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JULY 2026

Privatised PIA appoints Lt. Gen. (R) Anwar Ali Hyder as Chairman

The newly elected Chairman and Vice Chairman, along with the CEO of SIAL preside over the meeting with the airline station managers

Pakistan's contribution to the global sport of football, is highlighted at the United Nations

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CONTENTS

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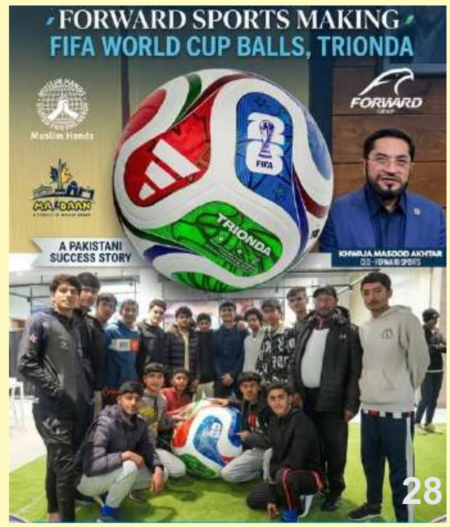

Tourism industry needs 'strategic intervention'

The Policy Advisory Board of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) has said that despite Pakistan's extraordinary natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, religious landmarks, and adventure tourism potential, the sector requires strategic intervention to fully capitalise on its global appeal to tourists.

In its report titled "Mapping Pakistan's Tourism Potential: A Comprehensive Export Analysis, built on primary data from 213 stakeholders — including tourists, tour operators, the hospitality sector, and government representatives — underscored the strategic economic importance of the Travel and Tourism (T&T) sector.

Spending behaviours further illustrate the economic potential of attracting international visitors. Foreign tourists spend an average of $12.5 per day, with a typical four-to-five-day trip injecting between $1,500 and $1,750 into the local economy.

In contrast, domestic tourists spend an average of $8.5 per day, totalling approximately $500 per trip.

FPCCI study cites infrastructure, visa hurdles blocking foreign tourist inflows.

To bridge this gap and boost foreign inflows, the study isolates critical barriers stifling industry growth as demand-side constraints which refer to inadequate road infrastructure, limited basic amenities, weak digital connectivity, and ongoing safety and security concerns.

Whereas, supply-side bottlenecks include unplanned construction, visa complexities, poor international marketing and branding, inconsistent government policies, and severe regulatory hurdles – most notably the requirement of No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) for foreign tourists.

To unlock new avenues for tourism-driven economic growth and improve Pakistan's standing on the global Travel and Tourism Development Index (TTDI), the FPCCI board recommends the immediate implementation of targeted strategies as regulatory reforms to simplify visa procedures and ease NOC requirements for foreign visitors.

The board emphasised digital integration to introduce digital governance systems for surveillance and complaint management, and aggressively promote digital payment infrastructure across tourist hubs.

Infrastructure development stressed the need to invest in climate-resilient infrastructure and expand roadside facilities to ensure safety and convenience. Whereas, quality control mechanism is required to standardise and improve food quality, hygiene, and robust waste management systems in tourist zones.

Tourism currently contributes approximately 5.9 per cent to Pakistan's GDP and supports 4.7 million jobs. Whereas, export earnings contribution of the sector in 2024 was $1.15 billion as tourism export earnings. Additionally, trade share of tourism exports accounted for 2.9pc of Pakistan's total exports and 14pc of its services exports in 2024.

The policy board has mapped Pakistan's tourism demand across eight major categories: adventure (45pc), religious (22pc), historical (11pc), business (6pc), education (6pc), sports (5pc), dark (3pc), and cruise (2pc).

The FPCCI report identifies a substantial imbalance between inbound and outbound tourism spending. While Pakistan earned $1.15bn from foreign tourists in 2024, Pakistani outbound tourists spent an estimated $2.4bn abroad.

PAA plans to install chair lifts at major airports

Pakistan Airports Authority has announced plans to install chair lifts, cable cars, and zip lines at major airports in Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad.

The initiative is part of broader efforts to enhance airport infrastructure, improve passenger facilities, and introduce new attractions at some of the country's busiest airports.

If implemented, the project would represent one of the most unique airport development initiatives in the region.


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PIA to modernise its fleet

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is reportedly preparing a significant fleet modernization program aimed at strengthening its domestic and international operations over the coming decade. Central to the proposal is the potential acquisition of new-generation aircraft, including the Airbus A350, which is being evaluated for future long-haul services. The initiative forms part of a broader strategy to improve efficiency, expand capacity, and enhance the airline's competitiveness in key international markets.

Under the expansion plan, PIA is considering the addition of up to 30 aircraft through a combination of direct purchases and leasing arrangements. The proposed fleet growth would support network expansion while also helping replace older aircraft. Management views fleet renewal as an important step toward improving operational reliability, reducing fuel consumption, and providing passengers with a more modern travel experience across the airline's routes.

While industry reports have linked the carrier to the Airbus A350, no formal order has been announced and discussions remain at an exploratory stage. The airline is continuing to assess its long-term requirements before making final decisions, with any future acquisitions expected to play a key role in PIA's transformation and growth objectives.

Jet fuel prices plunge, yet airfares expected to remain high

Airlines were stand to save billions of dollars on jet fuel after an interim US-Iran peace deal sent oil prices lower, but passengers were unlikely to see immediate relief as tight capacity may allow carriers to keep fares well above pre-war levels.

The US market offers the clearest example. Fare increases lag this year's fuel cost run-up, and domestic seat growth remains limited. This gives airlines leeway to use lower fuel bills to rebuild margins instead of reversing recent price hikes. US jet fuel spot prices stood at $2.85 a gallon on June 17, down sharply from an early April high of $4.88. Sustaining this decline would cut the industry's annual fuel bill by more than $40 billion, according to Reuters calculations.

Fares still lag fuel

As jet fuel prices surged, US airlines raised ticket prices, increased bag fees and cut schedules, but those steps offset only part of rising costs. Industry data show jet fuel prices rose more than three times as fast as airfares from January through May.

Deutsche Bank estimated US carriers would recover only about 60 cents of every additional dollar spent on fuel, generating $14.4bn in higher revenue against $24.1bn in higher costs.

Alaska Air reported recovering about one-third of the increase. Delta Air Lines, United and American Airlines put second-quarter recapture at 40pc to 50pc, while JetBlue Airways and Frontier Group expect to recover less than half.

United CEO Scott Kirby told Reuters his airline is close to recouping the spike through pricing.

Raymond James data show average domestic fares booked one week before travel were up 34.1pc year-on-year on June 8. The key question is whether airlines can maintain fare increases as fuel prices ease.

“What remains crucial is the ability to hold price,” Melius Research analyst Conor Cunningham said, noting that lower gasoline prices could ease consumer pressure over airfares.

Unequal pass-through

Outside the US, fare relief is likely uneven. Lower crude prices take time to impact jet fuel. Unless prices fall back toward start-of-year levels, airlines will likely keep fares firm or push them higher where demand allows, said Dudley Shanley, Goodbody's head of aviation and travel research.

Europe may see a split. Long-haul fares are more likely to ease because airlines successfully passed on higher costs on those routes, RBC analyst Ruairi Cullinane said. Short-haul fares may prove firmer if the peace agreement supports demand. In Asia, HSBC analysts said China's big three airlines face weak pricing power. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific is better placed as higher fares, cargo revenue and premium demand could offset costs.

The Middle East is the clearest exception after war disrupted traffic. Some airlines may use promotions to win back traffic, aviation analyst John Strickland said, but fuel remains too expensive for widespread discounting. UAE carriers could be more aggressive with government backing, he added.

Earnings before discounts

Airline benefits depend on how long prices stay down. Fuel bills reflect long-term purchases, not spot prices. Even after recent declines, jet fuel costs 5pc more than a year ago, the International Air Transport Association reported.

Southwest Airlines COO Andrew Watterson summarised the pressure. Asked when Southwest could return to pre-pandemic margins, he told Reuters, “When's fuel going to go down?” This leaves little incentive to cut fares as airlines rebuild earnings.

Jefferies estimated each 5pc drop in its roughly $3-per-gallon 2027 forecast would lift projected earnings per share by 10pc to 15pc for Delta, Southwest and United, and up to 50pc for American Airlines.

No broad fare war

Past US fuel cycles often triggered capacity races pushing fares lower. Those conditions are absent now. Aircraft delivery delays, tight airport capacity and weaker low-cost carriers limit the risk of a broad domestic fare war.

US domestic seats will grow just 0.4pc year-on-year in the third quarter, down from 4.6pc expected before recent Middle East tensions. JPMorgan analysts said limited aircraft deliveries and budget-carrier pullbacks reduce the risk of “meaningful capacity creep,” allowing airlines to hold pricing.

Ultimately, fare relief may depend on consumer strength.


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Pakistan's first Explosive Detection System installed at SIAL Cargo Terminal

Sialkot, Pakistan: In a landmark development for Pakistan's aviation and export sectors, the country's first-ever Explosive Detection System (EDS) has been installed and formally inaugurated at the Cargo Terminal of Sialkot International Airport. The state-of-the-art system marks a significant milestone in strengthening cargo security, enhancing operational efficiency, and facilitating exports in line with international standards. A formal inauguration ceremony was held at Sialkot International Airport Cargo Terminal. The EDS machine was jointly inaugurated by the then Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti and Chairman Export Development Fund (EDF), Mr. Omer Saeed. The ceremony was attended by Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Waqas Afzal, esteemed members of the Board of Directors, CEO SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R), and other distinguished officials.

Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti termed the installation of the EDS machine a matter of immense pride and honor for Sialkot International Airport. He highlighted the longstanding partnership between SIAL and EDF, stating that both organizations have been working closely since 2007 and that the inauguration was a shared achievement. "Today's celebration is mutual as the Export Development Fund has always extended its valuable support to SIAL. The installation of this advanced EDS machine is another testament to our strong collaboration and shared commitment towards facilitating Pakistan's exports," he remarked. The Chairman further informed participants that the EDS machine possesses the capability to scan up to 1,800 bags per hour, significantly improving the speed and efficiency of cargo handling operations. He noted that the system would ensure the swift movement of export consignments while strengthening security protocols. "The installation of this machine reflects our commitment to providing reliable, efficient, time-bound, and internationally compliant cargo services. It sends a strong message to the global market that exports from Pakistan meet the highest standards of security and operational excellence," he added. Addressing the gathering, Chairman EDF Mr. Omer Saeed praised SIAL and the Sialkot business community for their progressive vision and contributions towards national economic growth. "Sialkot International Airport is a vibrant organization, and the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry has always demonstrated remarkable leadership in empowering the region. The installation of this EDS machine will undoubtedly facilitate exporters and further strengthen Sialkot's position as a leading export hub of Pakistan," he stated. Mr. Omer Saeed further emphasized that Sialkot is globally recognized for its world-class products and export-oriented industry, setting a new benchmark for cargo security and export facilitation across the country. The inauguration of the EDS system represents a major step forward in modernizing cargo operations at Sialkot International Airport and reinforces the airport's commitment to supporting Pakistan's growing export sector through innovation, efficiency, and international best practices.


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PIA resumes Lahore-Manchester operations after 6 years

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed direct flights between Lahore and Manchester after six years, with the first flight from Punjab's capital taking off on Thursday 2 July.

According to a statement issued by PIA, PK-709 departed from Lahore with 325 passengers on board.

An inaugural ceremony was held at Lahore airport, where PIA Chief Operating Officer Khurram Mushtaq saw off the passengers, the statement said.

Hours ago, the first flight destined for Lahore left Manchester on Wednesday 1st July night.

The PIA statement said the resumption of flights on the Lahore-Manchester route would help strengthen “people-to-people ties” between the two countries.

PIA now operates five weekly flights between Pakistan and Manchester, the statement said, adding that these included four flights from Islamabad and one from Lahore.

