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International Aviation

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 Web. www.newflyerintl.com
 E-mail flyer_intl@hotmail.com
 facebook.com/flyerintl

Issue Monthly
 Price Rs.1000/=

Annual Subscription Pakistan Rs.10000/=

Other Countries US \$100/-

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

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

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 123 HH Phase 4
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 Cell: 0333-3872222

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FLYER
International
Monthly Magazine of Aviation and Tourism
Vol 33 AUGUST 2026 No.11

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Govt approves Haj policy

The federal cabinet on Monday 6 July approved a comprehensive Haj Policy for 2027–2030, aimed at providing more facilities to pilgrims and improving operational efficiency.

The cabinet commended Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Sardar Muhammad Yousaf and his ministry's team for the excellent Haj arrangements made this year.

A detailed briefing on the new Haj policy was presented to the cabinet. The meeting was informed that, unlike previous one-year policies, the new framework is the country's first comprehensive four-year plan aimed at ensuring long-term planning, improving operational efficiency and providing better facilities to pilgrims.

Standard operating procedures (SOPs) and other regulations will be formulated, and they may also be amended whenever necessary to remain aligned with the laws and regulations of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The cabinet was informed that, under the new policy, prospective pilgrims will no longer need to register annually. Instead, they will be able to register at any time for Haj in any year until 2030, enabling uninterrupted registration according to their preference. This will facilitate the preparation of a priority waiting list.

Additionally, a Shariah-compliant Haj savings scheme will be introduced, allowing people to save in advance for their future pilgrimage.

The cabinet was also informed that the entire Haj management system is being digitised, including digital payment mechanisms, a digital complaints management system and digital monitoring mechanisms.

Under the policy, separate quotas have been allocated for government and private Haj schemes, as well as long- and short-duration Haj packages, mandatory training for pilgrims, and provisions for Takaful (Islamic insurance) and emergency response services.

The cabinet also directed that Haj assistants be appointed through a transparent, merit-based process and that third-party validation of both government and private operators be ensured.

Preserving Taxila

TAXILA is far more than a collection of ancient ruins. It is one of South Asia's greatest archaeological landscapes and a testament to the civilisations that flourished here. Among its finest monuments are MohraMoradu, one of the best-preserved Buddhist monasteries of Gandhara, and Sirkap, an ancient city whose grid layout and monuments reflect an extraordinary blend of Greek, Persian and South Asian influences. Their value lies in both their age and authenticity a quality that earned Taxila Unesco World Heritage status. That authenticity is now under scrutiny. Unesco reportedly believes recent work at the two sites went beyond conservation into reconstruction, with original walls allegedly replaced or raised through modern masonry. It has warned that failure to reverse damaging interventions could place Taxila on the List of World Heritage in Danger with the risk of eventual delisting. The Punjab archaeology department rejects this view, saying the works are conservation measures

meant to stabilise vulnerable remains and prevent further deterioration.

Without an independent technical assessment, it would be premature to endorse either position. Yet Unesco's request for heritage impact assessments, compatibility studies, laboratory tests, drawings and before-and-after documentation suggests its concerns are substantive.

Pakistan should treat the matter with urgency and humility.

Placement on the danger list would be a serious embarrassment, while delisting would be a cultural and diplomatic disaster, especially when the country is seeking recognition for other historic sites. Conservation is not the beautification of ruins.

It is the careful preservation of original fabric, with new work kept minimal, documented and reversible. The government should share all records with Unesco, pause further work, invite independent conservation experts to inspect the sites, and reverse any intervention found to have damaged authenticity. Taxila's past cannot be rebuilt once it has been overwritten. Protecting it is not a favour to Unesco, but a duty to Pakistan's own history.





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PAA, IATA discuss enhanced cooperation for Pakistan's Aviation Sector

A meeting between Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) and a delegation from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) was held recently at HQ PAA, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Director General (Works & Development) Sumair Saeed.

The IATA delegation comprised Mr. Sheldon Hee, Regional Vice President (Asia Pacific), Mr. Azhar Azahari, Regional Manager (South Asia), and Mr. Feroze Jamall, Country Manager (Pakistan).

Discussions focused on strengthening collaboration in capacity building, consultancy services, and the future roadmap for Pakistan's aviation sector. PAA highlighted its ongoing initiatives, infrastructure projects, and operational achievements, which were appreciated by the IATA delegation.

Both sides reaffirmed their commitment to enhancing cooperation for the sustainable growth and development of Pakistan's aviation sector.

Pakistan Airports Authority showcases aviation safety and infrastructure excellence at ICAO Asia-Pacific forum

Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) successfully represented Pakistan at the Twenty-Fifth Meeting of the ICAO Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Team (APRAST/25), held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 22 to 26 June 2026, where it presented a Working Paper highlighting the successful reconstruction and upgradation of Runway 07L/25R at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi. The meeting brought together aviation safety experts and regulators from across the Asia-Pacific region to exchange best practices and strengthen regional aviation safety.

The Pakistan delegation comprised Engr. Hafiz Zahid Ishaque, Project Director JIAP, PAA; Engr. Muneeb Ahmed Khan, Senior Deputy Director JIAP, PAA; and Ms. Mahrugh M. Hussain, Senior Deputy Director, ICAO Cell, Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA).

On behalf of Pakistan, Engr. Hafiz Zahid Ishaque presented the working paper titled "Schedule-Optimized Runway Reconstruction with Safety Assurance under Live Aerodrome Operations."

The presentation highlighted the successful execution of one of Pakistan's most significant aviation infrastructure projects while maintaining uninterrupted airport operations and ensuring full

compliance with international aviation safety standards.

The project achieved several notable milestones, including completion within the planned 18-month timeframe with zero delays, zero claims, and zero cost overrun. During construction, approximately 60,000 aircraft movements were safely facilitated, nearly 10 million passengers were served, zero reportable operational safety occurrences were recorded, and the upgraded runway was successfully certified and commissioned for commercial operations.

The Working Paper showcased the collaborative efforts of the Pakistan Airports Authority and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority in planning, regulating, executing, certifying, and operationalizing the project. It was presented as a practical example of the effective implementation of ICAO Safety Management principles during major airside infrastructure works.

During the forum, the United States and AEROTHAI commended Pakistan's Safety Assurance Framework and acknowledged the effectiveness of its collaborative governance model in coordinating multiple stakeholders while maintaining safe and uninterrupted airport operations. The appreciation reaffirmed the practical value of Pakistan's experience for the wider Asia-Pacific aviation community.



Group photo taken on the occasion shows Mr. Sumair Saeed Dy DG PAA (centre) and Mr. Feroze Jamall (4th-L) with other participants.



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Centrum Air announces to launch flights from Tashkent to Karachi



Mr. Arshad Wali Muhammad Si Director Gerry's Group presenting a memento to Mr. Adil Mirza, Head of International Sales, at the launch of Centrum Air inaugural ceremony. The launch marks an important milestone in the partnership between Centrum Airlines and Gerry's Group, further strengthening air connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan while creating new opportunities for travel, tourism, and business. Mr. Ken Marshall COO Gerrys Group also seen in the picture.

New 2-weekly flights between Karachi and Tashkent to commence on September 3 2026, strengthening regional connectivity between Pakistan and Central Asia, announced at the official launching ceremony on 5th August 2026. August 6, 2026 — Gerry's Group has announced the official expansion of Centrum Air's operations in Pakistan with the launch of its new Karachi–Tashkent route, marking another significant milestone in strengthening regional connectivity between Pakistan and Central Asia.

Serving as Centrum Air's General Sales Agent (GSA) and Ground Handling Agent (GHA) in Pakistan, Gerry's Group manages the airline's nationwide sales, marketing, and operational support, reinforcing its commitment to expanding international travel opportunities for Pakistani passengers.

The official announcement was made during a prestigious launch ceremony held on August 5, 2026, at Karachi Marriott Hotel, attended by distinguished guests from Pakistan's aviation and travel industry. The event brought together senior government officials, corporate leaders, travel trade partners, media representatives, and key industry stakeholders to celebrate this important milestone.

Among the distinguished guests was Luqman Rasheed, Deputy Director



The cake cutting ceremony held on the occasion shows Mr. Amin Wali Muhammad MD Gerry's Travel Mr. Arshad Wali Muhammad Group Director Gerry's group, Mr. Ken Marshall Chief Operating Officer Gerry's International, Mr. Shahbaz Muhammad Khan General Manager - Marketing Gerry's International, Mr. Adilmirza Khalmirzaev Head of Agents Relation Centrum Air-Headquarter and others.

General of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA), alongside senior executives from Gerry's Group and Centrum Air.

Redefining Regional Connectivity

Beginning September 3, 2026, Centrum Air will become the only airline offering exclusive non-stop flights between Karachi and Tashkent, providing travelers with a convenient, affordable, and time-efficient travel option.

The new service is expected to significantly strengthen business, tourism, and cultural exchanges between Pakistan and Uzbekistan while offering passengers seamless onward connections to a growing network of international destinations through Centrum Air's strategically located hub in Tashkent.

"The partnership between Centrum Air and Gerry's Group combines the strengths of two organizations that share the same values—professionalism, reliability, innovation, and customer service. Together, we are committed to making both the Lahore and Karachi routes successful and to supporting the continued growth of travel between our two countries," said Mr. Arshad Wali Muhammad, Group Director, Gerry's Group.

Event Highlights

The launch event showcased Centrum Air's vision for the Pakistan market and highlighted the airline's growing regional network through a series of presentations and networking sessions.

Highlights of the evening included:

Leadership Addresses: Opening remarks by (Mr. Arshad Wali Muhammad), Group Director, Gerry's Group, and (Mr. Ken Marshall), Chief Operating Officer – Airline Division, Gerry's Group, emphasizing the strategic significance of the partnership and its contribution to regional aviation growth.

Airline Network Presentation (by Mr. Adilmirza Khalmirzaev), Head of Sales, Centrum Air, presented the airline's expanding route network, competitive fare structure, modern fleet, and extensive transit opportunities via Tashkent.

Airline Details & Gerry's Partnership Showcase: (by Mr. Shahbaz M. Khan), General Manager Marketing – Airline Division, Gerry's Group, presented Gerry's Group's aviation capabilities, nationwide network, and its commitment to delivering world-class representation and operational excellence for Centrum Air in Pakistan. Industry Engagement: The evening concluded with networking sessions involving leading travel agencies, corporate partners, and industry professionals, followed by a ceremonial cake cutting, lucky draw, souvenir distribution, and an exclusive hospitality experience.

The event reaffirmed Gerry's Group's continued commitment to connecting Pakistan with emerging international destinations while supporting the country's growing aviation and tourism sectors.

