known as the "Derajat Museum." The inauguration was performed by former chief minister Ali Amin Gandapur.

The Derajat Museum now showcases the rich history and cultural identity of the Derajat region and southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Its galleries display artefacts from the Gandhara and Islamic periods, rare coins, inscriptions, pottery and everyday objects from various historical eras that reflect the region's diverse heritage.

Officials note that one of the most notable features of the museum is that it is the first museum in the country developed through adaptive reuse of a historical building at this level of modern conservation. The museum has been equipped with advanced display cases and gallery systems that match international standards. These specialised glass showcases are considered among the best in Asia and have been used in Pakistan for the very first time.

Member of the National Assembly Faisal Amin Gandapur highlighted the

significance of preserving the building. He noted that the structure had been suffering from years of neglect, yet its foundation and design were so strong that engineers confirmed it could withstand seismic shocks.

The library has been restored in the adjacent building and is now being developed as a digital library, where all available historical records and documents will be accessible to the public, according to officials.

The revenue records of Mianwali, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bhakkar are also currently preserved in Dera Ismail Khan. Whenever these districts require old records for major forums, especially the Supreme Court, the documents are obtained from Dera Ismail Khan, as all historical records of the Derajat region are kept here.

This entire record is now being digitised. The documents are being scanned and added to a modern archival system to ensure long-term preservation and easy access. Notes and documents belonging to officers from the British era are also being scanned and digitised.

Within this building, a dedicated section is being established for the artists of Dera Ismail Khan. Local artists and artisans will be able to showcase their work here, and the preserved records of former artists will also be available in this space.

With its restoration now complete, the Dera Ismail Khan Town Hall stands once again as a symbol of heritage and learning. The transformation into the Derajat Museum not only safeguards the city's cultural memory but also creates a vibrant space for history, research and public engagement.



An eye-catching landscape of pink-tinged rocks, blue shores, and breath taking natural scenery near the Gadani Ship breaking Yard. The striking views showcase Pakistan's natural beauty, attracting both domestic and international tourists.

Pilgrims with certain diseases barred from Haj

The Saudi government has imposed a restriction on pilgrims with certain health conditions, including chronic and infectious diseases, from performing Haj next year, according to a notice on the Pakistani religious affairs ministry's website.

The ministry urged doctors to issue health certificates to the pilgrims to avoid legal action, warning that in case of any false and incorrect declarations, they would have to return from Saudi Arabia at their own expense.

Saudi monitoring teams will verify the validity of the pilgrims' fitness certificates at the entry and exit points and locations of Haj to ensure that only those meeting the criteria of participation.

PIBTL to handle Reko Diq's copper-gold exports

Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Ltd (PIBTL) on Monday 15 Dec. signed an agreement with Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) for the handling and export of its copper-gold concentrates.

The signing follows PIBT's execution of a Supplemental Implementation Agreement with the Port Qasim Authority (PQA), enabling PIBT to handle, store, and export copper-gold commodities, including minerals, metals, and other natural earth resources, said a press release.

PIBT will serve as the primary logistics and export gateway for Reko Diq's mineral output, reinforcing Pakistan's position as a regional mineral hub. The project is scheduled to commence operations from 2028 onwards.

PIBT CEO Sharique Azim Siddiqui said this agreement would enable exports from one of the world's most significant mining projects and serving as a cornerstone for national economic growth.

Barrick Mining Corporation's Group COO and Interim President and CEO Mark Hill said the agreement with PIBT marks another step forward in ensuring that Reko Diq delivers lasting value to all our stakeholders but particularly the people of Balochistan and Pakistan.

Favourites get kind draws for World Cup



US President Donald Trump receives a medal as he is awarded the inaugural 'FIFA Peace Prize' by Gianni Infantino during the World Cup 2026 draw.

Holders Argentina and leading contenders Spain were handed kind draws for the 2026 football World Cup in a star-studded ceremony on Friday 5 Dec. which saw US President Donald Trump receive FIFA's new peace prize.

The event in Washington started the final countdown to the tournament, six months out from the first-ever 48-team World Cup, with much-fancied France among those receiving a harder task.

Lionel Messi's Argentina will begin their defence of the trophy they won in Qatar in 2022 against Algeria, and will also face Austria and debutants Jordan in Group J. Heavily-fancied Spain, the European champions, will kick off their campaign against first-time qualifiers Cape Verde before also taking on Uruguay and Saudi Arabia in Group H.