Pakistani flights had been banned from flying to the European Union, the United Kingdom and the US in May 2020, after one of its aircraft crashed in Karachi, killing nearly 100 people on board.

The European Union Air Safety Agency had barred PIA from operating in EU countries over safety concerns, and the ban on flights followed the then-aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan's statement on the floor of parliament, where he termed pilots' licences “dubious”.

The European agency lifted the ban after more than four years on Nov 28, 2024. In July 2025, the UK also removed Pakistan from its Air Safety List, allowing Pakistani airlines to apply to operate flights in Britain.

In September 2025, PIA received approval to resume direct flights to the UK after a gap of nearly five years. The airline subsequently restarted operations, with Manchester becoming the first destination.

On Jan 8, PIA announced that it would also resume direct flights to London, ending a six-year hiatus.

Dera airport to be operational soon, says governor

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday 29 May visited Dera Ismail Khan International Airport, where officials of the Pakistan Airports Authority briefed him on the status of the facility and ongoing rehabilitation efforts.

Speaking to reporters after the visit, Mr Kundi said carpeting work on the runway had already been completed, while the remaining work would soon be finalised to make the airport operational.

He noted that the Dera Ismail Khan airport had been closed since 2015 and stressed the need to overcome shortage of equipment and staff at the facility at the earliest.

“The airport's audit and safety assessment are essential before commercial operations can resume,” he said, adding that he hoped the defence minister would soon announce the complete restoration of commercial flight operations.

The governor said that discussions would be held with South Air authorities regarding flights to Dera Ismail Khan and Chitral.

He added that private airlines would also be encouraged to begin operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Mr Kundi said the proposed Green Field International Airport would be constructed over more than 1,700 acres and would have the capacity to handle over one million passengers annually.

Rejecting proposals to shift the airport to Pezu, Lakki Marwat or Bannu, he maintained that a location near Yarik in Dera Ismail Khan would be more suitable for the entire region.

He announced that work on the dualisation of the N-55 Dera-Paroa Road would begin soon, adding that the tendering process for the project had already been completed.

Commenting on political matters, the governor termed restrictions on wheat “unjust and unconstitutional”.

Regarding constitutional reforms, Mr Kundi stated that no draft of the proposed 28th Amendment had yet surfaced, adding that the Pakistan People's Party reviewed every constitutional matter before presenting its recommendations.

K2 Airways cargo aircraft ‘disapears from radar’

A K2 Airways Boeing 737-400 cargo aircraft, en route to Karachi from Sharjah, disappeared from radar over the Arabian Sea, about 155 nautical miles west of Karachi, late on Tuesday 7 July night.

According to reports, the aircraft lost contact with ground control while approaching Pakistani airspace, about 287km from Karachi.

The pilot had reported a 'navigation issue' during the flight and requested assistance from the Karachi Area Control Centre.

Later, the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) said the plane had reported a navigational system issue at 9.18pm and was promptly guided by the Area Control Centre.

However, three minutes later, the aircraft was observed on radar to be descending, after making a rapid heading change. Subsequently, radar contact and communication were lost about 155 nautical miles (287km) west of Karachi.

There were five crew members onboard the aircraft, including the pilot, first officer, flight engineer and two aircraft engineers.

Following the incident, the rescue coordination centre was activated, and a coordinated search and rescue operation was launched at sea through various agencies to locate the missing aircraft. The Bureau of Air Safety Investigation will investigate the incident.

Wreckage founded

PN and PMSA after 12 hours of Search & Rescue operations in deep Sea have successfully located and identified wreckage of K2 Airways Cargo B737 which was declared missing last night.

The wreckage was recovered from 53 NM South of ORMARA.

Various air & sea borne assets were employed by PN & PMSA to locate the wreckage and efforts are underway to find the missing crew members.

Further details will follow as Search & Rescue operation progresses.

Why triggered the plunge of K2 flight

Everything appeared normal until the crew of K2 Airways Flight 1732, a Boeing 737-400 registered as AP-BOI, reported a navigation systems failure at 9:18pm (0418 UTC) on July 7. While operating a ferry flight from Sharjah to Karachi, the crew requested heading guidance from air traffic control.

The aircraft had undergone maintenance in Sharjah prior to departure, indicating that maintenance work had been carried out before the ill-fated flight.

Three minutes after the initial distress call, the aircraft began a rapid plunge towards the sea, reaching a descent rate of 22,400 feet per minute, as recorded by Flightradar 24 — a rate far exceeding even dual-engine failure scenarios, as commercial aircraft are designed to glide rather than descend like a stone.

The crash resulted in the death of all five crew members on board.

As findings of any investigation are awaited, IRU failure, spatial disorientation, CRM breakdown are explored among likely causes of crash

Captain Muhammad Rizwan Idrees had spent most of his career as a rotary-wing (helicopter) pilot, while First Officer Faisal Jatoi was at the early stage of his airline career. Four speculative causes appear most plausible for such a rapid and catastrophic loss of control:

IRU failure coupled with spatial disorientation

This remains the leading hypothesis. The crew reported navigation system malfunctions and requested directional guidance from Karachi Area Control.

An Inertial Reference Unit (IRU) failure involves a critical malfunction of the Inertial Reference Unit — a core avionics system that uses gyroscopes and accelerometers to provide the aircraft's attitude (pitch, roll and yaw), position and velocity. When it fails, it can feed corrupt data, or no data at all, to the primary flight displays, autopilot and navigation systems.

The reported erratic altitude excursions — a 5,000-foot descent followed by a 6,000-foot climb — loss of airspeed, and the subsequent stall and entry into a graveyard spiral or spin strongly suggest IRU failure combined with spatial disorientation and a catastrophic breakdown in Crew Resource Management. These typical Swiss cheese failures are particularly dangerous over the sea at night in cloudy conditions, with scattered thunderstorms reported up to 41,000 feet.

Additionally, more than 20 aircraft reported GPS spoofing along the route and near the crash site. The flight path passed close to an active conflict zone where clashes between Iran and the United States had resumed on the same day. Military activity in such areas poses significant risks to civil aviation, as states do not always issue timely NOTAMs or divert civilian traffic when air defences are activated. A recent example is Azerbaijan Airlines Flight J2 8243, which was struck over Grozny when Russian air defences were active against Ukrainian drones but civilian traffic was neither properly notified nor diverted.

In-flight structural break-up

A sudden plunge from cruising altitude could occur if the aircraft broke apart in mid-air. However, the initial erratic descent of 5,000 feet, followed by a 6,000-foot climb and a subsequent right turn, suggests the aircraft was still intact at that stage. Excessive g-forces applied during recovery attempts may then have caused a mid-air structural failure. While theoretically possible, this scenario does not fully align with the reported navigation failure unless multiple cascading system failures occurred — again pointing towards Scenario 1.

Runaway trim or flight control jamming

The sequence of a 5,000-foot descent, a 6,000-foot climb and the final death spiral could indicate runaway trim or control surface jamming. Runaway trim occurs when the elevator trim motor malfunctions, causing uncontrolled nose-up or nose-down movements. However, at high altitude, crews generally have sufficient time to identify the issue and disconnect the trim system. Having personally experienced this emergency, the author considers it unlikely to have caused the total loss of control in this case.

Weight and balance

A major in-flight shift in the aircraft's centre of gravity due to unsecured cargo can lead to sudden stalls or unrecoverable attitudes. This scenario can largely be ruled out, as the aircraft was operating a ferry flight with no passengers or cargo.

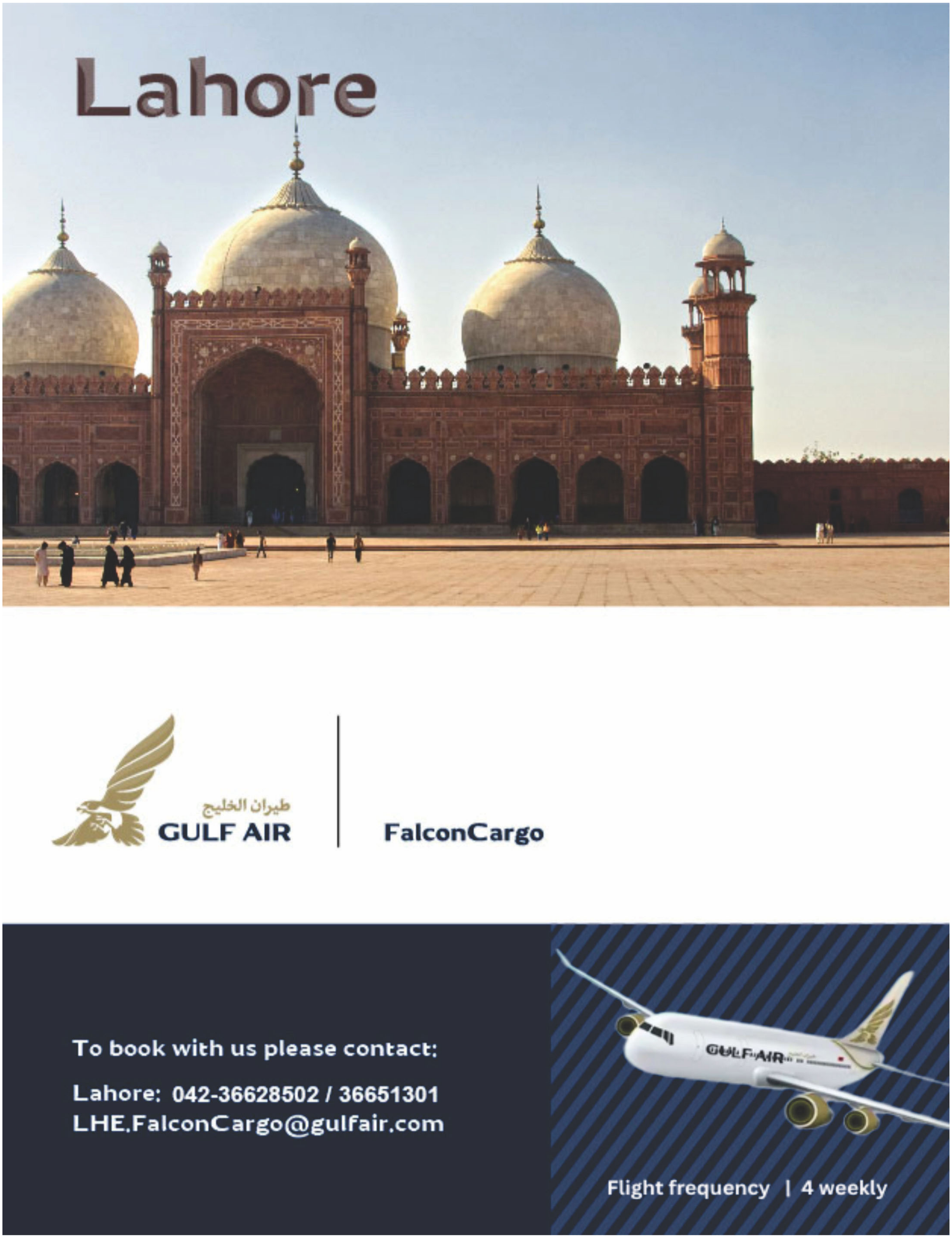
At present, IRU failure combined with spatial disorientation and catastrophic Crew Resource Management failure appears to be the most probable cause.

This theory gains further weight when compared with the crash of Adam Air Flight 574 in Indonesia in 2007, which also involved a Boeing 737-400 with a history of repeated IRU malfunctions.

On Jan 1, 2007, Adam Air Flight 574, a Boeing 737-400 operating a domestic service from Jakarta to Manado via Surabaya, crashed into the Makassar Strait near Polewali, Sulawesi. All 102 people on board perished in what remains the deadliest accident involving a Boeing 737-400 and the deadliest known crash attributed to IRU malfunction.

