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DG Khan Airport set for A320/A321 operations with airside upgradation

The airside upgradation of Dera Ghazi Khan Airport is expected to be completed before the end of next year, enabling the airport to handle Airbus A320/A321 operations, Deputy Director General Works & Development, Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), Sumair Saeed, said on Sept. 9, 2026.

He was speaking during PAA's e-Kacheri, which he chaired along with Directors Commercial, Airport Services, and senior officials from other key directorates. The e-Kacheri provided passengers and members of the public an opportunity to raise concerns and offer suggestions regarding airport facilities and services.

The Deputy Director General (W&D) said the need for terminal upgradation at Dera Ghazi Khan Airport had also been considered; however, the existing terminal capacity is presently considered adequate for A320 operations.

Regarding Karachi Airport, he said major renovation is being planned alongside measures relating to flight scheduling and slot management, with further expansion envisaged in the future. He also informed that PAA has already provided land and issued an NOC for the Red Line bus service, which will pass near the airport and facilitate passengers traveling to and from the airport.

Directions were also issued to Peshawar Airport management and the Commercial Directorate to explore measures to facilitate passengers and employees traveling between the airport and a nearby security checkpoint. The Director Commercial suggested that a transport service could be arranged through a tender for this purpose.

Several human-resource related issues were also raised. Officials informed participants that suggestions regarding selection criteria would be considered and placed before the Executive Committee, while tests for advertised posts would be conducted following completion of the ongoing rationalization process. It was also informed that retainership salaries had been increased by 100 percent last year, with a further increase under consideration.

Passenger complaints concerning airline services, ticketing, flight delays, and airport commercial facilities were also taken up. The Deputy Director General (W&D) directed the concerned authorities to investigate the complaints and engage the relevant airlines where



required. Matters requiring regulatory examination will be referred to the relevant competent authority.

Other suggestions and complaints included parking charges, food and retail facilities, drinking water and photocopying services, airport access, school visits, and employment

opportunities.

Concluding the e-Kacheri, the Deputy Director General thanked all participants and said that public feedback plays an important role in improving airport operations and passenger services. He added that the suggestion to increase the duration of the e-Kacheri would also be considered.





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Islamabad and Lahore International Airport launch premium Meet & Greet / Concierge Service 'Khushamdeed'

Islamabad International Airport (IIAP) has launched its Premium Meet & Greet / Concierge Service, marking another step towards enhancing passenger facilitation and elevating the overall airport experience.

Secretary Defence Lt Gen (R) Muhammad Ali HI(M) was the chief guest at the launch ceremony. The event was attended by Major General Qaisar Suleman, Additional Secretary-IV (Defence Division); AVM Zeeshan Saeed, Director General Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA); AVM Amir Hayat, CEO Pakistan International Airlines; Colonel Irfan Hassan, Chief Coordinator Aviation, Ministry of Defence; Tashfin Ashraf, Director APS; Aftab Gilani, COO/Airport Manager IIAP; Senior Joint Director Commercial; and other PAA officials.

The ceremony was also attended by distinguished guests, including Lt Gen Rizwan Akhtar (Retd) and Air Marshal Arshad Mahmood Malik (Retd), former CEO PIA, on behalf of M/s Walee Al Nazawy.

The ceremony commenced with a ribbon-cutting at the designated Khushamdeed Premium Meet & Assist Service corridor, formally marking the commencement of the service at IIAP. The guests subsequently visited the service facilities, including the designated corridors and waiting areas at both International Departures and International Arrivals.

Addressing the gathering, the Secretary Defence appreciated the concerted efforts of the airport management and the licensee in successfully introducing the service. He emphasized the importance of providing enhanced, seamless, and passenger-centric facilitation at the airport.

DG PAA AVM Zeeshan Saeed highlighted the Authority's commitment to provide modern, efficient, and customer-centric services in line with international airport standards.

Lt Gen Rizwan Akhtar (Retd) and Air Marshal Arshad Mahmood Malik (Retd) also addressed the gathering, highlighting the salient features of the service and

appreciating the efforts of the team and airport management in bringing the initiative to fruition.

The Premium Meet & Greet / Concierge Service is designed to provide a seamless and personalized airport

experience, particularly for passengers seeking enhanced comfort, convenience, and dedicated assistance. The service includes designated corridors and waiting areas at International Departures and International Arrivals.





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PSW, PAA sign MoU to digitalize Cargo Throughput Charges

Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA) and Pakistan Single Window (PSW) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to digitalize the collection of Cargo Throughput Charges (CTC) on import consignments arriving in Pakistan by air.

Director Commercial, PAA, Mr. Abdul Basit signed the MoU on behalf of Pakistan Airports Authority, while Chief Domain Officer Naveed Abbas Memon signed on behalf of Pakistan Single Window. The initiative aims to integrate CTC payments with the PSW platform, replacing manual and paper-based procedures with a streamlined digital process. The system will facilitate electronic payments, automated document verification, and real-time visibility of CTC collections.

The digital CTC collection system will be implemented at Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, from August 27. It is expected to reduce paperwork, bank visits, and queues while improving transparency and efficiency in the collection process.

Deputy Director General Airports PAA, Engr. Sadiq Ur Rehman, and Deputy Director General Works & Development

PAA, Engr. Sumair Saeed, CEO PSW Agtab Haider along with other officials from PAA and PSW, were also present at

the ceremony.

The PSW-PAA collaboration is in line with the Government of Pakistan's digitalization policy and represents an important step towards modernizing Pakistan's air cargo ecosystem and facilitating trade.



'Pakistan CAA participates in 61st conference of DG CAs' in Kuala Lumpur

Pakistan took the stage at DGCA/61

Director General Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, Mr Nadir Shafi Dar, is representing Pakistan at the 61st Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation, Asia and Pacific Region (DGCA/61), being held in Kuala Lumpur,

Malaysia, from 7 to 11 September 2026, under the theme "Smart Skies: Emerging Technologies for Safe, Secure, Sustainable and Efficient Aviation."

On 7 September, he joined senior aviation regulators and international aviation leaders as a panellist in the High-Level Panel Discussion on "Smart Skies", exploring the opportunities and regulatory challenges that emerging technologies bring to aviation safety, security, sustainability and efficiency.

He will also serve as Moderator for Agenda Item 3: Aviation Safety, one of the principal technical agenda items of the Conference, later in the week — guiding discussions among Directors General and senior aviation representatives on regional safety priorities, oversight challenges and opportunities for cooperation.

Pakistan's dual role at DGCA/61 reflects its continued engagement with ICAO and the wider Asia-Pacific aviation community, and its contribution to advancing safe, secure, sustainable and efficient aviation across the region.



Centrum Air launches direct Karachi-Tashkent Flights

Centrum Air has officially commenced direct, non-stop flights between Karachi and Tashkent, marking an important milestone in strengthening air connectivity between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

The inaugural flight departed from Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, on September 3, marking the beginning of the new international service. The launch was commemorated with an inauguration ceremony hosted by Gerry's dnata, bringing together distinguished representatives from Gerry's Group, Centrum Air, and the Embassy of Uzbekistan.

The ceremony was graced by H.E. Mr. Alisher Tukhtaev, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Mr. Arshad Wali Muhammad, Group Director, Gerry's Group; Mr. Adilmirza Khalmirzaev, Head of Agents Relations Department, Centrum Air; and Mr. Ken Marshal, Chief Operating Officer, Gerry's International, alongside other distinguished guests and aviation industry representatives.

The inauguration featured a traditional water cannon salute, followed by ceremonial celebrations with the dignitaries, cockpit crew, and operational teams. The occasion highlighted the successful collaboration between the partners in establishing this new international air connection.

With two direct, non-stop flights per week, the Karachi-Tashkent route will provide passengers with a convenient travel option between Pakistan and Uzbekistan while supporting stronger economic, commercial, and people-to-people ties between the two countries.

The new connection is expected to facilitate greater opportunities for business, tourism, trade, cultural exchange, and bilateral travel, while further enhancing Pakistan's connectivity with the wider Central Asian region.

The launch of Centrum Air's Karachi-Tashkent service reflects the growing potential for stronger aviation and commercial ties between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. It also contributes to broader efforts to promote regional connectivity

and create greater opportunities for travel, trade, and cultural exchange.

As the new route begins operations, the partnership between Centrum Air and Gerry's Group will support increased

travel and exchange between Pakistan and Uzbekistan, creating new opportunities for passengers, businesses, and communities while contributing to stronger regional connectivity.



New PIA board announces bonus for employees

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has approved a performance bonus for its employees.

The decision was announced in the 102nd board of directors meeting held on Friday 31 July, and the first to follow the transition to private management.

The board of directors of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd (PIACL) has approved a performance bonus equivalent to one month's basic salary for airline employees.

A spokesman for PIA said in a press release that the strategic decision reflects the new leadership's immediate priority to invest in human capital and align the workforce with the airline's broader transformation and growth strategy.

Commenting on the decision, the PIA management highlighted that the gesture aims to recognise staff dedication while energising teams for upcoming operational milestones, route revivals, and service enhancements.

"Our workforce is the backbone of PIACL revival," remarked the chairman of the board.

"By prioritising employee welfare and motivation from day one, we are building a foundation of excellence, accountability, and commercial viability to take the national flag carrier to new heights."

The decision marks a strong, positive

start for the new management, setting a clear trajectory towards operational reliability, customer-centric service delivery, and sustainable corporate growth.

South Air explores strategic collaboration with Ethiopian Airlines

A South Air delegation, including AVM (R) Ijaz Malik and Mr. Muhammad Fahad Naeem, visited the Ethiopian Aviation Headquarters in Addis Ababa and held a productive meeting with Mr. Retta Melaku, Group Chief Operating Officer.

The discussions focused on potential collaboration in interline connectivity, cargo opportunities, operational cooperation, and future aviation partnerships between South Air and Ethiopian Airlines.

The delegation also met with the President of Ethiopian Aviation University, where an agreement was signed for the training and professional development of South Air's pilots, technicians, engineers, and cabin crew.

This marks an important step towards strengthening South Air's operational capabilities and building a long-term aviation relationship with Ethiopian Airlines.

B'desh confirms deal to buy Chinese J-10 jets

Bangladesh has confirmed a deal to purchase China's 4.5-generation J-10CE fighter jets, citing the aircraft's reported combat performance against French-made Rafale jets during the brief Pakistan-India conflict last year, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) reported.

The Chengdu J-10C is a single-engine, multirole combat aircraft manufactured in China. Boasting a top speed of Mach 1.8, it can be fitted with a variety of air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions. It played a key role on the first night of hostilities, shooting down six jets belonging to the Indian Air Force.