Shaheen Airport Services welcomes South Air's scheduled flight operations in Pakistan

Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS), the leading ground handling service provider in Pakistan, has welcomed the commencement of South Air's scheduled flight operations under the Tourism Promotion and Regional Integration (TPRI) Licence, marking a significant step forward in enhancing the country's domestic aviation network.

South Air launched its inaugural scheduled services from Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, with flight Z8911 departing for Turbat and continuing onward to Quetta, while flight Z8942 departed for Bahawalpur with onward connectivity to Islamabad. The return flights Z8912 and Z8971 also formed part of the inaugural operations. SAPS, as the designated Ground Handling Agent, ensured seamless execution of all ground operations, delivering efficient passenger handling, ramp services, and operational coordination.

Welcoming the development, SAPS highlighted that the addition of South Air's services will significantly enhance connectivity from Karachi to key regional destinations, offering greater convenience to passengers and contributing to the growth of Pakistan's aviation sector. The successful handling of inaugural flights reflects SAPS' commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety, reliability, and service excellence.

Initially, South Air will operate one weekly service on the Karachi-Turbat-Quetta route using ATR72-600 aircraft and three weekly services on the Karachi-Bahawalpur-Islamabad route using ATR72-500 aircraft. Further expansion plans include routes from Karachi to Peshawar, Rahim Yar Khan, Sukkur, and Gwadar, with SAPS extending its full ground handling support across these destinations.

At Quetta International Airport, the inaugural flight arriving from Turbat was accorded a traditional water cannon salute. The ceremony was attended by the Governor of Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, along with other distinguished guests. SAPS teams at Quetta ensured smooth ground handling and operational support during the ceremony and subsequent departure.



A cake-cutting ceremony was held at the CIP Lounge, where airport officials briefed guests on South Air's operations and future plans. The Governor conveyed his best wishes for the airline's success and appreciated the role of professional ground handling services in strengthening aviation infrastructure.

At Islamabad International Airport, a separate inaugural ceremony was held to mark the commencement of operations on the Islamabad route. The event was attended by senior management of South Air and key stakeholders. SAPS once again ensured uninterrupted passenger

check-in and flight handling, demonstrating operational efficiency and coordination.

Flight Z8942 arrived at Islamabad at 1143 hours with 37 passengers on board and later departed as the return inaugural service carrying 56 passengers, with all operations handled smoothly by SAPS. SAPS reaffirmed its commitment to supporting airline partners through reliable and high-quality ground handling services, playing a vital role in facilitating connectivity, operational excellence, and the continued growth of Pakistan's aviation industry.



ADB services hired to outsource Islamabad Airport operations



Islamabad International Airport outsourcing is expected to enhance operational efficiency, improve passenger experience and align airport services with best international practices.

The Privatisation Commission Board (PCB) on Friday 10 July approved the signing of a transaction advisory services agreement (TASA) with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for the outsourcing of operations of Islamabad International Airport (IIAP).

The meeting, presided over by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Privatisation and Chairman of the Privatisation Commission Muhammad Ali, reviewed the terms of the negotiated TASA and approved the agreement with ADB.

The board expressed confidence that ADB, with its expertise and experience, will successfully complete this transaction expeditiously while ensuring maximum competition and transparency.

IIAP will be outsourced to a qualified private sector operator under a long-term concession framework through a competitive bidding process. The privatisation is expected to enhance operational efficiency, improve passenger experience, and align airport services with international best practices.

Karachi, Lahore air gateways next

The government is targeting the privatisation of IIAP during the current fiscal year. The contract with ADB as transaction adviser was revised with certain changes in contract conditions envisaging some indemnity clauses because of its multilateral status. The contract terms were approved by the Cabinet Committee on Privatisation.

The process of hiring financial advisers to outsource the international airports in Karachi and Lahore would begin immediately, as previous government-to-government discussions had not progressed as desired. Both airports were expected to attract more

than \$500 million in fresh investment each, Mr Ali told media a few days ago.

Furthermore, the PCB also granted approval for the appointment of BDO Ebrahim & Company, chartered

accountants, as external auditors for the audit of three financial years from 2025-26 to 2027-28, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee of the Board.

The PCB resolved to continue ensuring transparency, efficiency, and the maintenance of high standards to further strengthen investor confidence in the government's privatisation programme, said an official statement.

12 years on, flight MH370 families seek 'facts' as court hears appeal

Relatives of Chinese passengers of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, which went missing 12 years ago in one of aviation's greatest enduring mysteries, showed up at a Beijing court on Tuesday 28 July to demand answers.

The court began hearing their appeal against an earlier ruling to order compensation, which the families say disregarded crucial questions.

The Boeing 777 carrying 239 people, two-thirds of them Chinese, vanished from radar screens on March 8, 2014, while en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing.

Despite multiple searches, including the largest in aviation history, the aircraft, passengers or black boxes have never been found.

A court in Beijing ordered Malaysia Airlines in December to pay eight families of Chinese passengers 2.9 million yuan (\$410,000) each.

Frustrated by what they say is a lack of substantive answers about their tragedy, two families have lodged an appeal.

"When I received the judgement and read the first-instance ruling, my first thought was that the court was insulting the families of the passengers, that it was mocking us," Li Eryou, 69, whose son was on the flight, said outside the court.

The hearing was closed to the media.

Looking for truth

"In 12 years, no one has ever apologised to us. I feel immense anger," he said.

"This is an international case, but the first-instance judge treated it like nothing more than an ordinary local traffic accident, which is why the compensation amount ended up being so pitifully small."

Experts have put forward several theories over the years to explain the

mysterious disappearance, from pilot suicide or hijacking to missile fire or a technical malfunction.

According to one theory, a fire could have broken out in electronic components, which produced smoke that filled the plane and led to the passengers and crew falling unconscious.

The plane then continued on autopilot over the Indian Ocean, where search efforts have been focused, before running out of fuel and crashing, the theory goes.

"The main reason why some families are appealing is that the first-instance court did not clearly establish the facts of the case, nor did it criticise or correct Malaysia Airlines' inaction" since 2014, said Jiang Hui, whose mother was on the plane.

The court had "merely ruled on the amount of compensation, which is not everything we, the families, are looking for", he said.

"What matters to us is the establishment of facts. That's our biggest demand."

Search extended

Nationals of 14 countries were on board the flight, including 50 passengers and crew members from Malaysia, where there were no pending cases against the airline.

Malaysia announced last month that the search for flight MH370 will be extended through June next year, an operation led by private firm Ocean Infinity.

The most recent search took place in two stages, beginning in March last year, but the firm returned empty-handed.

Jiang Hui said he was thankful to the Malaysian authorities for the extension, and asked that families be allowed to organise their own search missions.

Drugged Malaysian pilot risks death penalty for smuggling in Indonesia

A Malaysian pilot who tested positive for meth, MDMA and cocaine after flying a passenger plane to Indonesia risks the death penalty for allegedly smuggling more than 70,000 ecstasy tablets in his suitcase.

The 39-year-old pilot, identified only by his initials, MSO, was arrested at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport shortly after arriving from Kuala Lumpur on Friday 31 July 2026.

The airport customs office did not say which carrier the pilot worked for, but the flight number indicated it was a Malaysia Airlines plane.

"The results of his urine test came back positive for meth, MDMA and cocaine. So, at the time of the flight, he was under the influence," Hengky Tomuan Parlindungan Aritonang, an official at the airport customs office, told reporters in the Indonesian capital.

Customs officials found 14 bags of ecstasy — more than 70,000 pills — in the pilot's suitcase, and four grams of meth, thought to be for personal use, in his hand luggage.

Hengky said the pilot likely did not expect to be checked in the special customs lane for pilots and crew, "but the monitoring we carry out is the same" for everyone.

In a statement to investigators, the man said this was the third time he had attempted to smuggle drugs, the second to Indonesia and once in Malaysia.

Awaludin Amin, of the police drug crimes unit, said investigators suspected the pilot to be part of an international syndicate, and he has been charged with smuggling.

Under Indonesian law, he risks the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Saudi Arabia's Riyadh Air announces flights to Pakistan, Philippines

A Riyadh Air Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner was seen before the opening of the 55th International Paris Airshow at Le Bourget Airport near Paris, France, June 13, 2025.

New Saudi airline will begin flights to Islamabad on August 14, Lahore on August 18 and Manila on September 9, operating its new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners on all three routes

Riyadh Air, Saudi Arabia's new national carrier, has opened public ticket sales for new services to Islamabad, Lahore and Manila, expanding its global network into

Asia.

Inaugural flights will operate to Islamabad on August 14, Lahore on August 18 and Manila on September 9, 2026. The airline said the route development supports Riyadh's broader connectivity ambitions and contributes to Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 goals.

The new services between Riyadh and Pakistan build on longstanding cultural and economic ties between the two countries. The routes are designed to serve business, leisure, work and family travellers, including the Pakistani expatriate community in Saudi Arabia, while supporting onward connections to the wider Middle East and Europe.

Riyadh Air will operate flights between Riyadh (RUH) and Islamabad (ISB) four times a week — on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays — with flight RX0659 departing Riyadh at 1345 and arriving in Islamabad at 2000. A second service, RX0661, will depart Riyadh at 2010 three times a week, on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, arriving in Islamabad at 0225 the next day.

Riyadh Air's new daily service to Manila reflects the expanding relationship between Saudi Arabia and the Philippines, driven by commercial partnerships, education, leisure and wellness tourism. The route is aimed at the established Filipino community in Saudi Arabia as well as business and leisure travellers.

Flight RX0873 will depart Riyadh daily at 0105, arriving in Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport at 1555 local time. The return flight, RX0874, departs Manila at 1725, arriving in Riyadh at 2215.

All three new routes will be operated on Riyadh Air's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, featuring the airline's latest cabin interiors across Business Elite, Business, Premium Economy and Economy classes.



Indonesian officials display drugs smuggled by the Malaysian pilot during a press conference at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, near Jakarta.

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Student pilot lands Cessna 150 alone after instructor jumps to death mid-flight



A trainee pilot was left on her own to land an aircraft after her pilot instructor, Leandro Andrés Bertazzo, decided to jump out of a moving plane high in the air in the skies of Argentina on Saturday, July 4. This forced the student, known as Rosario, to safely land the aircraft on her own. Bertazzo, who was the age of 42, was later found dead following the incident.

The trainee pilot was 22 years old, and after Bertazzo's act, was left on her own to carry on and land the aircraft safely. Following the incident, there have been questions on Bertazzo's mental health leading up to this day, of which Eduardo Alvarez, the Director of the Flying Parrot Cordoba Flying School, noted no signs.

Trainee Pilot Instructed To "Carry On"

According to reports by CNN NEWS, Rosario was on a training flight with Bertazzo when the incident took place. According to Rosario, the instructor made a brief comment before he got up out of his seat, saying "you know what you have to do, carry on." This was followed by Bertazzo taking off his headset, getting out of his seat, and then opening the Cessna 150's doors and jumping. This was the second flight of the day for Bertazzo, who clearly was waiting for the right time to end his life.

