

Famous Festivals in Pakistan..

With the advent of spring, skies of Lahore and Rawalpindi are resplendent with all types and sizes of kites. The entire population participates in kite flying matches to herald the coming of spring. That is why this festival is also known as "Jashn-e-Baharan". This festival is at its peak in the spirited city of Lahore. Lahorites enthusiastically participate various fun activities while kite flying being the main attraction. Basant is not only a kite flying event, but also a cultural festival of traditional food, dresses, dances and music.

Festival Highlights

Male tourists can expect to be decorated with yellow scarves while the ladies will be given attractively decorated Gajras (traditional bangles made of flowers). Yellow is indeed the main color in this event as it depicts the blossoming spring flowers in the fields of Punjab.

Night time kite flying is another spectacular sight to witness. The entire sky is lit with heavy duty lights and in this illuminated sky one can see hundreds of white colored kites dancing and competing for supremacy over the other. This atmosphere is further enlightened with barbecues and loud tempting music coming from all corners of the city. Apart from this one may also experience various flavours of the culturally rich city of Lahore. Festivals, performance by famous folk singers, dancing horses and jhumar dances, performances by cultural troupes, stalls of kites, bangles, flowers, handicrafts etc and to top it all the delicious and tempting food of Lahore all combine to make this a memorable event of your life.

Lok Virsa...Folk Festival

The largest cultural activity in Pakistan is the annual National Folk Festival (Lok Mela), held in October each year. Over the past two decades, this festival has taken on an international flavour and more than 20 different countries have sent their artisans and performers to participate in the festival. Nationally, the festival has become a thing of pride for artisans and performers, who come on their own to participate. Most important of all, the Provinces of Pakistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir put up beautifully decorated pavilions and visitors have the unique opportunity to see an assortment of Pakistan's traditionally rich culture in the federal capital of Islamabad for an exciting ten days.

An exhibition of artisans at work under the banner of the Heritage Museum forms the core of this festival. The Research & Media Centre of Lok Virsa arranges groups of dancers that perform all over the festival grounds, inviting visitors to join in, and in the evening, arranges music concerts from all parts of Pakistan. Documentation of the festival is carried out by Lok Virsa's researchers, who interview all the artisans and artists.

Festival Highlights

Participants come from all over Pakistan. You would be able to feel and experience the variety in tastes, cultures and heritage of Pakistan all under one roof. One may find different pavilions displaying the crafts of their respective provinces. The Kashmir pavilion may display major crafts from Azad Jammu and Kashmir like Embroidered shawls, Namda and Gabba (floor rungs and wall hangings), wood works, basketry, metal crafts and jewellery etc. The Punjab Pavilion may host traditional food items along with singing and listening pleasures of Punjab folk songs. Punjabi style handicrafts also manages to catch viewer attention.

From the Balochistan pavilion one may expect to get depictions of nomadic balochi life styles and traditional artisans displaying their skills of various Baloch crafts. Leather embroidery crafts and crafts

using date leaves are also prime choices of interest in this pavilion. Apart from this one may expect to get a taste of Balochi folk songs and their all famous dish called "Sajji".

The Sindh pavilion may offer depictions of Sindh life style, village scenes and working men and women. Artisans preparing different crafts and their traditional folk songs and instruments. "Ajrak" a traditionally made shawl is by far the most highlighted attraction of this pavilion.

The N.W.F.P Pavilion features the pushtoon culture, customs, crafts and cuisine. Glittering metal crafts of Brass and Copper are displayed in a great variety along with stalls of traditionally made baskets. Stone carving which was traditionally done on tomb stones is also shown in a diversified fashion which can be used on planters, table tops and wall hangings. Along with this Pathan dancers perform their famous "Khattack Dance" and offer their traditional "Chapli Kebab" for your eating pleasures.

Apart from these pavilions one may witness all kinds of cuisine, musical galas, crafts bazar, lok virsa's display and sale stalls. A richly cherishable experience bound to create a lasting impression.

Silk Route Festival

Festival on the Roof of the world where natural environs, landscape, privileged location in the highest mountains of the world, breathtaking spectacles of sheer scenic beauty, wildlife and nature, awe-inspiring snow peaks, glittering glaciers, serene valleys of lush green foliage and fruits, gleaming and scintillating streams of unpolluted water, rich diversity of people, culture, folklore, arts, crafts and heritage are unexplored discovery that awaits you.

