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Aviators group says pilots should have final say on flying in war zones

Pilots must be given a “final and non-negotiable” say allowing them to refuse to fly over or within conflict zones without influence from commercial pressures, global union group International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) said.

The position paper on Monday 6 April from IFALPA comes as the six-week-long Iran war is reshaping airspace across the Middle East and increasing disruptions to flights due to drone and missile attacks and interceptions, heightening safety risks for airline crew members and their passengers. Montreal-based IFALPA said airlines should recognise how conflict zone operations can create mental and emotional strain in the cockpit.

“The Commanders decision regarding the conduct or rerouting of a flight, including refusal to overfly a conflict zone, must be final and non-negotiable,” the paper said. “Additionally, this decision must not be influenced by financial or other incentives, career repercussions or other penalties, or commercial pressures.” While many carriers have canceled services to affected destinations, Dubai-based Emirates is now operating at about 69pc of its normal capacity and Qatar Airways at 26pc, according to Flightradar24 data. That equates to hundreds of flights per day in airspace that has been targeted by Iranian missiles and drones.

The United Arab Emirates has instituted “safe corridors” with specific flight paths, but planes still regularly enter holding patterns during attacks and in some cases have been turned back or diverted to other destinations when airspace was closed temporarily.

Qatar Airways said “the safety of our passengers and crew remains paramount” and all flights to and from Doha were being operated through dedicated flight corridors established in close coordination with the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority.

Emirates, which has also said it prioritizes safety, did not respond immediately to a request for comment. The IFALPA paper said airlines needed to provide pilots operating in conflict zones with mitigation measures like post-flight recuperation time and confidential support.

“If rerouting, delay, holding, elevated workload, diversion complexity, or sector uncertainty are recurrent and foreseeable, they should be incorporated into scheduling assumptions, fatigue controls, and roster buffers with additional safety margins such as augmented crew rostering, rather than repeatedly managed as an ad hoc exception,” it said.

Separately on Monday 6 April, the United Nations aviation agency said its governing council condemned Iran for unlawful airspace violations against Gulf neighbors like the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia affecting civil aviation safety.

“The council deplored Iran's illegal use of unmanned aircraft systems for military purposes against civilian infrastructure over the territories of the affected member states,” the International Civil Aviation Organisation

said in a statement.

The council's decision follows a paper submitted by multiple Arab states over Iran's use of weaponized drones against its neighbors, a source familiar with the matter said. Iran has submitted a separate paper regarding its territory that is to be heard during a future council session, although the source was not familiar with specific details.



An Emirates A380 aircraft is seen parked at Cornwall Airport Newquay recently. The aircraft, which arrived from Dubai a week ago, was reportedly on a 'short-term' stay at the airport due to the ongoing situation in the Middle East.

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PIA resumes direct flight to London after six years

The first Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) direct flight to London in six years took to the skies on Sunday 28 March afternoon after a special inauguration ceremony at Islamabad International Airport.

The national flag carrier is expected to operate four weekly flights from Islamabad to London. These will be operated to Heathrow Airport's Terminal 4, according to an earlier statement issued by the PIA spokesperson.

PK-785's voyage was inaugurated by Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen Muhammad Ali, British High Commissioner Jane Marriott, and PIA Consortium Chairman Arif Habib, who jointly cut the ribbon, state-run Pakistan TV reported.

The flight was scheduled to take off at 12:50pm, but faced a slight delay, eventually departing at 1:19pm.

On March 26, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif had said that the PIA would commence its first direct flights from Islamabad and Lahore to London's Heathrow Airport on March 29 and 30, respectively.

Last September, PIA had received the go-ahead to resume direct flights to the UK after a gap of nearly five years.





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Lahore Airport included in Route to Makkah project for Hajj

A high-level coordination meeting was held at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, to review preparations for the commencement of Route to Makkah operations from Lahore for the first time for Hajj.

The meeting was attended by Mr. Fuwaz Saud Al Shafiri, Saudi Director Operations Hajj, along with the Secretary of the Saudi Embassy, who met with the Airport Manager Erfan Khan and senior representatives of Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), ASF, Customs, FIA, ANF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other stakeholders.

Participants emphasized enhanced inter-agency coordination to ensure seamless processing of Hajj pilgrims at all stages. The meeting reaffirmed the commitment to provide maximum facilitation under the Route to Makkah initiative. Detailed discussions were held on infrastructure arrangements, including dedicated counters and holding areas for Route to Makkah passengers, adequate seating capacity, improved queue management systems, and clear signage across the terminal. Special focus was placed on ensuring smooth passenger flow, minimizing congestion, and enhancing operational efficiency.

The meeting concluded with a shared resolve to ensure a smooth, organized, and passenger-friendly launch of Route to Makkah operations from Lahore Airport.

Pakistan Airports Authority signs consultancy contract for greenfield airport in Faisalabad



The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) achieved a significant milestone Wednesday 1st April with the signing of a consultancy services contract for the construction of a new Greenfield Airport in Faisalabad. The contract agreement was signed by Director General PAA, AVM Zeeshan Saeed, and Mr. Rami Beydoun, Country Manager of M/s Daar Al-Handasah, the foreign lead consultant firm.

The ceremony was held at PAA Headquarters in Karachi and was attended by top officials. The consultant will provide comprehensive services, including a feasibility study, master planning, and design for the project.

The occasion was graced by Dy. DG Airports Engr. Saadiq Ur Rehman, Dy. DG Works & Dev. Engr. Sumair Saeed, Director Planning & Dev. Engr. Ghulam Abbas Shaikh, Director Finance Mr. Hafiz Saqib But, Addl. Director SP Engr. Shehzad Asghar, Addl. Director Design Engr. Faiz Ullah Khattak and other senior officials of PAA. The project will be executed under a joint venture arrangement comprising M/s DAAR-OSMANI&CO-RMJM Osmani and ACE (Asian Consulting Engineers), with M/s Daar Al-Handasah serving as the Lead JV Partner.

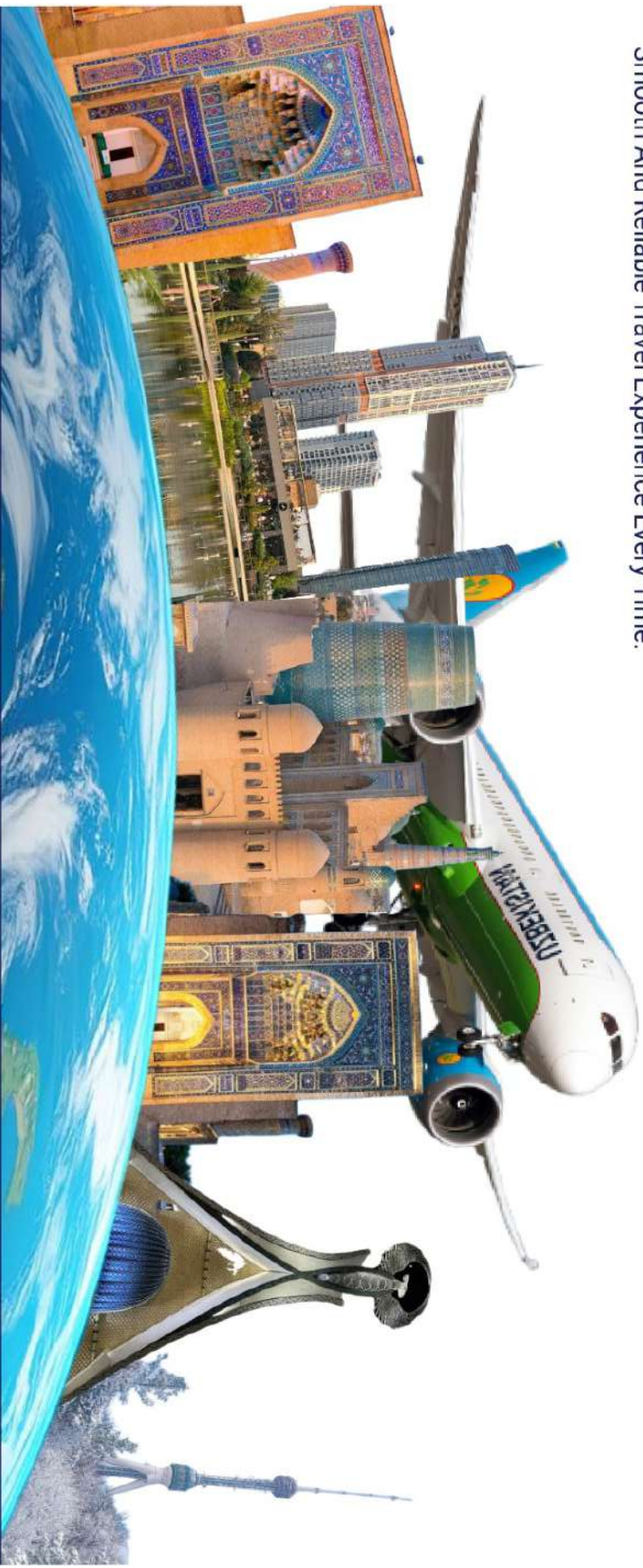
This initiative marks a major step forward in enhancing aviation infrastructure and connectivity in the Faisalabad region.





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Governor Gilgit-Baltistan Syed M. Shah briefed on aviation projects in GB at PAA, headquarters, Karachi

Karachi - The Honorable Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan Syed Mehdi Shah visited the Headquarters of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), where he was briefed on ongoing and planned aviation development initiatives in the region.

Key projects highlighted included:

1. Skardu International Airport Upgradation

PAA is undertaking a major upgrade, including a new terminal with capacity for 1.2 million passengers annually, along with expanded airside and landside infrastructure. The PKR 70 billion project, supported by international and local consultants, aims to boost tourism and regional connectivity. Completion is expected by July 2030.