Thomas Tuchel's England will hope to win Group L that features beaten 2018 finalists Croatia as well as Ghana and Panama.

Two-time winners France, meanwhile, face awkward tests against Senegal and Erling Haaland's Norway in Group I, which will be completed by an intercontinental play-off winner from either Iraq, Bolivia or Suriname.

The 2026 tournament will be held across the United States, Mexico and Canada from June 11 to July 19, with 16 more teams added to the global showpiece, up from the 32 nations involved in Qatar in 2022.

That means a total of 104 matches, compared to 64 games last time.

Trump seizes limelight

Trump seized the limelight, but Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum were also in attendance.

While snow fell outside amid freezing temperatures in the US capital, some of the biggest stars in the American sport and entertainment world appeared on stage inside.

The event was co-hosted by supermodel Heidi Klum and American actor and comedian Kevin Hart, and

featured performances by the Village People, Robbie Williams and Andrea Bocelli.

While the US will host the majority of matches including the final at the MetLife Stadium outside New York, three of the 16 venues will be in Mexico and two in Canada.

Sri Lanka Tourism Road shows 2025 held in Lahore



The Sri Lanka Tourism Road Show 2025, held at The Nishat Hotel, Lahore.

This prestigious event was exclusively attended by top travel agents, and the JS Group of Companies was specially invited to be part of this remarkable occasion.

The Directors of JS Group of Companies, Mr. Asad Sajjad Bhutta and Mr. Ahmad Sajjad Bhutta personally attended the event.

During the road show, they had the privilege of an insightful meet-up with the Sri Lankan Airlines team, along with distinguished dignitaries and excellencies from Sri Lanka, including the Director General of Sri Lanka in Pakistan, and leading travel agents from Lahore.

The event provided an excellent platform for meaningful interactions with top Destination Management Companies (DMCs) from Sri Lanka, enabling to explore and promote the exceptional beauty, culture, and tourism opportunities of Sri Lanka.

Additionally, productive meetings were held in Lahore with trade partners and other airline representatives, further strengthening industry relationships and future collaborations.

It was truly a wonderful and memorable event, fostering strong partnerships and opening new horizons for tourism development.



Sialkot to produce FIFA World Cup 2026 ball

Sialkot, Pakistan's renowned sports manufacturing hub, to produce all official match balls for the FIFA World Cup 2026, set to take place in the USA, Canada, and Mexico.

Forward Sports, the same company behind previous World Cup balls, is manufacturing the new Adidas Trionda, featuring advanced panel design and connected-ball technology.

This achievement highlights Pakistan's craftsmanship, precision, and global trust in its sports manufacturing industry, reinforcing the country's growing reputation in delivering world-class products for major international sporting events.

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Pakistani climber Samina Baig poses next to the ceremonial marker at the South Pole. The alpinist, who is pursuing the Explorers' Grand Slam, travelled to Antarctica as part of an international expedition. She reached Union Glacier in the Ellsworth Mountains around a week ago, and completed her ski-trek to the South Pole on Dec 14



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Going back in time with Uzbekistan's storied past



An Uzbek lady wearing a traditional costume posing for photos in one of the buildings in Samarkand.

"I am confident that the architectural magnificence of these medieval monuments will captivate you," remarked my guide Mariam as we approached the Unesco World Heritage Site of Registan Square in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

She was indeed correct.

Upon arriving at the location, the only word that escaped my lips was "wow", as I was greeted by three magnificent buildings surrounding a vast square.

Registan Square is a must-visit



attraction in Samarkand.

In an instant, I found myself entranced by the grandeur and brilliance of these structures, each featuring large arched entrances, turquoise domes, and round towers, their exteriors lavishly adorned with azure tiles and intricate engravings.

Constructed between the 15th and 17th centuries as madrasas or Islamic educational institutions by the rulers of the Timurid dynasty, these edifices were renowned for their focus on astronomy, science, literature, and psychology. (The Timurid dynasty was established in the 14th century by Uzbek Emperor Timur Lane, also known as Amir Timur.)

The sense of awe persisted as I explored the interiors of these madrasas and the in-house mosques, where the walls and ceilings of the rooms, doors, and arched entrances are embellished with blue, alabaster, and gold mosaics, symbolising Samarkand's affluent status during that era.

Streamlining Digital Transactions

It is easy to envision the substantial funding necessary to preserve these

structures.