This tragic decision left Rosario on her own in the airplane, having to fend for herself. Rosario was left in complete shock, but was able to land the plane safely and with no damage. For Bertazzo, the feat of opening the plane door mid-flight would have been difficult, and comparable to opening a car door when traveling at approximately 124 miles (200 km) per hour. Alvarez shared the following statement:

"He made this tragic decision on board an aircraft with another person by his side. It's impossible to think about it or understand it, but the human mind is so complex."

Bertazzo Was A 'Beautiful Person'

According to Alvarez, Bertazzo was a "beautiful person with a great smile," and

according to his LinkedIn profile, had been working at the Flying Parrot full time, and suggested he was certified for FAA Multiengine ATP-CTP / OACI 5. Following Bertazzo's life-ending jump, it will now be investigated by prosecutors in Argentina for the exact details that influenced Bertazzo's final decisions.

Bertazzo was an experienced flight instructor and was also qualified and had worked previously in the neighboring

country of Chile, as per his LinkedIn, which showed he had been a trained pilot since November 2018. Bertazzo's final flight, which was operated by the Cessna, had been on a training flight over central Argentina last Saturday and had been passing near the Argentinian city of Toledo in the province of Córdoba.

Flying Parrot operates its flying school from the Coronel Olmedo Airport, which carries the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) code SADC. It is located approximately one mile (1.6 km) from Coronel Olmedo, in Cordoba, Argentina.

More debris of crashed plane recovered for forensic analysis



A PERSON holds a mobile phone displaying a picture of Muhammad Arif Siddiqui, a flight engineer aboard the K2 Airways cargo plane.

The Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) said on Friday 10 July that additional wreckage of the cargo plane that crashed into the Arabian Sea had been located, while search and rescue teams continued efforts to find the missing crew.

It added that the Pakistan Navy (PN) and the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) were continuing their search and rescue (SAR) operation in the deep sea for the missing aircraft and its crew.

In a statement, the PAA said the SAR mission remained underway in the deep sea. Additional parts and debris of the ill-fated aircraft had been recovered for subsequent analysis by the investigation team.

"The search for the crew members is continuing with full vigor through the coordinated employment of aerial and sea-borne assets," the PAA added. "Additional parts and debris of the ill-fated aircraft have been located and retrieved for subsequent analysis by the investigation team," the statement added, noting that further updates would be shared as the search and rescue operations

continued.

The Boeing 737-400 cargo aircraft, operated by Karachi-based K2 Airways, a privately owned Pakistani cargo airline, was observed disappeared from radar late on Tuesday.

According to aviation authorities, the aircraft encountered a navigation system malfunction when it was approximately 155 nautical miles west of Karachi, prompting the pilot to report the technical issue and requested assistance from the air traffic control. Shortly after the distress communication, all contact with the aircraft was lost. The sudden disappearance triggered an extensive search and rescue operation involving the Pakistan Navy, the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, and other relevant authorities to locate the aircraft and its crew.

Five crew members were on board the aircraft, including two pilots, two engineers and one support staffer.

After nearly 12 hours of search and rescue operations in the deep sea, the Pakistan Navy and PMSA located and identified the wreckage of the cargo aircraft, which had been declared missing on Tuesday night. The wreckage was found south of Ormara, off the coast of Balochistan.

Search teams were also continuing efforts to locate the aircraft's black box, which contains the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and flight data recorder (FDR).

K2 Airways is a private airline based in Karachi. The carrier was established in May 2018 after being granted an airline charter licence by the government.

A historic milestone in ACAAP's Journey



A historic chapter was written in the history of the Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan (ACAAP) as the ACAAP Lahore Office and the ACAAP Academy were officially inaugurated.

The ceremony was attended by a large number of ACAAP members from across Northern Pakistan, followed by a delightful dinner hosted by Dynamic Global Logistics (DGL), Lahore. The event was hosted by Mr. Rana Tariq Mahmood, Chairman ACAAP, Ch. Tariq Mahmood Choudhary (Senior Vice Chairman), Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone (Vice Chairman), along with members of the Executive Committee.

The event was honored by the presence of Mr. Jamil Ahmed, Chairman PIFFA, as the Chief Guest.

One of the proudest moments of the ceremony was the inauguration of the *ACAAP Academy Hall,* which has been fully sponsored by *Raaziq Group* in the loving memory of the *late Mr. Nadeem Khan* . This remarkable gift to the industry, covering the entire cost of the Academy Hall, was widely appreciated by all participants. The ribbon-cutting ceremony of the Academy was performed by *Mr. Hassan Mahmood* , Vice President, Raaziq Group.

Later, a memento distribution ceremony was held to recognize and honor all respected members who generously contributed towards the renovation of the ACAAP Lahore Office. They were presented with mementos and appreciation letters as a token of gratitude. Chairman ACAAP highly appreciated their generosity and commitment towards strengthening the Association.

During their addresses, Mr. Jamil Ahmed (Chairman PIFFA), Ch. Tariq Mahmood Choudhary (Senior Vice Chairman ACAAP), Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone (Vice Chairman ACAAP), and other Executive Committee members praised the remarkable progress achieved by



Mr. Hassan Mahmood, Vice President Raaziq Group, Mr. Rana Tariq Chairman ACAAP, Mr. Jamil Ahmed Chairman PIFFA and Mr. Tariq Choudhry CEO Dynamic WW Logistics along with others cutting the ribbon on the occasion



ACAAP under the leadership of Mr. Rana Tariq Mahmood and his team. The speakers acknowledged that the accomplishments achieved within the past two years were equivalent to what many believed would normally take ten years, describing them as an unmatched milestone in the Association's history.

In his keynote address, Mr. Rana Tariq Mahmood, Chairman ACAAP, thanked all members, donors, distinguished guests, and participants for making the event a grand success. He emphasized that ACAAP's achievements are the result of teamwork, unity, and the unwavering support of the Executive Committee and members across Pakistan. He also expressed special appreciation to Ch. Tariq Mahmood Choudhary for accepting the responsibility of serving as Senior Vice Chairman and contributing wholeheartedly to the Association. Chairman ACAAP reaffirmed his commitment to continue working tirelessly for the betterment of Pakistan's air cargo industry and stressed that the industry's progress is only possible when personal and political interests are set aside in favor of collective goals.

During the ceremony, the following generous donations were announced.

Tariq Mahmood Choudhary, CEO, Dynamic Group, announced a *donation of PKR 1 million* for the construction of the ACAAP Sialkot Office.

Mr. Jamil Ahmed, Chairman PIFFA, announced a *donation of PKR 250,000* towards the renovation of the ACAAP Lahore Office.

Mr. Tazeer Malik , Former Chairman ACAAP, also announced a *donation of PKR 250,000* for the renovation project.

The ceremony concluded with a heart felt vote of thanks delivered by Mr. Kashif Bhatti, who expressed gratitude to all distinguished guests, members, sponsors, and participants for making this historic occasion a memorable success.



Turkish Airlines flights to Sydney will now operate via Singapore



Star Alliance carrier Turkish Airlines has made a change to its operation between Istanbul Airport (IST) and Sydney Kingsford Smith airport (SYD). Instead of its current routing via Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KUL), the service will now operate via Singapore Changi Airport (SIN). Turkish commenced its first Australian route to Sydney in 2024, and has since added a one-stop service to the country's largest city of Melbourne Airport (MEL).

These changes will see both Turkish routes to Australia now operate via Singapore, while the airline awaits delivery of the Airbus A350-1000, which it has suggested will attempt the route nonstop. The new routing to Sydney via Singapore will take effect from October 26 through until March 2.

Flight Number	Frequency	Dep. Airport	Dep. Time	Arr. Airport	Arr. Time	Aircraft
TK022	5x Weekly	Istanbul (IST)	3:20 PM	Singapore (SIN)	6:50 AM	Airbus A350-900
TK022	5x Weekly	Singapore (SIN)	8:30 AM	Sydney (SYD)	7:25 PM	Airbus A350-900
TK023	5x Weekly	Sydney (SYD)	9:35 PM	Singapore (SIN)	2:50 AM	Airbus A350-900
TK023	5x Weekly	Singapore (SIN)	4:35 AM	Istanbul (IST)	11:10 AM	Airbus A350-900

Turkish Airlines flights to Sydney will now operate via Singapore

As first reported by Aero routes, Turkish filed changes to its Sydney service taking effect for the Northern Hemisphere winter season. The five weekly flights will now operate via Singapore, a Star Alliance hub for onward flights to Australia. These flights will complement the existing three weekly flights already flying via Singapore to Melbourne.

Turkish operates the Airbus A350-900 on its route to Sydney, with the flights



that will operate via Singapore following the schedule below; note all outbound flights from Istanbul depart on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday:

Both Australia-Bound Services will now operate via The Lion City

CreAs already mentioned, Turkish's three weekly flights from Istanbul to Melbourne currently operate via Singapore; the move for Turkish to adjust its Sydney-bound service via Kuala Lumpur to Singapore will represent a significant increase in the airline's



presence at Changi from 17 to 22 weekly flights. Already Turkish operates up to two daily flights between Istanbul and Changi, in addition to its Australian services.

Turkish has ambitious plans to expand its operations to Australia, with the airline already targeting nonstop services between Istanbul and Sydney with the Airbus A350-1000. Once the airline takes delivery of this ultra-long-haul capable aircraft, it could change the way travelers fly between Australia and Europe, with the Turkish carrier permitted to operate up to 35 flights a week between the two countries, significantly more than its Middle Eastern competitors.

Turkish also has the upper hand for onward travel to Europe or Africa, with the airline operating an extensive network of flights to around 125 airports in Europe and 65 destinations in Africa.

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No inbound flights for expats with expired IDs

Overseas Pakistanis holding an invalid, expired, or cancelled National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis (Nicop) will not be allowed to board flights to Pakistan, official sources said on Wednesday 15 July.

The government issued directives to all zonal directors of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to convey the decision to airlines operating inbound flights to Pakistan.

An official told media that the practice of allowing travel on invalid Nicops had been going on for a long time and the authorities decided to stop it with immediate effect. "Airlines should be instructed to verify the validity of Nicops before boarding and refuse carriage to any passenger presenting an invalid, expired, or cancelled Nicop," the official said.

He added that passengers travelling on a foreign passport with an expired or otherwise invalid Nicop will not be allowed to board a flight to Pakistan unless they hold a valid Pakistani visa.

The official clarified that the decision was not country-specific and would apply to travellers arriving from all countries. A senior FIA official said the law regarding valid travel documents was already in place and the latest directive was aimed at strict enforcement. He said the decision had also been conveyed to all immigration check-posts to ensure uniformity.