Highlights of the Festival

Artisans-at-work (Gilgit, Karimabad & Skardu) - Master artisans from remote parts of Northern areas will be at work in beautifully designed and documented pavilions.

Folkloric Song & Dance Ensembles (Gilgit, Aliabad, Gulmit, Karimabad & Skardu) - folk dancers and musicians from all parts of Northern Areas including Dance, Song Ensembles from the neighbouring Xinjiang Province of China and Central Asia will be invited to entertain visitors to the festival.

Folk Music Groups - Small open air stages will be set up at the festival grounds in the different cities to present folk musicians from all over the Northern areas.

Exotic Craft Bazaar - Exotic local bazaars will be held including Sunday & Friday markets for the local communities where people can sell, exchange or exhibit local produce, offering endless variety of cottage crafts, Knickknacks, flea-market, etc. Food & Fruit Fair - Food festivals will be held in co-operation with hotels and communities in several places, Farmer will exhibit and sell fruit. Polo Matches and Indigenous Sports Events - Several Polo matches will serve as a major attraction for domestic tourists and foreign visitors at Gilgit and Skardu.

Camping Villages & Open Air local Restaurants - Will be set up at the scenic spots for nature lovers.

Ethnic Fashion Show - Depicting regional costumes and cultural traditions will be held. Community Festivals at District Level - AKCSP, AKRSP, and Craft Development Projects, Literary and Cultural Forums, IUNC, WWF, and other NGOs will hold community Festivals and district levels. Crossroads of Asia! - One of the few regions in the world that holds a fascinating combination of Adventure, History, Natural Beauty, Culture and Trade at the cross roads of Asia. The region and its indigenous heritage of arts, crafts, history, landscape, people, produce and cultures is a unique experience. You are invited to the Silk Route Festival in Pakistan Northern Areas.

Shandur Polo Festival...

Highlights of the Festival

Passion for Polo will be the highest on the world's highest Polo ground. Shandur invites visitors to experience a traditional polo tournament between the teams of Chitral and during the 2nd week of July. The tournament is held on Shandur Pass, the highest polo ground in the world at 3,700 meters. The

festival will also include folk music and dancing and a camping village is set up.

Background

Polo is an equestrian sport with its origin embedded in Central Asia dating back to 6th century BC. At first it was a training game for cavalry units for the King's guards or other elite troops. To the war like tribesmen who played polo with as many as 100 players to a side, it was a miniature battle. It became a Persian national game in the 6th century AD. From Persia, the game spread to Arabia, then to Tibet, China and Japan. In China, in the year 910, death of a favorite relative in a game prompted Emperor Apao-Chi to order beheading of all players!

Polo was introduced in South Asia, by the Muslim conquerors in the 13th century. English word 'Polo' is a Balti word meaning, 'ball'. Now a days, there are six players to a side, but this is by no means a rule in local polo games. There was no limit to the number of players and no time limit. Whichever team scored nine goals first, was the winner. The present game with a team of six players in a side, lasts one hour with a ten minute break.

Gilgit, Chitral and Skardu have always played the game of polo closest to its original form. In the past, local Rajas, Mirs and Mehtars were the patrons of the game. At times, more than 50% of the annual budget of their principalities would be spent on supporting the game.

Shandur Polo Tournament:

The first time a polo tournament took place at the Shandur Pass, was in 1936. A British Political Agent, Major Cobb, who was fond of playing polo under a full moon, had the polo ground near Shandur, named. 'Moony Polo Ground'.

The most exciting polo tournament of the entire Northern Pakistan, is played on top of Shandur Pass, around 3,700 meters above sea level. It is a place unique and exotic in itself, surrounded by some of the most spectacular mountain scenery in the world. The event marks the annual rivalry between the polo teams of Gilgit and Chitral. The Polo tournament has some added attractions for the visitors; trout fishing at the nearby streams and lakes and a festival of folk dances and music of the Northern Pakistan.

The highlight of the festival is the final match between the Gilgit and Chitral teams. The final provides a most colorful spectacle. Supporters of both sides travel long distances from the remote parts of Chitral and Gilgit, to watch the thrilling game. The event, as such, offers a fascinating insight into the lifestyle of the people of this region. Their culture and indigenous customs are a delight to behold for the visitors.