The Information and Broadcasting Adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Zahedur Rahman said earlier this week that a draft proposal to buy the jets had been submitted to the country's finance ministry and Armed Forces Division for final approval, SCMP reported, citing the Bangladesh Press Information Department (PID).

According to the PID, the draft proposal includes the purchase of Chinese attack helicopters, VIP transport helicopters and drones. "Subject to necessary budgetary allocation in the current fiscal year, this procurement will be executed immediately; otherwise, it will roll over into the next budget cycle," it added.

The SCMP reported that Rahman said Bangladesh "paid attention" to the war last year, when Pakistan used J-10 fighters and PL-15 long-range air-to-air missiles to shoot down Indian Rafales.

In January this year, Pakistan and Bangladesh's air chiefs held detailed discussions on the "potential procurement" of the locally-produced JF-17 Thunder aircraft, according to Inter-Services Public Relations.

It added that Bangladesh's air chief Air Marshal Hasan Mahmood Khan called on his Pakistan counterpart Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar Sidhu in Islamabad. "The meeting focused on strengthening operational cooperation and institutional synergy, with emphasis on training, capacity building, and collaboration in aerospace advancements," the ISPR added.



Five killed in US after cargo plane overshoots runway



THE Amazon cargo plane, which overran a runway at Miami.

At least five people were killed when an Amazon cargo plane overshot a runway after it landed on Sunday 6 Sept. at Miami International Airport, crashed into vehicles and caught fire, officials said.

Miami-Dade County fire chief Ray Jadallah told reporters that in addition to five fatalities, three people were transported to trauma centers “in critical condition” and two more were treated at a local hospital.

“The airplane did strike a couple of vehicles,” which left “a couple of victims that were actually trapped in the vehicles,” Jadallah said. “A complex extrication with our technical rescue team” was needed, “including a search and rescue of the pilot and co-pilot that were trapped in this aircraft.” Jadallah did not clarify whether the pilot or co-pilot survived, and officials declined to answer questions after brief statements were made.

Video showed thick smoke billowing from the blue and white Boeing 767 after it arrived at 1:58pm from Puerto Rico, as fire trucks raced to the scene. The plane operating as Prime Air Flight 7598 caught fire as a result of the “crash,” fire officials said.

“A total of 60 fire apparatuses arrived, just short, just shy of 200 men and women from Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, to begin the actual search and rescue and firefighting,” Jadallah said.

“The actual cause of the incident will be determined by the FAA and the NTSB,” he added, referring to the Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board.

In a statement posted to X, fire officials said they used foam to extinguish a fire in the engine compartment.

“One person was trapped under one of the involved vehicles and had to be extricated by specialized technical rescue personnel.”

Defence Minister visits Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore

The Honorable Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Asif visited Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore to review passenger facilitation arrangements and ongoing infrastructure development projects. Upon arrival, the Honorable Minister was received by the Acting Chief Operating Officer/Airport Manager and other senior officials.

During his visit to the ASF Second Hold Area (International), the Honorable Minister observed a queue of female passengers and directed the opening of an additional search counter to facilitate passengers and expedite the clearance process. The Honorable Minister also visited the newly constructed Immigration Area, where he inspected the immigration counters and reviewed the ongoing construction work. The Acting COO/Airport Manager briefed him on the development progress and arrangements being made to ensure smooth and efficient passenger facilitation.

The Minister subsequently inspected the International Departure Joint Search Area and other passenger facilities, expressing satisfaction with the overall arrangements and emphasizing the need to maintain high standards of service and passenger convenience. The Honorable Minister later visited the under-construction Domestic Departure Area and received a detailed briefing on the ongoing development work, facilities, and overall progress of the project. Expressing concern over congestion at the Departure

Drop-off Lane, the Honorable Minister emphasized the need for its substantial expansion on priority to improve traffic flow and facilitate passengers.

The visit concluded with the Honorable Minister proceeding to the State Lounge.



AirSial Expands Fleet to 12 Aircraft, Becomes Pakistan's Second-Largest Airline

AirSial becomes Pakistan's 2nd largest airlines

AirSial, a private airline backed by the Sialkot business community, has become Pakistan's second-largest airline by fleet size after adding its 12th aircraft.

The new Airbus A320 arrived at Karachi Airport from abroad and will be used for both domestic and international operations.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) remains the largest with 32 aircraft, followed by AirSial with 12 and Airblue with 11.

AirSial management plans to acquire more aircraft as the airline expands its routes. According to the airline's spokesperson, the fleet expansion is also expected to create new employment opportunities as additional aircraft enter service.



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Air India captain's drug test returns positive

The second drug test performed on the captain of the Air India Phuket-Delhi flight, which suddenly lost about 300 feet of altitude recently, has returned positive, Indian news TV channels reported on Tuesday 11 Aug..

Indian investigators are examining evidence linked to an Air India flight that plunged sharply mid-air recently, authorities said, as local media reported the pilot had tested positive for marijuana.

The Airbus A320 carrying 137 passengers and eight crew members lost about 300 feet (91 metres) of altitude shortly after departing from Thailand's Phuket for New Delhi on August 4, before landing safely in the Indian capital.

India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said 24 people were injured in the incident, a higher figure than the 17 previously reported by the airline.

The AAIB said it was "presently engaged in the systematic collection, preservation and examination of all relevant technical, operational, medical and human-factor evidences". The agency was "committed to an independent, transparent and professional investigation", it said in a statement.

Indian media reports, meanwhile, said the chief pilot had failed a second drug screening test.

Broadcaster NDTV, citing unnamed sources, reported that the pilot had "smoked marijuana". The aviation ministry said that both pilots had undergone standard psychoactive substance screening after the flight landed in New Delhi.

The captain's initial screening produced a result requiring confirmatory testing, with samples sent for further analysis, the ministry added. Both pilots had been removed from flying duties pending the outcome of the investigation, it said.

Air India on Tuesday 11 Aug. said it could not comment on the reported test results because authorities had not shared the findings of the post-flight screening with them.

"We will continue to cooperate with the relevant authorities as required," an airline spokesperson said, adding that the carrier conducts regular drug testing for crew members.

The AAIB inquiry is being supported by Airbus and France's civil aviation safety agency, the BEA.

An Airbus spokesperson said the manufacturer was providing technical assistance to Indian authorities, with a team of experts having been dispatched to

Delhi. The BEA said it was involved in the investigation but did not plan to send investigators to India at this point.

The incident is the latest challenge for Air India as it seeks to overhaul its operations following a string of setbacks.

The carrier has faced disruption from the conflict in the Middle East and continuing operational pressures. Its reputation suffered a major blow in June 2025 when London-bound Flight 171 crashed shortly after take-off from Ahmedabad, killing all but one of the 242 people on board and 19 people on the ground.

Recently, the airline appointed former Ethiopian Airlines chief Tewolde Gebremariam as its new chief executive.

Pakistan extends ban for Indian airlines till Oct.24

Pakistan has once again extended its airspace restrictions for Indian flights.

The Pakistan Airports Authority has issued a new notification regarding the ban on Indian aircraft entering Pakistani airspace. According to the notification, all airlines registered in India and leased aircraft will be banned from entering Pakistani airspace, including those owned or operated by Indian citizens.

According to media reports, the new extension will be in effect until 4:59 AM on October 24, Pakistan time, while the current phase of the ban began on August 18.

The series of closures of Pakistani airspace for Indian flights started on April 23, 2025, after which the ban has been extended several times. The latest notification is the 16th notification issued in this regard.



Adviser picked for Lahore-Karachi airport operations

The Board of the Privatisation Commission (BPC) on Tuesday 11 August approved the appointment of a financial adviser for the outsourcing of operations at Lahore and Karachi airports and decided to start the process for the sale of the fourth batch of two more power distribution companies (Discos)—Lahore and Multan.

In a statement, the Privatisation Commission said its board of directors approved a "consortium led by EY-Parthenon as the top-ranked interested party for appointment as financial adviser for the outsourcing of operations of Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore (AIIAP), and Jinnah International Airport, Karachi (JIAP)". The board also constituted a negotiation committee to finalise the Financial Advisory Services Agreement (FASA) with the successful consortium.

The PC appointed the Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB) last month as financial and transaction adviser for the outsourcing of operations at the New Islamabad International Airport.

It said the board also took up the privatisation of Lahore Electric Supply Company (Lesco) and Multan Electric Power Company (Mepco) as major transactions, necessitating the appointment of a financial adviser in accordance with the applicable Privatisation Commission regulations.

Following this approval, the Privatisation Commission will initiate the process to appoint a financial adviser for the two transactions.



A crew member walks on the flight deck of US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln as it arrived at the Thai port of Lam Chabang recently, after 270 days at sea.

Ground breaking ceremony of new ACAAP office, Sialkot held

The Ground Breaking Ceremony of the New ACAAP Office, Sialkot was held on 29th August 2026 at the new office premises.

The ceremony was inaugurated by:

Chairman: Mr. Rana Tariq

Vice Chairman: Mr. Nadeem Khalid Lone of ACAAP.

Deputy MD UIC: Mr. Shakil Ahmad .

EC Members: Mr. Amjad Fakhri, Mr. Usman Aslam, Mr. Saleem Butt

ESS Subcommittee: Mr. Irfan Yousas - Convener, Mr. Faraz Akram Awan - Deputy Convener and Mr. M. Yousaf presented bouquet to the guests.

Along with most Senior Members of ACAAP attended the ceremony.

This new office marks a major milestone for ACAAP and the Logistics Industry of Sialkot. We pray to Allah for the successful completion of this project and continued progress under the leadership of ACAAP.

May Allah bless this new beginning and bring success & prosperity to ACAAP and the entire Logistics Community. Said the Sr. members, ACAAP.



US court lifts immigrant visa ban on Pakistan, 74 other nations

A US judge on Friday Aug. 22 struck down a Trump administration policy that suspended the issuance of immigrant visas to applicants from 75 countries, saying the policy exceeded Secretary of State Marco Rubio's statutory authority.

Judge Jeannette Vargas of Manhattan said the policy, which the State Department announced in January, was "patently unlawful" and ran afoul of federal immigration law, which explicitly stripped the secretary of state of authority over consular officials' processing of immigrant visas.

"The policy, which categorically prohibits the issuance of immigrant visas based upon the nationality of the applicant, represents a direct abrogation of this statutory scheme," she wrote.

The State Department's suspension, which also took effect in January, impacted applicants from Pakistan and Bangladesh; Latin American countries including Brazil, Colombia, and Uruguay; Balkan nations such as Bosnia and Albania; and those from many nations in Africa, the Middle East, and the Caribbean.