Consequently, as a means of generating revenue, the government has leased out most of the former dormitory rooms of the madrasas to art, souvenir, and clothing shops. These businesses primarily sell glazed ceramic crafts, vibrant caps commonly worn by Uzbek men, and coats made from a traditional hand-embroidered textile known as suzani.

Where the action is

Uzbekistan, one of the only two double-landlocked countries in the world, has been the cultural heart of Central Asia for over two millennia.

Today, it is a prominent tourist destination, attracting visitors with its rich history, vibrant culture, stunning architecture, and delectable cuisine.

The majority of travellers arrive by air into Tashkent, the modern political capital of the nation, which gained independence in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The remnants of Soviet influence are still visible in the form of old Stalinist buildings and Lada cars on the streets.

Until the 15th century, Uzbekistan served as a crucial hub along the legendary Silk Route, an overland trade path that connected the East and West, facilitating not only commerce but also the exchange of cultures and traditions.

The cities of Samarkand and nearby Bukhara were significant crossroads that drew travellers, pilgrims, and scholars from distant lands, along with camel caravans.

Samarkand boasts a rich history that predates Timur's era by many centuries. More than two thousand years old, it is considered one of the oldest urban settlements on the planet, comparable to Babylon in Iraq and Varanasi in India. Historians assert that it was already a fortified city when Alexander the Great arrived in the 2nd century BCE.

Reflecting on his experience there, the once Great Emperor remarked, "Everything I have heard about the place is true, except it is more beautiful than I ever imagined."

Subsequently, the region came under the rule of the Turks and Arabs – who introduced Islam – as well as the Persians. They prospered from the Silk Route trade and ethnic exchanges until 13th century when Mongol leader Genghis Khan marched in and reduced everything to rubble.

After almost a century and extensive bloodshed, Amir Timur ended the Mongol rule and went on to construct a new and legendary Samarkand, establishing it as

the capital of his vast empire, which at its peak stretched from present-day Iran to India.

He was a ruthless military commander, yet he also served as a significant benefactor of art and architecture. This patronage led to the emergence of the Timurid Renaissance, which motivated him and his successors to construct mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, and monuments on an unprecedented scale, utilising artisans from throughout his extensive empire; tile-makers, architects, glass-makers, and painters from India, Persia, and Syria.

The ensemble we see today are those majestic creations.

Other attractions

While Registan Square is the crown jewel, another remarkable site that attests to this grandeur is the Shah-i-Zinda complex, a breathtaking avenue adorned with mausoleums of Timur Lane's relatives and trusted generals. Some of these mausoleums feature exquisite tile artwork, regarded as the finest in the Islamic world, particularly the one that serves as the resting place for one of his



sisters.

Interestingly, this complex does not contain the tomb of BibiKhanym, Timur's cherished wife. Her tomb is situated adjacent to a grand mosque that she commissioned in the 15th century. Known as the BibiKhanym Mosque, it stands as one of Samarkand's premier attractions, intertwining history with art and architecture.

Understandably, the most revered mausoleum in Samarkand is the final resting place of Amir Timur. Referred to as Gur-e Amir, this architecturally magnificent tomb, where he lies beneath a large slab of jade, serves as a monument of national importance, perpetually filled with locals and tourists.

I revisited many of these iconic sites at night, when there were fewer visitors, and the soft lighting created an enchanting ambiance.

Sadly, there is nothing physically present in Samarkand to truly connect



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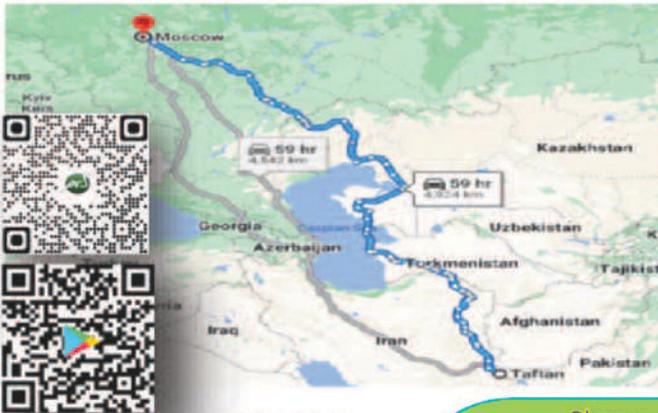


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with the Silk Route era other than some modern eateries that have alive the tradition of Chaikhana or a traditional Tea House, which then functioned as a resting place for fatigued travellers. These venues were important cultural hubs where merchants, traders, and locals exchanged news, ideas, and gossip while revitalising themselves.

