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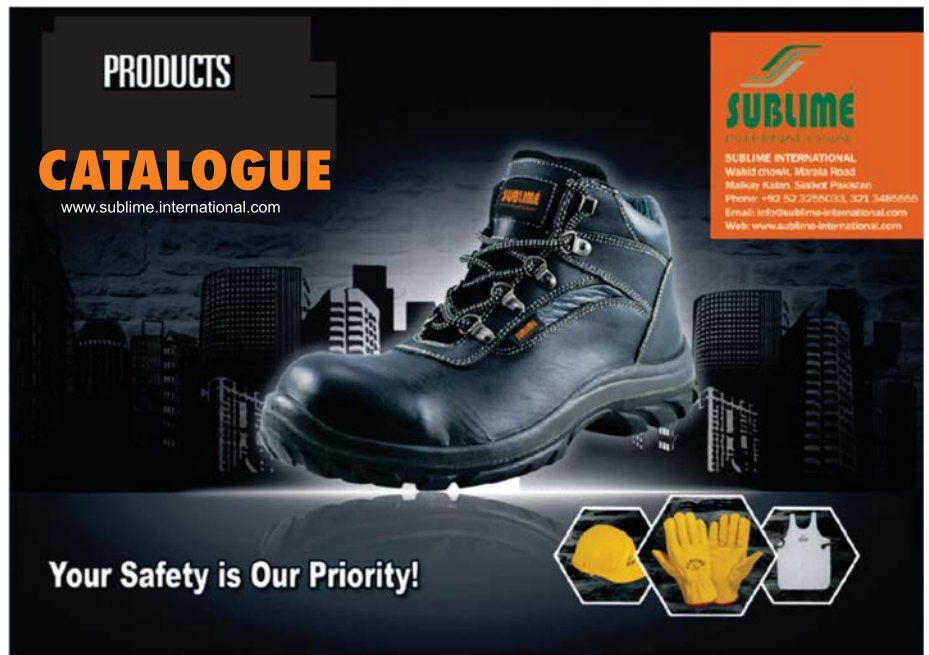
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The authority acts against several officers for offloading travellers

At least 132 passengers were offloaded from their scheduled flights at various airports across the country in the past year by immigration officers of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) while 85 of its officials were penalised for misuse of authority during this period, according to a report submitted to the Senate.

The FIA informed the Senate in the last week of May that strict measures were in place against immigration officials involved in the unjustified offloading of passengers or collaboration with human smugglers.

It added that during 2025, final inquiries found 85 officials guilty of misuse of authority in immigration-related matters and they were penalised.

Among the complaints against FIA officers were allegations of offloading, torture and taking a bribe of Rs500,000 from a passenger at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport.

Similarly, the immigration staff unjustifiably offloaded 15 candidates who were travelling on work visas.

Most of the cases related to passengers being offloaded multiple times for refusing to give bribes to FIA officers. In one case, the brother of a complainant was offloaded and not allowed to board his scheduled flight at Karachi airport.

The FIA report stated that its Directorate of Internal Accountability was responsible for strengthening internal oversight, protecting institutional integrity, and enforcing accountability within the agency.

Meanwhile, FIA records revealed that 132 passengers were offloaded across the country in 2025. The highest number of offloaded passengers was recorded at Islamabad International Airport (62), followed by Karachi's Jinnah International Airport (54), Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport (32), Multan (21), Faisalabad (six), and Sialkot (three).

However, the figures were compiled by the FIA based on the number of complaints regarding wrongful offloading, instead of its own reported data.

The FIA document submitted to the Senate stated that upon scrutiny of the complainants' documents, the agency's inquiry observed that they lacked the requisite travel documentation.

The agency's report stated that the passengers were accordingly advised to complete the necessary requirements after which they were able to travel successfully.

It added that most of the offloading cases were justified as the passengers lacked sufficient funds, confirmed hotel bookings, protector stamps, complete education-related documents or a justified and clear purpose of travel while some also had incomplete travel documents and other pending requirements mandatory for boarding. The FIA report further stated that passengers could visit the office of its deputy director, both prior to departure and after instances of offloading, for guidance and clarification.

A pre-departure facilitation desk has also been established at the Faisalabad Zonal Office, where passengers are provided guidance regarding their travel documents, it added.

Recently, the Lahore High Court ruled that immigration authorities could not curtail a citizen's right to travel abroad on the basis of vague suspicions or unsubstantiated reasons.

South Air test flight to New Gwadar International Airport

New Gwadar International Airport achieved a major milestone after the successful landing of South Air's first trial flight, marking an important step toward the airport's full operational launch.

Airport officials and representatives from relevant institutions welcomed the aircraft upon arrival, describing the successful landing as a significant development for Gwadar's aviation connectivity and economic future.

The trial flight is expected to pave the way for the regular operation of both domestic and international flights from Gwadar, improving travel links and supporting commercial activities in the region.

Officials believe the airport's operationalization will strengthen Gwadar's strategic importance, enhance trade opportunities, and contribute to economic growth in Balochistan and across Pakistan.

The development is being viewed as another key milestone in efforts to transform Gwadar into a major regional transportation and business hub.





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Flydubai suspends flights to three cities in Pakistan

Flydubai has suspended its flight operations from and to Islamabad, Lahore and Peshawar till October 26 due to “operational reasons”, the airline’s flight inquiry in Pakistan said.

However, flight operations from and to Karachi will continue as usual, the airline confirmed.

Flydubai, a low-cost airline based in the United Arab Emirates, launched its operations in Islamabad and Lahore in July 2024, and commenced flights to Peshawar in May last year.

According to aviation monitor Flightradar24, flydubai’s flights between Islamabad and Dubai (FZ353, FZ354), Lahore and Dubai (FZ359, FZ360), and Peshawar and Dubai (FZ375, FZ376) were cancelled since at least May 7.

Flight operations to and from Karachi will continue as usual

A statement on flydubai’s website, issued on March 31 — weeks after the US and Israel launched a joint war against Iran — says that the airline is “currently operating flights across its network with a reduced schedule”.

It advised passengers to regularly check flight status and operational updates for the latest information before heading to the airport.

While the statement did not mention the Middle East conflict that sparked on March 28 with US-Israeli strikes on Iran, it said, “We continue to closely monitor the situation and update our flight schedule accordingly. The safety of our passengers and crew remains our highest priority”.

The war has resulted in a sharp spike in jet fuel prices, leading to air travel’s worst crisis in years.

Late last month, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) warned that the jet fuel crisis tied to the US-Israel war against Iran could hit Asia hardest first.

“I think we will see airlines starting to reduce some of their schedules as we go towards the peak summer period in anticipation of some fuel shortages,” IATA head Willie Walsh said.

Pakistan seeks early launch of direct flights to US amid improved ties

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said on Friday 15 May that the government is keen to see the early launch of direct flights between Pakistan and the United States, adding that bilateral relations are rooted in mutual trust and cooperation.

The interior minister met with the US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Paul Kapur, alongside US Chargé d’Affaires Natalie Baker, Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry and the federal interior secretary, according to an official statement.

Both sides reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged views on the latest situation in the Middle East, the statement said.

The minister’s remarks come after Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) resumed its direct services to London earlier this year, ending a six-year suspension. The airline confirmed on March 29 that its inaugural flight had departed from Islamabad.

PIA also announced that direct flights from Lahore to London would be introduced.

Naqvi observed that Pakistan-US relations had strengthened during President Donald Trump’s tenure, describing the ties between the two nations as based on mutual trust and bilateral cooperation.

PAA to construct Islamabad’s tallest building

If all goes as planned, Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) will construct Islamabad’s tallest building in Blue Area.

PAA owns a 9,000 square yard plot in Blue Area, where it plans to construct a multi-storey high rise office-cum aviation complex.

“Envisioned as Islamabad’s tallest building, the Aviation Complex will house PAA offices, airline headquarters, business and conference facilities, banks, recreational and fitness amenities, an aviation museum, art gallery, day care, food courts and hotel accommodations,” read a document of Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (PEPA).

Recently, PEPA issued a public notice, inviting comments from the general public and other stakeholders. According to the notice, public hearing will be held on May 18 in Crown Hotel Islamabad.

It is relevant to note here that Islamabad houses many skyscrapers, with under-construction Garden Residential Apartment Project in F-10 Markaz is set to be the tallest building, standing at 470 feet and having 42 storeys. Whereas, Centaurus Mall is around 335 feet with 29 floors. The controversial One Constitution Avenue is also among the tallest buildings with 23 storeys.

According to the Capital Development Authority (CDA), building plan of the said building has been approved and now PAA wants to start construction.

“Right now, I cannot say anything whether the building will be the tallest in Islamabad or otherwise. But yes, they got building plan approved,” said an officer of the CDA.





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Arif Habib creates PIA takeover vehicle

The Arif Habib-led consortium has established a special purpose vehicle, PIA Equity Ltd (PIAEL), to complete its acquisition of Pakistan International Airlines, Arif Habib Corporation Ltd (AHCL) announced on Thursday 30 April.

The consortium has submitted a standby letter of credit and a bank guarantee to the Privatisation Commission for the acquisition of the remaining 25 per cent shares of PIA.

The consortium has already acquired a 75pc stake in Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd (PIACL) for Rs135 billion, while the remaining 25pc will cost Rs45bn. The consortium is expected to assume full ownership within the next 12 months upon completion of payments.

PIA Equity Ltd's shareholding comprises Arif Habib Corporation Ltd, Fatima Fertiliser Company Ltd, Lake City Holdings, AKD Group, The City School Group, and Fauji Fertiliser Company Ltd. PIAEL will act as the central platform for the acquisition and future management of PIACL, bringing together institutional investors under a unified structure.

The management changes and full private control was expected by early next month, freeing the airline from government appointed board members.

Thousands of workers of PIA could be problematic for the new management as there is resistance among the workers regarding complete privatisation as their jobs may be at stakes.

TCS receives B737 aircraft



A new Boeing 737 freighter aircraft has arrived at Karachi Airport, where TCS (Private) Limited welcomed it with a ceremonial water cannon salute, marking another step forward in cargo and logistics operations at the airport.

Gerry's Group Director Arshad Wali Muhammad conferred Sitara-i-Imtiaz

Gerry's Group Director, Arshad Wali Muhammad, has been conferred the prestigious Sitara-i-Imtiaz by the President of Pakistan at an investiture ceremony held at the Aiwan-e-Sadr on May 13, 2026.

The Sitara-i-Imtiaz, one of Pakistan's highest civilian honors, was awarded in recognition of Arshad Wali Muhammad's visionary leadership, unwavering commitment, and remarkable contributions toward the hospitality, international travel trade, local travel ecosystem; thus, contributing to the progress and prosperity of Pakistan.

This honor is not only a personal

achievement for Arshad Wali Muhammad but also a moment of immense pride for the entire Gerry's Group family. His leadership, integrity, and vision continue to inspire excellence and progress.