Festival Information

It is advisable to be there one day in advance to enjoy all the offerings of the festival. Activities at Shandur includes dance and music performances by different groups, trout fishing, mountaineering, trekking, hiking and of course, horse riding. Crystal clear lakes, snow covered mountains, alpine flowers and vast stretches of green grass, are added attractions

Facilities

A tourist tent village with restaurant facilities is sprung up during the tournament. Merchants from Peshawar, Chitral and Gilgit set up souvenir and folk craft shops. The tournament offers visitors and opportunity to mix with the locals.

How to reach?

The Shandur Pass lies almost midway between Chitral and Gilgit on a jeep road, travelling on which, is adventurous, to say the least. The distance from either side is 170 kms. One can get to Chitral or Gilgit by Pakistan International's daily F27 Fokker planes from Peshawar and Islamabad. There are daily two

flights from both destinations, subject to good weather. Visitors planning to go by air must expect adjustment of minimum 02 days in their itineraries just in case the weather does not permit flights to operate.

Access to Chitral by road is either from Peshawar or from Islamabad. Both these routes join up in lower Swat valley near Chakdara, from where you proceed via Dir over 3200 meters high Lowari Pass and on to Chitral. It will take about 11 hours for a direct ride, otherwise, a stopover in Dir is recommended. From Dir, you shift to 4x4 jeeps for your onward journey to Chitral and on to Shandur. From Chitral side, travelers can also enjoy overnight stay at Mastuj whereas from Gilgit side, Gupis is a suitable place.

Travelling by road from Islamabad, on the Karakoram Highway (the Silk Route), visitors can stop at halfway for overnight stay along the mighty Indus, at Besham.

Accommodation

For visitors to Shandur, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) has set up its new motels with all facilities like, attached toilet/bathroom, hot/cold water, restaurant etc, at Panah Kot (Dir), Chitral, Bamburet (Kalash Valley), Besham (KKH), Barseen (KKH) and Gilgit, besides some private hotels. On the pass a tent village with all facilities is set up.

National Horse and Cattle show

One of the most famous annual festivals. the National Horse and Cattle Show is also held in Spring in the Fortress Stadium Lahore. During the week long activities there is a display of the finest livestock, horse and camel dances, tent pegging colourful folk dances from all regions of Pakistan, mass band displays and tattoo shows in the evening.

Mela Chiraghan

The Festival of Lamps or Mela Chiraghan is a very important and popular event. This is celebrated every Spring on the last Friday of March outside the Shalimar Gardens. During the Festival, people from all walks of life gather from all over the province to actively participate in the Festival. The show has been described as an eloquent expression of Pakistan's heritage and an authentic account of its agricultural and industrial achievement's. It is held in Lahore Fortress stadium at the end of February or at First week of March.

The fortress stadium, the venue of the show is thronged by active participants, foreign visitors and peoples who watch the festival with great enthusiasm, verve and aplomb.

A large number of them are interested in watching and appreciating the best breeds of livestock. Many derive pleasure by watching other activities such as display parade of animals, dances by horses and camels, polo matches, tent pegging, dog shows and their races, vaudeville acts of stuntmen, mass display of military band, rhythmically physical exercise by the children. Tastefully decorated industrial floats and torch light tattoo shows. Additional attractions include a subtle interplay of lights to weave enticing patterns at night and breath taking acts by foreign groups. The show began as a modest exhibition organized by the army to project the cattle wealth of the country in the early fifties. Today it is an international event to which come dignitaries from abroad and visitors and foreign tourists.

The organizing committee comprises representatives of a number of agencies including army, rangers, LMC schools, the police, industrialists and the art councils.



Pakistan is a multicultural country. Besides the religious festivals, there are many other cultural and festive events taking place all around the year all over Pakistan.

These events include exhibitions, festivals and local events. Here's a list of festivals and events happening in Pakistan;

1: Eid-ul-Fitr

Eid-ul-fitr is the biggest Muslim festival celebrated all over Pakistan. It is celebrated after one month of fasting during the month of Ramadan. Celebrated on the 1st of Shawwal, the 10th month of Islamic Calendar, The Eid day starts with the special Eid prayers. People exchange gifts and sweet with each other and alms to the poor and the needy.

2: Eid-ul-Azha

Eid-ul-Azha is also another massive religious festival commemorating the great sacrifice offered by Prophet Ibrahim. It is celebrated on the 10th of Zilhaj, the 12th month in the Islamic Calendar. Collective prayers are offered after sunset and the sacrifice of goats, sheep, cows or camels is made and the meat is distributed among relatives, friends and poor.