The Indonesian investigation determined that the pilots became preoccupied with troubleshooting the IRU. The autopilot disconnected due to erratic IRU inputs — a built-in safety feature designed to prompt manual control. By the time the crew recognised the developing anomaly, the aircraft had entered a steep 100-degree right bank. Their recovery attempts, which subjected the aircraft to loads of up to 3.5g, resulted in structural failure and an in-flight break-up.

The final investigation report on Adam Air Flight 574 may offer valuable leads and lessons for the investigators of K2 Airways Flight 1732.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How Qantas plans to beat jet lag on the world's longest 20-hour flight

Lighting, meals and a wellness zone aim to help passengers beat jet lag before landing

Qantas redesigns cabins around sleep, nutrition and body clocks for nonstop journeys.Agency

For decades, airlines have focused on making long-haul flights more comfortable with bigger seats, better entertainment and improved meals.

Now, Australia's Qantas believes the answer lies in something passengers cannot easily see: biology.

As the airline prepares to launch the world's longest commercial flights between Sydney and London in 2027, lasting up to 20 hours nonstop, it is redesigning nearly every aspect of the journey around sleep science, human circadian rhythms and passenger wellbeing rather than traditional cabin luxury.

The initiative, known as Project Sunrise, will eventually connect Sydney directly with London and later New York using specially modified Airbus A350-1000ULR aircraft capable of flying for as long as 22 hours without refuelling. The aircraft are being fitted with additional fuel capacity while carrying only 238 passengers—far fewer than a standard A350—to improve comfort on ultra-long journeys.

The biggest challenge isn't the aircraft

According to researchers involved in the project, the greatest obstacle is not engineering but the human body.

Flying across seven to 16 time zones disrupts the body's circadian rhythm, often leading to jet lag, fatigue and reduced alertness that can last for several days after arrival.

Peter Cistulli, professor of sleep medicine at the University of Sydney, who worked with Qantas on the project, said the airline has spent years studying how light exposure, meal timing and movement can help travellers adjust to a new time zone before they even land.

Instead of serving meals whenever passengers become hungry, cabin crews will follow carefully timed schedules designed to encourage wakefulness or sleep depending on the destination's local time.

UK announces £8m for anti-illegal migration efforts with Pakistan

United Kingdom Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan Hamish Falconer announced an additional £8 million to support joint UK-Pakistan efforts to combat crime and illegal migration and thanked Pakistan for its role in helping facilitate diplomatic efforts that led to US-Iran agreement.

According to a statement issued by the British High Commission, Falconer, during his visit to Islamabad, personally thanked Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar for Pakistan's contribution to the diplomatic process.

During meetings with Pakistan's senior leadership, Falconer announced an additional £8 million to strengthen joint efforts against crime and illegal migration. The funding will be used to enhance border management and visa systems and provide technical expertise to assist Pakistani law-enforcement agencies in disrupting human-smuggling and trafficking networks.

The minister announced additional funding aimed at strengthening cooperation between the UK and Pakistan to tackle illegal migration to Britain by addressing the factors that drive people to undertake irregular journeys.

The package will also support the return of individuals who have no legal right to remain in the UK and finance community-based initiatives in areas considered vulnerable to illegal migration. The programmes will focus on improving identity verification and information-sharing mechanisms, strengthening investigative capacity against smuggling networks and expanding prevention initiatives designed to reduce the risk of exploitation.

The two sides held a comprehensive exchange of views on regional developments, Pakistan's macroeconomic outlook, ongoing structural reforms, fiscal priorities, institutional modernisation and opportunities to further strengthen Pakistan-United Kingdom economic cooperation.

The UK welcomed the agreement between the United States and Iran following intensive negotiations involving several partners, including Pakistan.

He reiterated the UK's commitment to promoting stability in the Middle East and said Britain would continue working closely with partners, including Pakistan, to support efforts aimed at achieving lasting peace in the region.

Speaking on the occasion, Falconer said the US-Iran agreement represented an important opportunity for regional stability and thanked Pakistan for its role in supporting diplomatic efforts.

“The UK-Pakistan partnership is critical for safeguarding global, regional and British national security through close cooperation against terrorist threats, visa fraud and serious organised crime,” he said.

“We are taking this partnership to a new level through additional funding aimed at deterring illegal migration and addressing its causes at the source.”

He also expressed appreciation for Pakistan's efforts in facilitating negotiations and said the UK and its international partners would continue working to support regional stability and ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

Falconer witnessed a live demonstration of joint law-enforcement operations aimed at tackling illegal migration. Supported by the UK, the initiative enables Pakistani authorities to identify and stop non-genuine visa holders at airports, ensuring that only eligible travellers and students proceed to the UK.

Meanwhile, the UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary met Federal Minister for Finance Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb at the Finance Division to discuss various aspects of bilateral cooperation.

Both countries renewed their commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation.

Privatised PIA First Chairman

Lt Gen (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder has been appointed as the first Chairman of the privatized Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), marking a significant milestone in the airline's transformation journey.

Bringing extensive experience in leadership, governance, and organizational management, he is expected to provide strategic direction and strengthen the airline's governance framework as it enters a new phase of growth and modernization.

As Chairman, he will oversee Board-level affairs, support long-term business objectives, and help drive operational excellence while reinforcing PIA's position in Pakistan's aviation sector.

Congratulations to Lt Gen (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder on this prestigious appointment, and best wishes for success in leading PIA through its next chapter.

Gerry's Group signs cargo GSA agreement with South Air

Gerry's Group announces a new strategic alliance with South Air (Private) Limited through the signing of a Cargo General Sales Agent (GSA) Agreement, aimed at delivering greater reach, efficiency, and connectivity within Pakistan's domestic cargo market.

The agreement was formally executed on June 15, 2026, at the Gerry's Group Corporate Office in Karachi by Arshad Wali Muhammad, Group Director of Gerry's Group, and Nishat Fatima, Chief Executive Officer of South Air, in the presence of AnisWali Muhammad, Group Director Finance, Gerry's Group, and Muhammad Ilyas, Group Chief Financial Officer, Gerry's Group.

Under this partnership, Gerry's Group will leverage South Air's expanding domestic flight network to strengthen cargo distribution capabilities nationwide, enabling the efficient, reliable, and timely movement of goods across Pakistan.

This collaboration combines Gerry's Group's extensive expertise in aviation, cargo sales, and logistics with South Air's growing operational network, creating new opportunities for businesses through enhanced market access and improved supply chain connectivity.

The partnership is expected to provide customers with wider network coverage, faster transit times, and improved access to key domestic markets across Pakistan.

With a legacy spanning over seven decades, Gerry's Group is one of Pakistan's leading aviation, logistics, travel, and technology conglomerates. Through its extensive nationwide presence and strategic partnerships with leading international and domestic organizations, the Group continues to play a pivotal role in connecting Pakistan with global and regional markets. Its diverse portfolio and commitment to service excellence have established Gerry's Group as a trusted name across multiple industries.

As Pakistan's aviation and logistics sectors continue to evolve, this partnership reflects a shared commitment to supporting economic growth through stronger domestic transportation infrastructure and seamless cargo solutions.

Gerry's Group remains dedicated to building strategic partnerships that enhance connectivity, drive operational excellence, and create long-term value for customers and stakeholders across the country.

Gerry's International appoints Ken Marshall as COO

Ken Marshall appointed Chief Operating Officer at Gerry's International.

With nearly five decades of distinguished leadership experience across the aviation, airline representation, travel, and aviation services sectors, Ken brings exceptional expertise in commercial strategy, operational excellence, business development, and organizational leadership. Throughout his career, he has successfully led business transformation, expanded international airline partnerships, and delivered sustained growth across Pakistan and the broader Asia-Pacific region.

As Chief Operating Officer, Ken will lead both our Passenger and Cargo businesses, overseeing one of Pakistan's largest airline representation portfolios. He will be responsible for driving operational excellence across our nationwide network while strengthening strategic partnerships with our airline partners and identifying new opportunities for sustainable growth.

Ken's extensive industry knowledge, global perspective, and proven leadership will play a pivotal role in advancing Gerry's International's long-term vision and reinforcing our position as Pakistan's leading aviation services organization.

We are pleased to welcome Ken to the Gerry's team and look forward to the leadership, vision, and experience he will bring as we continue our journey of growth and excellence.

First aircraft dismantling project launched in Southern China

The first aircraft dismantling project in the Hainan Free Trade Port was launched on Friday 12 June at the Hainan FTP One-Stop Aircraft Maintenance Base.

The project, undertaken by Grand China Aviation Maintenance Co Ltd under HNA Technic, marks the completion of Hainan's aviation maintenance value chain loop.

Aircraft dismantling is a key part of the aviation circular economy. By dismantling retired aircraft and testing and refurbishing their components, the process enables the reuse of parts and materials, delivering both economic and environmental benefits, while boosting the competitiveness of Hainan's aviation maintenance industry.

Hainan FTP offers several advantages for the business. Hainan's strategic location as a southern island makes it an important gateway connecting China with the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the maintenance firm brings proven expertise in aircraft repair and modification.

Policies in the Hainan FTP also offer significant support for aircraft dismantling and the subsequent recycling and re-manufacturing of aviation components. The Hainan FTP — the world's largest free trade port by area — fully launched island-wide special customs operations in December 2025, allowing freer entry of overseas goods, expanding zero-tariff coverage, and introducing more business-friendly measures.

The global market for repaired and re-manufactured used serviceable components is vast, according to industry estimates. Meanwhile, the Hainan FTP's zero-tariff and other import facilitation policies help companies reduce both capital and time costs when re-manufacturing components from dismantled aircraft.

'Excited' Trump takes first flight on Qatar-gifted Air Force One

PRESIDENT Trump speaks to the press before he boards Qatar-gifted Air Force One for his first flight.

US President Donald Trump said on Wednesday 1st July he was thrilled to make his first flight aboard his new Air Force One plane, thanking Qatar for the controversial gift of the luxury jet.

Trump said the United States “couldn't build a plane like this” — despite the fact that the heavily modified Boeing 747-8 aircraft was originally made there. “To be honest with you, I'm excited about the first flight. Nobody's ever seen anything like it,” Trump told journalists traveling with him, including a photographer, ahead of a trip to North Dakota.

The 80-year-old president is due to attend an event at the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library as part of celebrations for the 250th anniversary of American independence.

“They just completed it. They made it appropriate for a president, that means the security and all of the different bells and whistles they put on. Very complex stuff, but it's really quite something,” Trump said at Joint Base Andrews near Washington.

Critics have raised a host of ethical, constitutional and security concerns about the gifting of an aircraft worth hundreds of millions of dollars by a foreign power like Qatar. The wealthy Gulf emirate, which is also playing a key role as a mediator in talks between the US and Iran, donated the jet last year. It has since undergone major modifications and testing.

The first flight also comes just a day after Trump faced further ethical scrutiny over filings that showed he earned around $1.2 billion dollars from his family's cryptocurrency ventures in his first year back in power.

India allows three Pakistani Passenger aircrafts to enter its airspace

Even though India and Pakistan have banned each other from their Airspace for any type of flights, India allowed three Pakistani passenger aircraft to enter the Indian Airspace on humanitarian grounds.

Three Pakistani passenger flights briefly entered the Indian airspace due to severe weather conditions in Punjab.

The affected flights :

Flight 1: The Fly Jinnah Lahore-Dubai flight 9P-514 deviated from its route due to adverse weather and entered the Indian airspace near Kasur at 9:13pm. The aircraft reportedly flew over Indian Punjab for around 20 minutes before re-entering the Pakistani airspace near Bahawalnagar at 9:33pm.

Flight 2: The Lahore-Jeddah Fly Jinnah flight 9P-586 entered the Indian airspace near Kanganpur at 8:52pm in an attempt to avoid turbulent weather and returned to Pakistani airspace near Sulemanki at 8:56pm after a brief four-minute transit.