2. New ATC Tower & Fire Station

A modern ATC tower and fire station are planned to enhance safety and operational efficiency in line with ICAO standards. The PKR 6 billion project has received initial approvals and is targeted for completion by July 2028.

3. All-Weather Flight Operations

Satellite-based navigation systems are being introduced at Skardu and Gilgit airports (PKR 832 million). Feasibility at Skardu is confirmed, while assessment at Gilgit is underway. If required, a new greenfield airport for A320 aircraft will be identified. Completion is expected by August 2026.

4. Ongoing Improvement Works

Additional works include terminal expansion at Skardu (PKR 730 million) and runway rehabilitation at Gilgit to ensure safe operations.

These projects are part of the Prime Minister's priority development portfolio and are being monitored through the Task Management System.

The governor appreciated PAA's efforts and expressed full support, emphasizing that improved aviation infrastructure will boost tourism, regional connectivity, and economic growth in Gilgit-Baltistan.



Jazeera Airways to operate Dual Saudi Bases, boosting seat and cargo capacity and strengthening Kuwait connectivity

Jazeera Airways has announced the expansion of its operations in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by adding King Fahd International Airport in Dammam to its existing operations at Qaisumah Airport, effective 26 March 2026 at 00:00 hours.

Operating from two Saudi airports will significantly scale up the airline's capacity, enabling it to offer over 20 destinations, more than 1,000 flights, 200,000 seats, and over 2 million tons of cargo capacity through 30 April. This expansion supports Kuwait's connectivity needs and ensures the continued movement of passengers and essential goods amid ongoing regional challenges.

The airline has established an integrated air-to-land model via Qaisumah, helping thousands of passengers remain connected with their families and workplaces despite disruptions.

CEO Barathan Pasupathi said the expansion to Dammam strengthens Jazeera's "connectivity bridge," enhancing both passenger travel and cargo flow while underscoring the airline's resilience and commitment to serving Kuwait. He also acknowledged the support of Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) and local partners.

Jazeera Airways continues to serve as a key carrier linking Kuwait with destinations across Egypt, India, Jordan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Türkiye, and the UAE, maintaining a focus on safe and reliable operations.

All flights from Qaisumah and Dammam will operate via Jazeera's temporary terminal at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds (Hall 8, Mishref). Bookings for Dammam flights opened on 25 March 2026. To book flights, visit jazeeraairways.com or the

Jazeera app.

The airline also remains committed to supporting cargo operations and supply chains in coordination with the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Flights cut, fares skyrocket worldwide amid ME unrest

Awar in Iran has sent the global aviation industry into a tailspin, forcing the widespread cancellation of flights after the closure of key Middle Eastern hubs and triggering a surge in airfares as jet fuel prices skyrocket.

Tens of thousands of passengers have been stranded after hubs in Dubai, Doha and Abu Dhabi were shut down, while the price of jet fuel has doubled in recent days to between \$150 and \$200 per barrel, upending airline finances.

The ongoing US-Israeli war on Iran and the subsequent threat to choke off traffic in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital energy route, is directly responsible for the chaos.

Middle Eastern carriers have been hit the hardest.

The UAE's Emirates is operating a reduced flight schedule, while Etihad Airways has resumed a limited schedule from Abu Dhabi.

Qatar Airways is also operating a limited schedule from Doha following temporary authorisation.

Elsewhere in the region, Saudia Airlines suspended flights to Amman, Kuwait and Doha, while Turkish Airlines removed Iran flights from its programme until March 12 and cancelled routes to Iraq, Syria and Lebanon until March 13.

The disruption has rippled across Asia.

Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific cancelled all flights to and from Dubai and Riyadh until March 31. Japan Airlines suspended its Tokyo-Doha route until March 21, and Malaysia Airlines suspended all flights to Doha until March 13.

European carriers followed with extensive cancellations. The Lufthansa Group suspended flights to Tel Aviv through April 2 and to regional hubs like Dubai and Abu Dhabi until March 15.

Air France cancelled flights to Tel Aviv and Beirut through March 15, while partner KLM suspended its Tel Aviv flights for the rest of its winter season and its Dubai flights until March 28.

British Airways-owner IAG cancelled flights to Abu Dhabi until later

Gerry's Group is proud to serve Jazeera Airways as its General Sales Agent in Pakistan and continues to strengthen the airline's presence in the market.

this year and multiple other regional destinations until later this month.

North American airlines also cut routes, with Air Canada cancelling all flights to Tel Aviv until May 2 and to Dubai until March 28. Delta Air Lines has cancelled its New York-Tel Aviv route until March 22.

The crisis has inflicted a severe financial blow, with soaring fuel costs being passed on to customers.

Asian carriers have been among the first to raise prices. Air India announced a surcharge of \$4.30 on domestic flights and \$20 on Southeast Asian routes, with increases of up to \$200 for North America coming March 18.

Hong Kong Airlines said it would raise fuel surcharges by up to 35.2pc from March 12. Australia's Qantas and Thai Airways have also announced fare hikes.

"Since early March 2026, aviation turbine fuel (ATF), which accounts for nearly 40 percent of an airline's operating costs, has seen significant price escalation," Air India said in a statement Tuesday.

European airlines have had a mixed response, largely due to their fuel hedging strategies. Lufthansa and Air France-KLM said they have secured a fixed price for the majority of their fuel needs for the coming months. In contrast, Scandinavian airline SAS announced a "temporary" price increase.

US carriers, however, could be more vulnerable. A report by Bernstein analysts noted that United, Delta, and American "do not hedge".

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby said on March 6 that he expects a "meaningful" hit to the carrier's first-quarter results.

Analysts warn that if oil prices remain high, airlines will have no choice but to pass on the increases. The timing is critical, as the war has erupted just as travellers in America and Europe book for the peak summer season.

"This conflict is already having a negative impact on people's willingness to travel. If you raise ticket prices, it's going to be a [new] negative effect," said Transavia France CEO Olivier Mazzucchelli.

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Japan moves to approve commercial flying car

The government has begun making arrangements to permit commercial flying car services carrying paying passengers as early as 2027 or 2028, according to multiple government sources.

Operations are expected to begin with sightseeing flights in urban areas, before eventually expanding to point-to-point services such as routes linking cities and airports. Passenger transportation by flying car, seen as a potential once-in-a-century revolution in mobility, now appears to become a reality sooner rather than later.

Flying car is a broad term for electrically powered vehicles capable of vertical takeoff and landing. They typically seat only a few people, are relatively quiet, and require only small landing areas, making them easier to operate even in densely built urban environments. They are expected to help ease traffic congestion in cities and provide a new transportation option in regional areas.

Applications have already been submitted to the Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Ministry for type certification under the Civil Aeronautics Law, a process required for aircraft mass production that also involves safety and other standards. The government appears to have concluded that the review process is moving forward in a way that makes the start of commercial operations feasible.

Commercial service is expected to begin with sightseeing flights in urban areas. Specifically, operations are envisioned for waterfront districts in Tokyo and Osaka. Within two to three years after that, the scope is expected to widen to include short-distance travel between two points and routes linking major airports such as Narita and Kansai with nearby cities.

Competition among companies developing flying cars is already intensifying.

At last year's Osaka-Kansai Expo, demonstration flights were conducted without passengers on board. In Tokyo, two consortiums were selected last year for the metropolitan government's flying car implementation project, one made up of nine companies including Japan



A demonstration of the commercial flying car in Osaka last year.

"JF-17 Thunder Surges ahead: how Pakistan-China fighter is outpacing India's Tejas in the Global Arms Market"

Pakistan's JF-17 Thunder is reshaping global fighter procurement dynamics through cost, delivery speed, and sanction-resistant supply chains, while India's Tejas struggles with production delays and export credibility in a rapidly evolving air power market.

(DEFENCE SECURITY ASIA) — The accelerating divergence between JF-17 Thunder export momentum and HAL Tejas stagnation is reshaping procurement calculations across budget-constrained air forces, where immediate operational readiness now outweighs theoretical performance advantages in increasingly volatile regional security environments.

Fighter jet reviews

Senior defence procurement officials evaluating lightweight multirole platforms are increasingly prioritising delivery certainty, lifecycle affordability, and sanction resilience, with multiple reported export contracts and negotiations reinforcing the JF-17's positioning as a deployable capability rather than a developmental risk.

This structural shift in buyer psychology—combined with production asymmetry and supply chain reliability concerns—has elevated the JF-17 from a niche joint venture into a strategically disruptive export platform, while the Tejas continues to struggle converting technical promise into market credibility.

Airlines Co. and another involving seven companies including Nomura Real Estate Development Co. Beginning in the new fiscal year, full-scale demonstration flights using actual aircraft are set to get underway in Tokyo's waterfront areas and elsewhere.

International rules governing flying cars are not yet formulated, but Japan's transport ministry has already established safety measures, including performance requirements for their batteries and a mandate to carry life jackets for flights over water. That gives Japan a position from which it can take the lead in setting the rules for commercial operations.

The government also intends to support the development of flying cars themselves. Last year, the Takaichi administration announced 17 strategic sectors that it would prioritize, and the list included aviation and space.

India-made Tejas

This divergence is being driven less by abstract platform potential than by the hard arithmetic of fleet recapitalisation, where air forces confronting ageing combat inventories cannot align procurement strategies with programmes still constrained by industrial bottlenecks and delayed induction schedules.

Tejas fighter specifications

For prospective buyers, the central issue is not whether the Tejas can eventually mature into a highly competitive export fighter, but whether it can be delivered at scale, supported reliably, and sustained without the uncertainty that now shadows its production pipeline.

The JF-17 benefits from a market position shaped by serial output, integrated weapons availability, and a lower-risk acquisition model that allows governments to convert procurement intent into operational capability without enduring prolonged developmental or logistical exposure.

Pakistan defense news

By contrast, the Tejas remains burdened by the perception that its export proposition is still subordinate to domestic force-generation pressures, a reality that weakens confidence among foreign customers seeking immediate force posture reinforcement rather than participation in a maturing aerospace project.