The State Department said applicants from those countries were "at a high risk for becoming a public charge and recourse to local, state and federal government resources in the United States".

The department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the ruling.

Vargas, an appointee of Democratic former president Joe Biden, issued the ruling in a lawsuit filed by immigrant rights groups Catholic Legal Immigration Network and African Communities Together, along with applicants for immigrant visas and US citizens who are sponsoring family members from the designated countries for immigrant visas.

President Donald Trump has pursued an aggressive immigration crackdown that he says is aimed at improving domestic security. Rights groups say the crackdown has violated free speech and due process rights and has created an unsafe environment, particularly for ethnic minorities, who have raised concerns about racial profiling.

Airline strike sees cancellation of 100 French flights

British budget carrier easyJet has called off about 100 flights out of French airports on Saturday 15 Aug. and Sunday 16 Aug. because of a strike by cabin crew furious over repeated changes to their schedules.

Unions said about half of the company's 900 French-based cabin crew would join the strike, which would affect about half of the flights out of two Paris airports, Nice, Bordeaux and Lyon.

The airline's management has called the action "opportunistic" as it falls on a major national holiday weekend when airports are busy. France is a key market for the low-cost airline, which was recently taken over in a \$7.7 billion deal by US private equity firm Apollo. Its passenger numbers in France are second only to Air France.

Most of the flights were cancelled on Friday, with the company saying it wanted to help passengers find alternative routes. William Bourdon of the SNPNC-FO union said that cabin crew wanted "stability" in their duties. He said some crew could see their hours and destinations changed 50-60 times a week.

"For anything to do with personal life or childcare, it makes things extremely complicated to organise because most of the changes come at the last moment—24-48 hours before," he said.

PIA to increase UK flights from Oct 27

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Wednesday 2 Sept. said it would increase its weekly flights to London from four to seven starting October 27.

Under the new schedule, five flights would depart from Islamabad while two would operate on the Lahore-London route, the airline said in a statement. "The increase in the number of flights reflects passenger confidence and rising demand," the statement added.

Pakistani flights had been banned from flying to the European Union, the United Kingdom and the US in June 2020, after one of its aircraft crashed in Karachi, killing nearly 100 people on board. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency had barred PIA from operating in EU countries over safety concerns, and the ban on flights followed then-aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan's statement on the floor of parliament, where he termed pilots' licences "dubious".

The European agency lifted the ban after more than four years on Nov 28, 2024. In July 2025, the UK also removed Pakistan from its Air Safety List, allowing Pakistani airlines to apply to operate flights in Britain. In September 2025, the PIA received approval to resume direct flights to the UK after a gap of nearly five years. The airline subsequently restarted operations, with Manchester becoming the first destination. In March, the PIA also resumed direct flights to London.



Delayed passengers wait at Terminal 3 of Heathrow airport, following major disruption due to a technical issue affecting the National Air Traffic Services control systems, leading to flights cancellation to and from the UK.

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London Air Traffic grinds to a halt as ATC technical issue grounds Heathrow Gatwick flights



A technical failure in the system used to process flights through UK airspace is causing widespread disruption at airports across Britain. National Air Traffic Services (NATS) first acknowledged a technical problem at 1:46 PM BST (8:46 AM EDT) on Tuesday 8 Sept., before confirming at 3:25 PM that it had identified an issue in its flight processing system. UK airspace remains open and flights are still departing, but at constrained rates.

Reuters reports that the disruption is already significant. Ryanair says around 65,000 of its passengers have already been affected, while a live Flightradar 24 snapshot shortly after 5:30 PM BST showed that nine of the world's ten most disrupted airports for departures were in the UK. The incident also comes only three years after a catastrophic NATS flight-processing failure affected more than 700,000 passengers, and little more than a year after another nationwide disruption in July 2025.

Current Status of the NATS System Failure

NATS has provided relatively little technical information so far. Its initial statement said engineers were investigating an unspecified issue affecting departures. At 3:25 PM, it confirmed the problem was in its flight processing system and said engineers were working urgently to restore normal operations. *AP News* reports that departures at some London airports were stopped for around 40 minutes, briefly restarted and then restricted again after the problem recurred.

The largest airports are all reporting significant delays and cancellations, with British Airways "experiencing some flight disruption." easyJet warned that the UK failure was now creating delays across Europe, and preventing many flights from operating, with departures completely halted at its largest base at London Gatwick airport (LGW). Meanwhile, NATS has stressed that this is not a full closure of UK airspace, saying:

"Flights are still departing and airspace is open, but recovery will take some time."

Some airlines have been considerably less restrained. Wizz Air said it was "extremely disappointed," arguing that the organization responsible for critical national infrastructure is "not fit for purpose" as it has repeatedly brought Britain's aviation system to a standstill.



Ryanair, true to its outspoken form, has called for NATS chief executive Martin Rolfe to resign, echoing its fierce criticism following the 2023 failure. COO Neal McMahon shared the following:

"How many more failures do passengers have to suffer before overpaid failure NATS CEO, Martin Rolfe, accepts responsibility for his repeated mismanagement and resigns? Over three years after NATS' catastrophic 2023 system meltdown, it's clear that nothing has changed, with UK passengers once again suffering avoidable ATC delays of up to 8 hours today. The astonishing part is that NATS continues to charge airlines and passengers more each year while delivering a worse service."

Even fixing the affected system will not instantly restore the schedule, and things are likely to get worse before they get better. Eurocontrol restrictions have limited traffic through London, southern England and Wales, while some aircraft bound for Britain have been held at their departure airports rather than adding to congestion in UK airspace. Airlines must then clear delayed departures and recover aircraft and crews that are increasingly out of position — precisely the problem that caused ongoing destruction long after the 2023 technical fault had been fixed.

The Impact Of The Disruption

The scale of the disruption is particularly visible in Flightradar24's live airport disruption index, which combines the percentage of delayed flights, average delay, and cancellations, into a score between zero and five. In a snapshot shortly after 5:30 PM BST, nine of the world's ten highest-scoring airports for departures were in the UK. A deeper look at data from Flight Aware also showed the cancellations at these airports continuing to climb:





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SIAL launches first-ever passenger bus shuttle service

Sialkot International Airport Limited has commenced its first-ever Passenger Bus/Shuttle Service, effective from 14 August 2026, aimed at providing greater convenience, accessibility, and ease of travel for passengers travelling through Sialkot International Airport. Under the initiative, a complimentary shuttle service will operate from Sialkot Kashmir Road, providing dedicated transportation for passengers travelling to or from Sialkot International Airport. It is pertinent to mention that the said initiative was taken by the esteemed members of the board of directors, SIAL, in the larger interest of the passengers. The shuttle service will operate every night according to the schedule: 9:00 PM, 11:00 PM, 1:00 AM, and 3:00 AM.

charge for SIAL passengers and is exclusively intended to facilitate passengers travelling through the airport.

SIAL management stated that the initiative reflects the airport's continued commitment to enhancing passenger facilitation and providing convenient, accessible and passenger-focused services. The introduction of the shuttle service is expected to make airport access easier, particularly for passengers travelling during late-night and early-morning hours. Chairman SIAL said that the passengers are the asset to the Airport and we are using all possible resources to facilitate our passengers. He added that with the launch of this service, SIAL continues to strengthen its passenger facilitation initiatives and deliver a more seamless travel experience for the people




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Unity Group of Freight Forwarders elects new Chairman

Mr Amjad Fakri has been elected as new Chairman Unity Group. Founder Chairman Unity Group, Mr. Faraz Akram Awan, for his tireless efforts and exceptional coordination established the Unity Group and, within just two years, successfully positioning it in the Pakistan Logistics Industry.

Under his visionary guidance, The both group members served as EC Members in ACAAP have worked diligently for the betterment of the Logistics Industry. It has set a great example by entrusting the responsibility of the Group to the new leadership of a very energetic and dynamic personality, Mr. Amjad Fakhri. His valuable services as EC Member in ACAAP make him truly deserving for the role of New Chairman, Unity Group of Pakistan.

Heartfelt congratulations to Newly Elected Chairman, Mr. Amjad Fakhri Unity Group from ACAAP members Sialkot.

SIAL hosts Executive Committee meeting

Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited, Mr. Malik Abdul Ghafoor, chaired the SIAL Executive Committee Meeting. Esteemed members of the committee participated in the meeting and shared their valuable input. Various matters pertaining to SIAL's operations, administrative affairs, ongoing projects, passenger facilitation, infrastructure development, and overall airport management were discussed in detail.

ACT. High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan visits SIAL

H.E., the Acting High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan, Pierre Jordaan, paid a visit to Sialkot International Airport, where he was warmly received by Chairman SIAL Mr. Malik Abdul Ghafoor, Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Syed Shahid Raza, a Member of the Board of Directors, and CEO SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R).

During the visit, Chairman SIAL Mr. Malik Abdul Ghafoor briefed H.E. the Acting High Commissioner Pierre Jordaan on the history, development, operations and evolving potential of Sialkot International Airport. Chairman SIAL highlighted the airport's unique journey as Pakistan's first privately owned international airport, established through the vision and collective efforts of the Sialkot business community.

Chairman SIAL appreciated the visit of H.E. the Acting High Commissioner, describing it as a reflection of the strong and longstanding bilateral relations between Pakistan and South Africa. He expressed the hope that the visit would contribute towards further strengthening institutional and economic linkages between the two countries, particularly through enhanced air connectivity and trade facilitation.

Expressing his views on the occasion, H.E. the Acting High Commissioner Pierre Jordaan stated:

"I am impressed by the Sialkot International Airport which is undoubtedly a testament of SCCI and business community of Sialkot. I am here for my second visit to Sialkot and Sialkot has much to offer and we learned a lot. I look forward to see direct flights from



Sialkot to Johannesburg in near future."

H.E. further lauded the untiring efforts of the Sialkot business community, stating that Sialkot is already known worldwide for its exemplary products and has now added an airport that is "one of its kind." Chairman SIAL reaffirmed the airport's commitment to maintaining close coordination with South Africa and

exploring avenues to further strengthen bilateral ties, particularly through improved connectivity, trade, business mobility and exchange of goods. The visit concluded with Chairman SIAL presenting an honorary shield to H.E. the Acting High Commissioner of South Africa as a gesture of respect and appreciation.