Flight 3: The Air Sial Dammam-Lahore flight PF-743 also crossed into Indian airspace near Haveli Lakha at 8:59pm and returned to Pakistani airspace near Kasur at 9:05pm after approximately six minutes.

An aircraft releases water during a firefighting drill at Napoleon Bonaparte Airport, on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica.


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Emirates operates Airbus A380 to highest number of destinations

Since Dubai-based Emirates is the largest operator of the Airbus A380, it is no surprise that the airline operates the type to the highest number of destinations in the world. As per the airline's latest schedule, the carrier will be deploying the aircraft to 48 of its global destinations during the month of July. This will amount to around 69 daily departures of the A380, from the airline's hub at Dubai International Airport (DXB)

However, it is worth noting that these numbers and schedules could change over the coming weeks, due to the ongoing regional conflict in the Middle East. The situation has forced all airlines within the region to restructure their schedule and

operations to ensure safety and efficiency.

Over 2,000 A380 Flights Scheduled

As per the latest data, Emirates is scheduled to operate 2,139 flights with the A380 throughout the month of July. Breaking this data down, the carrier will be flying the type to 48 destinations around the world, resulting in up to 69 departures from DXB on a daily basis.

While operations on several routes remain unaffected, the ongoing situation in the Middle East has led to the airline downsizing capacity and frequency on certain routes to ensure continued operational efficiency. Due to this, the year-on-year operational data indicates the airline's scheduled A380 operations for July are around 15% lower than what the airline had operated during July 2025. That being said, the airline is recovering its operations and is gradually returning the aircraft type onto several of its routes.

Compared to Emiraates' June operations, the airline will be returning the A380 onto four routes in July. These are daily services from the airline's hub in Dubai to Copenhagen Airport (CPH), Munich Airport (MUC) Manchester Airport (MAN) and London Gtwick Airport (LGW) However, in the case of MAN and LGW, the airline's capacity remains considerably lower than the pre-crisis levels.

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London & Manchester - 2 Most Affected Markets

A number of the airline's routes have had A380 frequencies reduced, or the type being replaced altogether by smaller equipment such as the Boeing 777 or the carrier's new Airbus A350-900s. However, perhaps the two markets that have seen the most drastic capacity reductions are London and Manchester. When talking about London, both the airline's gateways at Gatwick and Heathrow are considered.

The airline has consistently operated six daily A380 services to London Headthrow Airport (LHR) for years. The airline's LGW services, meanwhile, have consistently seen two daily A380 services, alongside its 777s and, more recently, the A350s. While the airline should have been operating ten flights across the two routes, eight of them with the A380, throughout June, the airline has only operated eight daily flights, of which only four are with the A380s (all to LHR). In July, the schedule remains at eight daily flights, of which six services will be with A380 services (five to LHR and one to LGW).

Manchester, on the other hand, previously saw three daily A380 services, with the carrier even receiving slots for a fourth daily operation (which was not utilized). However, for the month of June, the airline is not operating the A380s to the airport, and in July, the carrier will only deploy the type once per day, with the remaining two services being operated by the Boeing 777-300ERs.

UAE, Iran to resume flights soon official says

Direct flights between Iran and the United Arab Emirates will resume soon after aviation authorities in both countries approved the route, following a multi-month suspension of operations amid regional military escalations.

Iranian and UAE aviation authorities had issued the necessary permits for flights to resume from July 1, Civil Aviation Organisation spokesman Majid Akhavan said.

e said the route would initially be served by Iranian airlines, with other carriers expected to be added later following the necessary reviews. Akhavan added that the resumption of flights on other international routes remained under review and subject toregulatory approvals.

Earlier, an Iranian trade official said containers that could not be processed due to `wartime conditions` were being cleared from the UAE`s Jebel Ali Port to Iran. The official added that trade was expected to return to pre-war levels gradually.

According to the IRNA news agency, Tehran said cargo clearance had resumed, after the US carried out attacks on multiple Iranian sites, following the reported strike on a cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz.-Agencies/ Monitoring Desk.

Passport home delivery service launched

In a major step towards enhancing citizen convenience and modernizing public service delivery, the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports (DGIP) has partnered with TCS to launch a nationwide secure home delivery service for passports.

The initiative, “Passport Aapki Dehleez Par” allows citizens to receive travel documents at their preferred address, eliminating return visits to regional centres and streamlining the distribution process. The service was formally launched at a meeting held at the headquarters of the directorate general.

Hassan Raza Leghari, Chief Executive Officer TCS, reaffirmed the company's commitment to supporting digital governance and citizen-centric public services.

“TCS is proud to partner with the Directorate General of Immigration & Passports in delivering an essential public service directly to citizens' doorsteps,” he said.

“Passports are highly confidential and important documents, and leveraging our nationwide logistics network and service excellence, we are committed to ensuring every passport reaches its recipient safely, securely, and on time,” he said.

The meeting focused on collaborative initiatives to further modernise passport services, improve operational efficiency and enhance the overall citizen experience. Discussions also covered TCS's role as the directorate's official logistics partner and the robust mechanisms in place to ensure the secure, reliable and timely delivery of passports across Pakistan.

Mohammad Ali Randhawa, Director General Immigration and Passports, stated: “The launch of the passport at your doorstep service reflects our commitment to making passport services more accessible, convenient and efficient for citizens.”

By delivering passports directly to applicants' homes, “we are reducing unnecessary visits to passport offices while ensuring a secure and seamless collection process.”

JICA assesses instllation of modern BHS at Multan Airport

A delegation from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) visited Multan International Airport (MIAP) to assess the proposed installation of a modern Baggage Handling System (BHS).

During the visit, a coordination meeting was held with officials of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), including MIAP management, to review the operational requirements, technical specifications, and feasibility of the proposed project.

The delegation subsequently conducted an on-site inspection of the designated project locations, including the International Baggage Area, to evaluate existing infrastructure and installation requirements.

The proposed BHS is expected to enhance baggage processing efficiency and further improve passenger facilitation at Multan International Airport.

Officials from PAA, Airport Security Force (ASF), and relevant airport departments accompanied the delegation throughout the visit.

Sabre Pakistan and Srilankan Airlines host training session

Sabre Karachi, in collaboration with Sri Lankan Airlines, successfully hosted an exclusive workshop and training session for travel consultants at Sabre Karachi's state-of-the-art training facility.

The session offered valuable insights into Sri Lankan Airlines' products, services, and latest offerings, providing participants with a deeper understanding of the airline's value proposition. Through interactive discussions and expert-led presentations, travel consultants enhanced their product knowledge, enabling them to better serve their clients and create more informed travel experiences.

The workshop proved to be highly beneficial for attendees and reinforced

Sabre Karachi's commitment to empowering travel professionals through continuous learning and industry collaboration.

President okays PIAC bill

President Asif Ali Zardari on Friday 12 June gave his assent to the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (Conversion) (Repeal) Bill, 2026, fulfilling all necessary legal requirements for the national carrier`s privatisation.

The original bill, which now stands repealed, was passed in January 2016, and sought to convert the national flag carrier into a public limited company.

Confirming the development in a statement, the presidency said that following the approval, `all the necessary legal formalities and requirements for the completion of the privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines Company Limited (PIACL) have been fulfilled`.

It added that the bill was passed by the Senate on June 10 and subsequently received approval from the National Assembly on June 11, before being sent to the president for his assent.

A consortium led by Arif Habib Corporation Limited had won the auction for 75 per cent shares of PIA in December last year, making a winning bid of Rs135 billion.

The documents pertaining to the transaction were signed during a ceremony in January, which was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

The Arif Habib-led consortium aims to transform the loss-making airline through operational restructuring, fleet expansion, and improved customer service.

To ensure the success of its revival plan, the consortium has plans to acquire the remaining 25pc government stake in PIA, thereby taking full control of decision-making.

Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan visits Sialkot International Airport

Ambassador of Ireland to Pakistan, H.E. Ms. Mary O'Neill, paid an official visit to Sialkot International Airport recently. The Ambassador was accompanied by officials from the Embassy of Ireland.

Upon arrival, the distinguished delegation was warmly received by the then Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Waqas Afzal, Esteemed Members of the Board of Directors, and CEO SIAL.

During the visit, the Vice Chairman briefed the Ambassador and accompanying officials on the airport's operations, ongoing development initiatives, and its contribution to regional economic growth. He highlighted the strategic role of Sialkot International Airport as a vital gateway connecting the Pakistani diaspora residing in Ireland and across Europe with their homeland.

Speaking on the occasion, Vice Chairman SIAL underscored the significance of the visit in further strengthening the cordial relations between Pakistan and the Republic of Ireland through enhanced people-to-people contacts and cooperation in the aviation sector. He also appreciated Ireland's efforts in promoting trade, investment, educational collaboration, and bilateral ties between the two countries.

Ambassador Mary O'Neill commended the contributions and entrepreneurial spirit of Sialkot's business community, acknowledging its pivotal role in driving economic activity and exports. She remarked that Sialkot International Airport stands as a reflection of visionary leadership and continues to make a significant contribution to the growth of Pakistan's exports and international connectivity.

The two sides exchanged views on opportunities for expanding cooperation in areas of mutual interest. They agreed on the importance of further strengthening international connectivity to facilitate trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Ireland.

Vice Chairman SIAL and Ambassador Mary O'Neill also agreed to explore avenues for enhancing trade relations between Pakistan and Ireland in the future, reflecting the shared commitment of both sides to fostering stronger economic and commercial linkages.

The visit concluded with a reaffirmation of the longstanding friendship between Pakistan and Ireland and a shared resolve to deepen bilateral engagement through constructive cooperation and greater connectivity.

New Chairman SIAL chaired a meeting with station managers of the airlines

Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik, and Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. Syed Shahid Raza, chaired a coordination meeting with Station Managers of airlines and representatives of government agencies operating at Sialkot International Airport. The meeting focused on operational excellence, enhanced inter-agency coordination, and collaborative measures to further strengthen institutional ties. Participants exchanged valuable insights on improving operational efficiency, service standards, and reinforcing the collective commitment to ensuring safe, seamless, and passenger-centric airport operations.

Deputy Commissioner Sialkot, Ms. Saba Asghar Ali, paid an official visit to Sialkot International Airport, where she was warmly received by the then Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Waqas Afzal, and CEO SIAL. On the occasion, Assistant Commissioner Sambrial Mr. Adnan Warraich was also present. During the visit, the worthy Chairman SIAL provided a comprehensive briefing on the airport's operations, state-of-the-art facilities, and its pivotal role in facilitating regional and national connectivity.

H.E. Rear Admiral Fred Senevirathene (Retd), High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan, paid a visit to Sialkot International Airport, where he was warmly received by the then Chairman SIAL Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti, Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Waqas Afzal, Members of the Board of Directors, and CEO SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (Retd).

Director General of the Pakistan Meteorological Department, Dr. Muhammad Afzaal, visited Sialkot International Airport recently.
Upon arrival, the DG Meteorological Department was received by the then Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. WaqasAfzal, CEO SIAL, Air Vice Marshal Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (Retd.), and Airport Manager, Mr. Nisar Ahmad. During the meeting, Chief Met Lahore was also present.

Lawmakers scrutinise sales tax, PIA relief

A parliamentary committee on Thursday 18 June continued its deliberations on the Finance Bill 2026, examining proposals related to sales tax exemptions, import regulations, income tax amendments, digital tax administration, and sector-specific concessions.

A meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Finance, chaired by Naveed Qamar, took up three key proposals for discussion, including the expansion of sales tax on retail prices, a 15-year tax exemption for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), and the removal of taxes on stationery items.

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) informed the committee that the proposal seeks to include 21 additional categories covering hundreds of consumer products, including packaged food, beverages, cosmetics, insecticides, and household goods.

It was explained that for locally manufactured products, retail prices would be printed at the manufacturing stage. It was further pointed out that small manufacturers often charge full prices but do not pay the corresponding sales tax.