Centrum Air lands in Pakistan



New Gateway from Lahore to Central Asia and Europe

Centrum Air is officially taking flight from Lahore, marking a major milestone in Pakistan's international connectivity. Represented by Gerry's Group in the country, the airline is launching direct service between Lahore and Tashkent, creating a high-speed bridge between Pakistan and Uzbekistan with operations starting from 21st April 2026!

The representation was formally inaugurated on 2nd April 2026 during a high-profile launch event in Lahore, attended by dignitaries and industry leaders. The success of this launch was further underscored by the presence of *Muddasir Hassan*, Senior Vice President at the airline division of Gerry's Group, whose strategy continues to drive regional connectivity, and the unmatched operational leadership of *Seemab Zaman*, General Manager – North & Central, at the airline division of Gerry's Group.

The ceremony was led by a comprehensive showcase by Mr. *Adilmirza Khalmirzaev*, Head of Sales, Centrum Air, and *Shahbaz M. Khan*, Head of Marketing, at the airline division of Gerry's Group, detailing the airline's specifics and its role in contributing to the growth of the global aviation industry.

The event also featured a keynote address by *Dr. Pir Tariq Sharifzada*, Founder President of the Pak- Uzbek Friendship Council.



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No war-charges on cargo, agents assure govt

Shipping agents have assured the government that no war-related surcharges are being imposed on in-transit shipments or cargo on other routes.

Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry held a high-level meeting here on Saturday 4 April with officials of the ministry and port authorities to address challenges faced by importers and exporters.

The minister said around 10 complaints lodged by importers and exporters against higher charges by the shipping sector have been processed so far. "We will ensure accountability and transparency to protect our trading community," Mr Chaudhry emphasised.

He noted that proactive measures are already in place and stressed the need for strict and regular monitoring of all government directives. The meeting was informed that key industry bodies, including the Pakistan Ship Agents Association and the All Pakistan Shipping Association, will issue advisories directing members to refrain from charging retention fees on export containers stranded at ports.

Additionally, terminal operators have agreed to offer relief on demurrage charges for export containers that arrived before March 3, 2026. These steps form part of a broader government strategy to ease pressure on the country's ports amid persistent logistical challenges.

"We are coordinating closely with port authorities, customs officials and shipping stakeholders to streamline cargo movement and reduce financial burdens on exporters," the minister said.

The initiatives aim to improve efficiency in the blue economy while supporting exporters navigating global disruptions.

The minister's announcements come at a critical time for the maritime sector, underscoring the government's resolve to build a resilient and efficient trade environment.

Traders have been urged to remain vigilant and promptly report any irregularities through official channels. Meanwhile, Pakistan Customs issued circulars directing traders to report any unjustified surcharges.

Gerry's GSA, Centrum Air opens office in Lahore



Celebrating the successful inauguration and ribbon-cutting ceremony of Centrum Air's office in Lahore, Pakistan. This milestone marks an important step in expanding aviation connectivity and enhancing travel opportunities within the region. Gerry's is proud to serve as the official General Sales Agent (GSA) for Centrum Air in Pakistan, supporting their operations and growth in this dynamic market.

The airlines is launching operations between Lahore and Tashkent from 21st April 2026.

IATA fears jet fuel supply will not recover soon

The head of a body representing global airlines warned on Wednesday 8 April it would take months for jet fuel supply to recover even if Iran reopened the Strait of Hormuz, given disruptions to Middle East refining capacity. Fuel is the second-largest expense for air carriers after labour, typically accounting for about 27pc of operating expenses, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Iran's closure of the Strait of Hormuz as part of retaliatory moves in the war has choked supplies of jet fuel globally and news of a ceasefire and the possibility of safe passage through Hormuz sent airline stocks soaring. Willie Walsh, director general of IATA, told reporters that while he expected crude oil prices to fall, jet fuel costs were likely to remain slightly elevated.

"If it were to reopen and remain open, I think it will still take a period of months to get back to where supply needs to be given the disruption to the refining capacity in the Middle East," Walsh said. He shrugged off comparisons to the Covid-19. "This is not similar to Covid. This is not a crisis anywhere close to what we experienced."

Islamabad International Airport becomes Pakistan's first 5G airport

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) is pleased to announce that Islamabad International Airport has become the first airport in Pakistan to offer 5G services.

Passengers at Islamabad International Airport will now benefit from ultra-fast 5G internet, enabling seamless live streaming, crystal-clear video calls, high-speed browsing, and enhanced digital services. 5G connectivity is currently active outside the airport building and in surrounding areas. Technical work is progressing rapidly to ensure full and improved 5G coverage inside the terminal building. The 5G facility will soon be introduced at other major airports across the country as part of its commitment to modernising Pakistan's aviation infrastructure and providing world-class passenger facilities.

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War risk, freight surge cloud trade outlook

Industry stakeholders have expressed mixed views on supply chain risks linked to imported raw materials following the imposition of an illegal war by the US-Israel on Iran, with some saying there is no immediate threat of shortages due to adequate inventories but warning that soaring freight and war risk charges pose a serious challenge for future trade.

Commodity traders, however, claim that many of their members have temporarily suspended import and export activities until freight and war risk premiums stabilise.

President of the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (PPMA) Tauqeer-ul-Haq said the pharmaceutical industry faced no serious supply disruption as most of its raw materials were imported from China. He added that the sector typically maintains raw material inventories sufficient for five to six months.

Jawed Bilwani, a representative of the value-added textile sector and former chairman of the Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers Association (PHMA), said the industry also sourced a significant share of raw materials from China. However, he noted that freight rates had surged by more than 100 per cent, while a Rs55 per litre increase in diesel prices had pushed up transportation costs.

The value-added sector usually maintains raw material stocks for two to three months and places fresh import orders when stocks fall to around one

month, he said. Industries holding only one month's inventory could face difficulties if they delay reordering due to high freight costs.

To reduce the cost of doing business, Mr Bilwani urged the government to cut motorway and highway toll rates by 50pc, offer freight subsidies to exporters, facilitate import shipments from China through land routes, ensure uniform terminal operator charges and abolish taxes on fuel prices.

President of the North Karachi Association of Trade and Industry (NKATI) Faisal Moiz Khan said the escalating conflict had severely disrupted shipping via the Strait of Hormuz, through which around 80pc of Pakistan's crude oil imports transit. Combined with the Red Sea crisis, this has halted or rerouted shipping, pushed up global oil prices and driven freight costs higher.

He warned that delays could emerge in imports of chemicals, fertilisers, polymers and other essential inputs. "Industry has warned of a 10-20pc drop in exports, particularly in textiles, in March, while higher import costs could worsen the trade deficit and balance of payments position," he said.

Many sectors were operating with tight inventories — often only 15 to 30 days for critical items — raising the risk of shortages or production disruptions if the situation persists, Mr Moiz added.

Freight and war risk charges have risen sharply, with container rates on

routes such as Shanghai-Jebel Ali climbing from about \$1,800 to more than \$4,000 per 40-foot container, he said. Shipping lines are also imposing emergency surcharges of \$1,500 to \$3,500 per container along with war-risk premiums, in some cases rising more than tenfold, increasing logistics costs by 15-30pc and adding to inflationary pressures.

He further said local transport fares had increased by 15-20pc for buses, goods carriers and rickshaws, pushing up prices of food and other commodities during Ramadan and raising business costs while squeezing household budgets.

Higher energy and import bills could strain foreign exchange reserves, currently around \$16 billion, widen the current account deficit, revive inflationary pressures and dampen economic growth, Mr Moiz warned. A prolonged Middle East conflict could also trigger balance of payments risks despite stable short-term fuel stocks.

Karachi Retail Grocers Association (KRGGA) Chairman Rauf Ibrahim claimed that imports and exports of commodities had been temporarily suspended due to a surge in freight rates. However, he said there were no shortages of edible items. He urged the government to strictly monitor hoarding and black-marketing and take steps to control prices.

Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council Executive Director retired Brig Sher Shah Malik said the local industry maintains a strategic sufficient inventory of approximately 0.9 million

ACAAP Region 'B' Sialkot organises DGR course



The DGR Course held at Zonal ACAAP Office Sialkot from 6-10 April 2026 was arranged for members under the leadership of Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone Vice Chairman, Mr. Amjad Fakhri Member EC and Training & Education Subcommittee Region "B" Sialkot.

Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone (Vice Chairman) and Mr. Amjad Fakhri (Member EC) hosted a lunch for Mr. Abdul Rasheed DGR Instructor, students and Training & Education Subcommittee, Airline Matter Subcommittee Region "B" and ACAAP staff at Zonal ACAAP office Sialkot.



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cont. from page 19

tonnes of urea to support the supply chain for the upcoming kharif season, provided gas supply to fertiliser plants remains uninterrupted. This domestic buffer not only ensures the availability of essential inputs for farmers but also protects national food security by stabilising production costs and sustaining agricultural output during periods of global market turbulence.

However, DAP supplies are likely to be impacted if the Gulf crisis is prolonged, as Pakistan's only plant, Fauji Fertiliser Bin Qasim, produces 50pc of the national requirements, he said.

The Middle East tension has disrupted the global fertiliser supply chain, exposing the vulnerability of countries dependent on imports, he said, adding that the halt in Qatari gas supplies — an essential feedstock for ammonia production — combined with the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a critical maritime route for fertiliser trade, has sharply constrained global availability of urea and related inputs.

As Gulf producers collectively account for roughly 30pc of global urea exports, the supply shock has pushed international urea prices to near-record levels of approximately \$740-750 per tonne.

“In Pakistan, local production effectively insulates the domestic market from extreme international price fluctuations,” he said, adding that currently, domestic urea prices remain around Rs4,400 per 50 kg bag versus potential import parity levels estimated between Rs13,700-14,700 per bag under prevailing global conditions.