High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan visits Sialkot International Airport

Sialkot : H.E, The High Commissioner of Canada to Pakistan Mr. Tarik Ali Khan paid a visit to Sialkot International Airport, where he was warmly received by Chairman SIAL Mr. Malik Abdul Ghafoor, Vice Chairman SIAL Mr. Syed Shahid Raza, Member of the Board of Directors, and CEO SIAL AVM Tanweer Ashraf Bhatti (R). H. E the High Commissioner was accompanied by the Trade Commissioner Mr. Zohaib Khan and Ms Zarmeena Nayyer office of the public affairs Canadian High Commission Islamabad. During the visit, Chairman SIAL Mr. Malik Abdul Ghafoor briefed H.E. the High Commissioner Mr. Tarik Ali Khan on the history, development, operations and evolving potential of Sialkot International Airport. Chairman SIAL highlighted the airport's unique journey as Pakistan's first privately owned international airport, established through the vision and collective efforts of the Sialkot business community.

Chairman SIAL appreciated the visit of H.E. the High Commissioner, describing it as a reflection of the strong and longstanding bilateral relations between Pakistan and Canada. Chairman SIAL stated that Canada and Pakistan have enjoyed the most cordial relations that have withstood the test of time. He added that we remain grateful for Canada's support to Pakistan rendered in education, health, and development cooperation, but beyond this industrial legacy, our business community has long championed the highest standards of corporate social responsibility, pioneering numerous monumental projects on a strictly self-help basis, a spirit of enterprise that proudly brought to life the very landmark we stand in today: "the Sialkot International Airport." As Pakistan's first privately owned international airport, commenced in 2007, SIAL was established in pursuit of a single vision: direct connectivity between this region and the world. Today, the Sialkot airport handles close to a million passengers and nearly ten thousand tonnes of Cargo. We believe there is also potential to look beyond trade in goods and into the services sector, and to aviation. Chairman SIAL further said that we anticipate that your visit will definitely open new



avenues of cooperation between Canada and Pakistan. Expressing his views on the occasion, H.E. the Canadian High Commissioner Mr. Tarik Ali Khan stated:

"I am pleased to be at Sialkot International Airport which is undoubtedly a testament of SCCI and business community of Sialkot. He said Airports in Canada are being run by public private partnership. H.E added that Sialkot holds immense potential and building and successfully operating an international airport is an example of the potential. He said that I look forward to

further strengthen the bilateral ties, trade export and in aviation industry.

H.E. further lauded the untiring efforts of the Sialkot business community, stating that Sialkot is already known worldwide for its exemplary products and has now added an airport that is "one of its kind." Chairman SIAL reaffirmed the airport's commitment to maintaining close coordination with Canada and exploring avenues to further strengthen bilateral ties, particularly through improved connectivity, trade, business mobility and exchange of goods.



President, PM pay tribute to armed forces on Defence Day

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Saturday 5 Sep. paid tribute to Pakistan's armed forces for their sacrifices in safeguarding the country's freedom, sovereignty and national security and stressed the importance of national unity and economic strength.

In separate messages issued on the eve of Defence Day, the two leaders also reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to regional peace and stability.

President Zardari said Sept 6 held a memorable place in the country's national history and provided an opportunity to pay tribute to those who demonstrated resolve, courage and devotion in defence of the homeland during the 1965 war.

"I, on behalf of the entire nation, salute the martyrs and veterans of Pakistan's armed forces and their families," said the president, who is currently in London on a private visit.

Pakistan has emerged as 'net regional security provider', says Zardari

"Through their blood and sacrifice, our martyrs wrote timeless stories of courage and patriotism in the annals of our national history. Their sacrifices will forever remain a guiding light for generations to come," he added.

President Zardari said the unity and spirit demonstrated by the armed forces and the nation on Sept 6, 1965, reflected the country's collective strength.

"This day reminds us that when a nation stands united in defence of its freedom, sovereignty and homeland, no power can defeat its resolve," he said.

He said Pakistan had increasingly emerged as a regional security provider, contributing to peace, stability and collective security beyond its borders.

He said the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement reflected Pakistan's commitment to regional security and its growing role as a responsible and dependable partner for peace and stability.

PM's message

PM Shehbaz described Sept 6 as "a glorious chapter in our national history", recalling what he called the resolve, unity and sacrifices demonstrated by the armed forces and the nation in defence of the country.

He said the day provided an opportunity to pay tribute to martyrs and veterans who had made sacrifices for Pakistan's security, sovereignty and independence.

"On the occasion of Defence Day, I, on behalf of the entire nation, pay heartfelt tribute to the martyrs and veterans of our armed forces and their families," the prime minister said.

He said the armed forces had displayed exceptional professionalism and courage during the 1965 war, while the nation showed unity, resilience and steadfastness.

Referring to Marka-i-Haq, the prime minister praised the armed forces and their leadership, saying their response to the country's "age-old adversary" would be remembered for generations.

PM commends PAF on Pakistan Air Force day

Prim Minister Shehbaz Sharif commended all ranks of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) for their outstanding performance throughout its professional history.

In a message on Pakistan Air Force Day, observed on September 7, the prime minister said that the PAF had demonstrated its professional capability, prowess and dominance in aerial conflicts for decades.

"Pakistan Air Force has indeed displayed its professional capability, prowess and dominance in aerial conflicts for decades. This distinguished organisation has a proud history of sacrifice, valour and professionalism and has always responded to the nation's call with profound courage," he said.

The prime minister said that in September 1965, the passion and resolve of PAF aviators to safeguard Pakistan's aerial frontiers had made them victorious in the vastness of the skies.

"They laid down their precious lives in defence of the motherland. It is certainly a national honour to pay glowing tributes to the Shuhada for their supreme sacrifices," he added.

He said that, in the same vein, in [May 2025](#), when the aggressor once again challenged the peace-loving country, the PAF, in perfect synergy with the sister services, defeated the adversary during Marka-i-Haq.

He attributed the success to bold leadership, the tactical brilliance of combat crews, excellent planning and the well-orchestrated employment of multi-domain warfare capabilities acquired in recent years through a comprehensive strategy of modernisation and indigenisation.

"The nation is proud that Pakistan Air Force once again upheld the glorious legacy of fighting valiantly, which has always been its hallmark," he said.

"On this special day, I wish continued professional success and progress to Pakistan Air Force. I am sure that, as always, Pakistan Air Force will rise to any possible occasion to defend the sovereignty and aerial frontiers of Pakistan," the prime minister added.



Flanked by the country's top civilian and military leadership, President Asif Ali Zardari, prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir wave the national flag during the inauguration of the Yadgar-e-Fatah monument, on the eve of Independence Day.



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Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan eye \$200m trade in two years



BISHKEK: PM Shehbaz Sharif and Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov exchange the joint declaration.

Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan on Wednesday 2 Sept. signed an agreement to raise bilateral trade to \$200 million within two years, along with multiple memorandums of understanding (MoUs) covering defence, education, health, science and technology, agriculture and connectivity.

The agreement was signed in Bishkek before Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his delegation wound up a three-day visit to Kyrgyzstan and returned home, according to the Prime Minister's Office.

At the signing ceremony, PM Shehbaz said the two sides had initially signed an MoU on the \$200m target, but that he had proposed a binding agreement instead as a more concrete step.

He said he put the idea to Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov, who agreed, and the accord was signed at the airport — lifting the goal from current trade of \$16m to \$200m over the next two years.

Earlier in the day, at a joint briefing with President Zhaparov, the premier said the two countries would work on a comprehensive plan of practical measures to gradually increase trade, improve trade mechanisms, promote joint investment projects, strengthen industrial cooperation and expand direct business-to-business contacts.

Existing trade, he said, was “not a patch on our friendship and our very strong relations”. Connectivity remained central to the shared vision of closer economic integration between South and Central Asia, he added, welcoming the transit trade agreement that would facilitate trade, improve logistics and

create new opportunities for regional connectivity.

Calling energy another important pillar of the partnership, PM Shehbaz said the two sides had reaffirmed the need for timely implementation of the CASA-1000 project and welcomed a new joint working group on electricity, hydropower, renewable energy, energy infrastructure and modern technologies.

He also welcomed the establishment of sister-city ties between Osh and Lahore, two ancient cities whose iconic landmarks reflect a rich history and cultural heritage.

Security and defence cooperation featured prominently in the discussions, with both sides resolving to strengthen cooperation against terrorism, extremism and other contemporary threats.

Pakistan would continue working with Kyrgyzstan at the UN and other multilateral fora, PM Shehbaz said, describing the Kyrgyz Republic as Pakistan's most important and valued partner in Central Asia. He also invited President Zhaparov to visit Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, the Kyrgyz president said that at a time of rising international tensions, strengthening friendship, deepening mutual understanding and developing cooperation were more important than ever. The economy should be one of the main pillars of the partnership, he said, with the two countries agreeing to boost trade, expand the range of traded goods and attract investment.

He said they were ready to undertake joint projects in pharmaceuticals, agriculture, energy, light industry,

tourism, the digital economy, virtual assets and other fields, and that Pakistan's seaports offered Kyrgyzstan a natural route to South Asian markets and global trade routes.

Joint statement

The joint statement signed by both leaders recorded a comprehensive exchange of views on the full range of Kyrgyz-Pakistan relations as well as topical regional and international issues, describing the talks as traditionally friendly and cordial and reflecting a high level of political understanding and mutual trust.

They instructed both governments to ensure consistent implementation of agreements reached during high-level visits, enhance the practical effectiveness of the Kyrgyz-Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, and ensure effective interaction among relevant bodies.

The statement also emphasised the Kyrgyz-Pakistan Joint Business Council's role in developing direct ties between the two business communities, with the leaders agreeing to facilitate its work on trade, investment and industrial projects.

The Joint Working Group on Tourism was instructed to identify specific areas of cooperation, including joint promotion of tourism products, exchange of experience and closer interaction between the two tourism industries. Both leaders reaffirmed their interest in deeper defence cooperation.

MoUs signed

Before the briefing, the leaders witnessed a ceremony at which representatives exchanged pre-signed documents. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar, who accompanied the premier, said 17 bilateral documents were signed during the visit, including a diplomatic programme of cooperation between the foreign ministries for 2026-27.

Others covered research collaboration, transit trade, science and technological cooperation, extradition, mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, and combating the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursor chemicals.

The Kyrgyz health ministry and the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council signed an MoU on medical education, and the two education ministries one covering education, climate change and academic research. The remaining documents dealt with the Lahore-Osh sister-city relationship, postal services and e-commerce, bilateral business ties, and cooperation in the security, education, environment and technology sectors.