When Mr Qamar asked how imported shaving foams would be covered under the scheme, tax officials said importers are already required to declare retail prices and sales tax at the time of entry, which helps curb under-invoicing.

Director General Tax Policy Dr Najeeb Memon said the proposal applies only to goods in retail packaging and would relieve importers of the additional four per cent tax on sales to unregistered persons.

Mr Qamar cautioned that agricultural sprays should not be inadvertently included.

The tax officials told the committee that the tax would apply from the date of transfer of inherited property. An earlier proposal had suggested levying the tax from the day of a parent's death, but the committee agreed that liability should begin only once the property is formally transferred.

Mr Qamar objected that FBR was seeking to tax property not yet registered, stressing that no levy should apply until inheritance is legally transferred.

The FBR officials clarified that family settlements would not attract the tax.

The committee also discussed tax on stationery items. Members emphasised that educational supplies, including pencils and geometry boxes, should remain exempt to avoid burdening families.

The tax officials said exercise books would remain exempt from sales tax, while other stationery items are proposed to be taxed at a concessional rate of 10pc.

MNA Mirza Ikhtiar Baig urged exemption for stationery, but the FBR officials said such items are taxed even in the UK. Mr Qamar questioned the likely revenue from the measure, while the officials said withdrawal of exemptions was linked to IMF conditions.

The committee directed the FBR to provide detailed revenue estimates and impact analysis before a final decision. MNA Javed Hanif said legislation should prioritise public benefit.

A discussion also took place on the proposed 15-year sales tax exemption for PIA under the privatisation agreement. Members raised concerns that granting a concession to one airline would create an uneven competitive environment.

The aviation secretary said the concession formed part of the share purchase agreement negotiated with investors.

Minister of State for Finance Bilal Azhar Kayani cautioned that withdrawing the exemption could affect privatisation, though he said the government could engage the IMF based on the committee's recommendation.

Mr Qamar directed officials to consult the government and return with a response. He observed that tax policy should remain sector neutral and avoid market distortions or undue advantage to any single entity. The committee recommended reviewing the broader sectoral impact and considering similar concessions across the aviation sector.

The committee also considered provisions relating to digital integration, faceless assessment, algorithmic settlement, and the establishment of an Independent Case Scrutiny Committee.

The committee agreed to tax returns on life insurance policies surrendered within the first four years, saying it would discourage misuse while protecting long-term policyholders.

Offloading not to curb genuine travel, claims FIA chief

Federal Investigation Agency Director General Dr Usman Anwar on Monday 8 June said that offloading was a "lawful, preventive, and protective measure" used only where credible risk indicators exist.

"The objective is to facilitate lawful travel while protecting the country's citizens, safeguarding human lives, countering organised criminal networks, and preserving the country's international reputation," the FIA chief said while talking to reporters here.

Dr Anwar said the FIA has intensified intelligence-led passenger screening at international airports, bringing illegal migration through Malawi to "zero" and cutting irregular flows to the EU by 64 per cent in early 2026. He said the measures target human smuggling, trafficking and visa abuse, and are meant to protect people from "exploitation, detention, deportation, trafficking, and loss of life on dangerous migration routes," not to restrict genuine travel.

He said his agency has identified Belarus, Cyprus, Central Asian states and certain Eastern European transit corridors as routes "increasingly exploited by organised human smuggling networks" for onward illegal migration to Europe, he said. Malawi also emerged as a high-risk transit hub in 2025. Criminal facilitators, the DG said, lure vulnerable people with false promises of jobs, education, settlement and legal migration.

The FIAs Annual Risk Analysis Report 2025listed Southeast Asian cyber-trafficking, organised migrant smuggling networks, and transit migration through Eastern Europe and Central Asia as critical threats. It also noted a rising trend of migration and deportation to Central Asian countries among young residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, besides hotspot districts of Punjab.


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'Wingmen' aircraft takes spotlight at ILA Berlin airshow as Europe continues rearming

As conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East continue, the US and European countries have increased their focus on developing and procuring unmanned AI-powered drones to complement their fighter jets.

People Walk through the static display behind a drone mockup at the International Aerospace Exhibition ILA at Schoenefeld Airport in Berlin, Germany, June 13, 2026

Several defense firms unveiled new 'wingmen' aircraft designed to accompany fighter jets at the ILA Berlinairshow as European nations begin to rearm.

As conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East continue, the US and European countries have increased their focus on developing and procuring unmanned AI-powered drones to complement their fighter jets and carry extra sensors, jammers, and weapons.

At ILA Berlin, the world's oldest airshow and one of the most important aerospace trade fairs, several defense firms unveiled their latest designs to Western militaries recently.

Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA), also known as wingman aircraft, range in size from small interceptors to planes. They fly in what is known as a "loyal wingman" system to accompany manned fighter jets such as the F-35.

Unlike traditional military drones that are remotely operated by human crews for isolated surveillance, Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCAs) are autonomous, jet-powered "wingmen" driven by artificial intelligence to fly in direct, high-speed combat formations alongside human fighter pilots.

A BOEING MQ-28 Ghost Bat unmanned combat aerial vehicle under development by Boeing Australia at the opening day of the International Aerospace Exhibition ILA at Schoenefeld Airport in Berlin, Germany, June 10, 2026.

Interest in the technology comes as European powers debate over building their own sovereign defense capabilities that are less reliant on the US.

"The AI agent, of course, the brain of these systems, needs to be controlled in a sovereign fashion," Stephanie Lingmann, head of air domain at the German startup Helsing, told *Reuters* at the airshow.

The war in Ukraine has demonstrated how electronic warfare can be as impactful as kinetic weapons systems.

Boeing Australia, Rheinmetall unveil new Collaborative Combat Aircraft.

Boeing Australia and German defense contractor Rheinmetall collaborated to build their own CCA, the MQ-28 Ghost Bat, which they unveiled at the Berlin airshow.

"It can go out ahead of crewed platforms, provide situational awareness, analyze data, it can fuse that data and provide decision-making quality information back to a human," the managing director for Boeing Australia, Amy List, told *Reuters* reporters at ILA Berlin.

Wingman aircraft are a relatively new technology and have not yet been seen on the battlefield. Although General Atomics says its CCA, the YFQ-42A, is ready to go.

"We have certainly spoken to Germany many, many times about our CCA and what there is to offer," General Atomics spokesperson C. Mark Brinkley told *Breaking Defense*. "It's the most advanced CCA in the world. We don't need to go to block whatever to add a weapons bay and all the rest, we're ready today."

General Atomic's CCA is in testing and has already been selected by the US Air Force to receive funding for prototype development.

PAA extends airspace ban on Indian aircraft until August 24

Pakistan has extended its airspace ban on Indian civilian and military aircraft for another month, until August 24, 2026, according to a Notice to Airmen (Notam) issued by the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA).

The previous extension of the airspace ban was set to expire on July 24.

"Pakistan has extended the air ban on Indian-registered aircraft till the morning of August 24," the PAA Notam said.

"The ban on Indian aircraft (both civil and military) will remain in effect from 5:50pm on June 16 to 4:59am on August 24," the Notam added.

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

India and Pakistan closed their airspaces to each other's airlines since late April 2025, when tensions between them escalated in the wake of a deadly attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir's Pahalgam.

On April 24, Pakistan's top brass had announced a series of measures,including the closure of its airspace to all India-owned or Indian-operated airlines with immediate effect, as it retaliated against New Delhi's slew of aggressive measures against the country.

Since then, Pakistan has extended the ban several times.

New Delhi, without evidence, had alleged that Islamabad backed the attack; however, Pakistan had strongly denied any involvement and offered a neneutral problea The nuclear powers had the fiercest air battle in May, in which Pakistan said it downed seven Indian fighter jets.


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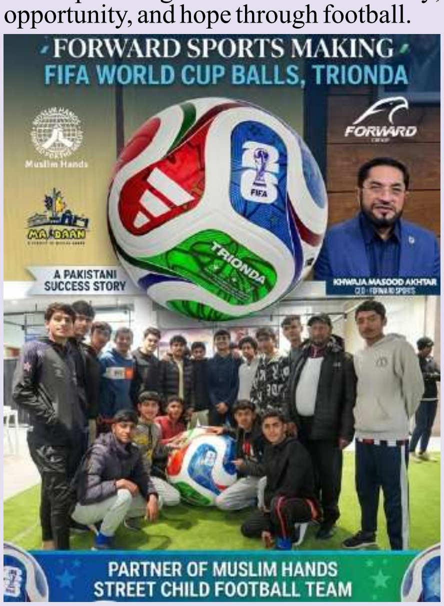
From the streets of Sialkot to the biggest stage in world football. Out of the last 10 FIFA World Cups, 8 official match balls were manufactured in Sialkot, Pakistan—cementing the city's reputation as the world's football manufacturing capital.

From EtruscoUnico (1990) to Trionda (2026), Sialkot's craftsmanship has helped shape football history, one World Cup at a time

Success story

Khawaja Masood Akhtar, Founder of Sialkot-based Forward Sports, is making Pakistan proud on the global stage as FIFA World Cup 2026 approaches. Despite Pakistan not qualifying for the tournament, his company continues to play a vital role by manufacturing the official Adidas "Trionda" match ball.

This achievement carries forward Sialkot's proud legacy of producing official match balls for four consecutive FIFA World Cups, highlighting Pakistan's excellence in global sports manufacturing. Forward Sports has also been a committed partner and sponsor of the Muslim Hands project Maidaan – Pakistan Street Child Football Team from day one, supporting the mission of giving underprivileged children identity, opportunity, and hope through football.



Pakistan 'secures entry' to first FIFA ASEAN Cup

The Pakistan Football team is set make its appearance in FIFA ASEAN Cup as the country has been invited to participate in the tournament, according to media reports.

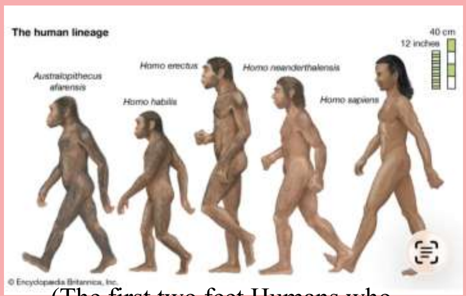
According to reports, FIFA has extended an invitation to Pakistan for the newly launched competition, scheduled to be held in Indonesia from Sept 21 to Oct 6. The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) is also reported to have agreed to participate. The national team would reportedly slot into Division 1, joining a highly competitive field that features Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, India, and the Indonesian hosts.

Local news outlets attributed the unexpected inclusion to ongoing, behind-the-scenes discussions between PFF President Mohsen Gilani and FIFA leadership. However, an official confirmation was awaited till filing of this report. Such a development would mark a historic milestone for Pakistani football, representing the country`s first appearance in a FIFA-backed tournament outside of standard World Cup and continental qualifying rounds.

Earlier this week, Pakistan ended a 74-year wait for a football tournament title and defeated Afghanistan 2-0 in the final of the Diamond Jubilee International Football Tournament in at the National Stadium to claim a historic first standalone international crown.