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Senior Vice President Saquib Fayyaz Magoon said the sudden suspension of vessel operations to the Middle East had brought export logistics to a standstill, causing huge losses to the exporters.

Exporters had already moved their consignments to the ports in line with shipment schedules, but with vessels no longer calling, terminal operators were now asking exporters to retrieve their containers. “Bringing containers back to the factories and then returning them to the port later would result in massive additional costs, which many exporters simply cannot absorb,” he said.

Mr Magoon urged the government to immediately announce a minimum 30day special relief window at all ports and to fully waive demurrage and detention charges in view of the extraordinary situation.

Rice consignments have been particularly affected. Profit margins in the rice export sector are already narrow, and any forced offloading of containers and retransportation of goods back to warehouses would sharply increase handling and logistics costs, resulting in heavy financial losses for exporters, he said.

Why is Airbus creating a new A220?



Last year, Airbus confirmed that the passenger-favorite single-aisle Airbus A220 will be getting an interior upgrade with the arrival of Airspace, an award-winning design concept that focuses on delivering an exceptional passenger experience. The upgrade will bring the A220 in line with other modern Airbus aircraft families, such as the A350, A330neo and A320neo, with the package featuring lighter, larger, and simpler storage, and upgraded lighting.

The upgrade is expected to arrive this year, with retrofits being available in the next few years for older A220 aircraft as well. In the same announcement, the manufacturer said that a 160-seat A220-300 would become available in 2027, increasing the number of potential passengers on the variant by 10. Let's examine why the Airspace upgrade will be a good thing for airlines that fly the A220.

What Is The Airspace Cabin Like?



The Airspace cabin aims to be a relaxing, inspiring, and beautiful space for passengers, enhancing their onboard experience. Simultaneously, it aims to increase functionality and the economic

viability of the plane, which is a desirable aspect for airlines. Highly customizable under-bin lights offer airlines a flexible canvas on which to promote their brand. With 16 million LED colors, it is easy to create a comfortable ambiance for passengers throughout the day and night. Per Airbus, the lights have proven to help reduce jet lag by up to four hours.

In the case of the A220, the airplane already has the largest windows in its class, measuring 11 inches by 16 inches: this makes them larger than the windows of the Boeing 777. The Airspace design takes advantage of that, with a tapered wall around each window, like a castle's arrow-slits. With one or two of these large windows per row, plenty of natural light enters the cabin. The windows are also mounted at eye height for comfortable and convenient viewing of the sky and landscape.

One of the key features is the Airspace XL bins, which are 20% lighter than the original overhead storage compartments and offer a 15% increase in bag capacity. In addition to the saved weight, the new bins have simpler mechanisms and fewer parts for more efficient baggage loading and bin closing, which are expected to have a significant improvement on the aircraft's turnaround time at the airport.



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SIAL hosts Executive Committee meeting



Sialkot International Airport Limited convened its Executive Committee meeting, chaired by the worthy Chairman SIAL Mr Hassan Ali Bhatti. Esteemed members of the committee participated and thoughtfully deliberated on key matters aimed at strengthening operational excellence and future direction.

Gul Group hosts a joyful event

Gul Group recently hosted a joyful event to celebrate an Eid Millan party. The gathering showcased warm and enjoyable moments shared with the Air China team, filled with smiles and happy moments. The photo shows, Mr. Saad (CA), Mr. Rais (CA), Mr. Imran Peracha (CEO), Mr. Khalid Khan (GM), and Mr. Faisal (CA) are seen cutting the cake together. Additionally, in the next picture, Madam Lubna Peracha, along with the female staff, is also participating in the cake-cutting ceremony.



PIA cuts operations, ends discounts

The Pakistan International Airlines has ended all discounts being provided to passengers, with concessions remaining in place only for children and infants, and has also cut its flight operations due to the continuous rise in the prices of jet fuel, the carrier's spokesperson said on Monday.

In recent weeks, jet fuel (JP-1) rates have soared amid global supply chain uncertainty spurred by the US-Israel war on Iran.

"The PIA has made a principled decision to end all discounts, with concessions remaining only for children and infants," the spokesperson said.

He added that a strategy was formulated in a high-level meeting to address the rising prices of fuel and potential losses to the airline.

The spokesperson said PIA would also restrict its flight operation to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to 16 flights per week.

"The carrier is also going to suspend flight to Gulf countries, with the exception of the UAE and Saudi Arabia, until the end of April," he added.

Further, he said that the PIA would also suspend its flight operations to Beijing and Kuala Lumpur from April 11 and 14, respectively.

"The PIA management has taken these decisions in view of the fourth consecutive increase in jet fuel prices," he said.

He added that the entire burden of the prices of fuel could not be passed on to passengers, therefore, some strict administrative decisions were taken.

He expressed hope that the global prices of fuel would return to normal soon, after which all affected routes would be restored.

PIA Consortium Chairman Arif Habib had sounded the alarm over the sustain ability of the carrier's operations in the wake of a 150 per cent hike in jet fuel rates, calling on the government to reverse the increase.

Body formed to survey proposed sites for new airport Peshawar

The district administration on Tuesday 10 March formed a committee to survey the proposed locations for construction of the Peshawar International Airport.

A statement issued here said that decision was taken during a meeting chaired by Peshawar division

commissioner Riaz Khan Mehsud and attended by deputy commissioner Sanaullah and officials from Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA).

The meeting was informed that approximately 2,500 acres of land was needed for the new airport and that its location must be secure and away from the populated areas.

The meeting reviewed progress on identifying a new site for the airport and relocating the existing one.

The meeting decided that a detailed feasibility report would be prepared for submission to the provincial government.

The meeting acknowledged challenges posed by the current airport's proximity to the Peshawar city, including traffic congestion, security risks, and urban expansion.

The participants were informed about potential sites, including Mattani, Adezai, Surezai, Mamu Khatki, Naguman and Bara Akakhel.

The meeting formed a committee headed by additional deputy commissioner (general) and revenue officials, PAA experts, and technical advisers, to expedite the process.

A follow-up meeting is scheduled in three weeks to review the progress.

The statement said that the committee would survey these locations and recommend the optimal site to the chief minister and the chief secretary.

On the occasion, Mr Mehsud stressed the project's importance for regional development, urban infrastructure, and security, calling for coordinated efforts to ensure its timely implementation.

FOD Walk conducted at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore to strengthen airside safety



A comprehensive Foreign Object Debris (FOD) Walk was successfully conducted at the Apron Area of Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, under the supervision of the COO/Airport Manager, with the collaboration of Gerry's dnata. It was highlighted the FOD removal and hazared it poses to aircraft operations.



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Pakistani ports emerge as safe trade hub

With the implementation of facilitation measures, long queues of container ships have begun forming at Karachi ports as global shipping lines divert vessels to Pakistan, seeking safer routes amid increased risks in the Strait of Hormuz due to the ongoing Middle East conflict.

The government has also established specialised sub-committees to recommend structural reforms in the maritime and logistics sectors. It has already reduced port charges to boost competitiveness, sped up the clearance of long-pending cargo, and implemented targeted policy measures to support transshipment activity.

Industry officials said the diversion has triggered an unprecedented surge in transshipment activity at Karachi ports, positioning Pakistan as an emerging alternative hub outside vulnerable maritime chokepoints.

Official data showed transshipment volumes at Karachi port reached 8,860 containers in just the last 24 days, while comparing with the annual volume of 8,300 containers in 2025. This clearly shows a sharp acceleration in cargo rerouting.

Industry sources said the potential of Gwadar and Karachi as transshipment ports for GCC countries and beyond, particularly during periods of crisis, is now being tested. Both ports, located outside narrow and vulnerable maritime chokepoints, offer significant opportunities for regional trade in petroleum products and LPG.

Shipping companies are increasingly opting for Karachi to avoid the security and insurance risks associated with routes passing through the Gulf, where rising tensions have heightened concerns over vessel safety and potential disruptions to supply chains.

Patron-in-Chief, Pakistan Textile Exporters Association (PTEA), Khurram Mukhtar, said in the backdrop of evolving global trade dynamics, Pakistan is emerging as a safe, stable, and increasingly attractive destination for international trade, investment, and transshipment activity.

The PTEA has proposed the establishment of a Centralised Monitoring & Response Unit to monitor import and export cargo flows through the Pakistan Single Window. This unit should function as a real-time control tower to identify bottlenecks across ports, terminals, shipping lines, and transshipment hubs. It should proactively coordinate with all stakeholders for swift resolution, ensuring uninterrupted cargo

movement and minimizing systemic inefficiencies.

It was proposed that a comprehensive service level benchmark should be defined across the maritime trade chain, covering ports, terminal operators, shipping lines, and allied service providers. These standards must be aligned with international best practices to ensure

predictability, reduce dwell time, and enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in global trade.

The association demands that advance manifest filing be made mandatory for all shipping lines to enhance planning, transparency, and operational efficiency.

Karachi Port sees more than 1,400% increase in cargo activity



Pakistan has witnessed over 1,400 percent increase in port activity and transshipment volumes, as global shipping disruptions linked to the Middle East situation have redirected trade flows toward the country.

Ports including Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar have reported record levels of cargo activity.

Transshipment at Karachi Port over the past 24 days alone has matched the total volume handled throughout the entire previous year. In 2025, Karachi Port processed approximately 8,300 containers, while in just the last 24 days, the port handled 8,313 containers. This represents a record-high growth of 1,423 percent compared to 2025.

Disruptions in shipping routes in the Gulf region have forced global logistics operators to explore alternative routes. Pakistan's ports are exactly what they were looking for.

At the operational level, South Asia Pakistan Terminal handled 5,286 containers, while Hutchison Port processed 1,827 containers and Karachi Gateway Terminal managed 1,200 containers during the recent surge in activity.