The ceremony was attended by senior government officials, dignitaries, members of the business community, and distinguished guests from across the country.

Gerry's Group extends its heartfelt congratulations to Arshad Wali Muhammad on this remarkable national honor and wishes him continued success in his contributions to Pakistan's growth and international standing.



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Ban for Indian flights extended

Pakistan Issues NOTAM, Extends Airspace Ban on Indian Aircrafts

Times of Islamabad



Pakistan has decided to keep its airspace closed for Indian flights until June 24 amid continuing diplomatic and regional tensions. The restriction affects Indian commercial airlines using Pakistani air corridors for international routes. Aviation experts say the closure could increase travel time, fuel consumption, and operational costs for affected carriers. Airspace restrictions between neighboring countries continue impacting regional aviation operations.

Industry analysts believe prolonged airspace closures can significantly raise airline expenses and disrupt international flight scheduling. Previous restrictions between Pakistan and India also resulted in major financial losses for airlines. Aviation authorities continue monitoring the regional situation closely. Air connectivity remains sensitive to geopolitical developments.

Ban on Indian flights exceeds loss of US \$2 billion

Air India's annual loss exceeds \$2 billion due to closure of Pakistani airspace | TV One USA

Due to the Middle East crisis and the closure of airspace by Pakistan, the Indian airline 'Air India' has fallen into a severe financial crisis, with an annual loss of more than \$ 2 billion. Due to the failed economic and diplomatic policies of the Modi government, not only the reputation of Indian aviation has been ruined, but also the confidence of foreign investors in the Indian economy has been lost.

Singapore Airlines report and major decline in profits: The recent report of Air India's major shareholder 'Singapore Airlines' has exposed the declining reputation of the Indian aviation industry. According to the report:

Air India's annual profit has recorded a historic decline of 57.4%.

Experts say that this financial loss is

likely to increase further in the coming days. Due to a severe decline in investment, Air India has been forced to close several of its important international flights in the last few months.

Impact of Pakistani airspace closure: According to defense and aviation experts, the effective and stringent air

security measures adopted by Pakistan are forcing Indian flights to take longer alternative routes. The war in the Middle East and the ban on the use of Pakistani airspace have led to a sharp increase in Air India's operational costs and fuel bills, which has proved to be the final nail in the coffin for its sinking economy.

China Eastern flies to Dublin this summer



China Eastern is set to launch nonstop services from Shanghai Pudong International Airport (PVG) to Dublin this summer, which will then become the longest flight service offered by the Irish capital city. According to Aeroroutes, the airline will commence service on July 20, on a thrice-weekly frequency, and is scheduled to use its Airbus A350-900 aircraft on this route.

Because China Eastern can continue using Russian airspace, the carrier can operate a flight path relatively close to the great-circle route between PVG and DUB, which measures approximately 5,819 nautical miles (10,777 km). The following is the itinerary the airline will be operating:

Itinerary	Departure Time	Arrival Time
MU231 PVG - DUB	1:40 AM	8:00 AM
MU232 DUB -	10:55 AM	6:00 AM (+1)

These services will be operated by the airline on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, with the westerly flight to Dublin being allocated a block time of 13 hours and 20 minutes, while the return service to Shanghai has been allocated a block time of 12 hours and five minutes.

According to a press release by Ireland's Department of Enterprise, Tour this new route was made possible by Ireland's establishment of an Air Service Agreement with China. The Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke, commented on the market's growth.

"China is a significant growth market for Ireland, and we now have a direct Dublin to Shanghai flight for the first time."

Dublin's Existing Service To China



The Irish capital is already connected to the Chinese Capital, Beijing, through the four weekly services operated by Hainan Airlines. That being said, it is worth noting that the airline is set to boost capacity by adding three more weekly flights to turn this into daily service between June 22 and September 9. The carrier operates these services with its fleet of Airbus A330-300 aircraft.

According to IDA Ireland, the airline launched this service to Beijing Capital Airport (PEK) back in 2018. However, initially, the airline operated two direct flights to Dublin, along with two flights to Ireland's capital via Edinburgh, Scotland, which were operated under fifth-freedom traffic rights. However, this changed in 2019, and since then, all four current services to Dublin are operated directly, while the two services to Scotland terminate at Edinburgh and return to Shanghai.

The approximate great-circle distance from Beijing to Dublin is only 5,100 nautical miles (9,445 km), so it is not as far as the upcoming service to Shanghai, which will be operated by China Eastern.



The addition of this new route will bring China Eastern's European network to 14 destinations across 12 countries, while further increasing connectivity between Europe and far-east Asia, especially within the SkyTeam alliance.

Riyadh Air's first flight to take off in July

Saudi Arabia's newest premium airline, Riyadh Air, has officially confirmed that its first commercial passenger flights will begin on July 1st, with nonstop service between Riyadh Airport (RUH) and London Heathrow Airport (LHR). The launch marks a major milestone for the startup carrier, which has spent the last two years building its fleet, branding, and international partnerships ahead of its long-awaited debut. Tickets are already on sale to the public as the airline prepares to enter one of the world's most competitive long-haul markets.

The inaugural route will connect Saudi Arabia's capital to Heathrow Airport, placing Riyadh Air directly in competition with established global carriers along a strategically important business and tourism corridor. The launch is especially significant because the airline is a centerpiece of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic diversification program, which aims to transform the Kingdom into a major aviation and tourism hub. Riyadh Air plans to operate a fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners during its initial expansion phase, with a strong focus on premium service and international connectivity. Reports indicate that the carrier ultimately intends to serve more than 100 destinations worldwide by the end of the decade.

Why London Was Chosen As Riyadh Air's First Destination



Riyadh Air's launch date had been closely watched across the aviation industry after several months of speculation surrounding the carrier's operational timeline. Interestingly, the airline has been flying to London since October 2025, mostly to carry diplomats, but the tickets were not available to the public, as noted by AeroTime.

Now, July 1st was chosen as the official start of public operations, with London selected as the first destination not only because it is a proven route for the airline, but also because of its strong financial, diplomatic, and tourism ties with Saudi Arabia. Bookings are already open through the airline's official

channels, with economy class tickets starting at 1,991 SAR (about \$530 one way), giving travelers their first opportunity to purchase seats on the highly anticipated startup carrier.

The route will be served by the airline's new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, an aircraft chosen for its long-range efficiency and premium passenger experience. Riyadh Air's cabin product has generated considerable attention in recent months, particularly after details emerged regarding its premium-heavy configuration. As previously reported by Simple Flying, the aircraft will feature business-class suites, premium-economy seating, and a modern economy cabin designed to compete with leading Gulf and European airlines. The carrier is positioning itself as a high-end global airline rather than a low-cost regional operator. Tony Douglas, CEO of Riyadh Air, told media outlets,

"Connecting Saudi Arabia with the UK directly and beyond through our growing network of global destinations including Jeddah, Cairo and Dubai, sits at the very heart of what we are building at Riyadh Air and the Kingdom's ambitions under Vision 2030. We look forward to welcoming our guests aboard to experience the future of air travel."

Saudi Arabia's Aviation Ambitions Are Taking Shape



The launch of Riyadh Air represents one of the largest airline startup projects seen in recent aviation history. Backed by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, the airline was established to increase air connectivity to the Kingdom and support economic growth beyond the oil sector. Riyadh Air has already secured major aircraft orders from both Boeing and Airbus as it builds a future long-haul network spanning Europe, Asia, Africa, and North America. Aviation analysts have compared the airline's ambitions to the rapid global rise previously achieved by Gulf carriers such as Emirates and Qatar Airways.

London is also a logical first

destination because the UK remains one of Saudi Arabia's most important international business partners. The route is expected to attract strong premium demand from corporate travelers, government delegations, financial sector executives, and high-end leisure passengers. Riyadh Air will enter a market already served by British Airways and Saudia, but the startup believes its modern product and fresh branding can help differentiate it from competitors.

Another factor driving interest is the airline's onboard experience. Riyadh Air's Boeing 787-9 configuration includes spacious premium cabins and upgraded digital entertainment systems, reflecting Saudi Arabia's growing focus on luxury tourism and hospitality. The airline has also emphasized advanced connectivity features, modern cabin aesthetics, and upgraded passenger comfort as key selling points for international travelers.

Country Manager Ethiopian Airlines visits STDC

A highly productive and engaging session was held between Mr. Feyyaz Ali Shah, MD of STDC, (Sindh Tourism Development Corporation) and Mr. Asrat Fikadu, Country Manager Pakistan Ethiopian Airlines, along with the senior leadership of Bukhari Travel Group. The discussion centered on strengthening bilateral tourism cooperation, enhancing connectivity, and fostering mutual growth between Pakistan and Ethiopia.

Together, the partners explored new opportunities to promote tourism, build strategic collaboration, and create long-term value for both markets.



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Motorways to have air ambulance service

In an effort to ensure safety and emergency response, National Highways and Motorway is working on a project to launch an air ambulance service and establish modern trauma centres on motorways in collaboration with the Pakistan Air Force (PAF).

Federal Minister for Communication Abdul Aleem Khan revealed this in a meeting with the Vice President of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) Konstantin Limitovskiy, along with Director General Mrs Xiaohong Wang, here on Wednesday 20 May.

The minister appreciated the air chief marshal for taking personal interest in the project to ensure the swift launch of the Air Ambulance (helicopter) Service. The federal minister extended an invitation to the AIIB delegation to visit completed National Highway Authority (NHA) projects.

The AIIB delegation expressed strong interest in collaborating with the NHA, describing their visit as pleasant and confirming that they would also be visiting Lahore. During the meeting, Federal Minister Abdul Aleem Khan emphasised that partnership and investment with the AIIB are of paramount importance to Pakistan.

He stated that the government aims to complete many vital transportation and infrastructure projects within the next two years." The most critical project for Pakistan right now is the Karachi-Hyderabad and Hyderabad-Sukkur Motorway, which will play a pivotal role in the country's economic development," said Abdul Aleem Khan.

He assured that Pakistan would utilise all available resources to ensure its timely completion and aimed to complete the project within 2 years. The minister shared that the section of the motorway connecting to the Karachi Port will consist of 8 lanes, while the Hyderabad-Sukkur section will feature six lanes.

Furthermore, the minister announced that the Lahore-Sialkot and Kharian-Rawalpindi motorway projects are also slated for completion within the next two years. This project will reduce the travel distance between Lahore and Islamabad by 100 kilometres, saving an hour of travel time and resulting in billions of rupees in annual fuel savings.

DGPAA Visits Skardu International Airport, reviews development projects



Director General Pakistan Airports Authority (DGPAA) Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed visited Skardu International Airport on 16th May 2026, accompanied by the Deputy Director General Airports Engineer Sadiq Ur Rehman, Director Airport Services, Director Engineering Services and Director Planning & Development. Upon arrival at Skardu International Airport, the DGPAA was received by the Airport Manager Skardu, Base Commander PAF Base Qadri, and Officer Commanding ASF.