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Pakistan faces uphill battle for GSP + Status

PAKISTAN'S preferential trade access to the European Union could be at risk. Brussels has cautioned that Islamabad can no longer assume continued trade concessions from the bloc. The warning comes at a critical moment in trade ties between the two. The current GSP+ scheme expires at the end of this year, with Pakistan seeking to enter into a successor arrangement — that has tougher conditions. The EU ambassador's view that the outcome is “not certain” highlights a problem that extends beyond immediate negotiations. To preserve preferential access to its largest export market, Islamabad must prove it can meet the commitments it made under the programme. As the ambassador put it, “GSP+ preferences cannot be taken for granted”. Such unusually blunt language from a diplomat is significant, particularly for a trade arrangement worth more than €7bn a year to Pakistani exporters.

The GSP+ issue is also a test of whether Pakistan is prepared to honour its international commitments. The economy has benefited enormously from preferential access to the European market since 2014. That dependence makes Brussels' latest warning especially serious. The European Commission's 2023-25 assessment has found regression in several areas. It noted that improvements in legislation had not translated sufficiently into implementation. Its concerns included enforced disappearances, curbs on free expression, weak judicial independence and forced labour. Islamabad's contention that the assessment lacks balance does not address these concerns. The successor scheme raises the bar, expanding coverage from 27 to 32 conventions. Pakistan has ratified the five additional conventions. But that is only a formal requirement. Brussels is now looking more closely at whether Islamabad is implementing them and wants evidence. Disputing Brussels' findings cannot compensate for shortcomings in

implementation when the successor framework explicitly places greater weight on enforcement. Hence, Islamabad faces the tough challenge of securing entry into the new framework. To do so, it must ensure that the deficiencies identified in the assessment do not put the EU's existing preferences at risk during the

transition. Treating the matter as diplomatic disagreement would be short-sighted. The issue is one of credibility, and Islamabad must show, through concrete actions, that its international commitments are more than promises on paper.

Khunjerab Pass generates record Rs.15 billion in customs revenue

Pakistan Customs collected Rs15 billion in revenue on imports from China through the Khunjerab Pass during the fiscal year 2025-26, breaking the previous record, while goods worth Rs2.8bn were exported to China and Central Asian countries through the border crossing.

Wajid Ali, Pakistan Customs Collector Gilgit-Baltistan, told media that Rs14.93bn in revenue was collected on imports through the Khunjerab Pass at the Sost Dry Port during FY26. In FY25, Pakistan Customs had collected Rs13.67bn in revenue on imports from China.

He said exports from Pakistan to China and Central Asian countries under the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) system had also increased during FY26. He said goods worth Rs2.8bn were exported to China and Central Asian countries via the Khunjerab Pass during the last fiscal year.

The exported items included surgical goods, artificial beads, brass decorations, garments, rice, cotton printed sheets, leather jackets, carpets, pinnets, potatoes, oranges, milk cream, baskets, motorcycle parts, juice machines and handicrafts.

Goods worth Rs2.8bn exported to China and Central Asian countries

Wajid Ali said business activities through the Khunjerab Pass were in full swing. He said the checking and examination of imported items from China had been increased. He added that the smuggling of illegal and contraband items from China to Pakistan through the Khunjerab Pass had been controlled through a strong mechanism jointly operated by Pakistan Customs and the Facilitation Mechanism team.

Ghulam Muhammad, a Customs clearing agent working at the Sost Dry Port, told media that exports of Pakistani products to China and Central Asian

countries had increased. He said local products, including cherries, gemstones, handicrafts and other items, were being sold at higher prices in international markets.

Local traders also complained about difficulties faced by them in exporting Pakistani products to China through the Khunjerab Pass. They said unnecessary restrictions and procedures at Chinese immigration authorities created difficulties for local traders seeking to export shipments.

They demanded that Pakistani authorities take up the matter with Chinese officials and seek relaxation of restrictions on Pakistani shipments entering China.

Smuggled goods recovered

Meanwhile, Pakistan Customs and the Facilitation Mechanisms Team recovered smuggled and contraband items worth billions of rupees in various operations, while goods worth Rs72.9 million were auctioned at the Sost Dry Port.

Mohib Khan, deputy collector of Pakistan Customs at Sost Port, told media that, for the first time, Import Policy 2022 had been implemented at the Sost Dry Port in letter and spirit. Under the policy, restricted items were confiscated.

Last month, Pakistan Customs foiled two major attempts to smuggle smartphones, Chinese wine and pork meat from China to Pakistan through the Khunjerab Pass in intelligence-based operations.

The total value of the seized goods and a confiscated vehicle in the two operations was estimated at around Rs158m. The confiscated items included 317 smartphones, 3,500 bottles of Chinese wine and 1,500kg of pork meat from an imported consignment lying at the Sost Dry Port.

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CM seeks plan to develop Ketī Bandar as deep-sea port

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Saturday 15 August tasked the investment department with preparing a detailed public-private partnership (PPP) proposal to develop Ketī Bandar into a world-class deep-sea port and economic corridor in accordance with the announcement in the budget 2026-27.

Presiding over a meeting at the CM House, he said the project must position the province as a leading maritime, logistics, industrial and energy hub of the region. "I want a comprehensive and bankable PPP model proposal for Ketī Bandar," he said.

According to a press statement issued after the meeting, the chief minister said the Ketī Bandar Maritime, Fisheries and Petroleum Economic Corridor, announced in the Sindh Budget 2026-27, had the potential to attract investments ranging from \$1 billion to \$2.5 billion. The corridor would comprise a modern fishing harbour, seafood export processing facilities, petroleum handling terminals, logistics infrastructure and industrial support zones, he added.

The chief minister ordered the relevant departments to undertake detailed planning and present a phased development strategy covering port infrastructure, industrial development, logistics, fisheries, energy facilities and tourism-related investments.

He said that the proposed Ketī Bandar Integrated Corridor would catalyse economic growth, employment generation and foreign investment while unlocking the development potential of Sindh's coastal belt and the Indus Delta region.

He directed officials to incorporate plans for developing Ketī Bandar as a future energy gateway. The proposal includes establishing LNG/RLNG and LPG import facilities, along with other strategic energy infrastructure. A feasibility study has already identified approximately 4,000 acres for the proposed development.

Textile exports rise to \$1.81bn

Pakistan's textile and clothing exports posted a marginal rise of 8.07 per cent year-on-year to \$1.814 billion in the first month of 2026-27.

Elevated input costs and external shocks that disrupted shipments, however, eroded exporters' competitiveness.

The suspension of trade with Afghanistan since October 2025 and falling exports to the Middle East, especially to the United Arab Emirates, due to the prevailing war in the region were the key factors behind subdued performance.

The PBS data showed exports of readymade garments rose 15pc in value and 23.22pc in quantity in July, while knitwear increased 4.06pc in value and 3.59pc in quantity. Bedwear up 4.16pc in value and 2.49pc in quantity.

Towel exports rose 13.37pc in value and 15.64pc in quantity in IMFY27, whereas cotton cloth went down 0.10pc in value and 4.17pc in quantity, respectively.

Yarn exports surged 18.69pc in July. The exports of made-up articles, excluding towels, increased by 10.56pc, while tents, canvas, and tarpaulin decreased by 16.83pc.

The import of synthetic fibre decreased 4.02pc in July, and the arrival of synthetic and artificial silk yarn surged by 18.42pc.

Exports rise 9.5pc in July

Pakistan's merchandise exports rose 9.54 per cent in the first month of FY27, even as the trade deficit widened on the back of rising imports, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reported on Wednesday 5 Aug.

In absolute terms, export proceeds stood at \$2.94 billion in July, up from \$2.68bn in the same month last year. Officials noted that the impact of budgetary measures on the export sector may become more evident in the months ahead. On a month-on-month basis, export proceeds surged 31.09pc.

In FY26, Pakistan's merchandise exports not only missed the annual target by \$4.87bn, but also contracted, reflecting the PML-N-led coalition government's failure to achieve visible improvement over the last four years. The export proceeds also contracted by 5.97pc compared with last year's \$32.04bn.

The planning ministry had earlier projected that export proceeds would

climb to \$60bn by 2030 — a target that has largely remained confined to official documents. More recently, however, the same ministry has revised the projection upward, setting a fresh target of \$100bn to be achieved by 2035.

Trade gap widens to \$3.95bn

The repeated claims of higher export targets underscore the gap between stated ambitions and actual performance of the country's exports sector and planning, with analysts noting that such targets often remain aspirational rather than grounded in policy execution.

The slowing trend in exports has persisted in recent months, with exports posting negative growth in February and March, followed by a brief recovery in April and May. In June, exports dipped by 9.61pc year-on-year.

Negative export growth has continued since August of FY26, except in July, when exports grew by 16.43pc YoY. Export earnings posted negative growth, with proceeds declining by 20.41pc in December.

The export sector had already been under pressure since February due to the conflict in the Middle East. The disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have pushed up shipping costs for exporters and disrupted supply chains. Furthermore, exports to Afghanistan were suspended since October 2025.

Trade deficit

According to the PBS data, imports surged 17.99pc to \$6.88bn in July from \$5.84bn in the same month last year. Month-on-month, imports decreased 0.17pc.

In FY26, the import bill grew by 7.89pc to \$69.59bn, up from \$64.51bn in the corresponding period last year. Imports rose 6.57pc to \$58.38bn in FY25 from \$54.78bn in FY24.

The trade deficit rose 25.17pc to \$3.95bn in July from \$3.15bn in the same month last year.



A Large number of people throng Empress Market to experience authentic Bohra cuisine during the Bohra Food Festival on recently. Organisers said the event, held in collaboration with the Karachi metropolitan Corporation, was aimed at celebrating the revival of the city's iconic heritage landmark.

Fairy tales beyond imagination

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

The 'Bird': 'Fond of Honey'



In the forests of America, Himalayas, Africa and all other greener parts of the world a small bird is found in various forms which is very fond of honey. The little bird is called 'Honey Guide Bird'. It has such a strong smelling power that it can smell and locate honey locations from miles away and there he reaches accurately by flying. The bees form beehives to live in, always. In our Punjabi language we call it 'Chata'. The honey bird reaches there due to his strong travelling and smelling power combined. Beehive is the house or a honeycomb which is a sort of a nested house, interwoven by the bees preferably in the trees, bushes which the bees select depending on their choice and suitability of the place decided by their skill and they do so mostly in the slightly hiding locations. Such honeycombs are found scarcely on plain outer walls but preferably in the corners of our house walls. The form or look of honey birds can vary according to different areas, but specie of the bird is the same. This feature is common with all other birds of the world too.

Shining Snake

In California a snake is found whose tale shines and gives light during night time. The snake is not poisonous and some people keep it in their houses as a pet or as a unique piece of decoration or as a variety of snakes. The snake which moves around without harming anybody sounds fanciful or funny to the normal viewers. This unique feature is entertaining for the



keepers depending on their choice. It is not necessary.