Known Origin of 'Human Species' on Earth

Prof Safdar Sandal



(The first two feet Humans who inhabited the planet earth)

For seventeen and half lakhs of years,the race 'Homo Erectus' which is now nonexistent ruled the world of archaic humans from the Pleistocene, spanning forover 2 million years. It was the first human species to have emerged with a human body-contour and gait and thus became the first known human beings. They were born in African Continent primarily which they eventually left to find other parts of the world and did colonize in Asia and Europe. Their height ranged between 1.5 - 1.8 m and they invented and wielded fire for the first time on this planet and learnt to cook their food which was naturally more hygienic for their physic. It is in itself a different and very interesting as to how did they happen to make fire which made a big difference in their livelihood. There existed another race called Neanderthal who inhabited colder countries of northern Europe which is upper Scandinavia now. In fact human looking race was diversified too. They were however different from Monkeys, Chimpanzees and Gorillas or dogs etc. The DNA genetic system of their blood was different, meaning thereby that they were separate kinds of living things and not related to each other and definitely not with human beings who were undoubtedly the most intelligent specie among all other living beings and here too, there have been two different kinds of human beings, which we shall discuss in this article, as below. To proceed, I venture to show first the original humans who are called 'Homo Erectus' :

The second kind which emerged finally and much later had a better and body-form. They are called'Homo Sapiens'. A third form also existed in between the two who were known as'Neanderthal' who originated in the colder countries of northern Europe. Besides the Chimpanzees, Guerillas and many kinds of monkeys and dogs toowere near kinds of modern man, as they possessed a part of intelligence but not a language to speak or verbally communicate. It is important to note that at present only the modern Human Kind of the man (Homo Sapiens) exist and the other two previous kinds of humans have completely diminished in the span of thousands of years, duemainly to the causes of nature which are not in the prowess of modern man to tell completely or exactly categorizing each of them. The present study is rudimentary too but surely is much useful and helpful. It should have been part of a'Scholastic Study' accompanied by modern science which has not done enough to fill the gaps on information.

There have been wars fought between the two species of humans. 'Homo Erectus' were much more stronger in their body muscles, but the form of their shoulder was such that they could not revolve their arms due to the jammed or immovability stature of their given body structure. The muscles in this part of their body impeded making round figures. They could throw their spears only in the straight direction and not in any angular shape whereas the Homo Sapiens could move their shoulder with twist take the example of modern cricket ballers who can give twists to their balls when throwing, this activity could not formed by the 'Homo Erectus', who possessed only a straight throwing capability which resulted into their failure to fight and win wars against the 'Homo Sapiens'. Only this single feature of their body impediment caused their vulnerability and failure in the wars, fought by them with the 'Homo Sapiens' which lasted for over centuries and which ultimately resulted in the end of this race. The two races had lived in separate caves existing nearly until 40000-50000 in the area between Morocco and Spain connected by 'Strait of Gibraltar' now; but there was no strait here and only land here connected the two Continents; Africa with Europe in southern Spain. It was an area last known to be inhabited by both the 'Homo Sapiens' and the 'Neanderthals'. They lived in caves simultaneously in neighborhood and had skirmishes quite often between them which finally resulted in the extinction of the later. This area was later, due geographical reasons occupied by sea water too making the two continents as separate entities, to be divided by 'Strait of Gibraltar', definitely not as cause of the said skirmishes in any way but as said due natural changes on the surface of earth. This phenomenon has occurred in some other parts of the world too and is thus not a surprise. The 'Strait of Gibraltar' is quite often used by illegal immigrants, pitifully.

Another prominent feature was of the blood category 'DNA' of the modern man which has been a different specie than the 'Homo Erectus'. They could not marry with each other and procreate children, as they were completely two different species of humans. In the logic of nature they were completely two different species, impossible for procreation, like many other living creatures of the earth have the same characteristic. This became the main reason or a better hurdle, for the improbability of a unique joint-specie which if had occurred would have shaped the earth and history of the world in an unimaginable way or deformity which can only be feared about. And this is the 'law of nature' and surely better so formed for the survival of modern man and the world in its present from millions of years and should continue to be so in a healthy way. This ideology has to be followed by the 'Homo Sapiens'of the present day, in order to avoid any extinction like that of the previous kinds of humans who had lived here for millions of years and ultimately faced being wiped out of this planet of ours.

With a great pity I may add here before closing that the present war phobia which exists in the world even today pitifully among the 'Homo Sapiens' may not end up with the current specie of man and the earth in its present form, which needs to be avoided. I mean genetically speaking and of course archeologically speaking too.

Local mangoes hit markets while seasonal exports begin

Sweet summer mangoes have reached markets in different parts of the country, while exports to multiple countries have also begun, raising hopes for higher foreign earnings and stronger demand in international markets.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Minister Mohammad Amin Ur Rashid recently inaugurated this year's mango export at a ceremony held at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council in the capital.

Official inauguration of mango exports was held recently, although shipments had already started two days earlier, said Mohammad Arifur Rahman, director of the Department of Agricultural Extension's exportable mango production project.

He said that 52.5 tonnes of mangoes had so far been exported to 14 countries, including Germany, Sweden, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ireland, the UK and Italy.

He said new export destinations would become clearer later in the season, as exporters usually explore new markets around the last week of June.

Regarding consumers, he said Bangladeshi mangoes are being sold to both expatriate Bangladeshis and local consumers in foreign markets.

However, he said that the exports have not yet entered major supermarket chains because those retailers require several conditions to be met, including a regular daily supply.

He added that flight limitations from Bangladesh remain a challenge in ensuring consistent shipments to every destination.

He also said that Bangladesh exported 2,194 tonnes of mangoes to 27 countries in the last export season.

The agriculture minister said the agricultural sector is one of the pillars of the national economy, with enormous potential to generate foreign exchange earnings through agricultural exports.

He said that although Bangladesh is among the world's most favourable countries for agricultural production, the sector has yet to achieve its full potential due to various policy and legal challenges.

He further highlighted that the adoption of modern agricultural technologies and strict quality assurance are essential for achieving success in international markets.

According to him, China has shown strong interest in importing Bangladeshi jackfruit on a large scale. However, to meet international standards, Bangladesh must establish a modern packaging and quality control system.

He also underscored the importance of preserving the authentic taste and quality of Bangladesh's indigenous fruits while encouraging scientists to enhance fruit colour, shelf life and storage capacity in line with market demands.

Addressing export challenges, he identified high air cargo costs as a major obstacle. He added that Biman Bangladesh Airlines is taking steps to expand its fleet and introduce dedicated cargo flights to help resolve the issue.

The minister said that in today's global market, ensuring food safety is just as important as maintaining taste and quality.

He said Bangladesh can establish a strong international position by guaranteeing proper quality control and safe agricultural production.

He expressed optimism that mangoes and other agricultural products would eventually become major sources of foreign currency earnings for Bangladesh.

To realise this vision, he called upon producers, exporters and all relevant stakeholders to work together in a coordinated manner.

Nishat takes over Rafhan

In one of Pakistan`s largest corporate takeovers in the food processing sector, Nishat Group has acquired a 73.9 per cent controlling stake in Rafhan Maize Products Company Ltd (RMPL), ending Ingredion USA`s decadeslong majority ownership.

Nishat Group announced on Tuesday 30 June that it had completed the acquisition of the controlling stake in RMPL.

The shares were acquired principally from Ingredion USA, the company`s longstanding majority shareholder, along with additional purchases from minority shareholders and through a public offer.

Following the transaction, Nishat Group now owns an aggregate 73.9pc stake in Rafhan Maize, while Ingredion has retained a 20pc shareholding.

The acquisition expands Nishat Group`s presence beyond its traditional businesses in textiles, banking, energy, automobiles and hospitality into food ingredientsandindustrialstarch.

Rafhan Maize is one of Pakistan`s leading manufacturers of corn-based products, producing industrial and food-grade starches, glucose syrups, sweeteners and specialty derivatives supplied to industries including food and beverages, pharmaceuticals, paper, textiles and animal nutrition. It is also among the country`s major exportoriented food processors.

Nishat Group employs more than 75,000 people across its diversified businesses. It said its operational scale, manufacturing expertise and investment capacity would enable Rafhan Maize to expand in domestic and international markets while increasing exports of higher valueadded products.

We are thrilled to welcome Rafhan Maize into the Nishat Group family, said Hassan Mansha, chairman of Nishat Mills Ltd.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Groundbreaking of ML-1 early next year: minister

THE ML-1 rail project will begin with the Rohri-Karachi section, officials said. The 1,680km Peshawar-Karachi route, part of CPEC, has secured a $2 billion ADB loan package.

Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Tuesday 30 June said the groundbreaking of the first phase of the Mainline-1 railway track will take place early next year with the financing of the Asian Development Bank.

He was speaking to journalists at the launch of the monthly development update culminating the fiscal year 2026. Talking about the key infrastructure development agenda for the new fiscal year, Mr Iqbal announced that work will begin on the Karachi-Hyderabad M-9 expansion, the Sukkur-Hyderabad-Karachi M-6 Motorway, and the Chaman-Quetta-Karachi Highway.

He said the construction work on the ML-1 railway project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will commence from the Rohri-Karachi section. The Asian Development Bank has committed a loan package of around $2 billion. The total cost of the Peshawar-Karachi 1,680km strategic track commonly known as ML-1 is estimated at about $10bn.

Asked if the ADB loan was acquired after China declined to take up the project as it used to be the preferred financier under the CPEC, the minister did not agree, saying all three modes including local, Chinese and multilateral financing were part of the plan under the CPEC framework agreement for ML-1. “It was agreed with China under the CPEC framework that ML-1 would be financed jointly through Chinese, Pakistani and multilateral sources,” he said.

However, given the ongoing annual rollovers of existing Chinese loans, it was considered prudent to start the project with ADB financing in the initial phase and it was done with China's consent. He said it did not look good to ask for annual rollovers of existing loans while seeking fresh loans as well. Therefore, the Chinese financing option for the project could be tapped in the subsequent phase.

It may be recalled that Pakistan has been requesting the Chinese side to depute technical teams for technical and financial terms and conditions for well over two years after the project size was scaled back for cost cutting.

The minister said the government will also launch the Karakoram Highway-II project to replace the approximately 100-kilometre stretch of the existing highway that will be affected by the construction of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam, ensuring uninterrupted trade connectivity between Pakistan and China.

Responding to a question as to why the government keeps talking about financial constraints even though it allowed the Diamer-Bhasha Dam's construction contract at 31pc higher than official estimates, the minister said the contract was not finalised or signed by the current government.

Mr Iqbal said the government will work closely with provincial governments to declare the social sector a national development emergency, focusing particularly on child nutrition, healthcare, education and the elimination of Hepatitis C within the next three to four years.

Musk becomes first trillionaire as SpaceX IPO makes history

Shares in Elon Musk's SpaceX jumped 11 per cent to $150 on their first day of trading on Friday 12 June after the biggest initial public offering in history, making the polarising entrepreneur the world's first trillionaire as he vowed to take humanity to Mars.

The blockbuster operation, which raised more than $75 billion, is expected to kick off a series of major IPOs by AI companies in the coming months.

The debut on the Nasdaq exchange in New York capped weeks of investor frenzy over the rocket company turned AI and satellite conglomerate.

“SpaceX wants to be able to take you to the moon, take you to Mars, and ultimately beyond,” Musk said at a launch event in Starbase, Texas, surrounded by staff.

“I'm confident at this point that with the incredible team that we have here at SpaceX, that we will do that for you,” Musk added. About 100 people assembled outside the Nasdaq exchange's home in New York, where SpaceX also marked the occasion with a neon sign in Times Square reading “Building the infrastructure to the future”. Musk “sets very futuristic goals that no one else is doing, and I think that has got a lot of people excited,” said Sarin Sio, of financial company Dovetail, who had come to the Nasdaq headquarters.

The company priced more than 555 million shares at $135 each in a filing with the US markets regulator on Thursday 11 June, valuing SpaceX at just under $1.8 trillion.

Friday's 12 June gain lifted its market value to around $2tr, placing it among the 10 most valuable US companies — ahead of Tesla, Facebook-owner Meta and Walmart.

Options for nearly 83m additional shares could push the total raised above $86bn.

Gwadar Port handles first ship refuelling operation

In a significant milestone for Pakistan's maritime trade, Gwadar Port has successfully carried out its first-ever commercial bunkering (ship refuelling) operation.

During the operation, the LNG carrier LNG ENUGU, jointly owned by QatarEnergy, ADNOC and global energy company Vitol, was supplied with 2,500 tonnes of very low sulphur fuel oil (VLSFO) at Gwadar Port.

The refuelling of the 285.4-metre-long vessel was carried out by the bunker barge Marine Ista.