During the visit, the DGPAA was briefed on ongoing and proposed development projects at Skardu International Airport. The briefing covered the expansion of the existing Passenger Terminal Building, construction of a new Air Traffic Control (ATC) Tower and Fire Station, and the proposed construction of a New Passenger Terminal Building.

The DGPAA also hosted a luncheon for senior dignitaries of the District Administration of Skardu. During the meeting, discussions were held on matters pertaining to airport development, particularly land-related issues concerning the proposed New Passenger Terminal Building project.

During the visit, the DGPAA also interacted with the staff of Skardu International Airport and appreciated their dedication and commitment.

PAA conducts Public hearing for aviation complex project in Islamabad



Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) successfully conducted the mandatory Public Hearing for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of its landmark Aviation Complex Project, Blue Area, Islamabad, at a local Hotel in Islamabad. The hearing was held in accordance with the provisions of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act, 1997, under the supervision of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), with technical support from National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK).

The session provided an opportunity to present the project's environmental assessment, technical features, and regulatory compliance before members of the public, local community representatives, and other stakeholders. Participants raised questions and shared feedback, which were addressed by project consultants and PAA officials. The successful completion of the hearing marks another important milestone for the Aviation Complex Project. Feedback received during the process will be incorporated into the final EIA report to be submitted to Pak-EPA for environmental approval. The Aviation Complex is a state-of-the-art G+26 facility with six basements, planned to centralize PAA offices and aviation-related services while promoting efficient land use and sustainable infrastructure development in the federal capital.

Dynamic Global Logistics launches its operations in Lahore



Thanks to Almighty Allah and the management of Dynamic Worldwide Group, especially Ch. Tariq Mahmood, Salah Tariq, Saim Tariq, and the entire crew, for providing us the opportunity to be part of this wonderful Dynamic family, said Mr Rana, Tariq Mahmood.

Along with my brothers Hussain Goraya and Awis Butt, and my entire professional team, we firmly believe that, Insha'Allah, we will play our role in the growth and success of this esteemed organization he said.

"We are proud to share the successful launch ceremony of *Dynamic Global Logistics Pakistan*, a group company of *Dynamic World Wide Logistics Group*, effective from 1st June 2026".

This new SBU will be led by Mr. *Rana Tariq Mahmood*, a highly respected industry professional with extensive experience in the logistics and aviation sector. He is also currently serving as the Chairman of *Air Cargo Association of Pakistan (ACAAP)*, further reflecting his strong reputation and leadership within the industry. His vast expertise, professional network, and industry relationships will contribute significantly to Dynamic Group's continued expansion and growth.

The ceremony included ribbon-cutting and cake-cutting celebrations, marking the beginning of an exciting new chapter for the group. Joining him at the event were:

Ghulam Hussain Goraya* – Regional Director Sales.

Muhammad Awais Butt* – Director Sales
Amtul Naseer* – Management Coordinator

We extend our best wishes to the entire team for a successful journey ahead. May *Dynamic Global Logistics Pakistan* continue to grow, achieve new milestones, and build a strong future in the logistics industry.



Mr. Tariq Chaudhary presents souvenir to Mr. Rana Tariq Mahmood on the occasion.



Spirit Airlines shuts down globally



A jetBlue plane taxis past grounded Spirit Airlines aircraft in Florida. Spirit Aviation Holdings Inc cancelled all flights and began winding down after failing to secure funding from the Trump administration.

US air carriers mobilised on Saturday 2 May to help passengers and crew members stranded by the overnight shutdown of Spirit Airlines, after last-minute talks with creditors and the White House collapsed.

The budget airline known for its bright yellow planes succumbed to crushing fuel prices and announced in the early hours of Saturday 2 May that “all flights have been cancelled, and customer service is no longer available” as it “started winding down its global operations, effective immediately.” Other carriers, including American, Delta, United, and jetBlue, leapt at the news on Saturday, offering what some dubbed “rescue fares” to those waking up with cancelled itineraries.

Some said they were increasing flights or the size of planes in and out of airports where Spirit had a significant presence.

Carriers also sought to support marooned Spirit staff — and hire them.

Several carriers encouraged now-jobless crew members to apply to their open roles.

Spirit had been in bankruptcy since August 2025 — its second in less than a year — and the White House had been considering a bailout.

“The recent material increase in oil prices and other pressures on the business have significantly impacted Spirit's financial outlook,” the company said in a statement. “With no additional funding available to the company, Spirit had no choice but to begin this wind-down.” It has promised refunds.

US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy scrambled to defend the Trump administration's position as a rescue plan never materialised.

“The president was like a dog on a bone trying to figure out a way to keep Spirit afloat,” Duffy said in a morning press conference.

US resumes flights to Venezuela after seven years



Passengers disembark after the plane landed at Simon Bolivar Airport in La Guaira, Venezuela.

The first direct flight between the United States and Venezuela in seven years landed at an airport near Caracas on Thursday 30 April, a new sign of a thaw after Washington deposed leftist leader Nicolas Maduro.

The American Airlines flight took off at 1426 GMT from Miami en route to the Venezuelan capital, where the United States has resumed diplomatic presence after years of tension.

The first flight's manifest was dominated by officials and journalists, with senior officials from Washington flying to Caracas to meet government leaders, a prospect unthinkable just months ago.

Representatives of the city of Miami, a hub for Latin Americans that sees itself as a gateway to the region, greeted passengers at the gate, as did the Venezuelan ambassador to Washington, Felix Plasencia.

The inaugural flight featured a special Venezuelan menu, including corn pancakes known as cachapas and a Venezuelan-style chicken salad.

Some 1.2 million Venezuelans live in the United States, and the thaw is expected to boost the US business presence in the South American nation, which has the world's largest proven oil reserves.

But President Donald Trump has also been moving aggressively to remove Venezuelans from the United States, terminating a programme that shielded migrants from deportation.

US forces carried out a deadly raid in Caracas on Jan 3, snatching longtime US nemesis Maduro and flying him and his wife to New York to face charges of drug trafficking, which they deny.

Maduro was replaced by his vice president, Delcy Rodriguez, who has largely cooperated with the United States despite her ideological background.

Laser hair removal device sparks Australia airport evacuation

A bomb disposal unit was called to an Australian airport on Thursday May 21 only to find the suspicious object was a laser hair removal device.

Avalon airport in Victoria state was partially evacuated in the early hours after the item was detected during a security screening.

“The Bomb Response Unit conducted checks on an item, and it was determined to be a laser hair removal device,” Victoria police said in a statement.

Acting Inspector Nick Uebergang said that the suspicious device — the laser hair removal tool — along with a hot chocolate container, was kept on a conveyor belt while police were called.

“The person who had the bag wasn't too cooperative with us to start off with too, which made things a little bit difficult,” he said. The incident forced the delay or cancellation of a number of flights.

The man was not charged and the airport reopened later in the day. In a statement, the airport confirmed “the item is no longer deemed a risk”.

“Today's response demonstrates the vigilance of the screening and security processes, with precautionary measures taken immediately to ensure the safety of passengers, staff and the broader community,” a spokesperson said.

Boeing quietly dodged the A380 bullet



Boeing quietly dodged the A380 bullet. In the 1990s, Boeing was studying the NLA (New Large Airplane), a massive 500+ seat, four-engine jumbo designed to take on the future of high-capacity travel. But in 1993, Boeing walked away from the program. History would later prove that decision may have saved them billions.

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Japan has quietly entered the supersonic race



Japan has quietly stepped into one of the most technically demanding races in aviation with a hypersonic engine test that pushes far beyond anything currently flying in commercial aerospace. At JAXA's Kakuda Space Center in Miyagi, researchers successfully carried out what officials described as Japan's first Mach 5 combustion test using a hypersonic experimental aircraft, marking a significant moment for a country that has spent decades researching high-speed propulsion behind the scenes. At Mach 5, or roughly 3,800 mph, a hypersonic aircraft could theoretically fly from Tokyo Narita to New York's JFK in just 1 hour and 45 minutes. The numbers alone make the project sound almost unreal. Mach 5 is roughly 3,800 mph, fast enough to cross the Pacific in a fraction of the time taken by today's long-haul flights. At that speed, even a route as punishing as Tokyo Narita to New York JFK, which covers roughly 6,730 miles, could theoretically be completed in about 1 hour and 45 minutes, before factoring in climb, routing, acceleration, and descent. More importantly, it is nearly three times faster than the cruising speed targeted by 'Boom Supersonics Overt' the American-built Concorde successor that aims to fly at Mach 1.7. For context, even at Mach 1.7, a New York JFK to Los Angeles flight of roughly 2,475 miles could theoretically take about 1 hour and 55 minutes, making Overture remarkably quick by today's standards, yet still nowhere near Japan's hypersonic ambitions. While Boom is trying to revive supersonic passenger travel for the modern era, Japan is already testing technologies that operate in an entirely different category of physics.

Japan's Mach 5 experiment was about much more than raw speed

The test took place inside JAXA's ramjet engine testing facility, where engineers recreated a simulated Mach 5 flight environment around a compact experimental aircraft. That meant exposing the vehicle to temperatures approaching 1,000 degrees Celsius around the airframe, the kind of thermal

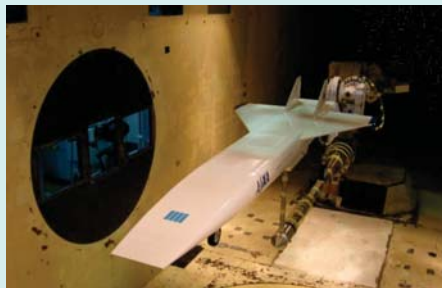


punishment that can destroy conventional aircraft structures within minutes.

Also read - Breitling has unveiled a limited edition Navitimer that brings the spirit of the Concorde's supersonic travel era back to the wrist.

What makes the experiments important is that the Japanese team was not simply trying to keep an engine running. The hydrogen-fueled ramjet test examined how the entire aircraft behaved under hypersonic conditions. Researchers evaluated heat shielding, exhaust-temperature distribution, thermal-structure analysis, and even the operation of aerodynamic control surfaces while the aircraft was exposed to extreme temperatures.

According to the team, the thermal protection system managed to keep the inside of the aircraft near normal operating temperatures despite the severe external heat. That detail matters because modern aircraft rely on sensitive onboard electronics for flight control, stability management, and engine operation. At Mach 5, protecting those systems



becomes one of the central engineering challenges.

The hydrogen-powered ramjet itself is another major part of the story. Unlike traditional jet engines that use rotating compressor blades, a ramjet relies on the aircraft's immense forward speed to compress incoming air before combustion. That makes the design mechanically simpler at hypersonic velocity, though it also means the aircraft must already be traveling at extreme speed before the engine can function efficiently.