'Count Dracula' - and the film 'Horror of Dracula'.



The story of 'Count Dracula' goes like this; as when a 15th century prince denounces 'God' after the loss of his wife whom he loved very much; he inherits an eternal strong feeling because of which he becomes 'Dracula', a horribly dreadful creature other than a man, but keeps its human body. The character of 'Dracula' is derived from a novel written by a British author published in 1897. Later on, two Cinema -films were produced, one in England and the other in Hollywood with a gap of several years between the two.

'Dracula' after the loss of his wife whom he loved to the extreme, becomes a 'demon' and as a result he gains an eternal curse; condemned to wander about into 'centuries' as he had 'defied' fate and belief of death both; guided by his single hope that he will get reunited again with his lost love which was humanly not possible however and as a curse he attained a super human disqualification, as he was denied death by nature and forever. On the character of 'Dracula', the first film was made in 1927 when the films were yet without a voice. In later years the film was allowed or licensed to be reproduced in Hollywood with a changed name being 'Horror of Dracula' and this was with voice, in 1958. This film I also happened to see in the 'Regal Cinema' of Lahore, (not-operating now or is closed).



Jheel Saif ul Maluk – Naran Kaghan
(The fairy in present form)

I was at that time a student of 'Government College of Lahore' (in 1958) and lived in the 'New Hostel' affiliated with the College. In those times some Cinemas used to display mostly English or Hollywood films which I was fond of seeing.

The tale of Prince 'Saif-ul-Maluk and fairy 'Badr-ul-Jamala' is a memorable one. This is the story of people of 'Kaghan Valley' who have been narrating this folk tale for hundreds of years. Above all, the story was made famous by Sufi poet 'Mian Muhammad Bakhsh' through his classical Punjabi poetry, centuries later.

Prince Saif-ul-Malook was the son of a King of Egypt. One night he saw a dream of a 'fairy (pari)' of unmatched beauty. When he woke up, his heart was beating and got lost. He asked scholars and wise men of his 'darbar' about its clue but no one knew who she was. The only fact they found was, that the fairy lived beyond the mountains. Leaving his kingdom, Saiful-ul-Malook, left his throne and travelled for months. He crossed deserts and mountains and finally reached the valley of 'Kaghan' in years' time. The old wise men told him further: "Go to the lake situated high in the mountains. On full moon-nights, fairies come down there to bathe". He walked bare footed, across the deserts and snow covered mountains, climbed for days ahead and finally reached 'Jheel Saif-ul Maluk', currently still present there. Locals believe the lake is magical, as it drew the prince and dragged him with the force of attraction. Imagine the long and arduous route which

brought him there on the location. On quiet nights, people say that 'Badr-ul-Jamala' (the pari) comes to the lake in the company of her other fairy friends and this happens only in the moonlit nights and in the summer days.

The water takes its original blue 'shafaf' colour where you can see the rocks till to the bottom. At midnight, lights appear and the fairies descend from the sky, for them to dip and swim in the water. Among them was 'Badr-ul-Jamala', the princess of the fairies exactly the same one as had appeared in his dreams. The love finally won. 'Badr ul Jamala' was allowed by the 'Jin' (gene) controlling her activity to stay with the fairy 'Saif-ul-Maluk'. It is a story about love that crosses worlds. The lake's crystal clear water and misty mountains behind make the tale feel real when you visit it. The fairy 'Badr-ul-jamala' still visits the lake changing forms and dresses, as the belief goes as it can come in different forms. They saw each other and fell in love. The 'jin' was angry but got solicited in the end, seeing their fanatic-true love.

It is possible that the picture from the nearby 'Kalashi' girl 'Maza' may in fact be the fairy herself as the fairy chooses the form and figure which she likes after that. She can take a figure and dress and this beautiful culture of our northern valleys, continues.

It seems to me true and that's why I write in my column with an unseen conviction and for my readers to believe it too and enjoy ..

The most beautiful part of this submission is that this folk story is presented to us by the superbly famous Punjabi poet 'Mian Mohammad Baksh'. My accolades to him.. In Punjabi :

Isq da maarya phire , sain sain karda

Thokkar thokhar maare, dar dar da banda -- Jadon yaar da hoya didar , dil thanda hoya (Sain sain stands for 'O Lord'. He stumbles door to door; a seeker. When he gets a glimpse of the beloved, His heart finds peace". Beyond Ko-e-Qaaf lays the land of fairies".

Sometimes I like to live in the wonder lands and these mostly have homed richly in our beautiful mountains. From the eight highest mountains of the world, six are already in our fairy-rich land of Pakistan and these are full of facts of life and love. This story the people in 'Kaghan Valley' has been told for hundreds of years and then is ornamented in beautiful verses of Sufi poet Mian Muhammad Bakhsh. Punjabi lovers know the worth of reading it from the core of their heart and soul, the renowned poet.

Pakistan's AI future

GUL Ahmed Energy Group recently announced plans to build Pakistan's largest Tier III data centre. Why is a textile group investing in AI infrastructure? Interests follow economic opportunity, and AI is potentially the biggest economic opportunity in recent times. Data centres are AI's infrastructural layer, and that layer runs on power. Global power demand is projected to more than double by 2030, from roughly 415 TWh to nearly 945 TWh. Countries able to supply reliable, competitively priced power at scale will host the infrastructure underpinning the next wave of economic value.

Pakistan, as of July-March FY 2026, has 49,651MW of installed capacity but converts only a fraction into usable electricity. Fuel constraints, transmission bottlenecks and rigid power purchase agreements keep much of it idle, while consumers pay capacity charges for power that never reaches them. This is both a fiscal and strategic problem. Grid reform is the obvious fix, but it is too slow to wait for. The faster path is to bring compute to where the electricity already is. Data centres collocated with generation and stabilised with battery storage bypass transmission bottlenecks and monetise capacity already paid for but unused. This model needs no grid reform, only regulatory changes permitting direct contracts between generators and off-grid facilities.

Pakistan has earmarked surplus capacity for AI and blockchain infrastructure. Sky47, which runs the 8.5MW Karakoram-01 in Islamabad, is developing a 5MW facility at Port Qasim in Karachi. Karachi also hosts a solar-powered sovereign GPU facility through the Telenor and Data Vault partnership, indicating that energy-coupled compute is operationally feasible today; it can run AI workloads at a fraction of foreign cloud costs while keeping sensitive data within Pakistani jurisdiction. The next step is converting this proof of concept into a replicable, scalable mechanism.

The regulatory constraints can be addressed. Independent power producers are bound by agreements channelling generation into the national grid, but the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contracts Market (CTBCM) already permits generators to sell directly to consumers. Operationalising it for collocated compute would push surplus power straight to data centres, sidestepping politically fraught IPP renegotiation, with no contracts being reopened and only existing surplus being

redirected. Transmission modernisation matters, but it is a separate, slower process; treating it as a prerequisite delays the immediate opportunity. Deploy energy-compute zones now, upgrade the grid later, and the capital these zones unlock can itself fund and incentivise modernisation.

Capacity payments are treated as the cost of energy mismanagement — Rs2.1 trillion a year, roughly \$7.5 billion, paid to plants that often generate nothing. Viewed differently, they are a prepaid infrastructure asset: 10 to 12GW of surplus generation, financed and available, awaiting demand Pakistan can't supply. AI data centres are among the few industries with power needs large enough and requirements high enough to absorb that supply where it sits. Some 100GW of new data centre capacity is expected globally by 2030, backed by up to \$3tr. Pakistan needs a fraction. Securing 1-2GW, under two per cent of the global pipeline, would generate \$700 million to \$1.5bn a year in electricity sales, offset up to 20pc of the capacity payment burden and attract \$10-25bn, several times the \$1.64bn Pakistan recorded in net FDI in FY26. The surplus is a sunk cost either way. The choice is whether it remains a liability passed on to consumers or becomes an asset earning foreign exchange.

Pakistan has engineers, a growing tech sector, and power it already pays for. What is missing is policy alignment connecting the assets to a specific goal. Three interventions follow: 1) immediate: operationalise the CTBCM for collocated compute, notifying rules that let generators contract directly with off-grid data centres. This needs no new money and no IPP renegotiation, only a regulatory decision and clear direction-setting; 2) short-term: designate energy-compute zones at two or three sites where surplus generation sits stranded, with land, licensing and battery storage pre-cleared, so that projects like Gul Ahmed's become a template to emulate rather than one-off interventions; 3) long-term: knit the sovereign compute capacity taking shape across Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore into a single national network, and link that GPU capacity to universities and startups so that Pakistan builds infrastructure and the talent to run it.

The generation is already there, as are the resources and the know-how. What remains is the will to act and an environment that turns it into tangible gains for everyone.

Consumer court orders railways to give Rs50,000 compensation to passenger over train delay

A consumer court has directed Pakistan Railways to pay Rs50,000 to a passenger over train delay travelling from Ghotki to Karachi.

Plaintiff, Ayaz Ali Chachar, a lawyer by profession, filed a lawsuit against the defendant Pakistan Railway under the Sindh Consumer Protection Act 2014 (SCPA), sought Rs500,000 in damages for negligence, defective services, mental agony and refund the amount paid for ticket along with mark-up.

According to the plaintiff, in January 2025, he booked a ticket on the Khyber Mail to travel from Ghotki to Karachi. He stated that the train departed from Ghotki and arrived in Karachi after a significant delay. As a professional lawyer, he had prior commitments, which were disrupted due to the delayed and deficient service provided by the Pakistan Railways.

The proceedings were carried out ex-parte as Pakistan Railway failed to file their response within stipulate period.

After hearing and examining evidence from the plaintiff, Judicial Magistrate (South) Abdul Ahad Memon, ordered the defendant to pay Rs50,000 in compensation to the plaintiff.

The court also advised the Pakistan Railway to "improve their service in all aspects to ensure smooth, timely and quality services".

The court observed that the plaintiff had suffer "inconvenience, harassment and mental distress on account of the inordinate and unexplained delay of more than four and a half hours in an overnight journey, and such distress, being a natural and foreseeable consequence of the proven deficiency in service, warrants award of reasonable compensation, even in the absence of proof of specific pecuniary loss."

Regarding the refund ticket amount, the court dismissed the claim and issued a decree for Rs50,000 as general damages against the defendant.