Officials said the move brings travel regulations in line with other state services where an expired CNIC or Nicop leads to suspension of banking, SIM, and property rights. The FIA has been tasked with monitoring compliance at airports to ensure airlines implement the verification requirement before boarding.

Millions of Nicops have been issued to overseas Pakistanis, with thousands expiring each month. While the move for stricter enforcement has generally been welcomed, many believe that the government should ensure faster renewal services at Pakistani missions abroad.

"Many Pakistanis only realise their Nicop has expired when they're at the airport," said Muhammad Riaz Chaudhary, a Pakistani settled in Heidelberg, Germany. "The government should provide an emergency extension or expedited renewal to avoid genuine



CAA restores Indus Air license

The CAA has restored Air Indus's licence, 11 years after the airline stopped flying.

Air Indus says it is finalising preparations to relaunch, beginning with domestic flights from its Karachi hub before expanding into the Gulf. Daily Pakistan reports the airline plans to restart using Airbus A320 aircraft.

The initial domestic plan is three daily flights between Karachi and Islamabad and two daily between Karachi and Lahore, with Peshawar, Sialkot, Quetta, Gwadar, Faisalabad, Multan and Skardu also planned from Karachi, plus a Quetta to Islamabad route.

In a second phase the airline says it intends to fly from Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Peshawar to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Doha, Kuwait City and Muscat, and states that all international routes remain subject to civil aviation approvals.

Air Indus says narrow-body jets will form the backbone of the network, with ATR 72-600 turboprops added in a later phase to connect smaller communities and improve access to the northern areas. The airline suspended operations on 1 July 2015.

One caution for readers. Air Indus has been attempting a restart in one form or another since 2016, and no relaunch date, ticket sales date or confirmed aircraft delivery has been announced. Nothing is bookable yet.



Pakistan Airports Authority observes Youm-e-Istehsal Kashmir

Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) observed Youm-e-Istehsal Kashmir across its headquarters in Karachi and airports nationwide on 5 Aug., expressing unwavering solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK).

At PAA Headquarters in Karachi, the national flags of Pakistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir were prominently displayed to mark the occasion. Across the country's airports, special awareness activities were organized to highlight the significance of Youm-e-Istehsal Kashmir and reaffirm Pakistan's continued support for the just cause of the Kashmiri people.

Documentaries and awareness videos depicting the plight, resilience, and aspirations of the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir are being screened on digital display screens and television monitors at airports.

Awareness banners, standees, digital streamers, and informational material have also been displayed at prominent locations throughout airport terminals, reinforcing the message of solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir.

Public announcements are also being made to inform passengers and visitors about the significance of the day, while airport employees observed a one-minute silence in solidarity with the people of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir, reaffirming Pakistan's continued support for their right to self-determination in accordance with the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.



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Pakistan offers port access for cargo transit to Kazakhstan

Pakistan has offered Kazakhstan its three major seaports for cargo transit, paving the way for joint ventures in coastal free zones to maximise regional maritime links and bilateral shipping cooperation.

The initiative will grant Kazakhstan and other Central Asian Republics (CARs) access to premium Pakistani port infrastructure across Karachi, Port Qasim and Gwadar. These shipping terminals are uniquely positioned to serve as vital transit hubs, opening up direct maritime trade corridors to global markets.

Kazakhstan's Ambassador Yerzhan Kistafin met with Maritime Affairs Minister Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry on Wednesday 29 July to discuss expanding bilateral trade via Pakistani ports.

'Pakistani seaports can act as transit hubs for Kazakhstan and the wider Central Asian region, offering access to markets in the Persian Gulf, Africa and Southeast Asia,' the minister said. Mr Chaudhry said Pakistan was keen to enhance engagement with Kazakhstan in ports, shipping, trade facilitation and regional connectivity.

Students of University of Sialkot visits SIAL

The Department of Aviation Management, University of Sialkot, organized an insightful industrial visit to Sialkot International Airport, providing students with a valuable opportunity to observe and understand real-world airport operations.

During the visit, students gained practical exposure to ground handling procedures and operational processes, enhancing their understanding of the aviation industry's dynamic environment. The airport staff warmly welcomed the delegation, shared professional insights, and guided students regarding career pathways and future opportunities in aviation.

This enriching experience successfully bridged the gap between classroom learning and industry practice, inspiring future aviation professionals to pursue excellence in their careers.

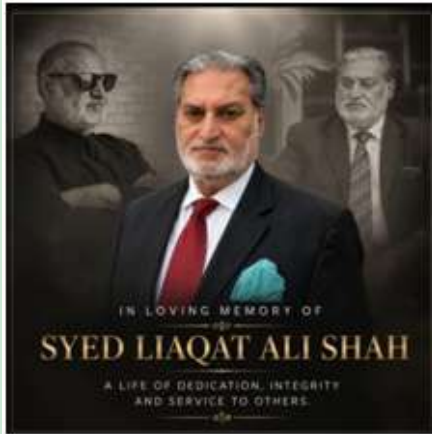
A delegation of RAS visits SIAL

A seven-member delegation of the Restaurant Association of Sialkot, led by Chairman of the association Mr. Nawaz Ansari from Allah Malik Restaurant, met Chairman Sialkot International Airport Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik, Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Syed Shahid Raza, and CEO SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R). The delegation included the President of the association, Mr. Jahengir, leading restaurant owners of Sialkot, namely Mr. Nadeem Ahmad of Frangos Restaurant, Mr. Kashif of Second Cup coffee shop, Mr. Faisal Cheema of Heritage Club, Mr. Saleh of Kaori Restaurant, along with other members of the association. Esteemed member of the board of directors and former vice chairman of SIAL, Mr. Sarfraz Bhatti, also attended the meeting. During the meeting, matters pertaining to the expansion of food and hospitality services at SIAL and potential avenues for future business collaboration came under discussion. Chairman SIAL appreciated the interest shown by the restaurant community and reaffirmed the airport's commitment to facilitating quality services and strengthening partnerships with the local business sector.

(Photo on next page)



Ah! Syed Liaquat Ali Shah Sahib, you too left us!



Syed Liaquat Ali Shah, a prominent and respected figure in our logistics industry and the Director/Partner of Pakistan Cargo Services, passed away on Wednesday morning, July 15, 2026, in Sialkot after a brief illness. His loss is deeply felt. Born in 1948 in Sialkot, he was a well-known and distinguished presence in the community. He will be sorely missed by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Throughout his time (41 year) at Pakistan Cargo Services, Syed Liaquat Ali Shah made significant contributions both as a director and as a valued human being. He sat on the ground floor of PCS head office. With a warm smile, he welcomed guests, maintained a friendly demeanor, and diligently oversaw his staff to ensure smooth operations.

We (Flyer team) extend our heartfelt condolences and loving thoughts to his family and the PCS staff at this sad time. We pray to Allah to grant him MAGHFIRAT and place him in paradise (Ameen). We also request others to pray for him. He is survived by his wife, 5 sons and a daughter.



A view of Hamza River



AirSial has signed a lease agreement with BOC Aviation for two airbus A320 aircraft the aircraft are both scheduled for delivery in 2028 and will be powered by CFM LEAP-1A engines. Photo shows Mr. Fazal Jilani Chairman AirSial hand shakes with his counterpart, also seen in the pictures are Mr. Ameen Ahsan CEO, Mr. Tariq Amin COO AirSial and the officials of BOC Aviation.



Group photo taken on the occasion of inauguration ACAAP office & ACAAP Institute Lahore in July 2026. ACAAP (Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan) presenting a shield to Mr. Muhammad Yousaf former Chairman ACAAP in sincere appreciation of his visionary leadership dedication and lasting contribution towards the betterment of ACAAP,



A seven member Resturent Association of Sialkot visits SIAL to congratulate to New Chairman, Vice Chairman

Airsial delegation visits Sial

Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited, Mr. Malik Abdul Ghafoor, and Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. Syed Shahid Raza, received a delegation from AirSial led by Chairman AirSial, Mr. Fazal Jillani, Senior Vice Chairman, Mr. Qaiser Iqbal, and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Ameen Ahsan. The AirSial delegation congratulated the Chairman and Vice Chairman SIAL on assuming their respective positions and conveyed their best wishes for a successful tenure.

A delegation of WCCIS congratulates new Chairman, Vice Chairman SIAL

President of the Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Sialkot, Dr. Mariam Siddiq, accompanied by a nine-member delegation, visited Sialkot International Airport and called on the Chairman of SIAL, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik. The delegation congratulated the Chairman on assuming his new responsibilities and extended their best wishes for a successful tenure.

DC Sialkot visits SIAL

Chairman SIAL, Mr. Abdul Ghafoor Malik, met the Deputy Commissioner Sialkot, Mr. Awais Mushtaq. During the meeting, Assistant Commissioner Sambrial, Mr. Adnan Bashir; Vice Chairman SIAL, Mr. Syed Shahid Raza; former Chairman SIAL, Mr. Hassan Ali Bhatti; and Chief Executive Officer SIAL were also present. The discussion focused on matters related to airport functioning and close coordination with the District Administration. The Chairman SIAL appreciated the continued support and coordination of the District Administration and expressed SIAL's commitment to further strengthening liaison and cooperation for the smooth and efficient functioning of the airport.



Why the 777x's new cabin architecture will be such a game changer for airlines



The promise of the Boeing 777X is a revolution in efficiency for long-haul and high-traffic airlines, but it will also change the game for passenger comfort at the same time. It will be the largest twinjet in history, and, thanks to its massive wingspan and gigantic engines, the plane will far surpass its predecessors in terms of fuel efficiency. The other major improvement that the 777X will bring is a cabin with a more spacious, modern, and comfortable design than any Boeing widebody before it.

The cabin of the 777X is inspired by the 787 Dreamliner, Boeing's first clean-sheet design in decades. As such, it features adaptive LED lighting, a more open cabin architecture, and overhead bins that feel smaller but actually fit more luggage, as Aviation Week covered. Among the many interior updates, the standout change from the legacy 777 is the new windows that are both larger and higher on the fuselage. No aircraft series has ever seen such a change between generations that are based on the same airframe.

The cabin of the 777X will also have lower pressure altitude and higher humidity to make the ride less fatiguing on long hauls and keep the cabin feeling fresh for high-density itineraries. It will dramatically raise the bar in terms of comfort, convenience, and technology for flyers. The lower operating costs and lower emissions that come alongside the radically improved passenger experience will instantly upgrade the business model of every carrier that flies the 777X.

Bigger Is Better

The Boeing 777X cabin is four inches wider than the legacy 777, as its internal cabin width is 19 feet, seven inches, compared to the 19 feet, three inches of the previous generation 777. That was achieved through a combination of new materials in the walls of the cabin that allows them to be thinner, as well as a change in design style. That change is a shift from convex (or bulging) to concave (like scalloped or recessed) shapes on the

cabin surfaces, like the walls and most importantly the overhead bins, according to Runway Girl.