The operation was conducted between July 9 and July 11 through a collaborative effort involving the Gwadar Port Authority, NLC, Gwadar International Terminals Ltd and Vitol Asia.

Pakistan Customs, port authorities and local shipping agent Pak Traders Gwadar played a role in ensuring efficient completion of the operation. With this development, Gwadar Port has moved beyond cargo handling to emerge as a maritime hub capable of providing fuel and other marine services to international vessels.

Experts said the breakthrough would open up new avenues for foreign exchange and revenue generation. It will also strengthen global confidence in the port's capabilities, infrastructure and security framework. The achievement is in line with CPEC vision to transform Gwadar into a key trade and energy hub.

Pakistan to fully shift to e-passport

The government has decided to phase out machine-readable passports and switch fully to e-passports, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi announced on Friday 19 Julu, saying the move will offer advanced security, global compatibility and a seamless airport experience.

Chairing a special meeting at the Passport and Immigration Headquarters, Naqvi said the complete transition would eliminate fraud and forgery.

"The complete transition to e-passports will end fraud and forgery related to passports," he said.

Director General Passports and Immigration Muhammad Ali Randhawa briefed the minister on the reforms. The meeting approved in principle to shift to e-passports, though no cutoff date for phasing out old passports was set.

An e-Passport is a highly secure travel document with an electronic chip embedded in one of its pages. The contactless NFC chip securely stores biometric data, facial details, biographical information, a unique identification number and a digital signature. The chip allows border control and smart devices to read data wirelessly.

Pakistan's e-passports are compliant with the International Civil Aviation Organisation's standards. Pakistani e-passport holders will be able to use e-gate facilities at airports worldwide, reducing immigration queues.

The meeting held on Friday 19 June also decided that all passport offices will move to a cashless payment system from July 1, ending manual cash handling at banks.

Randhawa informed the meeting that initial work on the home delivery of passports for citizens in Pakistan and abroad had been completed.

"The process of providing passports at citizens' doorsteps will start soon," Naqvi said.

The Pak ID platform will be available to online passport applicants to streamline submissions and cut processing time.

Naqvi directed that the policy for business passports be finalised at the earliest in consultation with the Federal Board of Revenue.

Saudi Arabia documents 1293 under water heritage sites and uncovers more than 1000 artefacts

More than 50 underwater exploration projects conducted along both coastlines

More than 50 marine exploration and underwater excavation projects have been carried out along Saudi Arabia's coastlines.Supplied

Dubai: Saudi Arabia has documented 1,293 underwater cultural heritage sites and assets along its Red Sea and Arabian Gulf coastlines and recovered more than 1,000 artefacts through a series of marine archaeological expeditions.

The findings were unveiled by the Heritage Commission during Saudi Arabia's participation in the 17th meeting of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Body (STAB) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris.

The announcement was part of discussions held during the Conference of Experts of the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, where Saudi officials presented the Kingdom's progress in documenting and safeguarding marine archaeological sites in accordance with international conservation standards.

The Heritage Commission said more than 50 marine exploration and underwater excavation projects have been carried out along Saudi Arabia's coastlines, leading to the discovery and recovery of over 1,000 artefacts linked to the region's maritime history.

The discoveries have expanded understanding of historical navigation routes, trade activity and cultural connections associated with Saudi territorial waters, while also contributing to efforts to preserve submerged archaeological sites and strengthen the national database of maritime heritage.

The Kingdom's Red Sea and Gulf coastlines have long served as important maritime corridors connecting the Arabian Peninsula with Africa, Asia and Europe, making them rich repositories of archaeological material linked to centuries of trade, migration and cultural exchange.

In addition to fieldwork, the commission highlighted efforts to strengthen international cooperation in the sector. Saudi Arabia has signed five international agreements aimed at enhancing scientific partnerships and facilitating the exchange of expertise with specialisedorganisations involved in the protection of underwater cultural heritage.

The commission also organised more than 10 specialist workshops focused on capacity building, technical training and the dissemination of scientific knowledge related to underwater archaeology and heritage conservation.

Public awareness has formed another pillar of the Kingdom's strategy. Four dedicated exhibitions have been staged to showcase the historical and cultural significance of underwater heritage and to encourage greater appreciation of submerged archaeological sites as part of a shared human legacy.

The Heritage Commission said its participation in the UNESCO gathering is part of Saudi Arabia's commitment to international cooperation in cultural preservation and its efforts to positionh itself as an active contributor to global heritage protection initiatives.

4,000-year-old Mohenjo-daro study finds ancient city grew more equal over time

For decades, archaeologists argued that cities grew alongside inequality. As settlements expanded, wealth often moved toward rulers, priests, and elite families. A new study on Mohenjo-daro presents a different story.

View of the Mohenjo-daro archaeological site.

Researchers from the University of York examined housing patterns in Mohenjo-daro, one of the largest cities of the Indus Civilization. The city thrived between 2600 and 1900 BCE in present-day Pakistan. Their analysis found lower inequality levels than those seen in other ancient urban societies. The gap between wealthy and poorer residents even shrank over time.

The team studied excavation records from earlier archaeological work at the site. They focused on the size of homes across the city and used Gini coefficients to measure economic inequality. Economists often use this system today to compare wealth distribution. Higher scores point to larger economic gaps.

Mohenjo-daro produced lower scores than cities in Mesopotamia and Bronze Age Greece. Researchers found another pattern as well. As the city developed, inequality dropped instead of rising.

House sizes became more similar during later periods of the city's history. Differences between large and small residences narrowed to levels closer to early farming villages than major urban centers. At the same time, Mohenjo-daro expanded and grew more prosperous.

Archaeologists have long noted what the city lacks. Excavations uncovered no royal palaces, no giant statues of rulers, and no lavish tombs filled with gold or luxury goods. Other ancient civilizations invested heavily in monuments linked to kings and ruling classes. Mohenjo-daro followed another route.

The city became known for organized streets and advanced drainage systems. Brick-lined drains passed through neighborhoods, serving ordinary households across the settlement. Public infrastructure appears throughout the city instead of concentrating around elite districts.

Trade practices show a similar pattern. Indus seals, used for business and administration, turned up in common homes across the city. Archaeologists did not find evidence showing rulers controlled access to these objects. Standardized weights and measures spread throughout the region as well, helping create consistent trade practices.

Researchers believe city governance played a large role in limiting inequality. Investment focused on practical systems tied to daily life, including drainage, street maintenance, and shared infrastructure. Development along city streets increased during the same period when economic gaps declined.

Lead author Dr. Adam Green said Mohenjo-daro differed sharply from other major societies of the time. Ancient Egypt built pyramids for rulers. Bronze Age Greece raised palaces for elites. Mohenjo-daro invested in public services used across the population.

The findings challenge the long-held belief that economic growth leads toward wider inequality. In Mohenjo-daro, urban growth and rising productivity appeared alongside a more equal distribution of resources. Researchers argue the city offers one of the clearest ancient examples of large-scale urban life built around shared access to infrastructure and economic activity.

The study also raises broader questions about how early cities functioned. Archaeologists often link urban growth with centralized political power and rising social divisions. Mohenjo-daro points toward another model, one where collective governance and public investment shaped the city's long-term stability.

KMC to develop mangrove park at China Creek

This image shared by KMC shows mangroves at a proposed mangrove park in Karachi.

In a significant initiative aimed at strengthening environmental sustainability, promoting eco-tourism and investing in a greener future, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has announced the development of a Mangrove & Biodiversity Park and Learning Centre at China Creek.

The project follows the announcement made by Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab during the inauguration of a mangrove park at Ibrahim Hyderi.

Speaking during a visit to the proposed project site, the mayor said that the development of the Mangrove & Biodiversity Park is not merely an environmental project but a long-term investment in the city's future.

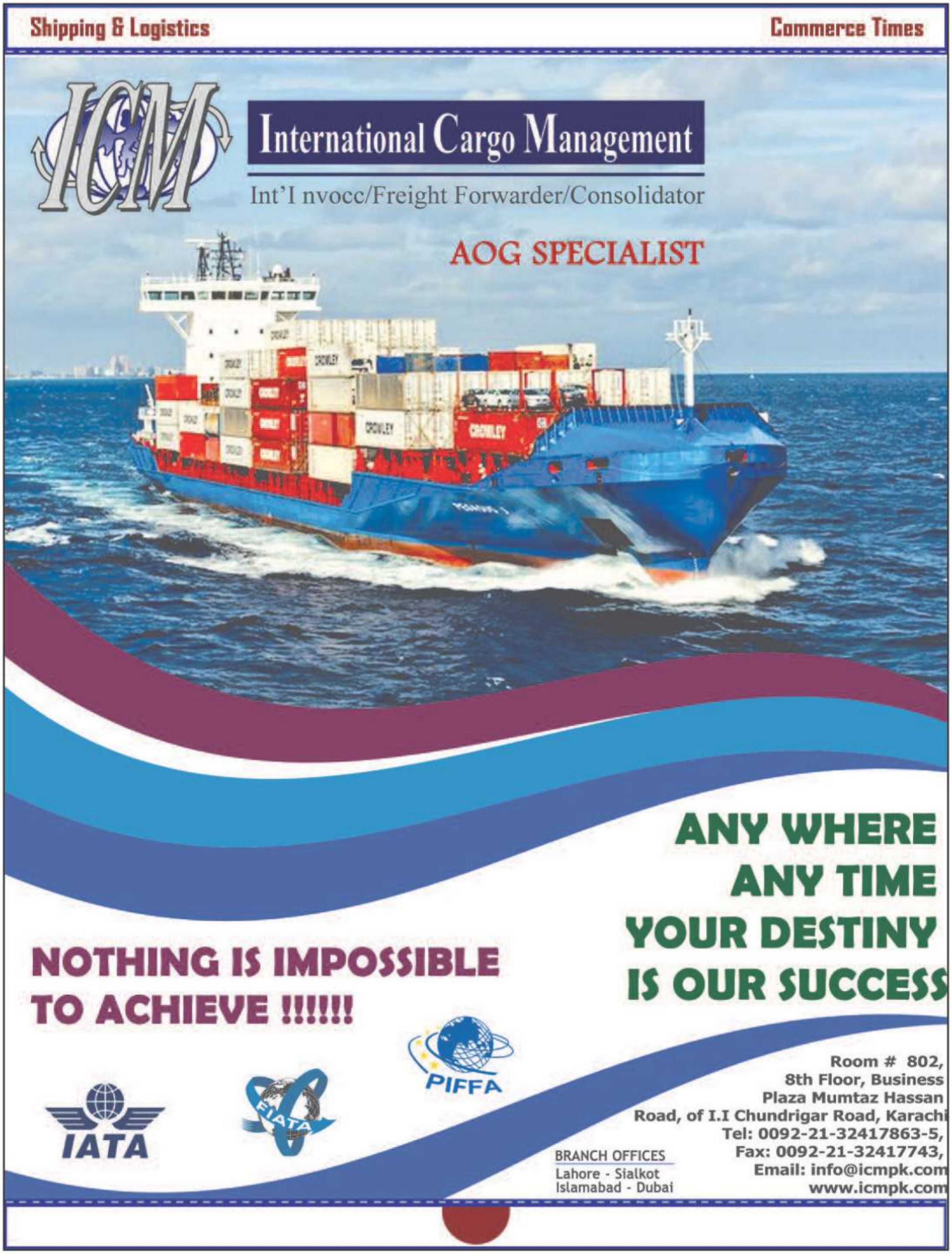
The mayor noted that mangroves serve as a natural defence against coastal erosion, rising sea levels, and climate-related disasters. They also provide critical habitats for marine life and contribute significantly to carbon sequestration, making them one of the most effective natural solutions to climate change.

Barrister Wahab emphasised that the KMC is among the first district governments in Pakistan to actively pursue a comprehensive green agenda.