One easily overlooked detail from the Japanese program reveals how seriously the researchers are approaching the

project. Engineers were also studying the environmental impact of hydrogen ramjet exhaust during the test. That means the experiment was not solely about reaching Mach 5. It was also gathering long-term data about whether hydrogen-based hypersonic propulsion could eventually become sustainable enough for broader aerospace use.

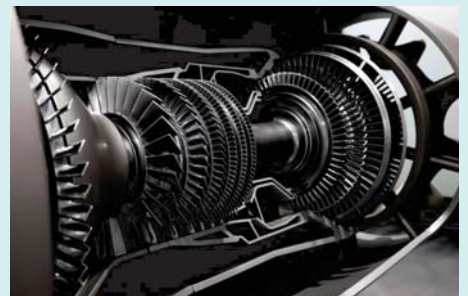
This hypersonic jet concept is so fast that it makes the Concorde look like a lazy tortoise. Designed to cruise at 5,500 miles per hour, The Antipode can take off from New York and land in Dubai before you can finish watching an episode of The Simpsons.

Thrice as fast as America's Concorde.

The comparison with Boom Overture highlights just how ambitious Japan's project really is. Boom's Overture has become the face of modern supersonic aviation, with promises of cutting transatlantic flight times in half while carrying around 64 to 80 passengers at speeds near Mach 1.7. It is effectively designed as a cleaner, quieter, and more commercially viable evolution of Concorde.

Japan's experimental aircraft belongs to an entirely different world. At Mach 5, airflow itself becomes unstable, shockwaves dominate the aerodynamics, and temperatures around the aircraft can approach those seen on spacecraft during atmospheric reentry. The engineering challenge stops being about comfort and economics and becomes a battle against heat, pressure, and physics itself.

That is why Japan's latest test feels important. The country is not unveiling flashy renderings or promising commercial flights by the end of the decade. Instead, it is slowly solving the foundational problems that have prevented hypersonic aviation from becoming reality for more than half a century. Boom Supersonic may bring back faster passenger travel first with plans to start production within two years, but Japan's research suggests the next frontier in aviation could eventually move far beyond Concorde's legacy altogether.



The Boom supersonic will be powered by the Overture engine. Image - Boom Supersonic



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Post-Hajj operations continue smoothly across Pakistan's major airports

Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), in coordination with all relevant stakeholders, continues to facilitate the return of Hujjaj under the ongoing Post-Hajj Operation 2026.

At Islamabad International Airport, the first official Government Hajj return flight, SV5724 from Jeddah, arrived on 1 June 2026 carrying 400 pilgrims. Returning Hujjaj were welcomed by Federal Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, PAA, ASF, and other stakeholders.

At Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore, the first returning Hajj flight for Lahore, SV5734, arrived from Jeddah. Provincial Minister for Specialized Health Care & Medical Education Khawaja Salman Rafique, the Airport Manager Lahore, and other officials received the pilgrims. At Faisalabad International Airport, PIA flight PK-840, the first Hajj return flight for Faisalabad, arrived from Jeddah carrying 167 pilgrims. The returning Hujjaj were welcomed by MNA Muhammad Bilal Badr, COO/APM FIAP, District Manager PIA, CSO ASF, and other officials.

At Multan International Airport, Air Blue flight PA-873, the first post-Hajj flight for Multan, arrived from Jeddah carrying 151 pilgrims. A welcome ceremony was attended by MNA Qasim Noon, airport officials, and representatives of stakeholder agencies.

At Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, AirSial flight PF723, the first post-Hajj arrival flight for Karachi, arrived from Jeddah carrying 159 pilgrims. Federal Minister Das Kohistani, Provincial Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, the Airport Manager, and other officials welcomed the returning pilgrims.

Special facilitation arrangements have been put in place at airports across the country to ensure smooth arrival procedures for pilgrims. PAA remains committed to providing efficient passenger facilitation and operational coordination throughout the Post-Hajj Operation 2026. It is pertinent to note that the flight arriving at Islamabad International Airport on 30 May 2026 was a scheduled commercial flight carrying 114 pilgrims under the Private Hajj Scheme. The arrival of SV5724 on 1 June 2026 marked the first official Government Hajj return flight under the Post-Hajj Operation 2026.

Pakistan Airports Authority warmly welcomed all returning Hujjaj and wishes them a safe and blessed homecoming.

Sialkot International Airport warmly welcomes returning Hajj pilgrims



Sialkot, June 1, 2026: Upon commencement of post-Hajj flight operations, returning Hajj pilgrims were accorded a warm and heartfelt welcome at Sialkot International Airport. On the occasion, State Minister for Planning & Development and Special Initiatives, Mr. Armaghan Subhani, along with Chairman Sialkot International Airport, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. Waqas Afzal, and Convener SIAL Hajj Committee, Ch. Ghulam Mustafa, graciously received the pilgrims arriving from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Esteemed members of the Board of Directors of SIAL were also present.

The returning pilgrims expressed their satisfaction and appreciation for the arrangements made at Sialkot International Airport, acknowledging the efficient facilitation and services provided throughout the Hajj operation.

Speaking on the occasion, State Minister Mr. Armaghan Subhani stated that the Government had made comprehensive and excellent arrangements for Hajj pilgrims to ensure a smooth and comfortable pilgrimage experience. He appreciated the dedicated efforts of Sialkot International Airport and its management, acknowledging their tireless commitment towards facilitating the Hujjaj during both departure and

arrival operations.

Chairman SIAL, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, remarked that it was a matter of immense honour and privilege for Sialkot International Airport to welcome the returning pilgrims. He stated that SIAL had utilized all available resources to ensure provision of the best possible arrangements for pilgrims during both departure and arrival phases of the Hajj operation.

He further expressed gratitude to the Government of Pakistan for operating Hajj flights from Sialkot International Airport, noting that the initiative had brought significant convenience to thousands of pilgrims from the region by enabling them to undertake their sacred journey from their neighbouring airport.

Today, a total of 708 pilgrims arrived at Sialkot International Airport from Saudi Arabia through three separate flights. During the post-Hajj operation, approximately 5,000 pilgrims are expected to return through Sialkot International Airport during the month of June.

A total of 26 post-Hajj flights have been scheduled, including 21 flights by AirSial and 5 flights by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), ensuring the safe and comfortable return of pilgrims to Pakistan.



News in pictures

PIFFA participates in ITIF Asia 2026



Group photo taken with Mr. M Jamil Ahmed, Chairman of PIFFA on the occasion.



Glimpses from PIFFA's presence at ITIF Asia 2026 at Expo Center Karachi. A productive few days of industry networking, professional engagement, and meaningful interactions with industrial leaders and business professionals.



Chairman Sialkot International Airport, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, met with the Vice President Emirates for Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Al-Nihari Al-Hashmi. During the session, Chairman SIAL and Vice President Emirates Airlines had a productive meeting, improving operational collaboration and exploring future opportunities aimed at enhancing passenger facilitation and aviation connectivity. Air Vice Marshall (R) Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti CEO SIAL also present on the occasion.



Gul Aviation GSA Air China hosted a lunch for new Country Manager Pakistan Air China, Mr. Ji, Mr. Imran Peracha Chairman Gul Group, Mr. Khalid Khan GM and Mr. Raees Siddiqi also present on the occasion.



Gul Aviation hosted an insightful Human Resources Management workshop presented by SZABIST University students as part of their Capstone Project, fostering innovation, learning, and professional growth. Mr. Imran Peracha and Mr. Khalid Khan also seen in the picture.



The Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan visits SIAL

Sialkot International Airport had the honour of welcoming H.E. the Ethiopian Ambassador to Pakistan OUMER HUSSEIN OBAASSUMES during his official visit to the airport. The distinguished guest was graciously received by Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Waqas Afzal, esteemed Members of the Board of Directors, and CEO SIAL. During the visit, Vice Chairman SIAL briefed the Ambassador on the operational framework of Sialkot International Airport, highlighting the airport's international and domestic flight operations, cargo handling facilities, and its growing role in regional connectivity and trade facilitation. While addressing the session, the Vice Chairman acknowledged the longstanding bilateral relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia and expressed optimism for further strengthening ties between the two brotherly nations through enhanced aviation and trade collaboration.

H.E. the Ethiopian Ambassador showed keen interest in exploring opportunities related to air freight enhancement and the feasibility and future execution of international flight operations between Ethiopia and Sialkot. Speaking during the meeting, the Ambassador remarked that Pakistan holds immense untapped potential and emphasized the importance of translating vision into practical execution. "I believe in execution, and Pakistan possesses tremendous potential that must be further enhanced through stronger cooperation between Ethiopia and Pakistan. We look forward to deepening this relationship and hope to soon witness Ethiopian Airlines landing at Sialkot International Airport," the Ambassador stated.

Members of the Board of Directors highly appreciated the Ambassador's visit and termed it a significant step towards fostering stronger bilateral engagement, particularly in the fields of aviation, trade, and cargo connectivity between the two countries.

The visit concluded on a positive note, reflecting mutual commitment towards building stronger institutional and economic linkages between Pakistan and Ethiopia.



Mr. Waqas Afzal Vice Chairman SIAL presents a shield to the honourable guest.



Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti and DyDG ASF Brigadier Saleem Khaliq Qureshi SI (M) inaugurate the newly constructed barrack for ASF at Sialkot International Airport.



H.E. Ambassador of Kazakhstan Yarzhan Kistafin visits AirSial Head office Sialkot. Photo shows the Chairman AirSial, Mr. Fazal Gilani presenting him a memento, Mr. M. Yousaf, Director also share the occasion.

Indonesia boosts defences with new fighter jets



INDONESIAN President Prabowo Subianto splashes blessed water onto a Rafale fighter during a ceremony in Jakarta to hand over six new planes to the air force.

Indonesia will continue boosting its defence capabilities, President Prabowo Subianto said on Monday 18 May, citing uncertain times as he presented new military hardware, including six French-made Rafale jets, to the air force.

The Southeast Asian nation, which pursues a policy of diplomatic non-alignment, must “continue to improve our defence capabilities to serve as a deterrent”, Prabowo told reporters at a ceremony at a military air base in Jakarta. He said Indonesia does “not have any interests other than protecting our own territory”.

“We observe that the global geopolitical landscape is fraught with uncertainty, and we recognise that defence is a primary prerequisite for stability,” he added.

Prabowo inspected defence equipment recently procured for the Indonesian military, including four Dassault Falcon 8X jets and an Airbus A400M Atlas transport aircraft, according to a presidential palace statement.

Jakarta signed an \$8.1 billion deal in 2022 under then-defence minister Prabowo to purchase 42 French-made Rafale fighters. Six of the jets have been delivered so far — three in January and another three on Monday, defence ministry spokesman Rico Ricardo Sirait said.

“The government views the strengthening of defence equipment not merely as the procurement of combat platforms, but as a strategic investment aimed at safeguarding sovereignty, national honour and national defence readiness,” Rico said.