The subtle change to the overhead bins was proven to create a space that felt much larger on the 787 Dreamliner, and Boeing applied that same interior sculpting style to the new 777X. The larger space allows for ten-abreast seating with 18-inch-wide seats in economy. In the first class seats, each pod will get three of the new extra-large windows all to themselves.

The windows are 29% larger than the Airbus A350 and 17% larger than the outgoing 777 legacy line, and they can be equipped with either electronically dimmed systems or physical window shades. The overhead bins have been designed for side-loaded luggage bags to ensure that the cabin has the most open and spacious environment possible, but there will be no shortage of stowage options, and it will take roughly 40% less effort to close them.

A Relaxing Space

The major improvements over the 777 that the 777X will bring to the market are lower cabin altitude, higher humidity, and a quieter cabin. The pressurization of the 777X will be 6,000 feet, as opposed to the usual 8,000 feet on most commercial planes. This decreases the effects of high-altitude fatigue and let travelers arrive feeling fresher and more energetic after transoceanic and transcontinental flights.

The humidity of the 777X will be about double that of the previous models in Boeing's lineup, which is another design update that was piloted by the 787, according to Teagae. Proven to have an appreciable improvement for customers that made the flying experience better overall, this environmental feature not only makes it a more pleasant ride in the air but will also help cut down on the intensity and duration of jet lag effects after disembarking.

The quieter cabin is an immediately noticeable quality that makes flying more pleasant for everyone, in any class cabin, and even the folks on the ground. The reason why the neighbors appreciate it too is that, despite the gigantic GE9X engines being the most powerful turbofans ever installed on an airliner, they are actually quieter too. Modernized insulation accompanies the new engine technology and nacelle aerodynamics, but the air conditioning has also been updated to make the cabin quieter as well.



The 777X's Future-Proof Cabin

Boeing offers easily changeable cabin layouts for airlines, allowing for seamless transitions and differentiation of cabin segments. A modular installation system allows airlines to easily swap in different modules. That makes the layout, capacity, amenities, and decor of the cabin easy to change based on shifting customer demand, business strategies, and technology updates.

Question 1 of 5

What is the main reason the Boeing 777X can offer significantly better fuel efficiency than previous 777 models and rival widebodies?

By reducing the maximum takeoff weight compared with the 777-300ER

By using GE9X engines and long composite wings with folding wingtips

By adding a third engine for extra thrust

By flying at much lower altitudes than other jets

Report Error

The modular cabin allows for different seating configurations across all classes, including first class, business class, premium economy, and economy class. First class can accommodate individual suites in a four- or six-abreast layout, business class offers flexibility for seven- or eight-abreast configurations, and economy offers a ten-abreast configuration with redesigned sidewalls for wider seats and aisles.

Modular galleys and lavatories are configurable, with transverse or longitudinal designs at the rear and a welcome galley at the main entrance door. Crew accommodations come in a flexible crew rest area with options for different bunk layouts, offering privacy and convenience for crew members on long-haul flights.



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Embraer unveils Praetor 600E and 500E aircraft

In February Embraer unveiled next-generation cabins for its Praetor family – the super-midsize Praetor 600E and midsize Praetor 500E. It is the first cabin update for these aircraft, which entered service in 2019, and it is comprehensive.

The Embraer design team started with what passengers and operators said matters the most on long missions: seat comfort and ease of use; a more modern, simpler CMS/IFE experience; and better galley workflow and capacity. These priorities have been addressed with redesigned seats; next-generation CMS/IFE; and a redesign for the Praetor 600E galley and Praetor 500E refreshment centre.

The team also designed the cabin around how people use technology today, prioritising zone control within arm's reach or via phone app, quick personalisation through cabin presets (or voice command), and a more immersive entertainment/productivity experience anchored by the 42in 4K OLED Smart Window and an upgraded sound system.

Smart Switch touchscreens are installed next to every seat

Window of opportunity

The Smart Window, an optional feature for the Praetor 600E, is a curved touchscreen integrated into the sidewall in the second cabin zone. Embraer believes the installation adds unprecedented versatility in a single cabin zone. It turns the sidewall into a shared, immersive digital 'window', which can display a real-time external view via 4K cameras,



including a forward view from under the aircraft, behind the nose landing gear. The feature can also transform the zone into a cinema area, complemented by divans that can be adjusted into lounge mode, or be used for virtual meetings – providing an additional large shared display for collaboration. Embraer also believes it enables a new level of experience with gaming consoles on board.

"It fundamentally changes how the cabin is used, turning a sidewall into a 42in interactive display for work, entertainment, or reconnecting with the outside world," says Jay Beever, VP of Embraer Design Operations. "It's one of those features that, once you experience it, reshapes expectations of what a business jet cabin can be. That's really what drives our approach to design, continuously raising the bar for the cabin experience. The Smart Window exemplifies that mindset, reflecting more than a decade-long journey to bring Embraer Executive Jets' interiors into a consistent DNA while redefining each platform along the way."

The Smart Window began as an Embraer design concept, the first sketches tracing back to 2014. "We believed from the beginning that the Smart Window

would become an assistant to owners and passengers when it came to providing relevant journey experiences, enabling a revolutionary second cabin zone experiential ambidexterity not seen in this segment before," says Beever.

Cabin layout options are the same as on current Praetor models; the 600E (shown here) accommodates up to four inflight beds, while the Praetor 500E accommodates up to two

Industrialising the idea

Lufthansa Technik was selected to help industrialise that vision, translating the design intent into something repeatable, integrable and certifiable. Lufthansa Technik was also Embraer's development and supply partner for the new IFE and CMS, Omni-Fi speakers, customised GUI and digital platform services including over-the-air updates and remote configuration.

The challenge with the Smart Window was to integrate a large, curved display into the sidewall adjacent to a traditional window, while ensuring compatibility with aircraft installation realities, and interfacing with the CMS/IFE ecosystem.

A technological basis already existed, but additional development was required. "Curved OLED displays exist, this was turning one into an airworthy, sidewall-integrated unit for an operating environment that sees pressurisation cycles, vibration, temperature variation and interfaces with multiple aircraft systems – more than just a simple integration into the cabin," explains Beever.

The Smart Window, as a fixed architectural element, was designed to integrate seamlessly with the sidewall panel's curvature and aesthetics. It was defined to sit across from a divan, creating a home-like feeling, so as to feel like part of the cabin's built environment, rather than an add-on.

Practical matters

Embraer says the fuselage was not significantly impacted by the installation, but certain reinforcements were included to secure it safely in place. If the external cameras are selected along with the Smart Window, small cutouts are added to the fuselage to mount the equipment. Reliability and serviceability are designed in. The Smart Window is mounted over an existing window, which keeps the installation contained and avoids introducing new certification standards or operational restrictions. To reduce support complexity, the Smart Window always sits in a defined location, and its footprint is



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clearly bounded.

The CMS is also designed for faster fault isolation: it includes built-in tests and fault indication for quicker troubleshooting, and the supplier programme is structured around formal maintainability deliverables rather than ad-hoc support (including pre-defined corrective and preventive maintenance tasks).

The seats (shown on the Praetor 600E) offer updates including electric-assisted seat release, increased legroom, a new lounge position, and more

Enhanced IFE

The new CMS user interface is built around a 'command at every seat' philosophy. Controls are distributed across Smart Switch touchscreens at each seat, along with Upper Tech Panels, a PED app, and a Galley Control Panel.

Both aircraft feature larger cabin monitors and an upgraded sound system including Bluetooth connectivity. The enhanced CMS package is supported by a larger media server and expanded device interfaces, including additional USB-C and HDMI ports, plus an HDMI port in the VIP zone. A moving map is also available as part of this package.

Voice control is available offline via the PED app, constrained to a defined command set covering lighting, temperature, shades, and media. Lighting extends beyond on/off to RGB mood settings.

The upper valance has been redesigned, increasing headroom and integrating new Upper Tech Panels, a per-seat ambient air system, and the Omni-Fi speakers.

The new seats on the Praetor 500E

Redesigned seats

The seats have been redesigned, engineered and manufactured by Embraer. "Only by committing to our resolute quest of ultimate comfort can a company justify the investment and effort it takes to certify, engineer, manufacture and design an entirely new seating system," says Beever.

Updates include electric-assisted seat release, a forward-tracking headrest designed to provide improved neck support, configurable cushion firmness, dual lumbar support, increased legroom, a new lounge position and a redesigned berthing process to enable quicker and easier seat conversion.

Cabinetry changes

Cabinetry changes within the cabin focused on the use of space, serviceability, and long-mission practicality. Across the cabin, there are also simplified placards and a more ergonomic latch design.

On the Praetor 600E, a forward crew

lavatory is now integrated into the side-facing seat, designed to add privacy without sacrificing cabin space. This monument was also refined by expanding the inner cabinet space by about 2.5in laterally, with elements like the HIC pad integrated into the design, and the shelf mechanism was reworked for easier installation (tool-less lock-in/removal). This feature is also available for the wet-galley configuration on the Praetor 500E.

Both the Praetor 600E galley (shown here) and the Praetor 500E refreshment centre were redesigned to cater for extended missions.

New material strategy

The cabins have a new material strategy, with broad, but structured customisation options. There are four interior tiers – Baseline, Executive, Artistry and Signature – which customers can then tailor through finish choices, seat personalisation, and other optional features.

As the tiers progress, a wider set materials, applications and craft and personalisation opportunities become available – including custom pattern carpet, live-log veneers, and premium surface options like quartz flooring and countertops, supported by a wider set of decorative finishes. Novel materials such as Aenigma, Alcantara and Fresco are Signature-exclusive, as are carbon fibre accent applications.

Seats can be tailored in terms of colour and stitching combinations, and there are three cushion firmness options.

Optional features include the Smart Window, crew lavatory, cabin connectivity, certain avionics equipment, and more.

Delivery timeline

Both the Praetor 600E and the Praetor 500E have now earned triple certification from ANAC, the FAA and EASA. Deliveries for new orders are scheduled to begin in 2029.

"Transforming bold ideas into reality within the complex environment of a major aerospace OEM requires balancing vision, programme timelines, cost, engineering constraints, and evolving customer expectations," says Beever. "Achieving that balance – while still surprising customers with features they never knew they needed – is an accomplishment in itself. The Praetor 600E demonstrates what happens when innovation is protected throughout the development process and guided by a clear purpose. Like many defining innovations before it, the Praetor 600E and Praetor 500E will inevitably inspire others to follow, adapt and reinterpret its ideas. But the benchmark has now been set."

Cruise ship runs aground in Danube due to low water levels



BULGARIAN police evacuate passengers from the ship after it ran aground in shallow waters on the Danube.

SOFIA: Bulgarian border guards began evacuating nearly 200 passengers on Tuesday 28 July from a cruise ship that ran aground on the Danube because of low water levels.