"The mental distress and inconvenience occasioned by such delay cannot be viewed in isolation from the ordinary human experience of travel, inasmuch as a passenger who plans his journey and subsequent professional or personal engagements around a specified arrival time is entitled to expect that the service provider shall adhere, within reasonable limits, to the schedule undertaken by it. Where such expectation

is belied by hours of unexplained delay, more particularly on an overnight journey, the resultant hardship is not confined to mere loss of time but extends to disruption of sleep, anxiety regarding missed commitments, without any information or redress from the service provider," the

judge observed.

"In the case of the complainant, the anxiety and distress occasioned by an arrival delayed by more than four and a half hours would naturally be more acute, and the resultant mental strain suffered by him is a foreseeable and direct consequence of the deficient service rendered by the defendant. Such failure on the part of the defendant to operate and complete the journey within the scheduled time, without any explanation or justification having been offered on record, squarely constitutes deficiency in service as contemplated under the Act," the judge added.

Date workers toil through rising heat in Sindh



A labourer carries dates at a palm orchard in Khairpur.

In blazing temperatures, Muhammad Idrees ladles boiled dates from a vat simmering over an open flame, work that labourers lament is getting hotter each year in Sindh.

Date season arrives in July, when temperatures in the province regularly hit the mid-40 degrees Celsius.

Workers start before sunrise, and split the day into short shifts, but the heat soon catches up with them.

Their gruelling routine involves harvesting and boiling fruit picked from palms that line Khairpur district, which produces more than half the country's dates and supports thousands of farmers and seasonal labourers.

Labourers begin work around 2am to avoid the worst of the daytime heat

Idrees, who has worked the date harvest for more than a decade, said the heat has now become "unbearable".

Date labourers are one of many professions in Pakistan that are becoming more difficult and dangerous as temperatures rise.

"It used to be less intense," Idrees told AFP as temperatures hit 42°C. "The heat is much harsher and the days are extremely hot. We fall ill because of it."

Multiple workers said they often suffer heatstroke, fainting and fever.

"When the heat makes us sick, we go to the doctor for treatment and then return to work," Idrees added.

Pakistan is among the countries globally most vulnerable to climate change despite contributing less than one per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The country has experienced increasingly frequent heatwaves, erratic monsoon rains and devastating floods, including catastrophic 2022 floods that inundated around one-third of the country and displaced millions, hitting Sindh particularly hard.

Heat and harvest

Workers descend on date farms to begin work around 2am to avoid the worst of the daytime heat and take a break before continuing until the late evening.

Idrees said the physically demanding work earns him around Rs1,200, roughly \$4, a day.

"We harvest the dates, load them onto trolleys and bring them here," he said. "They are boiled over the fire and then spread outside in the sun to dry."

Pakistan, the world's fifth-largest date producer, normally earns more than \$120 million a year in exports, according to industry estimates.

Date farmer Shahnawaz Phulpoto, who owns more than 1,500 palm trees, said that heavy monsoon rains from shifting weather patterns have hampered date crops and caused financial losses.

But for now the main challenge is the heat, he added, as the sun blazed overhead.

"The temperature rises every year," he said, adding: "We are seeing the effects of climate change every year."



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Unesco asked to add Rani Ghat, Banbhore to heritage list



An 8th century mosque in Banbhore.

Pakistan on Wednesday 2 Sept. requested Unesco to facilitate the inclusion of two key heritage sites, Rani Ghat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Port of Banbhore in Sindh, in the Unesco World Heritage List.

The request was made during a meeting between Unesco Representative in Pakistan Fuad Pashayev and Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi. The Unesco World Heritage Centre currently catalogues Pakistan's Tentative List at 37 properties, including the archaeological site of Rani Ghat and the Port of Banbhore.

The meeting was told that a visit by the World Heritage Committee to Banbhore was expected from September 6 to 11.

The minister also requested the UN body for assistance in the inclusion of four selected Pakistani foods and culinary traditions in the Intangible Cultural Heritage framework. These foods include Makai Roti and Saag (Punjab), Balochi Sajji, Sindhi Biryani, and Chapli Kebab (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa).

Culinary traditions of Makai Roti & Saag, Sajji, Biryani and Chapli Kebab proposed for listing as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage'

Gandhara corners

Separately, Imran Shaukat, coordinator of the PM's Task Force on Gandhara, said they planned to expand Gandhara exhibitions overseas and establish dedicated 'Gandhara Corners' to showcase Pakistan's Buddhist heritage.

Mr Shaukat said the task force was considering allocating five to 10 acres around selected Gandhara sites where Buddhist schools and institutions could establish research and meditation centres to facilitate extended visits to individual archaeological sites.

An international Gandhara conference is scheduled for November, while delegations from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are also expected to visit Pakistan in October and November.

Pakistan expands Unesco world heritage tentative list

Pakistan has expanded its Unesco World Heritage tentative list from 25 to 37 properties with the inclusion of 12 new cultural and heritage sites, strengthening the country's prospects for securing further international recognition for its historical and civilisational legacy.

According to a statement issued by the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division, the newly-added properties include the Archaeological Complex of Gor Khatri, Bazira-Barikot, Bhamala Buddhist Complex, Sethi House, Mai Qamro Mosque, Pharwala Fort, Rawat Fort, Tomb of Sultan Muqarrab Khan, Kot Diji Fort, Naukot Fort, Umerkot Fort and Kalasha Valley Cultural Landscape.

The additions were made in three phases this year, according to Unesco records. The Kalasha Valley Cultural Landscape was included on March 9, followed by Kot Diji, Naukot and Umerkot forts on March 18. The remaining eight properties were added on May 11.

The statement said Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Aurangzeb Khan Khichi had given priority to documenting, conserving and promoting Pakistan's cultural heritage, with the government viewing historic sites as important assets for tourism, education, cultural diplomacy and sustainable economic development.

The latest additions also marked progress in documenting federally administered heritage. Four properties under the Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums such as Pharwala Fort, Mai Qamro Mosque, Tomb of Sultan Muqarrab Khan and Rawat Fort had been placed on the Unesco Tentative List for the first time.

According to the government, the 12 sites collectively represented the diversity of Pakistan's heritage, ranging from ancient settlements and Gandharan Buddhist remains to Islamic architecture, historic forts and living indigenous traditions.

Five of the newly-listed properties were in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Archaeological Complex of Gor Khatri reflected Peshawar's long urban history

and its importance as a crossroads linking the Indian subcontinent with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Bazira-Barikot in Swat provided evidence of early settlement, urban development and successive cultural phases in the ancient Gandhara region. The site was also associated with the historical context of Alexander the Great's campaign and the subsequent development of Gandharan civilisation.

The Bhamala Buddhist Complex in Haripur added further depth to Pakistan's Gandharan heritage portfolio, reflecting the development of Buddhist culture and the interaction between local and Hellenistic artistic traditions.

The ministry said the inclusion of the Kalasha Valley Cultural Landscape broadened the scope of Pakistan's heritage representation by highlighting living indigenous traditions and cultural diversity alongside archaeological and architectural sites.

The Federal Department of Archaeology and Museums was also undertaking conservation and development work at Shah Allah Ditta Caves in Islamabad on the minister's directions. The project aimed to preserve the historic site and develop it as a cultural tourism destination with improved visitor facilities and heritage interpretation.

Pakistan currently had six properties inscribed on the Unesco World Heritage List. The expanded tentative list provided a larger pool of documented heritage from which future nominations can be developed.

Meanwhile, preliminary assessment requests had been submitted to Unesco for the Archaeological Site of Ranigat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Port of Banbhore in Sindh. Their nomination dossiers were expected to be submitted for consideration under the Unesco World Heritage framework after completion of the preliminary assessment process.

According to the ministry, the expansion of the Tentative List was being viewed as an important step towards strengthening Pakistan's global heritage profile and creating new opportunities for tourism, cultural diplomacy and future World Heritage nominations.



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Seven GB roads set for federal takeover to boost tourism



The 36km Karakoram Highway-Naltar to Satrangi Lake Road is one of the key thoroughfares proposed for takeover by the federal government.

The federal government has identified seven roads spanning 464 kilometres across Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) for federalisation under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's tourism initiative, with the routes to be constructed, widened, rehabilitated and maintained by the federal authorities to improve connectivity and promote tourism in the mountainous region.

An official of the National Highway Authority (NHA) told media that Federal Communications Minister Abdul Aleem Khan had proposed to the GB government that seven key roads across the region be handed over to the Centre under PM's tourism initiative. The seven roads identified include the 54km Astore-Chilim Chowki Road, 31km Deosai-Skardu Road, 100km Skardu-Khaplu Road, 17km Skardu (Thorgu)-Shigar Road and the 36km Karakoram Highway-Naltar to Satrangi Lake Road.

The remaining two routes, the 121km Thalichi-Astore-Rattu-Shounter Road and the 105km Gorikot-Shagarthang-Skardu Road, are currently under construction.

The NHA official said the proposal had been approved by the GB cabinet and a memorandum of understanding (MoU) had also been signed in this regard.

The move comes as the government seeks to expand tourism infrastructure in the region, where difficult terrain and limited road connectivity remain major challenges to exploiting its tourism potential.

The initiative is aimed at

strengthening road connectivity to some of the region's major tourism destinations, improving access to remote communities and facilitating travel across GB.

Roads in GB are frequently blocked by landslides, mudflows, heavy rainfall, avalanches, flash floods and glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs).

NHA's role

Under the plan, the roads will be constructed, widened, rehabilitated and maintained by the NHA to improve connectivity and facilitate access to popular tourist destinations.

The official said that the proposal would be placed before the federal cabinet for approval. Once approved, the NHA would assume responsibility for the development and long-term upkeep of the seven road links, including their construction, widening, rehabilitation and maintenance.

Asked about funding, he said the federal government would provide funds for the project. Previously, the GB government had been bearing the cost of maintenance, widening and rehabilitation of the roads, he added.

The official said it had also been proposed that a toll tax be introduced for tourists visiting the scenic region, with a blanket exemption for local residents.

Revenue generated through the toll would be spent on improving the road network in GB, he said.

"With the number of tourists to Gilgit-Baltistan multiplying each year, the federal minister proposed introducing a toll tax to fund road infrastructure

development. However, locals should be exempt from this tax," the official said.

Move appreciated

People associated with the tourism sector, including hotel owners and transporters, welcomed the initiative and expressed hope that improved road maintenance and connectivity would help promote tourism.

Ikram Baig, president of the GB Association of Tour Operators, told media that the initiative would help promote tourism in the region.

He said frequent road blockages were a serious issue for GB, as tourists were not only stranded for several days but residents also faced similar difficulties during bad weather.

He said there was hope for an improved road network in the region after the federal government assumed responsibility for the roads.

"This initiative can boost tourism. Delays in restoring road connectivity and frequent blockages have badly affected tourism in GB," he said, adding that a reliable road network was essential for the sector.