Air France, Airbus convicted of manslaughter in 2009 crash

A French appeals court on Thursday May 21 convicted Air France and Airbus of involuntary man slaughter over the 2009 crash of a Rio-Paris flight that killed 228 people, the worst disaster in France’s aviation history.

The Paris Court of Appeal ruling was a dramatic reversal of a lower court decision.

The appeal court said that the French flag carrier and Europe’s leading aerospace manufacturer were ‘solely and entirely responsible for the crash of flight AF447,’ ordering each to pay 225,000 euros (\$261,000) the maximum fine for corporate manslaughter.

While the penalties are symbolic, the ruling will be seen as significant reputational damage for both companies. Air France and Airbus have consistently denied any criminal liability, blaming pilot error.

The lower court ruling acquitted them in 2023, finding that the companies had made mistakes but could not be proven to have caused the crash. But on Thursday May 21 presiding judge Sylvie Madec, said the lower court had not taken into account ‘the existence of the causal chain within which the pilots’ actions occurred, and which led to the deaths of all the passengers.

‘The AF447 crash was a disaster waiting to happen and one that could have been avoided if each of the companies involved had fully grasped the seriousness of the failure,’ she added.

Airbus said it would lodge an appeal. There was no immediate reaction from Air France.

‘Pain of families’ The families of those killed in the crash praised the ruling.

Daniele Lamy, the head of an association of families of the victims, said that after a 17-year legal battle the justice system had finally taken into account ‘the pain of the families faced with a collective tragedy of unbearable brutality.’ ‘It is also a ruling which, for the first time, convicts multinational aerospace companies and places safety above any other economic consideration,’ Lamy said.

These prestigious firms will no longer be able to hide behind their self-satisfaction and technological pride.’ On June 1, 2009, Air France Flight AF447, travelling from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, was cruising over the Atlantic when the pilots lost control of the aircraft, causing it to plunge into the ocean.

There were no survivors among the

216 passengers and 12 crew on board the Airbus built A330 aircraft, the dead including 72 French nationals and 58 Brazilians. Although prosecutors in 2023 had asked for the charges to be dropped, they had subsequently lodged the appeal.

The eight-week appeal trial ran between September and December last year. The ruling was a ‘great source of satisfaction’, said Olivier Morice, a lawyer for the civil parties. ‘This is an extremely long judgement, more than 400 pages, it’s very technical,’ he added.

Lawyers for the families have argued that both companies were aware of the problem with the pitot tubes, used to measure flight speed. But the pilots were not trained to deal with such a high-altitude emergency.

The court heard how a malfunction with the tubes, which became blocked with ice crystals during a mid-Atlantic storm, caused alarms to sound in the plane’s cockpit and the autopilot system to switch off.

Experts highlighted how, after the instrument failed, the pilots put the plane into a climb that caused the aircraft to stall and then crash into the ocean.

Absolutely dreadful situation’ Simon Ndiaye, a lawyer for Airbus, said the ruling had nothing to do with ‘justice, the law, or safety.’ ‘The legal battle will continue,’ he said. ‘On a human level, Airbus reiterates its compassion for the victims’ families.’ The manufacturer had emphasised what it describes as erratic crew behavior and flawed decision-making during the emergency, as the aircraft entered a stall. The appeals court held Airbus responsible for several faults, including underestimating the seriousness of problems with sensors and failing to properly inform the crews of operating airlines.

Air France was found guilty of having failed to provide pilot training and to adequately inform flight crews. Without ruling out that ‘pilot errors’ may have been made during the 4 minutes and 30 seconds between the icing of the sensors and the impact with the ocean, the court nevertheless considered that the crew had not been sufficiently prepared to deal with the ‘extremely complex failure’ ‘The pilots of AF447 truly tried everything to get out of this absolutely dreadful situation,’ the presiding judge said. ‘They went as far as their abilities allowed, and nothing can be held against them.’



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Airblue starts flights from Lahore to Baku



Airblue has launched new Lahore to Baku flights as part of efforts to improve regional connectivity. The route is expected to support tourism, business travel, and people-to-people links.

Aviation analysts say new international routes can strengthen competition and increase travel options for passengers. It also boosts Pakistan's air links with Central Eurasia.

K2 Airways from Karachi to Uzbekistan



K2 Airways has launched a new cargo route between Karachi and Uzbekistan. The service aims to improve trade links and faster movement of goods between the two countries.

Officials say the route can support exporters and strengthen regional connectivity. It also opens new logistics opportunities for businesses.

Air Asia suspends flight to Pakistan



Travelling between Pakistan and Malaysia will soon become somewhat complicated as AirAsia X will officially be suspending its Kuala Lumpur-Karachi route from June 30.

The airline confirmed that operations on the route will remain halted until March 26, 2027. AirAsia X cited geopolitical uncertainty and the ongoing supply chain disruptions as the main reasons behind this decision, adding that the carrier is currently optimising its international network.

China confirms massive 200-jet Boeing order after summit



China has officially put pen to paper on a commitment to buy 200 Boein commercial aircraft for the country's airlines. The news comes in the wake of US President Donald Trump's visit to the Asian nation, during which he met with Xi Jinping, his Chinese counterpart, in Beijing.

Pakistan set to receive first Chinese J-35 stealth fighters in 2026



Islamabad's reported induction of up to 12 Chinese J-35A stealth fighters alongside KJ-500 AEW&C aircraft and HQ-19 missile defence systems could dramatically reshape the South Asian military balance before India fields its own fifth-generation combat fleet.

Islamabad could receive an initial batch of between four and twelve Chinese J-35A fifth-generation stealth fighters later this year, a development that would instantly transform Pakistan into the first export operator of Beijing's next-generation combat aviation ecosystem and potentially alter the South Asian airpower balance before India fields its own stealth fleet.

Pakistan defense news

The prospect of Pakistan inducting operational fifth-generation aircraft as early as 2026 is generating escalating concern among regional military planners because the reported package extends beyond stealth fighters alone and reportedly includes the KJ-500 airborne early warning aircraft alongside the HQ-19 high-altitude missile defence system.

SIAL puts Boeing 767-336 ER for sale

A Boeing 767-336 ER (Property of Sialkot International Airport) is available for SALE, suitable for multi-pronged aviation purposes (Engineering, Parts, Cargo conversion, Training, Projects etc)

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Sailing the Hormuz



Evening over a quiet bay in the Musandam Peninsula in 2012

It was a bright afternoon in 2012 when we sailed into the Musandam Peninsula — the small bit of land that juts out in the north of Oman — at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz.

At the time, the name meant little to us and we did not yet know the significance it would acquire in the years ahead. What drew us instead was the landscape itself. After a day and a half of sailing past the flat desert coastline from Dubai, mountain cliffs suddenly rose straight out of the deep indigo sea.

The waters of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea seemed to meet uneasily there. The currents were restless, the shifts beneath the boat sudden and hard to anticipate. In sheltered inlets, the water turned clear green, revealing stones, coral fragments and swaying seaweed below the surface. There was something ancient about that strait. For centuries, it has carried merchants, conquerors, fishermen, smugglers, pilgrims, fleets of empires and oil tankers through its narrow passage. Yet the mountains remained indifferent to all of them. They stood over the water with the same hard stillness with which they must once have watched Arab dhows leave on the monsoon winds for India and East Africa. It was difficult to sail through those waters without thinking of the countless vessels that had passed there before us — Portuguese warships guarding imperial trade routes, British gunboats policing the Gulf and, in more recent decades, endless columns of oil tankers feeding distant economies. The silence of the mountains was deceptive. Beneath the water, there was life everywhere.

We saw flocks of seabirds diving at shoals of flying fish skimming across the surface of the sea. We immediately tacked towards them and dropped our lines into the water. Within a few hours we had caught dozens of great barracuda, kingfish and mackerel; enough to feed us for days. At times, dolphins appeared without warning, escorting the boat before vanishing again into the blue water.

My fellow sailors, Rahil and Khalid, and I were so absorbed in the excitement

of the catch that we failed to notice an Omani coast guard boat approaching at speed. Our Mauritius-born deckhand, William, disappeared inside the cabin at the first sight of it and refused to come out, despite repeated calls, leaving the three of us to answer the polite but curious questions of the coast guards.

By dusk, we needed to find safe anchorage. We chose a quiet bay near a cove, enclosed by mountains on three sides. It took us nearly an hour to secure the anchor properly and, just as we had settled down for the evening, we heard the rattle of another engine approaching through the darkening water.

A young boy in a small dinghy came alongside our boat. He asked us not to throw litter into the sea and requested that we hand over our garbage bags, so he could dispose of them properly at a waste site nearby. He spoke Arabic but was of Baloch origin and knew a little Urdu. Perhaps that explained why the waters around Musandam were still so remarkably clean. The encounter reminded us, sadly, of the sea near Karachi, where hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage and industrial waste are dumped every day.

At night, Musandam became almost unreal.

The mountains disappeared into darkness, leaving only faint outlines beneath a sky thick with stars. Around the boat, the sea glowed softly with phosphorescence. Every movement in the water, whether a fish or a wave, produced brief flashes of blue light. It felt less like floating on water and more like moving through darkness itself.

We were woken very early the next morning by a short storm and struggled to keep the boat away from rocks jutting out of the water. Gradually, thin streams of golden sunlight began filtering through the mountain gaps and fishermen started appearing across the bay. Dolphins leapt through the water while schools of fish scattered ahead of them. Dawn seemed to bring the entire sea briefly to the surface.

As we sailed out of the bay, the wind funneling between the mountains rose to nearly 25-30 knots, making the passage back into the Gulf difficult and exhausting. In the distance, we could see small white speedboats racing across the water towards the coast of heavily sanctioned Iran, carrying cargo through one of the busiest and most politically charged waterways in the world.

The journey became inspiration for another much longer 10-day voyage from Dubai to Karachi the next year in 2013.

The writer is president, WWF-Pakistan

Ethiopia Ambassador visits Forward Sports



H.E. Ambassador Dr. Omer H. Oba undertook an official visit to Forward Sports - Pvt Limited in Sialkot, where he commended the facility's production capacity, operational excellence, and its significant milestones on the global stage.

The Ambassador held a productive meeting with the management team and discussed bilateral cooperation.

He highlighted emerging opportunities within Ethiopia's sports equipment sector, emphasizing the country's strategic role as a gateway for expanding business across Africa.

The Ambassador also underscored the vital roles played by the Ethiopian Mission and Ethiopian Airlines in bridging the two nations and strengthening bilateral relations.

This engagement establishes a foundation for future cooperation and a long-term partnership in the manufacturing and trade sectors.

US Embassy, Pakistan Football Federation launch FIFA World Cup 2026 countdown event in Islamabad



FIFA World Cup 2026 Official Football Unveiled In Pakistan For The First Time Grand Ceremony In Islamabad.