Europe has been hit by a succession of heatwaves this summer and the Danube, the continent's second-longest river which flows through 10 countries, has recorded low water levels in recent weeks that have hindered navigation.

The Swiss-flagged Viking Ullur ran aground some 25 kilometres upstream of Vidin in northeastern Bulgaria on Monday 27 July night.

For security reasons, the operation was carried out with the help of a border police speedboat and was expected to be completed before Wednesday 29 July morning.

The ship, which plies a route between the Hungarian capital Budapest and Romania, was carrying 186 passengers, all of them European Union citizens, as well as 52 crew members and service staff.

It had been due to call at the port of Vidin to resupply and was also beginning to run short of drinking water, the ministry said.

Another ship was chartered by the shipping agent to take the passengers, but was not able to get near the vessel that ran aground.

Bulgarian police footage showed passengers wearing life vests being helped by emergency service personnel to board the speedboat.

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Work yet to be done to secure GSP+ status

The European Union, which counts Pakistan among the top beneficiaries of its Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), said on Thursday 16 July that the country would have to overcome certain shortcomings in order to qualify under the revised framework.

The new preferential trade framework, which will take effect on Jan 1, 2027, requires all existing beneficiaries to reapply for the status under more stringent sustainability and governance requirements.

Although the European Commission's latest report on the implementation of the GSP over the 2023-2025 period noted that Pakistan had made some positive changes, it also flagged certain "compliance issues with its GSP+ obligations".

The latest assessment comes at a time when Pakistani exporters enjoy preferential access to the European market in return for implementing 27 international conventions covering human rights, labour rights, environmental protection, climate action and good governance.

In a Staff Working Document issued alongside the report submitted to the European Parliament, officials praised a number of legislative and administrative developments, saying that these need to be "translated into real improvements on the ground".

It cited the legislation establishing a National Commission for Minorities, the narrowing of the scope of the death penalty, the continuation of the de facto moratorium on executions, the adoption of implementing rules under the Anti-Torture Act, the passage of a Domestic Violence Bill for Islamabad Capital Territory and the country's first conviction for marital rape as notable positive developments.

The EU also praised the National Commission for Human Rights for emerging as an important institution in advancing Pakistan's human rights obligations.

But looking ahead, the Commission said Pakistan's continued access to the EU's preferential trade regime would depend on tangible improvements in areas where concerns persisted.

"To ensure further GSP+ eligibility and compliance with international commitments, including in view of the revised GSP rules as of 2027, key priorities for future engagement include: ensuring accountability for human rights violations; increased efforts against torture; in prison and capital punishment reforms; reversing negative developments in relation to enforced disappearances and violations of freedom of expression," the report emphasised.

Besides human rights, the report also reviewed Pakistan's implementation of commitments relating to labour rights, environmental protection, climate change and sustainable development.

It also welcomed Pakistan's ratification of the 2014 International Labour Organisation Protocol to the Forced Labour Convention and the expansion of labour inspection mechanisms, but said enforcement remained weak, forced labour continued to affect large numbers of workers and child labour was declining only gradually despite new provincial action plans.

However, the Commission's assessment was dominated by concerns over the country's human rights record in addition to recognising a number of positive legislative measures adopted during the reporting period.

It also said "significant concerns remained, generally impacting the rule of law and civil society space", adding that "enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings increased, without accountability for perpetrators".

The Commission also expressed concern over the deterioration in freedom of expression, saying amendments to cybercrime, anti-terrorism and blasphemy laws had introduced vague provisions that could be used against "dissidents, human rights defenders, journalists, minorities and ordinary citizens", exposing them to

imprisonment, confiscation of assets or restrictions on foreign travel.

Media freedom, according to the report, continued to deteriorate despite the adoption of legislation for the protection of journalists, with members of the media facing intimidation, harassment, violence and strategic litigation for reporting on sensitive issues.

It further mentioned that recent constitutional amendments had been criticised for "further undermining judicial independence", compounding longstanding concerns relating to fair trial guarantees and access to justice. The report, which the commission said was "shaped by persistent complaints about the integrity of the 2024 electoral process, harsh measures against opposition party leaders and supporters, and further increased military influence", also touched upon the situation of political rights.

The report also devoted considerable attention to the issue of enforced disappearances, saying that reports continued to indicate a high and growing number of cases, particularly in Balochistan and KP, while the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances had failed to establish accountability for perpetrators.

It also criticised the continued absence of legislation specifically criminalising enforced disappearances.

The European Commission acknowledged Pakistan's efforts in strengthening social protection, advancing prison reforms, introducing measures against gender based violence, expanding education initiatives and improving institutional mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

But it also highlighted continuing discrimination against religious minorities, persistent violence against women and children, high numbers of out-of-school children, child marriages, child labour, prison overcrowding and concerns over the treatment of Afghan refugees returned under Pakistan's repatriation programme.



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Pakistan assures EU of fulfilling obligations under GSP+ framework

Federal Minister for Law and Human Rights Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday 9 July reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the European Union's GSP+ framework and advancing human rights during a meeting with a delegation of the European Union and ambassadors of European countries.

The delegation, led by the European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Raimundas Karoblis, held discussions with the minister on Pakistan-EU relations, the GSP+ framework, human rights, the rule of law and areas of mutual cooperation.

The EU delegation comprised ambassadors of Sweden, Norway, France, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, as well as the chargé d'affaires of Ireland, the high commissioner of Canada and senior officials of the Canadian High Commission.

According to an official statement, both sides exchanged views on Pakistan's progress in fulfilling its human rights commitments and reaffirmed importance of continued engagement to further strengthen the partnership between Pakistan and the European Union.

The visiting diplomats appreciated Pakistan's recent initiatives in the field of human rights, particularly the establishment of the National Commission for Minorities and the enactment of the Protection of Journalists and Media Professionals Act. They also discussed progress on issues relating to the death penalty moratorium and Pakistan's broader human rights obligations.

During the meeting, Tarar briefed the delegation on the government's ongoing legal and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening the protection of fundamental rights, improving access to justice and reinforcing the rule of law.

The minister said the government is committed to safeguarding human rights while ensuring that counterterrorism measures were implemented strictly in accordance with the Constitution and the law.

He said that legal reforms in the country were being pursued to strengthen democratic institutions and improve the justice system.

Tarar also assured the EU team that

Pakistan would continue its constructive engagement and cooperation with the EU on human rights, legal reforms and implementation of commitments under the GSP+ framework.

The meeting concluded with both sides expressing satisfaction over the ongoing dialogue and reiterating their commitment to deepen cooperation and maintain regular engagement to advance shared objectives.

Textile exports

stagnate at

\$17.9bn in FY26

Pakistan's textile and clothing exports posted a marginal growth of 0.26 per cent in FY26, reflecting the sector's struggle to maintain momentum amid rising production costs and weakening demand in key regional markets.

The increase, one of the weakest performances in recent years, was attributed to elevated input costs, which eroded exporters' competitiveness, and to external shocks that disrupted shipments.

The country's merchandise exports not only missed the annual target by \$4.87bn for FY26, but also contracted, reflecting the PML-N-led coalition government's failure to achieve visible improvement over the last four years.

Among the major setbacks was the suspension of trade with Afghanistan, which had emerged as an export market worth nearly \$1.5bn. Exports to the Middle East also lost pace during the year, particularly to the UAE, Pakistan's largest export destination in the region, further weighing on the sector's overall performance.

In absolute terms, textile export proceeds reached \$17.93bn in FY26, up from \$17.88bn in the previous year. In rupee terms, the export proceeds grew 0.69pc in FY26.

However, textile and clothing exports recorded negative growth

of 16.71pc to \$1.267bn in June, down from \$1.521bn in the corresponding month last year. Since October 2025, barring a marginal uptick in January and April, exports remained in negative territory.

The PBS data showed exports of readymade garments rose 3.87pc in value and 5.55pc in quantity during FY26, while knitwear declined 0.88pc in value and 2.63pc in quantity.

Bedwear declined 0.01pc in value but increased 1.44pc in quantity.

Towel exports slightly declined 1.93pc in value and 3.08pc in quantity in FY26, whereas cotton cloth went down 7.55pc in value and 4.18pc in quantity, respectively.

Yarn exports surged 12.40pc in FY26. Exports of made-up articles, excluding towels, fell 0.71pc, while tents, canvas, and tarpaulin dipped by 3.81pc.

The import of synthetic fibre increased 7.25pc in FY27, and the arrival of synthetic and artificial silk yarn surged by 3.89pc in FY26.

The import of raw cotton declined 43.26pc during the months under review from a year ago.

However, the import of second-hand clothes surged 16.36pc in FY26.

Oil imports Pakistan's oil import bill grew 5.76pc to \$16.862bn in FY26 from \$15.943bn in the preceding year, mainly driven by higher arrivals of petroleum crude.

Data showed that crude oil imports surged 31.58pc in value, with a 12.78pc rise in quantity, indicating that the higher value of crude oil is due to rising international oil prices.

The value of petroleum products grew 7.05pc, while quantity declined 0.50pc in FY26.

On the other hand, imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) recorded a 36.10pc decline, while imports of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) grew by 3.21pc, reflecting demand for energy products.

The telecommunication group's imports surged by 27.97pc year-on-year, mainly due to higher mobile phone arrivals in FY26. The import of mobile handsets increased by 26.55pc to \$1.889bn against \$1.492bn in FY25.

A floating bridge into the heart of mangrove jungle

"It is '*Jungle Mein Mangal*' [merriment in the wilderness]," said Managing Director, Sindh Tourism Development Corporation, Feyaz Ali Shah as visitors from various walks of life arrived at the Mangrove Biodiversity Park at Korangi Creek for an eco-tourism exploration trip organised by the Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Department of the Government of Sindh on Saturday 11 July.

"Of course '*Jungle Mein Morr Nacha Kis Ne Dekha*'? [A peacock danced in the forest, but who saw it?]" He added. "That is why we brought you all here today, to appreciate the beauty of nature and marvel at the ecological significance of the mangroves and the biodiversity you see here," he said.

The Mangrove Biodiversity Park was built some two years ago and there are plans for expansion as it receives more funds. Currently, it has a 700 metres long floating wooden bridge, designed by architect and environmentalist Tariq Alexander Kaiser, which allows one a peek into the dense mangrove forest. The area, at first, was opened for school, college and university tours but in September last year it opened for the general public. Almost immediately it was realised that too many people pouring in were causing too much destruction. They broke off the mangrove tree branches and littered the place. That was when an entry fee was introduced so that those who really appreciate nature may visit here.

Some environmentalists are worried about construction of some multi-storey buildings in the vicinity, which they fear may harm the mangroves.