Policy adjustments have also supported this growth. Pakistan has revised its transshipment regulations to allow cargo handling at both seaports and airports, which has improved flexibility for international trade operators.

Improved infrastructure, including

developments under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is helping strengthen Pakistan's position as a regional trade and logistics center.

If the current momentum continues, Pakistan could further enhance its role in global trade by attracting sustained investment in logistics and port infrastructure.

'Gwadar's flagship project to be launched soon'

The Director General of Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), Moin-ur-Rehman Khan, said on Tuesday 31 March Gwadar's flagship Central Business District (CBD) project is expected to be launched soon.

Presiding over a GDA meeting, he said 2,585 acres of land has been acquired by the provincial government for the project.

"Once finalised, the CBD will be formally launched, accelerating economic, commercial, tourism and real estate activities in the area," he said.

The director general of GDA said the CBD project will feature corporate offices, hotels, apartments, shopping centers and conference facilities. Cultural attractions of the project include a museum, theater, library, and expo center, Gwadar Tower, marina park, and seaside resorts, he said.

He said that Gwadar's growing global relevance due to its strategic location, secure port and geographic advantage will boost up confidence of world investors.



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Pakistan, UAE focus on petroleum, food trade to boost bilateral flows

Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to enhance trade in key commodities, including petroleum products and food, as part of efforts to strengthen bilateral trade and improve supply chains.

The development came during a virtual meeting between Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, where both sides reviewed ongoing trade cooperation and regional economic coordination.

Officials from Pakistan's Ministry of Commerce, including senior representatives, also participated in the discussions. Both countries reaffirmed their commitment to expanding economic



ties and improving trade facilitation mechanisms.

The talks focused on high-demand sectors such as petroleum and food, with both sides agreeing to streamline

Shipping lines, traders agree on fair pricing, transparency

Shipping lines have reached an agreement with traders to ensure fair pricing, advance disclosure of costs, and minimal diversion of cargo except in emergencies, in a bid to address concerns of the business community over non-transparent shipping charges and cargo handling practices.

A committee, constituted by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, held a series of meetings to address key issues affecting trade. The committee, headed by Member Customs Operations Shakeel Shah, in consultation with all stakeholders, took key decisions on shipping charges and trade facilitation.

To ensure transparency and consistency in the application of war-risk surcharges on shipments originating from or destined for Pakistan, it was agreed that shipping lines would refrain from any undue or opportunistic pricing.

An official announcement said exporters would be informed of all applicable charges prior to booking. Shipping lines clarified that war-risk surcharges are applied only on routes passing through the Gulf/Middle East and Red Sea regions, and that they regularly issue advisories — currently being compiled for wider dissemination — to inform stakeholders.

The committee directed shipping lines to avoid discharging cargo at alternate ports except in cases of imminent threat or other exigencies. It was also agreed that imposing a war-risk surcharge on consignments already in transit prior to

March 3, 2026, is unfair, and shipping lines would not apply such charges to those consignments.

Additionally, it was emphasised that withholding bills of lading (B/Ls) due to third-party disputes causes financial losses, delays, and operational disruptions for exporters, and such practices should be discouraged.

Circulars have already been issued to promote transparency, advising traders to report any instances of unjustified charges or withholding of B/Ls. Traders have been encouraged to submit representations to the Collector HQs (Exports & IOCO) for redressal of non-compliance with these decisions.

Shakeel Shah underscored the need for all stakeholders — including government agencies, shipping lines, trade bodies, and related service providers — to work collectively to ensure transparency, fairness, and facilitation of legitimate trade.

He stressed that opportunistic pricing and non-transparent, arbitrary practices must be avoided. He appreciated the role of various stakeholders in the logistics supply chain and urged all participants to act more responsibly, particularly in light of the ongoing conflict situation in the Middle East.

The committee included representatives from public and private sector entities involved in the regulation and facilitation of the maritime logistics supply chain.

processes for exporters and traders and improve logistical coordination.

Pakistan's side acknowledged support from UAE authorities, including assistance through diplomatic missions in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, as well as collaboration with private sector partners such as DP World.

The UAE reiterated its commitment to strengthening economic engagement, noting progress in bilateral cooperation and the need for coordinated efforts to ensure mutual benefits.

Both sides agreed to continue engagement, with technical teams scheduled to meet very soon to address operational issues and identify further opportunities for trade growth.

Gwadar Port activity revives as Malaysian ship docks



A Major cargo vessel from Malaysia is docked at the Gwadar Port, carrying 14,629 metric tons of transshipment goods.

Commercial activity at Gwadar Port has gained fresh momentum as a major cargo vessel from Malaysia docked at the port carrying 14,629 metric tonnes of transshipment cargo, officials said on Sunday 5 April.

According to details, the cargo ship MV Riva Glory arrived at Gwadar Port with a large consignment of various commercial goods, marking another significant development in the port's growing trade operations.

A spokesperson for Gwadar Port said the vessel transported multiple categories of trade items, which were currently being unloaded as per the scheduled plan.

Speaking on the occasion, Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Noorul Haq Baloch said the continuous arrival of cargo ships was clear evidence that the port was gradually emerging as an important hub for regional trade.

He said international commercial activity at the port was expanding steadily due to modern facilities, efficient operations and an improved logistics system.



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Why the Strait of Hormuz is a geological wonder

The continental collisions that created this narrow Mideast waterway endowed the region with its petrochemical riches—and created a chokepoint that can disrupt the global oil trade.

The Strait of Hormuz is narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It's also a geological marvel where you can see evidence of the collision of two continents, says Mike Searle, professor of Earth Sciences at Oxford University's Worcester College. About 'a quarter of the world's seaborne oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz, the roughly 30-mile-wide waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. This narrow passage is one of the world's most prominent maritime "chokepoints," high-volume shipping routes with the power to wreak havoc on the global economy if disrupted—which has been the case since late February due to conflict in the Middle East.

It's also a geological marvel as one of the places on Earth where you can see the collision of two continents, says Mike Searle, professor of Earth Sciences at Oxford University's Worcester College.

That evidence is visible in the geology across the region—from the Zagros Mountains of southern Iran to the skinniest point of the Strait of Hormuz, where the Musandam Peninsula of Oman juts north like a dagger toward Iran.

Remarkable for its steep, black rock cliffs and jagged coastline of drowned valleys, a type of estuary that forms when rising sea levels flood river valleys, the Musandam Peninsula is also one of the rare places on Earth where ophiolite—rocks that are typically buried deep under the ocean crust—are "absolutely spectacularly well exposed," Searle says. "It's by far the biggest, best ophiolite complex anywhere in the world."

Yet the same geologic process that made the Strait of Hormuz so unique is also what leaves it so vulnerable.

How the Strait of Hormuz formed

Many of the world's shipping chokepoints are straits, defined as a narrow body of water that connects two larger bodies of water. These have been formed naturally over millions of years through the shifting of tectonic plates and rising sea levels with the melting of glacial ice sheets. Seafarers have taken advantage of these geographical shortcuts for centuries as they typically are faster than navigating around continents on the open ocean.

(The Bab el Manded is another strait with an outsize role in history)

For the Strait of Hormuz, this process began roughly 35 million years ago with the collision of two continental plates: the



Arabian plate to the south and the Eurasian plate to the north.

At the time, these continents were separated by the ancient ocean Tethys, named for the mythological Greek titan of the sea. The Arabian plate began to push northward under the Eurasian plate, a process called subduction, ultimately consuming Tethys as the two continental plates and the landmasses above them knitted together, says Mark Allen, head of the Earth Sciences department at Durham University in the U.K. who has studied the Arabia-Eurasia collision.

"And the neat thing about continental collisions is they are not over in an instant," Allen says. "The deep forces that make the plates move can still operate after you've brought these continents together for tens of millions of years."

As the Arabian plate continued to bulldoze its way under Eurasia, Allen says, both plates eventually began to shorten and thicken "just like if you crash two cars together." As these two plates crumpled together, they created the present-day Zagros Mountains in Iran.

(The lost continent of Zealandia has been mapped for the first time)

This tectonic movement also created the conditions for the Strait of Hormuz. Think of the Arabian plate like a bendy ruler, Allen says. When you place something heavy on one end of it—like a mountain range—the ruler begins to dip down and create a depression. In the case of the Arabian plate, this depression formed the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz.

If you look around the Strait of Hormuz, or wander through the landscapes directly on either side of it, you'll see the traces of the continental collision in stunning ways.

To the north, the tectonic forces that have been shortening and thickening the crusts of the colliding plates have "created the most spectacular landscapes in the Zagros Mountains of southern Iran," Allen says. The mountain range is layered with sedimentary rock including sandstone, shale, and limestone. The latter is particularly strong and resistant to

erosion, Allen says, meaning you can walk on a single bed of limestone for many kilometers.

"Zagros has long been seen as a paradise for structural geologists, the kind of geologists who are interested in how and why rocks form, because you can walk over these huge structures and study them from satellite images," he says. "It's about as striking a geological landscape as you can find on Earth."

The region is also known for its salt glaciers and salt domes created as the salt from deep within the Earth was pushed up through the folds created by the continental collision. "In places it literally flows down the hillsides like a rock glacier," Allen says.

To the south, the Musandam Peninsula is part of the Al Hajar Mountains in Oman that run all the way down the northeast coast of Arabia. Those mountains are mostly composed of ophiolite, Searle says, a slab of the Tethyan oceanic crust and mantle that was thrust onto Arabia during a continental collision between 95 and 60 million years ago during the late Cretaceous. The same geologic forces that created the Strait of Hormuz also tilted the Musandam Peninsula eastward to the point where it pinches the Strait.

Most notably, this continental collision also gave the region its staggering oil reserves.

For hundreds of millions of years before the Arabian plate collided with Eurasia, it was sitting at just below sea level, Allen says, accumulating all the kinds of rocks needed to form oil and gas reserves. Over time, the collision of the plates trapped these pockets of oil and gas under the rocks in the northern end of the Arabian plate—which now sits underneath Iran, Iraq, and parts of Syria.