The football was unveiled for the first time. The footballs for all matches of this global tournament have been manufactured in Pakistan and will be supplied from here. This special event was organized by the US Embassy in Islamabad in collaboration with the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF). The main objective of this event was to formally start the countdown to the FIFA World Cup 2026 and highlight the cultural and economic ties created around the world through this mega global tournament. The highlight of this prestigious event was a giant football specially manufactured in Sialkot, which was presented to the participants for exhibition. A statement issued by the US Embassy said that this football is a wonderful symbol of Pakistan's immense and globally recognized capacity to produce international quality sports products. During the event, US Chargé d'Affaires Natalie Baker and Pakistan Football Federation President Syed Mohsin Gilani welcomed the Federal Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi and the Chairman of the Prime Minister's Youth Program Rana Mashhood as special guests. Warmly welcomed. Addressing the ceremony, the speakers emphasized that the FIFA World Cup is not just a game, but a huge and effective global platform to bring different countries, nations and diverse cultures of the world closer to each other.

The FIFA World Cup is taking place from June 11 to July 19, 2026. Its being jointly hosted across 16 cities in Canada, Mexico and the USA.



The ceremony of FIFA World Cup 2026 held in Islamabad, picture shows Railway Minister Hanif Abbasi, US Charge d'Affaires Natalie Baker and Khawaja Masood CEO Forward Sports (Pvt) Ltd Sialkot (the manufacturer of the FIFA World Cup football).



ECC allows NLC to take over shipping corporation



The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Tuesday 19 May approved the transfer of management control, along with a 30 per cent shareholding, in Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) to the National Logistics Corporation (NLC) for optimum and integrated freight transport through shipping and road networks.

The ECC meeting, presided over by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, also approved more than a 70pc increase in the subsistence allowance for Kashmiri refugees of 1989 and seven supplementary grants worth around Rs8.634 billion.

An official statement said the ECC “granted in-principle approval for restructuring of PNSC of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs through sale of 30pc shareholding and transfer of management control to NLC” — an army-run logistics firm working under the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

The summary for restructuring and divestment to NLC was moved by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs following an earlier approval by the prime minister in February this year.

The ECC directed the authorities concerned to expedite the restructuring and consolidation process to tap emerging maritime and transshipment opportunities.

PNSC is Pakistan's national shipping

carrier engaged in the transportation of dry bulk and liquid cargoes across the globe. It operates a fleet of 12 ships with a carrying capacity of 938,876 tonnes of deadweight. It also has a real estate business and a ship repair workshop.

According to official sources, the consolidation is aimed at expanding the national shipping fleet and reducing foreign freight costs. Under the prime minister's approval, the vessel fleet is to be expanded from 12 to more than 50 in five years, with projected annual foreign exchange savings of \$5bn to \$6bn in freight costs by handling more sea-route cargo.

At present, the national carrier handles around 12pc of Pakistan's sea-route cargo requirements, resulting in foreign exchange outflows on freight payments.

PNSC's profit during the first three quarters (July-March) of the current fiscal year stood at around Rs7.5bn, almost half of the Rs15.4bn recorded in the same period last year.

The ECC also approved a request of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan for enhancement of the monthly subsistence/Guzara allowance for Jammu and Kashmir refugees of 1989 from Rs3,500 to Rs6,000 per person with effect from Feb 1, 2026.

It also approved a supplementary grant of Rs578.838 million for the period ending June 30, 2026. The committee

directed the ministry to take up future budgetary requirements with the Finance Division for the next budget cycle.

The ECC approved a request of the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for a supplementary grant of Rs3.915bn for the Prime Minister's Youth Skill Development Programme through NAVTTC and the establishment of Daanish Schools in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan.

The committee also approved two summaries of the Ministry of Interior and Narcotics Control, including Rs160m for repair and maintenance of the Prime Minister's Office during FY26 and Rs480m for recurring operational requirements of Frontier Corps KP (North) Hospital at Shakas in Khyber district.

The committee approved another Rs1.5bn grant to the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination for the Prime Minister's National Health Programme during PSDP 2025-26.

The ECC also granted Rs1bn to the Ministry of Railways for payment of outstanding liabilities under the Prime Minister's Assistance Package and directed the Railways Division to undertake a review of its pension liabilities.

The committee also directed the Establishment Division to review the overall policy framework relating to the Prime Minister's Assistance Package.

Another Rs1bn grant was approved for the Ministry of National Food Security and Research for the operationalisation of the National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA).

The ECC also approved the National Policy to Realise Pakistan's Gemstone Potential 2026-30, submitted by the Industries and Production Division.

The policy aims to formalise the gemstone sector, promote value addition and modern mining practices, and enhance exports and regional economic development, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.



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Gwadar Port cuts transit tariffs by up to 40pc



Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Noorul Haq Baloch said the new tariff structure would boost investment, accelerate regional economic growth and create jobs.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Monday 11 May announced a major reduction in tariffs at Gwadar Port aimed at boosting international transit trade, according to an official statement.

The minister said berthing fees for container ships had been reduced by 25 per cent, while port charges on international transshipment containers had been cut by 40pc. He added that port charges on transit container cargo had also been reduced by up to 31pc.

Further, one month of free storage has been introduced for general cargo, compared with the standard five-day allowance at other ports in the country.

“Ships bringing transit and transshipment cargo have been given major relief,” Chaudhry was quoted as saying.

“These incentives take effect immediately, and further adjustments will be reviewed in phases based on operational data and market response,” the minister said, adding that future revisions would be guided by cargo trends, regional competition, and sustainability considerations.

Mr Chaudhry said the measures formed part of a broader strategy to transform Gwadar into a competitive, investor-friendly and modern deep-sea port serving as a strategic gateway for trade with Central Asia, the Middle East, East Africa and beyond.

He said that amid rising demand for low-cost and congestion-free shipping routes, Gwadar was well placed to capture a larger share of regional trade flows. The revised tariff regime, he added, was expected to reduce operational costs for shipping lines, encourage new transshipment and feeder services, and increase cargo throughput.

“This initiative will stimulate economic activity in the country, generate employment opportunities, and expand Pakistan’s logistics and maritime sectors,”

he said.

Meanwhile, Gwadar Port Authority Chairman Noorul Haq Baloch said the new tariff structure was expected to create employment opportunities.

He said reduced fees and improved facilities would attract local and international investors, accelerate regional economic development, and create new jobs.

A day earlier, Mr Baloch said Gwadar Port’s strategic importance had increased amid rising tensions in the Strait of Hormuz because of its shorter access

routes to Iran and Central Asia, as well as investor-friendly incentives.

During a meeting with members of the All Pakistan Shipping Association in Karachi, he said the port was increasingly being viewed as a safe regional trade gateway.

He said Gwadar had the potential to become the future hub of regional trade and logistics because of its low operational costs, modern facilities and shorter trade routes. He added that the Gabb-Rimdan border route had emerged as an effective multi-modal corridor for promoting trade with Iran and Central Asia.

Earlier this month, Mr Baloch also said that four transshipment ships were recorded at the port during April, indicating Gwadar’s growing importance as an alternative trade route in the region.

Seafood exports top \$500m



THE government has announced setting up a 100-acre seafood export processing facility at the Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority to promote the blue economy.

Maritime Affairs Minister Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Saturday 16 May said the fish and fisheries product exports exceeded the \$500 million mark for the first time in the first eleven months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to the opening of the Russian market.

In a statement, the minister called it a landmark achievement for the maritime sector and the blue economy.

Currently, the minister said 16 Pakistani companies have been authorised to export seafood to Russia.

He was confident that access to Russia could pave the way into other Eurasian Economic Union markets and estimated that annual seafood exports could climb to \$800m, with initial exports to Russia alone projected to reach about \$300m. Frozen fish remained the top export category. Other exports, including shrimps, prawns, crabs, sardines, mackerel, flatfish and fish meal, helped broaden the product mix and increase value-added processing.

China remained the largest seafood market, importing nearly 59pc of total seafood exports. Thailand was the

second-largest market, importing mainly Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP)-processed shrimps and prawns valued at \$31.3m. HACCP is a globally recognised food safety management system designed to proactively identify, evaluate, and control potential biological, chemical, and physical hazards throughout the food production process.

Pakistan exports fish and seafood to the UAE, Malaysia, Japan, the EU, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Kuwait and the United States. Pakistan has recently secured a four-year extension for seafood exports to the United States after the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration classified Pakistani fisheries as “comparable” under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Recently, the minister announced a major infrastructure plan to establish a 100-acre seafood processing and export zone at the Korangi Fisheries Harbour Authority to promote the blue economy and expand the authority’s role in global seafood trade. Estimated at \$60-80 million, the project would house 20-25 medium- and large-scale processing units for fish, shrimp, and cephalopods, along with value-addition and export-grade packaging facilities.

The zone will include cold storage and blast-freezing facilities with multi-temperature storage from minus 18 to minus 40 degrees Celsius, ice plants and flake ice stations with a daily production capacity of 50-100 tonnes, he added.

Mr Chaudhry noted that seafood would move via sea, air and land routes, adding that overland corridors to Central Asia offered cost-effective opportunities amid rising demand in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Karachi Port Trust grows strategic role

Maritime Conference Highlights Pakistan's Growing Strategic Role in Indian Ocean Trade.

Islamabad, April 29, 2026: A conference titled "The Impact of the Current Geopolitical Situation on Maritime Trade in the Indian Ocean Region" was jointly organized by the Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) and the National Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI).

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry attended as Chief Guest, while Chairman Karachi Port Trust Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed delivered remarks on "Pakistan's Maritime Opportunity – Karachi, Gwadar and the Indian Ocean Pivot."

Addressing the conference, the Minister emphasized that global trade leadership depends on efficient services and connectivity. He noted Pakistan's recent gains in transshipment cargo and underscored the vast potential of the maritime sector and blue economy for the country's future growth.

The event concluded with souvenir presentations and a group photograph.



Review of incentives to boost export underway

In a departure from established practice, the government has initiated a review of export promotion schemes and incentive options for the upcoming budget, holding a special meeting at the Economic Affairs Division and reaching out to international experts for policy input.

As part of this policy decision, the government has assigned Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Cheema on Saturday, rather than Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan, to oversee and review proposals for targeted incentives across various sectors.

A dedicated Tariff Policy Board under the Ministry of Commerce was mandated to handle tariff issues across sectors, and the ministry also had a separate export promotion mechanism. Ironically, Mr Kamal also continued meeting with stakeholders to review budgetary proposals.

An official announcement said that a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Ahad Cheema to review export promotion schemes and policy options for the upcoming federal budget, with a focus on strengthening Pakistan's exports and supporting priority sectors through effective, targeted incentives.

The meeting was attended by Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani, Governor State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmad, Secretary Finance Imdadullah Bosal, Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Rashid Mahmood Langrial, and Secretary Commerce Jawad Paul. The Saturday 9 May meeting featured the special participation of Professor Stefan Dercon, who had earlier been engaged by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to prepare a national economic plan. The plan, however, was postponed

ahead of its announcement and later replaced with the planning minister's 5Es framework.