With hundreds of birds, swimming camels, mongooses, and snakes, Mangrove Biodiversity Park offers a serene retreat into diverse nature

"The government of Sindh supports and cares about the safety, security, cleanliness, maintenance and preservation of these areas. But we also want our young generation to visit here and carry out research on mangroves. Why are they important for biodiversity and must be protected? We would like universities to set up a research centre here along with a small museum and an aquarium to learn about marine life, the ecological significance of mangrove forests, biodiversity and the importance of coastal conservation to develop awareness and environmental sustainability," said Feyaz Ali Shah.

"Mangroves are the first-line of



Visitors take a walk on the floating bridge to enjoy the serene atmosphere and scenic beauty of the Mangrove Biodiversity Park.

defence against coastal storms. The roots of the mangrove trees are so strong that they block all the waves that come towards the coast during a storm. They are very special to us," curator of Mangrove Biodiversity Park, Zara Hirjee, told media.

She said that the Mangrove Biodiversity Park has been built with recyclable materials. "The wood pillars and planks that the floating bridge is built from are from a disassembled ship. The rest of the material used is also all vernacular, like the bamboo you see," she added. At one end of the floating bridge there was a big round bird watching tower under construction, mostly made from bamboo.

"The tide levels change twice a day. So you have high tide and low tide twice a day. And because the bridge is floating, it goes up by about eight feet at high tide and back down by eight feet at low tide. At low tide one can see the roots of the mangroves. The crabs come out too as do the birds that come to feed here," Zara pointed out.

"In December you have migratory birds come here too. So the mangroves are essential to biodiversity. And this place, covering an area of about 50 hectares, is designed as a conservational space, a wellness space, which is only a 30-minute drive from the city," she said. "So right now the space is self-sustained. Whatever tickets you pay for go back into the park. We hire local members for the park upkeep. There is no bird poaching, no tree

cutting allowed here. If we see it happening, we stop it right away," she added.

Mohammad Rafiq from the fishermen community of Ibrahim Hyderi said that he has spent his entire life around the mangroves. "As children we played with the fish, crabs and shrimps which breed here," he said. "The mangrove species at the Park is the *Avicennia Marina*, though you also find two other species, the *Rhizophora Mucronata* and *Ceriops Tagal* along our coast. But *Avicennia Marina* is the toughest of the three types of mangroves. It survives here due to its resistance to adverse conditions such as high salinity and untreated factory waste," he said, pointing to the Korangi Industrial Area.

Senior Manager, Admin and Operations at the Park Faisal Tanoli said that there are some 72 species of birds, including 32 migratory birds, attracted by the mangrove trees at the Mangrove Biodiversity Park. "There are also honey bees that produce rich honey from the mangrove flowers. These yellow flowers of the *Avicennia Marina* have a very fragrant odour that is also a source of a very expensive perfume. A 50ml bottle of the perfume costs around six lacs," he said.

"You can also find here Kharai camels, which are a special kind of camels that swim in seawater and marshy areas. Plus, you'll find a lot of mongoose here as well as there are both venomous and nonvenomous snakes here. But they are afraid of people so stay away," he



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Punjab allocates funds for high-speed rail, glass train projects

The Punjab government has allocated funds for two major rail projects, a high-speed train between Rawalpindi and Lahore and a glass tourist train between Rawalpindi and Murree.

Under the Annual Development Programme (ADP) 2026-27, the provincial government has allocated Rs200 million for the feasibility study of the Rawalpindi-Lahore high-speed train during the current fiscal year. The total cost of the feasibility study is estimated at Rs452 million.

The government has also allocated Rs49 million for Rs117 billion Rawalpindi-Murree tourist glass train project. The process of land acquisition for the railway track and stations has begun in Murree.

For other development projects, Rs3 billion has been allocated for the 38-kilometre Rawalpindi Ring Road project from Banth to Thalian Main Carriageway, which has a total estimated cost of Rs47 billion. So far, Rs29 billion has been spent on the project.

An allocation of Rs69 million has been made for the feasibility study of Ring Road Phase II, from Thalian to GT Road.

For sewerage projects, Rs1 million has been allocated for the feasibility study of a sewerage outfall trunk for the city's drains. The estimated cost of the study is around Rs42 million.

For the Mall signal-free project, Rs100 million has been allocated for the Rs3 billion Ammar Chowk flyover.

Another Rs200 million has been earmarked for the Race Course and Army Graveyard underpasses.

In addition, Rs93 million has been allocated for the Rs2.691 billion Tulsa Chowk underpass and Rs100 million for the Rs3.75 billion COD underpass.

In Gujar Khan, Rs100 million has been allocated for the construction of two underpasses at Galiana Mor and Technical College Chowk, with an estimated total cost of Rs4.531 billion.

Rohtas Fort 'restoration work' on Unesco radar

After expressing concerns on renovations at Taxila heritage sites, Unesco has raised objections to certain interventions at Rohtas Fort that have the potential to adversely affect the outstanding universal value of the World Heritage property.

The concern was raised after Unesco's team visited the premises on Tuesday, 21 July following information from a third party regarding ongoing restoration works at Rohtas Fort that allegedly violated international standards.

Unesco's Pakistan office had requested the Ministry of National Heritage and Cultural Division to assist the visit to Rohtas Fort to inspect the ongoing project by the Punjab Directorate General of Archaeology and Museums.

According to sources in the Ministry of National Heritage, Unesco wanted to examine the ongoing work to collect information and report to the World Heritage Centre. The source said the restoration work was not in compliance with Unesco's approved guidelines. "This is the second time Unesco has expressed concern with the government of Punjab over its so-called conservation methods that do not align with international conservation standards," the official said.

Official says conservation work violates international standards

Last month, Unesco cautioned the Pakistan government over the Punjab Archaeology Department's major reconstruction at Taxila's Mohra Moradu and Sirkap. During its visit, the UN agency found ancient stone walls were covered with fresh masonry and structures were artificially heightened, creating an obvious mismatch with the original fabric.

Unesco subsequently asked Pakistan to reverse the changes and submit full documentation, such as before and after pictures, warning that Taxila could land on the danger list or lose its heritage status altogether. This had also put the country's bid for 24 more heritage sites at risk.

Explaining that changing the design of ancient remains was a serious violation of international laws, the official in the ministry told media that the Punjab government had not responded to specific queries raised by Unesco.

"Restoration, such as a retaining wall, is only permissible to some extent to prevent an ancient remain from collapsing. Altering the design of a historical property that has universally significant value can compromise its authenticity," he said.

"In some places, original walls have been replaced with new ones erected at Mora Moradu and Sirkap. Restoration and using cement to erect walls of World Heritage sites is a serious violation of Unesco rules for conservation of archaeological monuments of historical value. This weakens Pakistan's position, which is endeavouring to have 24 more sites of historical importance included in Unesco's World Heritage list since 1997," the official said. The request from DOAM to enlist Rani Ghat and Bhambhor has been accepted by the UN agency, according to the source.

Despite repeated requests for comments on conservation efforts at Rohtas Fort, the office of the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division Secretary Asad Rehman Gilani did not respond.



A File photo of Rohtas fort.

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Japanese monk asks Buddhists to visit Taxila for global peace



Japanese monk Junsei Terasawa prays for world peace during his visit to the ancient Dharmarajika Stupa near Taxila.

A 76-year-old Japanese Buddhist monk has appealed to monks and followers of Buddhism across the world to gather at Pakistan's ancient Dharmarajika Stupa in Taxila for a collective prayer for global peace, saying the teachings of the Buddha that once spread from the historic centre of Gandhara should again inspire humanity at a time of growing global conflict.

Speaking to journalists after offering prayers for peace at the nearly 2,000-year-old Dharmarajika Stupa, Japanese monk Junsei Terasawa said the world was passing through a period marked by conflicts, violence and human suffering, making the Buddha's timeless message of compassion, non-violence and reconciliation more relevant than ever.

"The message of peace was raised from Taxila and flourished across the globe, and today, when the world is once again facing conflict and uncertainty, that message must rise again from this sacred land," Monk Terasawa expressed.

Japanese Buddhist monk Junsei Terasawa San celebrated the enduring legacy of peace, harmony, and interfaith understanding on a month-long pilgrimage across Pakistan, visiting some of the country's most significant Buddhist heritage sites. His spiritual journey has taken him to ancient stupas and monastic complexes in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the renowned archaeological remains in the Swat Valley, where he offered prayers and reflected on the enduring legacy of the Buddha's teachings.

For decades, Terasawa has been globally recognised for his dedication to peace-building through non-violent action and interfaith dialogue.

His humanitarian mission has taken him to regions affected by armed conflict across Eurasia, where he has organised peace marches, led prayer gatherings and supported initiatives aimed at promoting reconciliation and human dignity.

During periods of conflict in Iraq, Chechnya and, more recently, Ukraine, he continued advocating peaceful coexistence through spiritual outreach and public prayer.

His work has focused on fostering understanding among people of different cultures and faiths, encouraging dialogue instead of confrontation, supporting the preservation of Buddhist cultural heritage, and advocating for a world free from the threat of nuclear weapons.

Throughout his journeys, he has consistently emphasised that lasting peace begins with respect for the shared humanity of all people, regardless of nationality or religion.

Standing at the revered Buddhist monument, where archaeologists discovered sacred relics traditionally associated with the Buddha during excavations, Terasawa described Dharmarajika as one of the most spiritually significant sites in the Buddhist world and an enduring symbol of peace.

Japanese Buddhist monk Junsei Terasawa underscored the enduring historical and spiritual ties between the ancient Buddhist civilisation of Gandhara and Japan, describing the region as one of the principal sources of the religious and philosophical traditions that later shaped Japanese society.

The monk also praised the artistic achievements of the Gandhara civilisation, saying its distinctive Buddhist sculptures and iconography, developed through a fusion of regional and classical influences, left a lasting impression on Buddhist art across East Asia.

He observed that many of the visual representations of the Buddha found in Japan reflect artistic concepts that can be traced back to the ancient workshops of Gandhara.



A Korean delegation, led by the Most Venerable Monk Jong Lim, poses for a group photo at the ancient Buddhist site of Dharmarajika Stupa near Taxila on Sunday 19 July.

Korean monks call Taxila spiritual root of Mahayana Buddhism

Describing Taxila as the "spiritual root of Mahayana Buddhism", a senior Korean Buddhist monk on Sunday 19 July said the ancient Gandhara civilisation remained central to the religious identity of Korean Buddhists, urging greater efforts to preserve Pakistan's Buddhist heritage and promote it as a destination for religious tourism.

Standing amid the serene ruins of the 2,000-year-old Dharmarajika Stupa, one of the holiest Buddhist shrines in the ancient Gandhara civilisation, most venerable Jong Lim said his latest pilgrimage to Pakistan might be his "tenth or perhaps last" visit, but his bond with Taxila had only grown stronger over the years.