"What is distinctive about the Middle East is the sheer scale of it," Allen says. "All of this happened over a vast area, over a long period of time, with traps that are huge so that economically you're not spending all your money drilling into a reservoir that's going to drain dry in a few years, they've got fields that last for many decades." Transporting this oil and gas to the rest of the world, however, requires first passing through the Strait of Hormuz—and its pinch point carved out by the Musandam Peninsula.

The Musandam Peninsula is still actively on the move, albeit at a geological pace. Searle points to a paper he and colleagues published in 2014 showing that the Musandam Peninsula is still thrusting northward toward the Zagros Mountains.

"And the Strait of Hormuz will gradually close," Searle says—although that's not likely to happen for at least another 10 million years.

Fabulous Mountains of the World

Prof. Safdar Sandal

Nanga Parbat

The most fabulous name and a specialty of the 'Indian Subcontinent', sweet in speaking or pronouncing and superb in nature and meaning; the mountain 'Nanga Parbat' (the 'naked mountain') has the height of 8,126 meters. A most unique feature of this mountain is that it is growing and gaining height gradually, It is becoming taller by virtue of nature, at a rate of 7mm per year and getting stronger too like a 'living being' with similar features as of life, instead of getting weaker. Nanga Parbat is also termed as 'Killer Mountain', due to the fact that it has claimed many fatalities among its climbers. It is the ninth highest mountain of the world and is located in Pakistan's Gilgit - Baltistan region. The name 'Nanga Parbat' comes from the local languages, reflecting its majestic look with strong, rigged, rugged and naked appearance.



human nature and it sounds to me also as a very precious and attractive feature. No less denying is the fact that I am a great lover of nature and mountains inclusive as uppermost. I have noticed that in human history people have been fond of giving mountains a religious status in all ages and this fact is a very an interesting tinge of human nature. People of nearly all Continents of the World, go for worship

habitat and for their religious attachments. Rather this attracts me as an interesting and most unique prospect of human life, to love mountains.

Mount McKinley

This mountain is situated in Alaska (USA). Its height is 6,194 meters and it is a part of *Denali National Park*. The first time it was surmounted by Walter Harper. The way is also very tedious and is full of dangers. The atmosphere is also very cold which has made it highly un-surmountable, also due to the decreased presence of oxygen which has made it highly inaccessible and dangerous.

Matterhorn - Mount.

This mountain is situated on the border between Italy and Switzerland. Its iconic shape makes it peculiar than other mountains. Its height is 4,478 meters. More than 500 people have lost their lives during their effort to surmount it in the last 50 years.

Swiss Alps

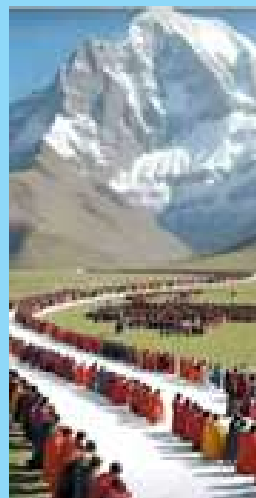
The Alpine Mountains are spread over countries, like Austria, Germany, Italy, France and also some East European countries. In connection with my business of Skiing articles produced in my factory situated in my home-town Sialkot and their export to the said countries, I have travelled in this most beautiful part of the world and doing business. The Alps Mountains studded with beautiful cities are a rare thing in this world. The cities of Europe scattered in the region are in scores. Here I feel proud to show only a few of photos taken during my lifelong travel which has been the most interesting and knowledge giving part of travelling life extending over sixty years.



Mount Tai

Mount Tai is situated in China's 'Shandong' city. Its height is 1533 meters and is respected as one of the sacred mountains of China which is worshipped by the Chinese people. It has many worship sites. 'Unesco' has declared it as a rich Religious Heritage. Every year nearly six million people come here to pay their homage and for worship. It has been noticed and observed by the scribe that most mountains of the world became places of worship for mankind as residences of Gods' right from the start of human history and this seems to me as a very interesting feature of the universe. I beg not to have become disrespectful to this aspect of the nature. On the contrary I consider it as very interesting aspect of universe. Love of mountains, I consider it, has been the most beautiful ornament of

their mountains considered as pious by them and I have every respect for this



Pakistan assures Iran of readiness for TIR, transshipment cargo operations



Pakistan has informed Iran that its authorities are prepared to handle cargo under international transshipment and transit arrangements, with procedures streamlined to ensure smooth movement under the TIR framework, media reported.

Officials said assurances were conveyed to Iranian diplomats regarding facilitation for cargo movement in line with international agreements, including the UN TIR Convention and TIR Rules, 2017.

Pakistan, a signatory to the TIR Convention, has been implementing the system since 2017, allowing cross-border transport of goods under a unified customs framework.

Authorities said the scope of the international transshipment regime has been expanded to include off-dock terminals in addition to ports to improve cargo handling and trade flows.

Under the updated framework, cargo can now be transported through Pakistan to Iran and Central Asian states using both international transshipment and TIR systems.

Officials said major ports, including Gwadar, Karachi and Port Qasim, along with border stations at Sost, Taftan and Gabd, have been enabled to process such cargo.

TIR consignments are being handled at ports as well as border crossings, while transshipment cargo is processed through ports and off-dock facilities.

Officials also said Gwadar Port is equipped to handle international transit cargo and can support expanded trade operations under the TIR system.

Customs authorities noted that Iranian border points, including Mir Javeh and Reemdan, are capable of processing TIR cargo, although the e-TIR system at

Reemdan has yet to be fully updated.

In the interim, consignments can be routed through Gabd for onward movement to other TIR-enabled locations in Iran.

Officials said procedures at ports and border stations have been expedited to ensure timely clearance and movement of cargo under the TIR framework.

More ships arrive from Hormuz

Easing concerns of any imminent fuel shortage in the country, oil tankers continue to arrive regularly following the permission granted by Iranian authorities for Pakistani vessels to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

The marine tanker MT Shalimar, owned and operated by the Pakistan National Shipping Company (PNSC), arrived at Karachi Port to offload crude oil, while MT Vienna Wood, carrying 57,000 tonnes of high-speed diesel, is awaiting berthing at the outer anchorage of Karachi's Port Qasim.

Another PNSC-operated vessel, MT Khairpur, has already discharged 55,000 metric tonnes of petrol at the FOTCO terminal at Port Qasim.

In addition, the Panama-registered tanker Qem Star is set to offload ethylene at Port Qasim. Ethylene is a critical petrochemical used primarily in the production of plastics, including packaging materials, bottles, and pipes. It is also essential for manufacturing ethylene dichloride (used in PVC) and antifreeze compounds. Other vessels at the outer anchorage are carrying commodities such as soybeans, coal, and containerised cargo.

At Karachi Port, 13 ships are currently berthed, handling containers and bulk cargo, including canola, rock phosphate, and cement.

Since the onset of the American-Israeli war on Iran, the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) has handled seven oil tankers carrying crude oil and two carrying petrol.

GSP+ status lifeline for economy

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has described the GSP+ status as a lifeline of Pakistan's economy, fearing there will be a very damaging impact on the country if this is withdrawn or revoked.

"The GSP+ status is not just a trade concession but the lifeline of Pakistan's economy. Under this status, more than 66 per cent of Pakistan's products — including textiles, leather, and surgical goods — are exported to European markets at zero duty. This facility serves as oxygen for the country's exports," explained Zaki Aijaz, Regional Chairman and Vice-President of the FPCCI, while talking to journalists at a press conference recently.

Flanked by S.M. Tanveer, Patron-in-Chief of the United Business Group (UBG), and others, he said the European Union is Pakistan's largest export market, accounting for roughly 25pc to 30pc of the country's total global exports. "If, God forbid, this status were to be revoked, Pakistani products would immediately face duties of 10pc to 12pc, potentially causing a direct annual loss of \$8 to \$9 billion. Increased prices would push Pakistani products out of global competition," he warned.

Mr Aijaz held a news conference in response to a recent speech by Imran Khan's son at a conference in Geneva, where he allegedly accused the Pakistani government of neglecting his father's human rights. Mr Khan's son also mentioned and linked GSP+ status with human rights, prompting severe criticism from the government. Information Minister Attaullah Tarar also criticised Mr Khan's son in this regard.

He emphasised that this issue affects not only large industrialists but also directly influences the everyday lives of Pakistan's people. The country's export sector — particularly textiles and leather — creates employment for millions, including a significant number of women. Currently, approximately 3 million families are directly linked to these exports.

They warned that losing GSP+ status could cause factory closures and mass unemployment, leading to a serious social and economic crisis.

Pakistan Travel Mart 2026 held in Karachi



Sindh Governor Nehal Hashmi on Friday 3 April inaugurated the three day Pakistan Travel Mart (PTM) 2026 at Karachi Expo Centre.

He officially opened the exhibition by pressing the inaugural button and later visited various stalls, interacting with participants.

Speaking on the occasion, he said Pakistan's tourism holds a prominent position globally due to its unique culture, towering mountains, vast deserts, beautiful coastlines and hospitable people.

He added that promoting tourism will not only boost trade but also strengthen the country's economy.

He emphasised that the country's development reflected the nation's determination and that under the leadership of the prime minister, the journey of progress would continue.

Mr Hashmi stated that both Pakistan and the world urgently need the promotion of trade and tourism. He highlighted that putting the country on the path of development is the government's top priority, and practical measures are being taken for the welfare of the people.

Despite challenging circumstances, Pakistan has sent a positive message to the world, emphasising that its doors remain open, he added.

Inviting the international community, the governor urged global visitors to come to Pakistan, promote trade and consider it

their second home. He lauded the efforts of PTM 2026's management, the business community, and the hotel industry, noting that the exhibition will play a vital role in advancing tourism.