Interestingly, the same professor was invited again to join the special meeting virtually to review proposals on export competitiveness and economic policy reforms for the upcoming budget.

The participants briefed the economic affairs minister on export policy proposals under consideration for the upcoming budget. Detailed discussions were held on priority sectors and on the formulation of suitable policy measures to enhance export growth, improve competitiveness, increase SME participation in exports, and expand Pakistan's presence in international markets.

According to the announcement, various proposals relating to fiscal support, trade facilitation, and sector-specific incentives were reviewed during the meeting. Participants observed that not only tax reductions but also improvements in factors of production, infrastructure, facilitation measures, and ease of doing business would play a critical role in boosting exports.

The meeting also reviewed options for export incentives, including performance-based rebates, incentives linked to incremental export growth, and reward mechanisms tied to export target achievement. The participants agreed on the need to align incentive schemes with measurable outcomes to ensure transparency, efficiency, and long-term economic gains. The proposed measures will be fine-tuned in consultation with relevant stakeholders ahead of the finalisation of the federal budget.

Meanwhile, the commerce minister continued to meet representatives of multiple stakeholders daily. The representatives of the Corporate Dairy Farmers Association met Commerce Minister Jam Kamal on Saturday 9 May and briefed him on the progress, investment potential, and future expansion plans of Pakistan's dairy and livestock sector.

During the meeting, the delegation highlighted the transformation underway in Pakistan's corporate dairy sector through modern breeding, artificial insemination, scientific herd management, and advanced milk-handling systems. The participants informed the minister that commercial dairy farms are now producing high-quality milk to international standards, enabling the production and export of value-added dairy products, including cheese and other processed dairy products.



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New Afghanistan-China transport corridor launched via Turkmenistan



A new multimodal freight corridor linking China and Afghanistan via Turkmenistan has been officially launched, aiming to improve the speed and efficiency of overland cargo transportation across Central Asia.

According to the Turkmenistan Embassy in London, the country has become part of a newly established route designed to accelerate freight deliveries between China and Afghanistan.

The corridor, developed with the involvement of Uzbekistan Railways' subsidiary Uztemiryul container, covers approximately 7,400 kilometers and is expected to reduce transit time to around 30 days, improving overall logistics efficiency.

Under the new route, containers are transported by rail from China through the Altynkol station in Kazakhstan, continuing via Uzbekistan to a logistics hub in Bukhara. From there, cargo is transferred to road transport and moved across Turkmenistan before reaching Herat in Afghanistan.

Officials say the new system integrates rail and road networks into a unified logistics chain, making transport more predictable and efficient.

First transshipment cargo vessel arrives at Karachi Port

The first-ever fully transshipment cargo vessel arrived at the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) on Friday 1st May, marking Pakistan's evolution into a premier regional transshipment hub.

The ship MV Erlin carried general cargo, bulk and breakbulk cargo, and vehicles. In a statement, Maritime Affairs

Minister Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry described the new development as a "quantum leap", reflecting the impact of recent maritime reforms and thereby enhancing efficiency, trade competitiveness, and business opportunities.

"In the past, Karachi Port handled only container transshipment. Today marks a historic shift, with the arrival of transshipment carriers for general cargo, breakbulk, and vehicles," the minister stated.

As MV Erlin has brought a diverse cargo, from steel coils to large buses destined for different countries, the operators of Pakistani ports have equipped themselves to handle all types of transshipment and transit trade cargo.

"This achievement strengthens Pakistan's position as a premier regional maritime hub, bridging global trade routes and partnering in progress," the minister added. The transshipment activities have increased significantly at Pakistani ports after the US-Israeli aggression against Iran on Feb 28, subsequently leading to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

As a result, transshipment cargoes destined for Jebel Ali Port in Dubai, the largest in the Middle East and a premier global hub, and Khalifa Port in Abu Dhabi began shifting to other ports, including Salala Port in Oman, ports in India, and Sri Lanka.

To attract transshipment cargo, the government has made major concessions on port charges and tax reliefs. Karachi Port has experienced an extreme increase in transshipment, with roughly 11,000 containers processed in March, Port Qasim managed 3,485 containers, and Gwadar Port also handled its first dedicated transshipment.

Meanwhile, KPT Chairman retired Rear Admiral Shahid Ahmed expressed confidence that transshipment activities will continue at Pakistani ports even after the Gulf crisis ends, as marine lines always maintain alternative options.

Chinese firm plans \$500m export facility

A leading Chinese company is establishing a large-scale manufacturing facility in Pakistan, with the potential to generate annual exports of \$400 million to \$500m and create up to 20,000 local jobs, reflecting renewed investment interest as the country seeks to boost industrial output and external earnings.

This was disclosed on Wednesday 13

May by a Chinese business delegation, led by Challenges Fashion Chairman Huwang Weiguo and Challenge Apparel CEO Ms Karen Chen, with Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan.

Both sides discussed investment in export-oriented manufacturing, industrial facilitation, tariff rationalisation, and broader Pakistan-China economic cooperation.

An official announcement said the delegation briefed the minister on the progress of their ongoing industrial project in Pakistan, sharing plans for significant expansion in manufacturing capacity, employment generation, and export growth.

Mr Huwang informed the minister that the company is establishing a major manufacturing facility under international production standards, with the first phase expected to be completed later this year.

He shared that the long-term expansion plan envisions one of the largest industrial operations of its kind, with the potential to create up to 20,000 employment opportunities and generate annual exports of approximately \$400-500m.

The delegation highlighted Pakistan's strategic advantages, including its skilled workforce, and geographic position linking regional and international trade routes. The investors expressed confidence in Pakistan's industrial potential and expressed growing interest among Chinese businesses in expanding their presence in the country.

The delegation also raised specific operational requirements relating to specialised industrial construction materials and inputs that are currently not manufactured locally and that need to be imported to maintain international manufacturing and safety standards.

The minister invited the delegation to formally submit details of specialised products not produced locally, along with relevant tariff classifications, so the ministry could examine the matter within the ongoing tariff rationalisation framework.

Separately, Mr Kamal held a detailed, wide-ranging meeting with Chinese Minister-Counsellor Yang Guangyuan to discuss strengthening bilateral trade, industrial cooperation, agricultural modernisation, logistics connectivity, supply chain resilience, and emerging investment opportunities within the broader framework of the Pakistan-China strategic economic partnership.

A major focus of the discussion remained Pakistan-China industrial cooperation, particularly in electric vehicles (EVs), renewable energy, battery manufacturing, and advanced industrial technologies.

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'Neela Gumbad' and other historic monuments of Lahore refurbish

A Gumbad, or the blue dome, is a monument near Lahore's famous Anarkali Bazaar. The 17th-century structure is the mausoleum of a Sufi Saint Syed Abdur Razzaq. Neela Gumbad owes its name to the Central Asian-styled blue tiles that once covered the dome. The complex has a mosque, too.

As the Punjab government began a massive refurbishment programme of the historic structure in recent months, some curious persons began asking questions about the history of the octagonal building and the person buried therein. But historical facts about this imposing landmark and the revered Sufi are somewhat clouded as different sources give conflicting pieces of information on them.

In a book published recently, titled *Tareekh-i-Lahore*, a brief article is included that describes the tomb called Neela Gumbad. Written by Prof Muhammad Shuj'auddin, this article was originally published in March 15, 1948, issue of *Fanoos*, a magazine published from Lahore. The piece says that most of the blue tiles that gave the building its name are gone — and he wrote this in the 1940s.

Quoting Mufti Ghulam Sarvar, Prof Shuj'a adds that the building is the burial place of a godly person Syed Abdur Razzaq Makki Sabzwari, whose ancestors had migrated from Sabzwar, Iran, to Ghazni, Afghanistan. In his youth, Abdur Razzaq Makki travelled to Peshawar and then to Delhi, joining the royal forces. But he soon devoted himself to religion and, so wrote some scholars, in 1001 Hijri/ 1592-3 AD, he became a spiritual disciple of Miraan Muhammad Shah Mauj Darya Bukhari of Lahore, a saint of Suharvardiya Sufi Order, who died in 1013 Hijri/ 1604 AD. Abdur Razzaq settled in Lahore and was revered as a great Sufi and spiritual personality. Abdur Razzaq is often called 'Makki' and based on this cognomen some scholars, such as K. L. Hindi, wrote that he had migrated from Makkah, though there is little evidence to prove the statement.

Though Prof Shuj'a has written that Saint Abdur Razzaq passed away in 1048 Hijri/1638 AD, there seems to be some typographical error as the author of *Tehzeeqaat-i-Chishti* has mentioned 1084 Hijri as Abdur Razzaq's death year, which corresponds to 1673-74. Yet another year of death is given by Dr Abdullah Chughtai

as he wrote in his *Tareekh-i-Amaakin-i-Lahore* that Abdur Razzaq had arrived in Lahore during Mughal emperor Humayun's era and died in 953 Hijri (or 1546/47).

At some later stage, the building of the mausoleum was constructed and with it a grand mosque. Both the mosque and the mausoleum fell into the hands of Sikhs when Ranjit Singh captured Lahore in 1799. During the Sikh reign, the mosque was converted into a military warehouse and the entire surrounding area was turned into a cantonment. In 1856, the British shifted the cantonment to another area known as Miaan Mir. The British redeemed both Neela Gumbad and the annexed mosque to the Muslims who got the buildings repaired.

Tareekh-i-Lahore, subtitled Prof Muhammad Shuj'auddin Marhoom Ke Ghair Mudavvan Maqaalaat, is edited by Afzal Haq Qarshi and published by Lahore's *Maktab-i-Jamal*. Other articles in the book deliberate on Lahore's political and cultural history during different eras, such as, Ghaznavid, Aibak and Mughal. It also delineates some other historical monuments, such as, Jahangir's mausoleum, Shalamar Gardens, Mahabat Khan's garden and mausoleum, Lahore's royal baths and other relics.

The book includes articles on some historical personalities from Lahore, for instance, Hazrat Ali Bin Usman Hajveri, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh, Shah Chiraagh, Nawab Abdus Samad and some others. Begumpura, a neighbourhood in Lahore, also known as Mughalpur, was among the symbol of Mughal era Lahore's grandeurs and splendours. Its historical buildings, says the author, were gradually crumbling and disappearing in 1940s. Many of the relics, not only in Lahore but also elsewhere in the country, are gone forever and restoring the remaining ones must be our priority.