The Mangrove & Biodiversity Park and Learning Centre will serve as a unique destination for residents, students, researchers, environmentalists, and tourists. The project is envisioned as a vibrant ecological space featuring mangrove conservation zones, biodiversity trails, educational facilities, awareness programs, and eco-tourism attractions designed to connect people with nature while promoting environmental stewardship.

The mayor further announced that the project has entered the execution phase and is expected to be completed in November this year. Upon completion, it is anticipated to attract millions of visitors annually and become one of Karachi's premier environmental and educational landmarks.

He also expressed his gratitude to environmentalist Tariq Alexander Qaiser for his invaluable guidance, expertise and support in conceptualising the initiative.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Sikh pilgrims arrive from India for JoreMela

SIKH pilgrims from India arrive at the Wagah Border to participate in the death anniversary commemorations of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, also known as Jore Mela.

Around 600 Sikhs from India arrived via Wagah Border on Wednesday 17 June to observe the death anniversary of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, known as Jore Mela.

Punjab Minister for Minorities Ramesh Singh Arora, Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) Additional Secretary (Shrines) Nasir Mushtaq and Pakistan Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee officials welcomed the visiting pilgrims at Wagah.

Speaking on the occasion, Arora said Pakistan's soil conveyed a message of peace, love and harmony. He said the government of Pakistan had issued visas to all Sikh pilgrims who applied to attend the commemorative events.

Nasir Mushtaq said such a large number of Sikh pilgrims had arrived in Pakistan for the occasion after a gap of 14 years. He said the death anniversary of Guru Arjun Dev Ji was observed in a spirit of unity and devotion.

He said comprehensive arrangements had been made for the pilgrims in accordance with the directions of ETPB Chairman Qamaruz Zaman, including medical facilities, security measures and quality transport services.

Special arrangements were also made to protect pilgrims from the intense summer heat, while CCTV cameras had been installed to ensure foolproof security.

Indian Sikh delegation leaders Sardar Gurmeet Singh Bohar and Parmjeet Singh said they regarded Pakistan as their second home and described the country's Sikh religious sites as sacred to their faith.

They said the spiritual peace they experienced upon arriving in Pakistan was beyond words and expressed hope that love, goodwill and peace would continue to flourish between the peoples of the two countries. The main ceremony will be held at Gurdwara Dera Sahib in Lahore on June 16.

Sikh pilgrims offer rituals at Gurdwara Panja Sahib at Guru Arjan Devji's

A Sikh pilgrim recites from the Guru Granth Sahib as devotees perform religious rituals at Gurdwara Panja Sahib in Hasanabdal.

Over 500 Indian Sikh pilgrims on Saturday11 June attended Guru Arjan Dev Ji's 420th martyrdom anniversary and Jor Mela offered their religious rituals at Gurdwara Panja Sahib Hassanabdal.

The Indian Sikh pilgrims reached here in the early hours of Saturday from Gurdwara Sacha Sauda Farooqabad by road amid strict security.

The visiting Indian Sikh pilgrims were welcomed by Evacuee Trust Property Board officials and office bearers of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

According to Sikh tradition, the event is also called Shaheedi Jor Mela or Shaheedi Purab of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, who is believed to have been martyred for the Sikh cause. On Saturday, Sikh pilgrims offered several religious rites including *matha thek* and *Ashnan*.

Hundreds of followers paid homage to the guru and prominent preachers narrated tales from the guru's life and talked about the details of his martyrdom in the Mughal era. Kirthi *jathas* or religious singing groups gave performances for the congregation and urged people to follow teachings of the fifth guru of Sikhism and to lead a pious and meaningful life.

Later, they also visited the shrine of Baba Wali Kandhari.

Due to the harsh weather, the health department also established a special medical camp on the way to Baba Wali Kandhari which is located on a hilltop. Talking to media persons, Indian Sikhs Group leader Sardar Gurmeet Singh Bohar said they were happy to visit their holy places. He said Sikh pilgrims had always been welcomed by Pakistani authorities.

Mr Bohar said Guru Arjun Dev Jee was born on April 15, 1563, at Goindwal, a small town on the bank of River Beas in the district of Amritsar. He had command over Gurmukhi, Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit.

Throughout his life, he preached love for humanity, equality, respect for all religions and equal treatment of all mankind. Guru Arjun compiled the Guru Granth Sahib in 1604.

He was imprisoned and killed in 1606 by Emperor Jahangir. According to historians, Chandu Lal, a Hindu, was an official during Emperor Jahangir's rule and wanted his daughter to marry Guru Arjun's son, Guru Hargobind.

However, when Guru Hargobind refused to marry her, it is believed that Chandu Lal instigated Jahangir to kill Guru Arjun. Guru Arjan was pushed into River Ravi while a crowd stood and watched.

His body never came up to the surface and it is believed that the guru disappeared alive.

Karachi Museum of History to be built by the seaside

Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Mayor Murtaza Wahab, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Culture Minister Zulfiqar Shah, alongside CAP officials Ahsan Najmi, Jahanzeb Awan and Ziad Bashir, break grounds for the museum project at Beach View Park on Saturday 23 May.

For now, it is only a piece of turf by the seaside. But this part of the Beach View Park in Clifton is where a new, one of its kind, digitally interactive museum to preserve and celebrate the history and heritage of Sindh and the Pakistan independence movement will come up soon. It is where the Sindh government, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the Citizens Archive of Pakistan (CAP) hosted the ground-breaking ceremony of the Karachi Museum of History on a very breezy Saturday 23 May afternoon.

Planned as a landmark cultural and educational space, the Karachi Museum of History will be built on globally recognised museum practices to create an immersive cultural institution that brings Pakistan's independence and Sindh's 5,000-year history to life through storytelling, technology, archival material and interactive experiences.

Through innovative exhibition design, oral history, research and public engagement, the museum aims to become a landmark destination for culture, education and tourism in Karachi. It is an initiative that builds on CAP's long-standing commitment to public history and cultural preservation, following the launch of the National History Museum in Lahore in partnership with the Punjab government in 2017.

The groundbreaking was attended by key government officials and civil society members, including Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah, Culture Minister Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab, KMC representatives and CAP members, including its Patron-in-Chief Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy.

Speaking on the occasion, CM Shah said Karachi is not only a city, it is an opportunity, a living archive of our collective memory, resilience and cultural diversity.

"Karachi is a city where everyone wants to come and no one wants to leave. The Karachi Museum of History will preserve the stories and legacy of migrants, traders, labourers, intellectuals, who came to this city, for generations to come. Karachi reflects the spirit and values of coexistence," he added.

He also said that Ms Obaid-Chinoy had first got the idea for such a place more than 10 years ago. "At the time we thought of using the Fayzee Rahamin building for the project but it was not given to us," the CM said.

He appreciated the efforts of the culture department, the KMC and the CAP for their commitment and collaboration in transforming this vision into reality.

He congratulated all the scholars, historians, architects, artists and professionals who have contributed to the project. "Your work will help preserve the soul of this great city for generations to come," he said.

CM Murad inaugurates Empress Market after restoration

People attend the inauguration ceremony of the newly lit-up Empress Market in Saddar.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Friday 10 June officially inaugurated the "second phase" of the restored Empress Market in a move towards preserving Karachi's rich architectural heritage and restoring the city's historic identity.

The inauguration ceremony of the project, launched by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), was attended by government officials, business representatives and citizens.

Accompanied by Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab, the CM said that the restoration of Empress Market is not merely the renovation of a historic structure but the revival of Karachi's cultural soul.

He emphasised that preserving heritage sites is essential for strengthening the city's identity and creating vibrant public spaces for residents, tourists, and future generations.

"This is more than the reopening of a market," he said.

"It is the unveiling of new opportunities for visitors, history enthusiasts, photographers, entrepreneurs and tourists to experience the authentic and timeless character of Karachi. Our commitment is to restore the city's historic gems and reconnect people with their rich cultural legacy."

The rehabilitation project includes the restoration of all market sections, the enhancement of pedestrian spaces, improved parking arrangements, the conservation of heritage architecture and the complete revival of the iconic clock tower, allowing it to function once again after a quarter of a century.

The chief minister added that several other heritage markets and historic structures are currently undergoing rehabilitation and will soon be restored to their original grandeur.

Later, a statement issued by the KMC said that the transformed Empress Market is expected to become a vibrant destination where commerce, culture, and history coexist, attracting local visitors and international tourists alike.

UAE's first-ever passenger train starts running

Abu Dhabi: Passengers sit in an Etihad Rail train, the UAE's first passenger train, on its inaugural journey. The passenger service, which will eventually connect four of the country's seven emirates, will run between Abu Dhabi and Fujairah in the first phase.

It's 7:13am on a sultry June morning and a passenger train pulls into the station in Abu Dhabi, oil-rich capital of the United Arab Emirates. An unremarkable scene in many cities but here, the first of its kind.

The UAE's inaugural passenger service, from sleepy Fujairah, carried enthusiastic travellers who watched Thursday's sun rise as they sped across the desert, relaxing on brand-new upholstery.

"We got to see landscapes you do not usually see from the road, some things you don't really see from the road trips and cars," said Gunjan Chaurasia, 42, who drove more than 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Dubai to Fujairah to be among the first passengers.

In a country whose flashy infrastructure includes the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, and the busiest airport by international traffic in Dubai, the slow arrival of passenger trains is a curiosity.

The UAE has well-advanced plans to launch flying taxis and Dubai, its commercial hub, is working with Elon Musk's Boring Company to build Dubai Loop, a high-speed underground transport network.

Yet the humble passenger train remains unusual in the Gulf. The UAE's Etihad Rail is just the second intercity service in the wealthy region, after Saudi Arabia. A rail network linking the Gulf countries was announced nearly 20 years ago. But in a region whose royal rulers do not always rub along, it has yet to become reality.

Pakistan, Italy to abolish visas for diplomatic passports

Pakistan and Italy have signed an agreement to abolish visa requirements for holders of diplomatic passports.

Pakistan's Ambassador to Italy Ali Javed and Italian Foreign Affairs Secretary General Ambassador Riccardo Guariglia signed the accord at a ceremony hosted at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Rome, according to an official handout. Ahead of the signing, the two diplomats held one-to-one talks and reviewed the full spectrum of bilateral engagement and cooperation at multilateral platforms including the United Nations and European Union.

Both sides expressed satisfaction at the "substance, intensity and soaring trajectory" of their strategic cooperation, the statement said.

The agreement, they said, would facilitate smooth exchanges of diplomatic delegations and strengthen bilateral engagement. Officials termed the accord a reflection of mutual trust and friendship and an "excellent addition" to existing mechanisms for cooperation, it added. Pakistan and Italy already have 15 government-to-government agreements in areas ranging from tourism and culture to science and technology, sports, higher defence studies and anti-narcotics cooperation. Other 21 memorandum of understanding (MoUs) exist between universities and think-tanks, the statement said. It added that key existing frameworks included the Defence Cooperation accord signed in 2009, the Strategic Engagement Plan established by foreign ministers in 2013, and the Joint Economic Commission set up in 2005. Earlier treaties include the Investment Protection Treaty of 1997, the Dual Citizenship Agreement of 1983 and the Extradition Treaty of 1972.

Pakistan's contribution to the world's sport football is highlighted at the united Nations

Pakistan's enduring contribution to the world's most beloved sport, football, was proudly highlighted at the United Nations as Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN, presented the Pakistan-manufactured Adidas "Trionado" football to H.E. Annalena Baerbock, President of the UN General Assembly during a special event ahead of World Football Day and the FIFA World Cup.

The gesture underscored Pakistan's globally recognized role as a leading manufacturer of FIFA-quality footballs, with Pakistani craftsmanship continuing to power the world's biggest sporting stages.

The occasion also coincided with a friendly football matches held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, where diplomats, former football players and UN staff came together on the iconic North Lawn in a spirit of friendship, unity and sportsmanship.

Participants competed in regional teams, setting aside national divides to celebrate the unifying power of the "beautiful game." May 19, 2026


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