"Every time I return to Taxila, I feel a much deeper emotional and spiritual connection than anywhere else," the 85-year-old revered monk told journalists.

"Although I have visited numerous Buddhist sites in India and many other countries, nowhere touches my heart like Gandhara because Korean Buddhism traces many of its Mahayana roots to this sacred civilisation. The spirit of this land still lives in the Korean Buddhist tradition."

The eight-member Korean delegation, comprising senior monks, Buddhist scholars and researchers, included lady monks Hyo Rok and Yoo Yeon; renowned academic Professor Lee Jong; PhD scholar Choi Bong Ju; and other distinguished members who

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travelled to Pakistan on a religious pilgrimage to explore the ancient centres of Buddhism in Gandhara.

With visible emotion, most venerable Jong Lim said, "Gandhara is not merely an archaeological site; it is a sacred spiritual landscape. This is where the message of compassion, wisdom and enlightenment travelled to the rest of Asia. Korea embraced that message centuries ago and transformed it into a vibrant spiritual and cultural heritage. That is why I always say, Gandhara is the root of Mahayana Buddhism, and Korea is its flower."

Professor Lee Jong, while speaking to reporters, said Pakistan occupied a unique place in the religious consciousness of the Korean people because of its association with the ancient Buddhist civilisation of Gandhara.

Professor Lee noted that according to long-held Korean Buddhist traditions, Maranatha, the monk credited with introducing Buddhism to the Korean kingdom of Baekje in 384 AD, originated from the ancient region corresponding to present-day Pakistan. "The Gandhara civilisation remains one of the greatest attractions for Buddhists from across the world, and its preservation offers immense opportunities to strengthen cultural, religious and people-to-people ties between Islamabad and Seoul."

Talking to newsmen on this occasion, Project Director Gandhara International Research Centre, University of Lahore, Dr Kyosoon Park stated that for two decades she had worked to build a bridge between Korean Buddhists and Pakistan, and this visit of Korean monks and scholars would help not only promote a soft image of Pakistan but also attract religious tourists.

The delegation toured the Taxila museum, where officials gave them an overview of Gandhara civilisation, Buddhist artefact and the ancient history of the region.

Members of the group showed strong interest in Taxila's globally recognised heritage and appreciated its historical importance.

During their visit, the museum's collection provided a glimpse into the history and significance of Buddhism, leaving a lasting impression on the visiting monks.

Deputy Director Department of Archaeology, Asim Dogar, informed the Korean delegation that the department was committed to preserving, promoting, and presenting our shared heritage to the world, making Punjab a hub of cultural exchange and tourism.

Thai monks perform rituals at Taxila's Buddhist heritage sites



Thai monks perform rituals at Dharmarajika Stupa in Taxila on Saturday 11 July.

The atmosphere at the ancient Dharmarajika Stupa turned profoundly spiritual as the Thai monks gathered around the sacred monument to perform centuries-old Buddhist religious rituals.

Clad in saffron robes, they offered flowers, lit incense, chanted verses from the Buddhist scriptures and sat in silent meditation, creating an aura of serenity and devotion that deeply moved everyone present. In an emotionally moving display of devotion to the sacred Buddhist heritage of Gandhara, a delegation of six Thai Buddhist monks visited the ancient archaeological sites of Taxila on Saturday 11 July.

Led by Professor of Buddhist studies at Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University (MCU) in Thailand, the delegation comprised Phramaha Teerawat, Sisouk Salirmkhoun, Sompone Sipaseuth, Phouangpasert Phoumavong and Phanthong Phomyxay, the visit was organized by Karakorum Quest.

The rhythmic recitation of sacred parittas echoed through the historic ruins, transporting visitors back to the glorious days when Taxila flourished as one of the world's foremost centres of Buddhist learning and pilgrimage. Many officials,

museum staff and visitors watched in respectful silence as the monks bowed before the stupa believed to have once enshrined the sacred bone relics of Lord Buddha.

The deeply emotional ceremony reflected the enduring spiritual bond between Buddhists across the world and the ancient land of Gandhara, where the message of peace, compassion and enlightenment once spread far beyond the frontiers of South Asia.

For the visiting monks, the moment was not merely a religious observance but the fulfilment of a cherished lifelong pilgrimage, while for onlookers it served as a powerful reminder that Taxila remains a living symbol of the universal teachings of Lord Buddha and a sacred destination that continues to inspire faith, reverence and hope more than two millennia after its founding.

Dharmarajika occupies a unique place in Buddhist history. Built during the reign of Emperor Ashoka in the 3rd century BCE, the stupa was constructed to enshrine sacred relics of Lord Buddha and remained a major centre of Buddhist learning and pilgrimage for centuries. Archaeological excavations later confirmed the discovery of relic caskets containing Buddha relics, making the site one of the most sacred Buddhist monuments in the region.

Talking to journalists during the visit, delegation leader Phramaha Daosayam Klalod described Taxila as "a sacred land where the light of the Buddha's teachings once illuminated the hearts of countless seekers."

"Standing before the Dharmarajika Stupa fills every Buddhist with profound humility. This is not merely an archaeological monument; it is a living symbol of the Buddha's compassion, wisdom and message of universal peace. Offering prayers here is a deeply spiritual experience that connects us with more than two thousand years of Buddhist history," he said.

The senior monk also appreciated Pakistan's efforts to preserve its Buddhist heritage, saying the conservation of Gandhara's archaeological treasures reflected respect for the shared spiritual legacy of mankind.



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How the Indus Valley built a civilization without kings

The Indus River Valley settlements were among the world's first civilizations. Did they also exist in a state of equality?

The Indus Valley Civilization had **no kings or palaces**, suggesting a unique society built on equality and collective decision-making.

A sophisticated, fully developed civilization with no palaces, temples, monuments, or elite dwellings! Does absolute standardized urban design indicate equality, collective decision-making, and peaceful cooperation rather than top-down centralized rule?

The Indus River Valley Civilization

Jewelry, toys, pottery fragments, and other IVC artifacts at the Baruda Museum, Vadodara, India.

Our only source of information about the Harappa or Indus Valley Civilization (IVC for short) comes from archaeological evidence. Two identical features are strikingly evident in these cities. Firstly, there are no monuments, palaces, elite dwellings, temples, or statues honoring individuals or elite classes. Secondly, identical, standardized grid pattern designs are obvious in all cities, from urban dwellings, communal facilities, and sophisticated water management systems, to industry facilities, and paved streets. How was this implemented and maintained throughout so many centuries, even though many cities were rebuilt several times after severe flood damage?

The interpretation of IVC ruins and artifacts today remains a controversial, highly debated subject, partly influenced by political considerations. Despite the application of advanced modern technology, including dating methods and specialist cooperation from other scientific disciplines, the structure and organization of their society, governance, and religious beliefs remain an enigma.

Where Is Alexander the Great Really Buried?

This civilization appears to have developed (mostly) in isolation. There is a marked archaeological difference compared to other contemporary civilizations that placed a high value on majestic buildings for kings or priests as privileged rulers. While the Indus script remains undeciphered, Mesopotamian cuneiform records from the Sumerian and Akkadian eras speak of trade with a wealthy eastern land they called Meluhha, which modern scholars identify as the Indus Valley Civilization.

The absence of royal and religious monuments, palaces, and elite houses indicates a definite difference in beliefs, lifestyle, and culture from their contemporaries. This is further implied by



the emphasis on neatness and hygiene (personal and public) in the abundance of bathrooms, public baths, covered sewage systems, and more. This has been confirmed in every IVC city that has been excavated so far.

Discovery

British engineers and surveyors were pleased when they discovered ruins made of strong, identical rectangular baked bricks at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro during the 19th century. These bricks were perfect for use in their construction of railroads across the Punjab, a province in Colonial India. They realized that the ruins were old but assumed the identical, perfectly preserved bricks could not be older than a few hundred years at most. This free use would only come to an end in the 1920s when archaeologists got involved.

On September 20, 1924, Sir John Marshall, Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India at the time, published an article with images in *The Illustrated London News*, showcasing archaeological finds from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. He asked the paper's readers for help in dating the discoveries. The article was headed "A Forgotten Age Revealed."

He wrote that two Indian archaeologists, Daya Ram Sahni and R. D. Banerji, had been excavating at the ancient sites of Harappa in Punjab and Mohenjo-Daro in Sindh since 1921 and 1922, respectively, under the supervision of the ASI.

To the editors and Marshall's surprise, Oxford Professor A. H. Sayce tentatively identified the ruins and artifacts in the photos as dating back to the 3rd millennium BC, the era of the ancient Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations. He was only partially right because he incorrectly identified some of the artifacts as Mesopotamian in origin.

Marshall's headline was right, though. An unknown or forgotten ancient civilization had indeed been discovered. The generally accepted dates were eventually refined through modern dating methods to c. 3300-1300 BC, with the mature phase dating to c. 2600-1900 BC. These dates vary across the many sites that have been excavated over the years. Nevertheless, the IVC is considered one of the oldest known fully developed complex

civilizations in the world. It is larger than its better-known contemporaries, ancient Egypt and Sumer in Mesopotamia. However, it remains the most mysterious, in part because the IVC script remains undeciphered.

The Enigma of Power in the Indus Valley Civilization

The baffling absence of key royal or religious class markers and the absolute standardization of living, working, and communal facilities return us yet again to consider the possibility of a state equality among all citizens. To date, no royal burials, no royal residences or palaces, no temples, and no single person depicted in monumental commemorative or glorifying statues or artworks have been discovered. The only depiction that could pass for a single king or high priest is a small 17.5 cm (6.89 inches) tall bust of a bearded man with a headband found at Mohenjo-Daro in 1925/26.

The degree of standardization achieved and followed for centuries in urban design and water management may indicate an advanced form of civic governance in a heterarchical format.

Cities were neatly laid out in north-south/east-west grid patterns. They had separate residential, industrial, and communal areas. City blocks were near identical in size and laid out across two areas or mounds. It appears as if cleanliness was one of the major driving forces in the outlay of both mounds. Public institutions and communal facilities, including the grain storage facilities, large halls for gatherings (religious or other), or administrative functions, and recreational, bathing, or purifying pools/baths, were on the "citadel" mound.

Residential and industrial facilities were on the other mound, or in the so-called "lower" city. Industrial factories and workshops were designed to suit the specific needs of particular industries or crafts and were situated close to the residential areas of their workers. Most specialized industries were located in cities conveniently near the areas of their raw materials and special activities, like coastal cities for shell jewelry, and Lothal for shipbuilding and maritime trading.

Residential areas were filled with identical houses opening onto smaller side streets, with their back walls flush against the wide main streets. The paved main streets even boasted built-in garbage bins at convenient intervals. All houses had built-in bathrooms, with drainage facilities embedded in the back walls emptying into covered pipes ending in covered drains under the paved main streets. Most houses had their own wells for fresh water.

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