In his foreword, Qarshi says that Prof Muhammad Shuj'auddin (1918-1965) was an educator, historian and archaeologist. He was a walking encyclopaedia of Lahore's history, its historic buildings — graves, tombs, gardens, havelis (mansions) and other remnants. In addition to teaching at Lahore's Dyal Singh College, he taught at Punjab University's history department and contributed to literary and academic Urdu journals. Aside from a couple of

textbooks, Prof Shuja's book titled *Noor Jehan and Her Times* had appeared in his lifetime. *Asraar-i-Samadi*, a manuscript that he compiled, published posthumously. Some of his books still remain unpublished.

As mentioned by Prof Muhammad Aslam in his book *Khuftagaan-i-Khaak-i-Lahore*, Prof Muhammad Shuj'auddin died in Lahore on Jan 27, 1965.

Mamdani calls on Charles to return fabled 'Koh-i-Noor'

Mayor Zohran Mamdani has called on King Charles to "return" the prized Koh-i-Noor diamond, which the British Empire took from the Indian subcontinent in the 1800s, on the third day of the monarch's state visit.

Before greeting Charles and Queen Camilla at a 9/11 memorial event, Mamdani was asked what he would discuss with the king if he had the chance.

"If I was to speak to the king, separately from that, I would probably encourage him to return the Koh-i-Noor diamond," the leftist mayor said, adding that his focus would be honoring those killed in the terror attacks.

It's unclear whether Mamdani followed through and brought up the contentious subject with Charles when the two met.

The monarch was seen laughing with Mamdani and having a brief conversation after they shook hands.

Housed in the Tower of London, the massive 106-carat stone is the star of Britain's crown jewels, adorning the Crown of Queen Elizabeth, the queen mother.

Ownership of the jewel has been contested over the centuries, passing through the hands of Mughal emperors, Iranian shahs and Sikh maharajas before the Kingdom of Punjab gave it to Queen Victoria in 1849 as part of a peace treaty.

India has repeatedly and unsuccessfully sought the return of the priceless jewel.

While there is little doubt it was mined in India, its history thereafter is a mixture of myth and fact, with several countries including Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan also laying claim to the gem.



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Blue passports okayed for 42 top taxpayers

Blue passports have been approved for 42 top taxpayers designated as ambassadors at large on the directions of the prime minister, Directorate General of Immigration and Passports (DGIP) chief Muhammad Ali Randhawa told media on Sunday 17 May.

Mr Randhawa said most of the approved blue passports had already been issued.

“Another proposal for special-coloured passports for businessmen paying taxes above a certain threshold is under consideration, with input from the Ministry of Commerce and the Federal Board of Revenue,” he said.

The DGIP is also set to introduce nationwide home delivery of passports and launch a chatbot to facilitate applicants.

“Applicants will soon have the option to get passports delivered to their doorsteps,” Mr Randhawa said, adding that discussions with a courier service company were under way.

“After an agreement is signed, the facility will be available across the country. Under this initiative, passports of those ready to pay nominal courier charges will be shipped directly to their addresses from Islamabad,” he said.

Mr Randhawa said authorities planned to extend the service to overseas Pakistanis in the second phase.

He said a chatbot would also be launched soon to help applicants. “Applicants will be able to get guidelines through it on procedures and document requirements, and check the status of their passports after submission,” he said.

He added that the initiative would also reduce the load on the department's call centre, “which is also being expanded”.

Mr Randhawa said a proposal to allow online submission of passport applications was also under “serious” consideration.

He said officials were considering either launching a dedicated app similar to the National Database and Registration Authority's (Nadra) Pak-ID or expanding the scope of Nadra's app to accept passport applications.

Under the proposed system, applicants would be able to upload old passports and photographs through the app for registration and would be notified by email if additional documents were

required.

“The initiative will allow application submission 24/7 from anywhere and will address human resource shortages,” he

'Legacy Returns Home' gallery formally opens at Islamabad Museum



US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S. Paul Kapur looks at rare Gandhara artifacts repatriated from the US at Islamabad Museum on Wednesday 13 May.

The Department of Archaeology and Museums on Wednesday 13 May officially inaugurated a new gallery, Legacy Returns Home, during a ceremony held at the Islamabad Museum.

The inauguration coincided with the United States' formal repatriation of more than 450 cultural artifacts to Pakistan, reaffirming the shared commitment of both countries to combat illicit trafficking of antiquities and protect cultural heritage.

The repatriated collection includes historically significant objects that were illegally removed from Pakistan and later identified and recovered through close cooperation between US law enforcement agencies and Pakistani authorities. The artifacts are now preserved and displayed in the new gallery, allowing scholars and the public to reconnect with an important part of the country's cultural legacy.

Speaking at the ceremony, US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs S. Paul Kapur said, “These artifacts represent chapters of Pakistan's history, connecting generations to their heritage. Among these artifacts are terracotta figurines that are more than four thousand years old.” He added, “Each of these objects tells a story. Each belongs to the people of Pakistan. And each now is home.” The Antiquities Trafficking Unit (ATU) of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office recovered all these antiquities. District Attorney Alvin Bragg announced their return to Pakistan following investigations by the ATU into smuggling networks, including foreign-operated criminal organisations. Over the past decade, the ATU, with support from

said.

Mr Randhawa also said that after June 30, passport fees would no longer be deposited at National Bank branches.

“Cashless transactions will be fully activated to end the role of the agent mafia. Tokens will carry a QR code that applicants can scan to pay through banking apps on their phones,” he said.

the US Department of Homeland Security, has recovered and repatriated to Pakistan 514 antiquities worth nearly \$23 million. These items were seized through criminal investigations into international trafficking networks.

This event represented a range of government agencies in the United States working to create a safer and stronger nation.

Among the recovered artifacts is a rare 2nd-century CE Buddhapada sculpture valued at \$1.1 million, which was looted from Pakistan in the 1980s and trafficked into New York. Other significant recovered items include a Gandharan frieze depicting Buddhist figures, ancient Mehrgarh terracotta figurines dating back to 3500–2600 BCE, and a statue of the Bodhisattva Maitreya.

The seizures also include a Gold Strato I coin from 105–85 BCE, recovered in 2023. The US embassy said these efforts had led to multiple convictions and highlighted ongoing international cooperation to combat illicit antiquities trafficking.

Pakistani officials welcomed the return of the artifacts, describing it as a significant step toward preserving the nation's rich and diverse history. They expressed appreciation for US cooperation and underscored the importance of continued international efforts to curb the illegal trade in cultural property.

The repatriation underscores broader US-Pakistan collaboration in law enforcement, cultural preservation, and heritage protection. Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi said, “This is bigger than just stone sculptures returning to Pakistan. These artifacts are symbols of a journey of a civilization, artistic excellence and rich history of this region going back thousands of years.”

Secretary, Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Asad Rehman Gilani lamented that by spiriting artifacts out of Pakistan, traffickers deprived generations of their rich cultural traditions.

Both the minister, Aurangzeb Khichi and the assistant secretary cut the ribbon and declared the gallery open.



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Unesco acknowledges Lahore Fort's Picture Wall restoration



Unesco has issued a report on its website about the completion of the Lahore Fort's Picture Wall, welcoming this addition to the conservation efforts.

In April 2026, the restoration of the northern section of the wall was formally completed after more than 10 years of rigorous scientific study and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The Picture Wall tells a 400-year story across one of the largest and most intricate mural walls in the world – a rare cultural treasure now revived for future generations. Extending nearly 475 metres in length and averaging 17 metres in height, the wall lines the northern and western edges of Lahore Fort.

Built during the reigns of the Mughal emperors Jahangir and Shah Jahan in the seventeenth century, the wall features approximately 2,000 richly ornamented recessed panels arranged across three tiers. These panels portray hunting scenes, royal processions, angels and mythical figures, animals and birds, as well as geometric and floral designs crafted through glazed tile mosaic (Kashikari), fresco work, marble and red sandstone jali, and terracotta relief. This artistic achievement was a key reason for the fort's inclusion on the Unesco World Heritage List in 1981.

As a Unesco World Heritage site, Lahore Fort holds significance across the globe. Its restoration has been led by young Pakistani professionals working in partnership with local and international institutions under the guidance of Aga Khan Trust for Culture and with the technical support of international conservation experts.

A significant number of the Aga Khan Cultural Service – Pakistan conservation team were women, serving as conservation scientists, surface conservators, conservation architects, archaeologists, ceramists and skilled artisans.

The Picture Wall has diverse artistic influences, including European traditions, Iranian mythology and Christianity.

The project began in 2015 through a partnership between Aga Khan Cultural Service – Pakistan (AKCS-P) and the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA). The initial phase focused on the comprehensive documentation of the entire Picture Wall using advanced technologies such as 3D laser scanning, Electronic Distance Measurement (EDM) instruments and high-resolution orthorectified photography — marking the first time these techniques had been employed on such a scale in Pakistan.

Building on this extensive scientific research, a prototype conservation area measuring 11 metres wide and 16 metres high on the western façade was identified to test and refine restoration approaches. In January 2018, an international workshop brought together prominent conservators, chemists and heritage experts to assess the prototype intervention and define the guiding principles and standards for the larger conservation effort. The findings informed the phased restoration of the entire western section of the wall — a 73-metre-long and 16-metre-high stretch. Conservation work officially began in March 2018.

The conservation effort was made possible through the combined support of public institutions, international partners and philanthropic contributors, including the Punjab government, WCLA, Royal Norwegian Embassy, the German Federal Foreign Office, and the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

A total of \$1.5 million was invested in the project.

Tausif Khwaja, CEO Aga Khan Cultural Service – Pakistan, said “The Picture Wall is a key reason for the Lahore Fort's UNESCO World Heritage status, and this project has proven that world-class heritage conservation is achievable in Pakistan”.

Fuad Pashayev, country representative to Pakistan, Unesco, says the completion of the Picture Wall restoration is a testament to what can be achieved when scientific rigour, international solidarity and local expertise work in concert.

Young leopard released into wild after recovery



The leopard, named Terry, was released back into its natural habitat in Azad Kashmir.

In a conservation success story, a rescued and rehabilitated common leopard was returned to the wild, said Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) on Sunday 3 May.

The 18-month-old animal was freed late Saturday night after being transported from Islamabad to Muzaffarabad and then taken on a four-hour journey to a suitable site in the wild, where it was released after 9pm.

According to the IWMB, “in a remarkable example of inter-agency collaboration and commitment to wildlife conservation, the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Wildlife Department and the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board have successfully rehabilitated and released a common leopard, affectionately named “Terry”, back into his natural habitat”.

The mission began on April 5 when the AJK Wildlife Department [rescued](#) the leopard in an injured condition from the outskirts of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) capital nearly a month ago.

According to Dr Shaista Ali, monitoring officer of the AJK Wildlife Department, the animal was rescued and shifted to Muzaffarabad before being transported the same day to Islamabad and handed over to the IWMB for treatment.

“The leopard had been beaten with sticks, which caused internal injuries,” Dr Ali said, adding that the animal was treated by expert veterinarians in Islamabad.

Dr Sana, a member of the IWMB and part of the medical team, said the leopard had suffered injuries to its neck and head.

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