Ayaz Ahmed Shigri, general secretary of the Alpine Club of Pakistan and owner of a guest house, said poor road connectivity remained a major hurdle to promoting tourism.

He too believed that the initiative would help enhance tourism in GB.

Asghar Khan, manager of Serena Hotel, told media that tourists usually planned their visits according to fixed schedules.

He said frequent road blockages disrupted tourists' plans and sometimes left them stranded in the region for days.

Such situations created a negative impression and discouraged tourists from visiting the region, he said.

"Many tourists, including national and international visitors, cancelled their plans to visit because of blocked roads," Mr Khan said.

He said the federal government's decision to take responsibility for the roads could help reduce the problem if the plan was implemented in its true spirit.

GB Tourism Minister Naiknaam Karim said accessibility played a major role in tourism development.

He said if the federal government took responsibility for the roads, the NHA could ensure better management and improvement of the network with greater resources.

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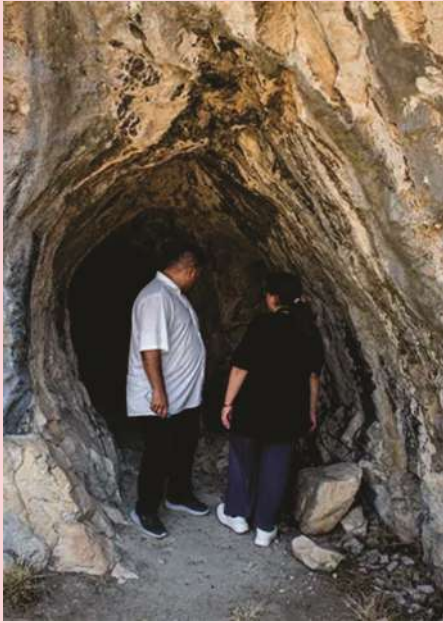
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The cave where Homer wrote The Odyssey?



Tourists visit the Homer Caves in Turkiye.

BORNOVA: On a Turkish hillside overlooking the olive-covered slopes outside Izmir is a cave known to generations of locals as the place where Homer penned The Odyssey.

"This place was always called Homer's Valley by the locals. Travellers from all over the world would come and see the cave where Homer is said to have composed his poems," explained Turkish researcher Altan Altin, who has written a book on the subject.

In fact, nobody knows exactly where Homer wrote his epic poems and there is much mythology around the idea of his cave. Today, of course, the debate has become livelier and more immediate thanks to Christopher Nolan's blockbuster film The Odyssey.

The poet has for a very long time been associated with the Izmir region of Turkiye's Aegean coast, which for most of its history was known as ancient Smyrna. "The Smyrnaeans have the river Meles, with its lovely water, and at its springs is the grotto, where they say Homer composed his poems," wrote the 2nd-century Greek chronicler and geographer Pausanias.

Those words have fuelled a centuries-long debate, one that continues today, about Homer's life and the location of the river where he was thought to have been born in the year 8 BCE.

Remarkable precision

Visiting the cave, which is filled with rocks, is not easy. Inside, travellers have left Greek scrawled on the walls, although it is not clear how old the writing is.

Although other places, notably the Greek island of Chios, also lay claim to Homer's origins, ancient Smyrna and its hinterland — where Bornova is located — are closely associated with the poet.

"For me, there's no doubt, Homer is from Bornova. In any case, he is from Ionia, which includes Smyrna and Chios. He's from these lands," Altin said. Ionia is the name of an ancient Greek region on Turkiye's Aegean coast.

To support his thesis, Altin pointed to a 3rd-century BCE frieze depicting the deification of Homer, which he says reproduced the Bornova cave with remarkable precision.

"This bas-relief was already known, but no one had ever noticed the identical details to those found in Homer's cave. This is the first time such a detailed geographical description came to light," he said. Archaeological evidence from the area also suggests a link to Homer.

"The discoveries from the excavations, especially coins bearing Homer's likeness, show us that the inhabitants of ancient Smyrna considered the poet to be one of their own," archaeologist Mehmet Akif Erdem said. "The Iliad and The Odyssey were written in the (ancient Greek) dialects of Ionic and Aeolic, suggesting that ancient Smyrna and Bornova could be among Homer's native lands," he said.

Homer everywhere

Beyond the academic debate about his origins, Homer is everywhere in Bornova. At Yesilova Hoyuk, a Neolithic site considered to be the oldest known prehistoric human settlement in Izmir, there is a bust of Homer with the inscription: "I compiled The Iliad and The Odyssey epics on this land. I lived in Bornova." The town — which already hosts a book fair dedicated to Homer and has a statue of Trojan War hero Hector in a local park — is planning to refurbish the cave and open it to visitors to capitalise on the revival of interest in the ancient poet.

"Preserving Homer's legacy is a duty we owe to humanity. He is one of the

founding fathers of literature," Bornova Mayor Omer Eski said. "The stories he tells are about this land. The question is not whether we should claim Homer or not. His story is also ours," he said. But not everyone shares his vision.

In 2024, municipal officials from President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling AKP party proposed renaming Homer's Valley after a Turkish fighter, saying the site should not have a Greek name.

"Erasing Homer's name would be one of the worst things we could do to Bornova," retorted the mayor, whose aim is to "make Homer known to the whole world as a person from Bornova" and to make the town a tourist attraction.

Mustafa Kocyigit, who runs the Gargantua bookshop in Izmir, said the success of Nolan's film has revived interest in Homer and boosted sales of the poem The Odyssey.

"I knew Homer was from these lands, but I didn't know he was specifically from Izmir. We are incredibly lucky," said teacher Safak Tosun outside one of the city's cinemas where the film is showing. "I feel proud, honoured and deeply privileged to be his fellow countryman." For the researcher Altin, there are clues in Homer's writing that he says shows the poet came from the area.

"When you dive into The Iliad, you really understand that Homer was an Anatolian. You find anecdotes and cultural references that are completely unknown elsewhere," he said. He believes Homer's origins should not stir up rivalry between Turkiye and Greece. "Homer is 2,800 years old, while the Turkish-Greek border is only a century old," he shrugs. "Homer is Greek. Homer is Anatolian. None of us is older than he is, not even our countries."



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Korean heritage delegation visits Taxila



Director General of the Korea Heritage Agency Kim Younwook visits Taxila Museum on 6 Sep.

A Korean heritage delegation walked through the timeless ruins of Taxila and Sirkap, retracing the glorious footsteps of the Gandhara civilisation and witnessing a cultural legacy that once transformed this historic land into a centre of learning, faith, art and human civilisation.

Kim Younwook, Director General of the Korea Heritage Agency, along with Jeon Bumhuan, Project Manager of the Official Development Assistance (ODA) Project, visited Taxila Museum and the ancient archaeological remains of Sirkap, immersing themselves in the archaeological and cultural heritage of one of South Asia's most historically significant regions.

The delegation was received and briefed by Deputy Director of the Department of Archaeology Muhammad Aasim Dogar, who introduced the visitors to the historical treasures preserved at the museum and explained the wider archaeological importance of Taxila.

Inside Taxila Museum, the visitors encountered a priceless gallery of antiquity, including sculptures, architectural fragments, coins, pottery and other archaeological treasures bearing testimony to the cultural flowering of the Gandhara region.

Officials explained that each artifact represents a fragment of a civilisation in which diverse cultures, traditions and artistic influences converged, leaving behind a distinctive Gandharan artistic tradition whose influence travelled far beyond the boundaries of the ancient Taxila Valley.

The delegation then proceeded to Sirkap, where the silence of the ancient ruins continues to preserve memories of a remarkable past.

Spread across the archaeological landscape, the remains of Sirkap offer a glimpse into an ancient urban civilisation. Its streets, structures and surviving architectural remains stand as enduring witnesses to Taxila's position as a crossroads where peoples, ideas, religions and artistic traditions met and flourished.

For centuries, the Taxila Valley

remained a meeting ground of civilisations. The region witnessed the passage and interaction of Achaemenian, Greek, Mauryan, Indo-Greek, Scythian, Parthian and Kushan traditions, while Buddhism flourished and Gandharan art reached extraordinary heights.

Against the magnificent historical backdrop, the visit of the Korean heritage officials assumed particular significance, offering more than a routine tour of archaeological remains.

The visitors were briefed on the archaeological significance of Sirkap and the importance of protecting its surviving remains for future generations. Their visit also highlighted the relevance of international cooperation in safeguarding archaeological treasures that belong not only to a particular country or civilisation but also form part of the collective heritage of humanity.

SCO names Lahore as its 'Tourism and Cultural capital'

The city of Lahore has been named the Tourism and Cultural Capital for 2026-27 by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

The decision was announced at the 26th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of State in the Kyrgyz capital, which was attended by PM Shehbaz Sharif held on 1st Sept. 2026.

The title of Tourism and Cultural Capital has been rotated annually among SCO member states since 2022, and the designation serves to highlight the prominence of a city that embodies the cultural heritage of the country that takes over the rotating presidency of the organisation.

This year, Pakistan assumed the SCO presidency, with PM Shehbaz defining the theme of the chairmanship as 'Turning Vision into Action: Connectivity, Innovation and Shared Prosperity'.

Cities that have held the title in the past include Varanasi, India (2022-23), Almaty, Kazakhstan (2023-24), Qingdao, China (2024-25) and Cholpon-Ata, Kyrgyzstan (2025-26).

The decision to designate Lahore as the tourism and cultural capital was taken in April this year, when the heads of tourism administrations of SCO member states met in Bishkek.

The designation is designed to promote people-to-people contacts and tourism among the member states.

Russia, N. Korea open first road link



North Korean trucks cross the new road bridge.

Russia and North Korea opened their first road bridge on Monday 7 Sept. in a carefully choreographed display of friendship, a structure which spans the Tumen river and which both sides cast as an important milestone in their deepening strategic partnership.

The first flag-adorned trucks trundled across the one-kilometre-long two-lane bridge as Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and his North Korean counterpart Pak Thae Song tuned in by video link to address workers and government officials from both countries.

Construction of the new bridge, which had been under discussion for years, began in April last year after the project was agreed during a [visit](#) by President Vladimir Putin to North Korea in 2024. There are already direct air and rail links between Moscow and Pyongyang, but until Monday there had not been a proper road link.

Instead, since 1959 and by special arrangement, planks had been placed on the nearby rail bridge, for decades the sole border crossing point, in order to move vehicles across the border between the two countries.

"I am convinced that the expansion of cross-border transport infrastructure will provide a powerful impetus for the further development of trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation," said Mishustin.

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