3: Shab-e-Barat

Shab-e-Barat is a religious festival celebrated on 14th of Shaaban, the 8th Islamic month. The day is celebrated with special Prayers and exchange of sweet dishes.

4: 23rd March- Pakistan Day

Pakistan Day commemorates the anniversary of Pakistan's Resolution, passed on March 23, 1940. Military parade is held at Lahore Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. Its main feature however remains the grand parade at Islamabad.

5: Mela Chiraghan (Festival of lamps)

Mela Chiraghan is held for one week outside the Shalimar Garden in Lahore. It marks the birth day of the famous Sufi Port Shah Hussain. The festival is celebrated on the last week of March

6: Horse & Cattle Show

Celebrated at Dera Ismail Khan (DIK), the festival includes local games, folk dances, music, cattles races and exhibition of local handicrafts. The Festival takes place at the end of March till 1st week of April.

7: Eid-e-Miland-un-Nabi

The Birthday of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (P.B.U.H.) on 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal - the 3rd of month of Islamic Calendar. It is a very mellow festival and celebrated with humbleness.

8: Ashura

The Two days mourning on the death anniversary of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H.) on 9th and 10th of Moharram, the first month of Islamic Calendar. The event is marked by Processions, rallies and meeting.

9: Independence Day

The National day of Pakistan is the Independence Day, celebrated every year on the 14th of August. The day is celebrated with various processions, rallies, decorations and lightings, debating contests and 14 August illustrations all over the country.

10: Defense Day

Marking the great defense Pakistan held against India in the war of 1965, the Defense Day is celebrated on the 6th of September includes Parades and exhibitions of military equipment at Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi.

11: Airforce Day

The Airforce day highlights the contributions, the strength and the bravery of the Air Force of Pakistan. Celebrated on 7th September many display of latest aircrafts of Pakistan Airforce are displayed for the public eye. The air shows at Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta is another attractive highlight of the day.

12: Death Anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam

Marked as an official holiday, 11th September is celebrated as the death anniversary of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the father of the nation.

13: Lok mela

Lok Mela is a famous folk festival held at Islamabad. Folk Music, songs music contests, folk dances, craftsmen at work, exhibition and sale of handicrafts are the highlights of the events. The festival presents a unique opportunity to watch the culture and craft of the whole country at one place. It is celebrated during the 1st week of October.

14: Birthday of Allama Iqbal

9th November is celebrated as the birthday of the National Poet of Pakistan Dr. M. Allama Iqbal. The event is celebrated with a lot of debating and poetry contests held at different institutes all over Pakistan.

15: National Horse & Cattle Show Lahore

Held at the Fortress Stadium Lahore, the Horse and Cattle show is a famous event in Lahore. The event's highlights include Cattle races, cattle dances, tent-pegging, tattoo show, folk music, dances, bands, cultural floats and folk games. It takes place on the 3rd week of November for 15 days.

16: Christmas and Birthday of Quaid-e-Azam

Celebrated on the same date of the year the Christmas and the birthday of the founder of Pakistan Quaid-e-Azam are two famous events in Pakistan, celebrated by the Christian minority and the whole nation.

17: BASANT

Basant is the Festival of Kites. Celebrated basically in Lahore, Basant is now renowned all over Pakistan with Lahore as the centre. Basant is the time when skies are filled with kites of all colours.



NOTE: The followings are the famous fairs, festivals and holidays observed all over Pakistan.

There are so many other colorful festivals celebrated locally in all the districts & regions of Pakistan.

JANUARY

CHIEF OF AIR STAFF GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP (04 Days) L

Held at Golf Course Peshawar. Players from all over Pakistan and many foreign countries participate in this glorious event. The participation fee (as compared to western countries) is most economical, whereas, the cash awarded to the winners of trophies is quite substantial. An golden oportunity for the foreign players to win the trophy.



☀ SHAB-E-BARAT (01 night) ☀ N

A religious festival featuring fireworks and light displays which is celebrated throughout Pakistan. Almost every home, small or big, rich or poor, in city or village is decorated with candles, lamps and lights. Kids and adults equally participate in firing crackers and intricate fire works.



[Go on Top](#)

FEBRUARY

SIBI MELA(03 Days) L

Traditional sports, exhibitions of handicrafts, dresses, jewelry; horse show, cattle show, camel & horse races, camel & horse dances, tent pegging, concerts and colorful stalls in industrial Exhibition. The most colorful show of the year. Sibi Town is about 110 miles from Quetta on Quetta Sukkhar Highway in the province of Baluchistan.