He also affirmed that no conflict can hinder Pakistan's progress, as the hearts of its people are filled with love for their homeland.

Day one at Pakistan Travel Mart marked an energetic and productive beginning for 3 day PTM and the group companies. The pavilion remained vibrant throughout the day, welcoming a remarkable number of diplomats, corporate representatives, travel agents, tour operators, and valued business partners.

The day was filled with engaging discussions, promising collaborations, and meaningful networking across the travel and tourism industry. Several Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) were signed, paving the way for new partnerships and future opportunities.

In addition, a series of podcasts and interactive sessions were organized, creating a platform for insightful conversations on tourism, aviation, and global travel trends.

The mention of travel, especially international, makes many nervous in these times of trouble and uncertainty, with air space in the region becoming very unpredictable.

But the three-day exhibition Pakistan

Travel Mart 2026 (PTM 2026), under way at the Expo Centre Karachi, gives one the brighter picture.

All the six halls of the Expo Centre had something hopeful to offer. If Hall 1 was dedicated to talks, discussions and seminars, Hall 2 and 3 had plenty to offer in the hospitality industry with many hotels sharing information about their various packages and presence in different cities.

Hall 3 also had trainee chefs from the College of Tourism and Hotel Management (COTHM) displaying their culinary skills. Their focus was on popular Arab dishes, well, specifically Saudi Arabian food such as Chicken Kabsa (a chicken and rice dish), Mutabbaq (also known as Arabi paratha), Shawarma platters and non-alcoholic champagne.

Saudi Arabia had a huge presence at PTM 2026 with many stalls offering information about Haj and Umrah packages, hotels and shuttle services, visas and tickets.

Halls 4 and 5 had much to offer and explore about East Asia, Southeast Asia and Central Asia, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. They were all offering very attractive tourism opportunities and relaxing retreats.

Malaysia also lured visitors at the Malaysia Pavilion in Hall 4 with trade and tourism opportunities the highlight of which happened to be the traditional Malaysian dance performances adding vibrancy to the exhibition.

Finally, Hall 6 was labelled as the 'Aviation District' with many airlines, headed by the national carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) showing who's boss by attracting visitors through traditional dance performances of each province. Plus, there was information about PIA's direct flights to Jeddah and Madinah, Dubai, Beijing, Kuala Lumpur, Paris, London, Manchester, etc.

Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) was prominent at the PTM, showcasing its offerings to airlines

With the private airlines such as Air Asia, Air Blue, Air Sial, Flyadeal and Jinnah also there along with some international carriers, it was a good opportunity to learn about the aviation and tourism industry.

Glimpses of PTM 2026 held in Karachi



Mr. Muhammad Rafiq Khan, Chairman of Bukhari Travel Group, conversing with Sindh Governor Mr. Nihal Hashmi after inaugurating PTM 2026 at Karachi Expo Centre.

Mr. A.S. Azad, Editor of Flyer International, is seen in conversation with Mr. M. Ilyas, Senior Vice Chairman of TAAP. Also present in the photo are Mr. Naem Sharif, Chairman, Mr. Hanif Rinch, Vice Chairman (South) of TAAP, and other distinguished guests.



Mr. A.S. Azad is pictured with Mr. Abid Ali Zaidi, Brand Manager of Air Sial, along with staff from Air Asia

Pakistan Travel Mart 2026: Malaysia, Ethiopia showcase tourism potential

Countries including Ethiopia and Malaysia showcased their tourism potential and strengthened engagement with Pakistani stakeholders during the recently Pakistan Travel Mart 2026 (PTM 2026), which concluded on Sunday 5 April at the Karachi Expo Centre.

The Ethiopian Embassy in Islamabad, in collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines, presented the “Ethiopian Enclave” at the expo, offering visitors a glimpse into the country's ancient heritage, diverse landscapes, and vibrant culture.

The Ethiopian pavilion received a high-profile reception, attended by key Pakistani officials including Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Tourism, and Aftabur Rehman Rana, Managing Director of the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation.

Visitors experienced traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremonies while exploring opportunities for bilateral collaboration in tourism and hospitality. The enclave attracted strong interest from Karachi residents, travel agencies, and media, positioning Ethiopia as an emerging destination for Pakistani tourists. The enclave remained open to visitors throughout the three-day event, concluding on Sunday 5 April.

Meanwhile, Tourism Malaysia concluded a successful participation at the exhibition, reaffirming its commitment to expanding tourism cooperation with Pakistan. The Malaysia Pavilion drew

significant attention from travel trade representatives, media, and visitors through business meetings, destination

briefings, and cultural performances.

The initiative also aimed to boost travel flows under the upcoming Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. Senior officials from Tourism Malaysia actively engaged with stakeholders, highlighting Pakistan as an important market in Malaysia's regional tourism strategy.

Direct UK flights to boost Pakistan's tourism: PTDC

Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Managing Director Aftabur Rehman Rana on Sunday 29 March said the restoration of direct flight operations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, particularly from Islamabad and Lahore to London, will provide a major boost to Pakistan's tourism sector.

In a statement, he said improved air connectivity with key international markets such as the UK will significantly enhance Pakistan's accessibility for foreign tourists, particularly for the large Pakistani diaspora and international travelers seeking authentic cultural and adventure experiences.

“The resumption of direct flights to London from 29th March 2026 following a six-year hiatus is a critical step toward revitalizing inbound tourism. It will not only facilitate ease of travel but also help rebuild international confidence in Pakistan as a safe, vibrant and welcoming tourist destination.”

He stressed the urgent need for connecting more global destinations in

Europe, Central Asia and Far Eastern countries through direct flights to give boost to the tourism economy.

The United Kingdom remained one of Pakistan's most important tourism source markets. Enhanced connectivity between Islamabad, Lahore and London is expected to encourage increased tourist flows, promote heritage and cultural tourism, and support business and investment travel.

Pakistan offers a unique blend of attractions, including breathtaking mountain landscapes in the north, ancient archaeological sites, vibrant cultural traditions, and diverse culinary experiences. With improved international access, the country is well-positioned to attract a broader segment of global travelers.

“PTDC remains committed to working with stakeholders across the public and private sectors to promote Pakistan as a premier tourism destination and to ensure sustainable and responsible tourism growth,” he added.



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Fresh studies trace Mohenjo Daro's urban roots to 3300 BC



US archaeologist Dr Jonathan Mark Kenoyer along side other experts at the Mohenjo Daro excavation site.

Recent excavations and new radiocarbon dates confirm an earlier urban occupation at Mohenjo Daro during the Kot Diji Phase, circa 3300-2600 BC, a source in Technical Consultative Committee (TCC) of the National Fund for Mohenjo Daro (NFM) has disclosed to media.

New excavations at the plain level to the west of the famous Stupa Mound have provided five new radiocarbon dates for a massive mud brick perimeter wall of the city. Sir Mortimer Wheeler had first discovered this structure in 1950, "but misidentified it as a revetment or flood protective bund", experts working at the site said.

The recent archaeological investigations were carried out at Mohenjo Daro under the direction of the NFM after a lapse of many years. A Joint Mission of the Directorate General of Archaeology and Antiquities, Sindh, and the Sindh Exploration and Adventure Society (SEAS), Pakistan, carried out excavation during the summer of 2025, and winter of 2025-26.

The project was led by leading Pakistani Archaeologists Dr Asma Ibrahim and Ali Lashari along with Dr Jonathan Mark Kenoyer, University of Wisconsin, Madison, US, and a team of scholars and students from various US and Sindh universities.

Dr Asma Ibrahim, when contacted by media, authenticated the recent findings obtained after radiocarbon dating of the material secured during the excavation. She had been at Mohenjo Daro along with other members of mission during the excavation. She said: "Yes: radiocarbon dating facility is not available in Pakistan, so it was carried out in the US. It was the second phase of the excavation at the site," she added.

TTC member Sikandar Hulio, talking to this journalist, said that the main focus of the excavations was to delineate the overall plan and chronology of the mud brick city wall that surrounds the western Stupa Mound.

Sir Wheeler's 1950 excavation and drawings show that this wall was built in many phases and the earliest structure was built on top of an even earlier occupation deposit. Although the lowest levels are now below the water table, the recent excavations were able to reopen the earlier trench to re-document and date the construction of the multiple phases of the mud brick city wall.

The pottery and carbon samples from the lowest levels of the first wall indicate that this initial structure was constructed at the end of the Early Harappan or Kot Diji Phase, around 2700-2600 BCE, approximately 100 years before the beginning of the Harappan Phase.

Kot Dijian pottery recovered from new deep coring below the first city wall indicate the presence of a substantial Early Harappan occupation before the first city wall was constructed. These findings correspond with the results from excavations at the site of Harappa, Punjab, which also has an Early Harappan, Kot Dijian Phase occupation and city wall dating to around 2800-2600 BCE.

Pottery and carbon samples from the middle and upper levels of the new excavations confirm that the later phases of the mud brick city wall at Mohenjo-daro were constructed during the Harappa Phase, beginning around 2600 BCE. The walls were expanded and maintained until around 2200 BCE and possibly even longer. Future investigations will trace the plan of the city wall around the Stupa Mound in order to try and locate gateways and to determine how this wall functioned and when it began to erode.

The TTC chairman has called the fresh studies a step forward in the understanding of the evolution of urban fabric and society. He expressed his resolve to continue these studies with the hope that frontiers of knowledge should be extended further.

GB tourism bounces back despite ME war



FOREIGN tourists explore New Bazaar in Skardu.

While concerns had been raised about the potential adverse impact of the escalating war in the Middle East and the resulting rise in fuel prices on Gilgit-Baltistan's tourism and hospitality industry, the situation on the ground suggests otherwise, with a surge in both foreign and domestic tourists.

According to officials from the GB tourism department, applications from foreign adventure tourists for climbing and trekking permits have already surpassed last year's figures.