Honouring the Silk Road's rich

history, they are named as "Chaykhana" (teahouse in Persian and related Central Asian languages) as well.

During our visit to one of these spots, we got to try some Silk Route era specialities like plov, a rice dish simmered in a big pot with meat, carrots, onions, and dried fruits. It reminded me of biriyani but with a milder kick.

We also tried samsa, a tasty meat-

filled pastry baked in a tandoor oven, and shashlik, which is basically grilled meat similar to kebabs. All of this was paired with traditional green tea, sometimes topped off with a slice of fresh lemon.

The food, the tea, and even a refreshing glass of freshly squeezed pomegranate juice – super popular in Uzbekistan – really revitalised me for more adventures in this epic city.

Murree braces for winter tourism

The district administration has completed all arrangements to facilitate tourists visiting Murree during the winter season and in the event of snowfall.

"Though there is no forecast of snowfall, the district administration has completed preparations for the winter season and established seven tourist facilitation centres in coordination with the Provincial Disaster Management Authority and the divisional commissioner," said Murree Deputy Commissioner Agha Zaheer Shirazi while talking to media.

He said that a mock exercise had been completed, while the Highway Department and other relevant departments had been provided with all available machinery to keep the roads clear.

He added that the district administration would maintain public safety, smooth traffic flow and uninterrupted essential services during snowfall and related emergencies.

Seven facilitation centres set up as departments placed on alert despite no snowfall forecast

He said that facilitation centres had been activated at key locations to assist tourists and residents through information sharing, route guidance, accommodation support and emergency response coordination.

The deputy commissioner said that the Highway Department would ensure the completion of road maintenance, patchwork and repair work on major and link roads across District Murree before the onset of snowfall to prevent traffic disruptions and accidents.

He said the department would also remove all construction material, debris



A family enjoys the snow in Murree on Jan 7, 2020.

and obstructions from roadsides, culverts, and drainage lines to ensure smooth traffic flow and facilitate snow clearance operations.

"Necessary machinery and equipment, including snow cutters, graders, loaders and tractors, will be deployed at strategic and vulnerable locations such as Jhika Gali, Kashmir Point, Pindi Point, Sunny Bank and Guldana to ensure a timely response during snowfall," he said.

He added that the district administration would maintain close liaison with the Meteorological Department for weather updates and early warnings and would disseminate advisories to relevant departments and the public through official channels.

He said the Health Department would ensure round-the-clock availability of medical staff and senior doctors to handle any emergency arising from snowfall, road blockages, or cold-related illnesses.

The deputy commissioner said the Price Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (Pera) would ensure strict enforcement of price control, anti-hoarding and anti-encroachment regulations during snowfall, particularly in markets, fuel stations and tourist areas.

"Motorway Police will ensure effective traffic management on the Murree Expressway and adjoining routes in close coordination with the District

Administration, NHA, Traffic Police and Rescue 1122, particularly during peak snowfall and tourist influx," he said.

He said the Traffic Police would implement a comprehensive traffic management plan for the entire snowfall season, covering all major and link routes expected to be affected during heavy snowfall and tourist movement.

He added that IESCO would ensure uninterrupted power supply to all essential locations, including hospitals, facilitation centres, control rooms, communication towers and tourist accommodation sites, especially during heavy snowfall and peak tourist days.

He said the Tourism Department would deploy the Pakistan Tourism Squad (PTS) at 17 Mile, Phulgran Toll Plaza and other key entry points to guide and facilitate tourists during the snowfall season, especially on weekends and holidays when visitor numbers are high.

The deputy commissioner said that hotel and guest house registration had been completed and the administration was monitoring daily occupancy. "Snowfall can occur at any time in winter. We need to remain alert, and instructions have been issued to all departments to provide all possible facilities to tourists during snowfall," he said.

Civil defence personnel have been instructed to remain present and available on the streets to ensure the safety of tourists and their property. They will be equipped with communication devices and tasers to break up any disputes.

The Murree tragedy in January 2022, in which 22 tourists lost their lives, was marred by accusations that locals demanded exorbitant amounts from stranded travellers who were forced to spend the night in their vehicles.

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