An official told media that the tourism season typically begins in May, although both foreign and domestic visitors also arrive during the blossom season, which peaks towards the end of April.

Despite tensions in the wake of the US-Israel war on Iran as well as the fuel price hike, the number of tourists in Skardu has significantly increased since Eidul Fitr.

The official noted that a large number of both foreign and domestic tourists are currently visiting popular destinations across Gilgit-Baltistan.

Foreign tourists visiting open-zone areas do not require permits, while those intending to trek or climb in restricted zones must obtain permits from the tourism department prior to arrival.

Travellers from countries such as Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia particularly favour the region during the spring season.

Tourists are reaching Skardu both by air and by road. Flight operations from Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi are running smoothly, while road access via the Karakoram Highway (KKH) remains in good condition.

Pakistan is home to five of the world's



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14 peaks exceeding 8,000 metres, including K2 (8,611m), the world's second-highest mountain, as well as Nanga Parbat (8,126m), Gasherbrum-I (8,080m), Broad Peak (8,051m), and Gasherbrum-II (8,035m).

In the summer of 2024, around 2,200 foreign adventure tourists, 24,000 foreign tourists without permits, and nearly one million domestic tourists visited the region. However, last year, around 2,000 permits were issued to foreign adventure tourists for climbing and trekking, as climate disasters and tensions along the Pakistan-India border led to a sharp decline in tourist arrivals.

Sajid Hussain, assistant director at the GB tourism department, said the climbing

and trekking season typically runs from June to mid-August. "So far this year, more than 1,000 applications for climbing and trekking permits have been received from foreign adventure tourists, compared to 850 applications by March last year," he said, adding that applications continue to be submitted until August. He expressed optimism that foreign tourist arrivals would recover this year if the situation remains stable.

When contacted, Skardu Deputy Commissioner Hamza Murad also agreed that there was a high volume of tourist activity in the region at present.

A hotel owner in Skardu, Zulfiqar Shigri, said tourist arrivals this year were higher than usual, with hotel reservations

by both foreign and domestic visitors exceeding figures for the same period last year.

Nazimullah Baig, managing director at Discovery Pakistan, earlier told media that the media East war created fear in GB about a potential decline in tourism this season. He said many countries, including the UK, had issued an advisory to their citizens not to visit Gilgit-Baltistan.

Uncertainty had gripped the region following the US-Israel attack on Iran and assassination of then Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, sparking violent protests and subsequent action by law enforcers in Gilgit and Skardu during which more than 20 people were killed.

Rs210 million project launched to make Hassanabdal 'international tourist city'

The Punjab government has initiated a multi-million beautification and facelift project to revamp the historical city of Hassanabdal, promote the soft image of the country and provide better tourist facilities to Sikh pilgrims who visit the city twice a year from across the world.

Renowned as the second holiest city for Sikhs after Amritsar, Hassanabdal holds immense religious significance due to the presence of the revered Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib. Each year, thousands of Sikh pilgrims from across the globe travel to the city twice to perform their religious rituals, with the largest influx expected during the upcoming Baisakhi festival scheduled to be celebrated in April and the birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion.

Briefing newsmen about this multi-million project, Assistant Commissioner Ahsan Ali revealed that, in a bid to enhance civic infrastructure and promote religious tourism, a comprehensive beautification and facelift project worth Rs210 million has been launched in the historic city of Hassanabdal.

He claimed that the initiative aims to transform the city into a vibrant and welcoming destination for both local residents and international visitors, particularly Sikh pilgrims who visit the city annually.

Mr Ali stated that the ongoing project is part of a broader effort to give the city a festive and aesthetically appealing look ahead of the international pilgrimage season. He added that the development work encompasses multiple infrastructure upgrades and urban revitalisation measures designed to improve both



Construction of the gateway to Punja Sahib, Hassanabdal, is in full swing as the Punjab government undertakes a Rs210 million project to facelift the city as a religious tourism destination for Sikhs from across the globe.

functionality and visual appeal.

"A key component of the project includes the shifting of utility services such as those of Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited and Islamabad Electric Supply Company to underground systems. This step is expected to not only enhance safety and reliability but also significantly reduce visual clutter across the city," he added.

He said that, in addition, grand entrance gates are being constructed at key points leading into the city, including a dedicated gate for the Municipal Committee Hassanabdal, to create a welcoming first impression for visitors.

Road infrastructure is also being upgraded through the installation of modern tuff tiles, ensuring smoother and more durable surfaces for vehicular and pedestrian movement.

The official said that the project further includes building elevation uplifting, aimed at standardising and beautifying the façades of commercial and residential structures. Authorities believe this will contribute to a more organised

and visually cohesive urban landscape.

"To accommodate the growing number of visitors, particularly during peak pilgrimage periods, a dedicated entrance parking facility is also being developed. This is expected to ease traffic congestion and improve overall accessibility to key religious and tourist sites," he added.

He revealed that a major highlight of the initiative is the revitalisation of the public square located in front of Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib. The area is being redesigned to serve as a central gathering space, complete with landscaping and modern amenities. Alongside this, a food park is being established within the public square to provide visitors with a variety of culinary options in a clean and organised environment. He said that, further enhancing the city's recreational offerings, a full-fledged food street is being developed at Lalarukh Park.

The park itself, along with its surrounding natural ponds and springs, is undergoing restoration and revitalisation to preserve its ecological value while making it more accessible and attractive to tourists.

He expressed optimism that the project will significantly boost tourism, create economic opportunities, and uplift the overall image of Hassanabdal on the international stage.

By combining heritage preservation with modern urban planning, the initiative seeks to position the city as a model destination for religious and cultural tourism. With the Baisakhi festival fast approaching, officials are working round the clock to complete major portions of the project.



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3,000 Sikh pilgrims to attend Baisakhi festival



Sikh pilgrims from India enter Pakistan via Wagah Border.

Some 3,000 Sikh pilgrims are expected to come from India to attend Baisakhi festival starting on April 10.

According to the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), Sikh pilgrims from India and across the world will participate in the Baisakhi celebrations.

The main ceremony will be held on April 14 at Gurdwara Panja Sahib, Hasanabdal.

Pilgrims will visit various religious sites, including Nankana Sahib, Ferozabad, Kartarpur, Eminabad and Lahore.

On Monday 30 April, an administrative meeting was held at the Punjab Home Department under the auspices of the ETPB, Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, to review arrangements for the Baisakhi festival.

Provincial ministers Khwaja Salman Rafique and Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora attended the meeting where Additional Secretary Shrines Nasir Mushtaq gave a briefing on arrangements for the pilgrims.

Addressing the meeting, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora emphasised that all departments must work together to project a positive image of Pakistan in the world.

Salman Rafique said the Punjab government would extend full hospitality to the guests in accordance with their traditions and was making special arrangements to ensure the safety and comfortable stay of the pilgrims.

Nasir Mushtaq said the Sikh pilgrims would be accorded greater respect, love, and hospitality than ever before, and every effort would be made to ensure they feel at home. He said uninterrupted gas and electricity supply would be ensured at all gurdwaras and a zero-tolerance policy would be adopted regarding the security of Sikh pilgrims.

The meeting decided to set up senior citizen counters, bathrooms, and extra FIA counters for pilgrims.

AJK PM announces to hold tourism conference

Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Raja Faisal Mumtaz Rathore on Friday 13 March announced that the government would organise a tourism conference in April and May as part of its efforts to promote the tourism sector and address challenges faced by stakeholders.

Talking to a delegation of the AJK hotel, guest houses, restaurants and Marriage Halls Management Association, he expressed the hope that the proposed event would bring together private businesses associated with tourism, experts, investors and members of the public interested in the sector to deliberate on issues and explore long-term solutions.

The delegation was led by the association's chairman, Raja Mohammad Ilyas.

The prime minister said the government was taking practical steps to develop the tourism sector on modern lines and create a conducive environment for both domestic and foreign tourists.

"Promotion of tourism guarantees economic strength. A stronger economy will also generate new employment opportunities," he said, adding that the government was fully aware of the problems faced by hotel owners and would take all possible steps to resolve them.

Mr Rathore said improving the economic system of Azad Kashmir was a key objective of the government and emphasised the need to enable people, particularly the youth, to become economically self-reliant.

He said the government was encouraging investment in private hotels, restaurants and other related sectors and that investors would always be welcomed.

The prime minister said the government was focusing on key sectors including health, education, agriculture, information technology, industry and trade, as well as tourism.

"Improvement in these sectors is essential to overcome economic challenges and eliminate unemployment,"

he added.

During the meeting, the delegation briefed the prime minister on measures needed to promote tourism, hurdles faced by hotel management, improving service standards and creating a favourable environment for the sector.

It also presented a detailed roadmap regarding joint efforts by the government and the association to boost tourism in the region.

The delegation welcomed the government's plan to organise a tourism conference in April and May and described the move to prepare a roadmap for resolving issues facing the sector as a positive step.

Members of the delegation also appreciated the prime minister's efforts for public service and his initiatives aimed at resolving public issues and restoring people's confidence in the system.

Since assuming office in November last year, Prime Minister Rathore has been engaging stakeholders from different sectors to explore ways of tapping their potential and addressing their concerns.

Last month, he hosted what was described as the first-ever overseas convention in Muzaffarabad in collaboration with the Overseas Pakistanis Foundation, aimed at institutionalising engagement with the Kashmiri diaspora.

On Thursday 12 March, the prime minister also met a delegation of farmers to seek their input on modernising the agriculture sector.

On the occasion, he announced that a large agricultural conference would be held in AJK between April 10 and 15 to bring the farming sector under greater government patronage and devise practical strategies for its development.

Official sources said the prime minister was also planning to hold an entrepreneurship conference to discuss emerging economic trends and explore ways to reduce unemployment by promoting business skills among youth through the use of modern technologies.

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