SINDH HORSE & CATTLE SHOW (03 Days) L

It is during spring when the trees are in blooming, and everyone in the city is carried away by the light-hearted beauty of the kites. Today Basant is considered a traditional and cultural event. The event has boosted the Kite industry as well as tourism from all over the world.

Basant Becoming Pakistan's Cultural Festival

Apr 14, 2000 - © [Hasan Mehmood](#)

In Pakistan all seasons have their own festivities, each has a different flavour. Pakistan shares all its festivities with its neighbouring countries like [India](#).

Lahore is the provincial capital of Punjab. It's a very historical city, Mughals who ruled the subcontinent found this city their favourite if you happen to visit this fascinating city you'll find a lot of monuments still showing that Mughals ruled this part of the world for a massive period of time. Lahore is such a famous city especially in [Pakistan](#) that people of Pakistan are used to say that (it's a term in Punjabi language which means) "One who hasn't seen Lahore has seen nothing".

Traditionally its said that Basant is celebrated to bid farewell to the winter season and to announce the arrival of spring season. Basant is celebrated in a big way in Pakistan and has become a very powerful traditional festival of Pakistan. It's a kite-flying festival which had originated from India and now it's famous across Pakistan especially in the Punjab province. In Lahore Basant is celebrated in the month of February usually around 20th of February. Lahorians prepare for the big event with a lot of enthusiasm and zeal. They start the preparation for the festival very early.

Basant is celebrated on Saturday evening which is usually called as night Basant. The night Basant is totally different thing to see. People prepare for the night Basant by putting floodlights on their roofs. If you get a look of sky at the night Basant you find that sky is covered with white kites floating in the sky like stars representing a spectacular scene. People especially ladies wear yellow clothes, which is a traditional dress of Basant. In contrast to night Basant the Basant on day is a totally different experience because unlike night now people fly colourful kites and sky is covered with vivid colours.

In March, Basant is celebrated in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The same is the scene here and same is the passion. In whatever city this fascinating festival is celebrated people love to come and enjoy. [Hotels](#) are packed to capacity and quite often it happens that people don't even find a room to stay. The reason for that is that not only people from all across the country come to participated in this festival with the locals but also people from neighbouring countries like India come to Pakistan to take part in this flamboyant festival.

Festivals

Main article: [Public holidays in Pakistan](#)

[\[edit\]](#)Ramadan

The holiest month of the [Islamic Calendar](#), which is a month of fasting from sunrise to sunset and self discipline, it is widely observed in Pakistan. Muslim Pakistanis (about 97% of the population)^{[citation](#)}.

[needed](#) fast, attend mosques with increased frequency, and recite Quran. Special foods are cooked in greater quantities, parties are held, and special accommodation is made by workplaces and educational institutes.

[\[edit\]](#)Chand Raat

Occurs after the Islamic month of [Ramadan](#). [Chand Raat](#) occurs the night before Eid day celebrations commence, marking the end of the month of Ramadan. In the night known as Chand Raat, people celebrate by various means, such as girls putting [henna](#) on their hands. People buy gifts and sweets that will be given to friends and families who come over to celebrate the end of Ramadan. The streets, major building and landmarks, even outside of malls and plazas, put on displays of elaborate decorations and colourful light shows. There are large crowds in the city center to celebrate the beginning of Eid, and it is usually a boom time for business.

[\[edit\]](#)Eid celebrations

The two Eids, [Eid ul-Fitr](#) and [Eid ul-Adha](#), commemorate the passing of the month of fasting, Ramadan, and the willingness of [Ibrahim](#) to sacrifice his son [Ishmael](#) for [God](#). On these days, there are national holidays and many festivals and events take place to celebrate Eid. As Pakistan is a Muslim state, there are three days off for all businesses and government offices.

On the night before Eid, people search for the [new moon](#) to mark the end of Ramadan and arrival of Eid ul-Fitr. The day starts with morning prayers, then returning home for a large breakfast with family members. The day is spent visiting relatives and friends and sharing gifts and sweets with everyone. During the evening people hit the town for some partying, going to restaurants or relaxing in city parks.

On Eid ul-Fitr, money is given for [charity](#) and as gifts to young children.

On Eid ul-Adha, people may also distribute meat to relatives and neighbors and donate food for charity.

[\[edit\]](#)Milaad un Nabi

[Milaad un Nabi](#) is a known religious festival which is celebrated in many parts of Pakistan. The Milaad is the celebration for the birthday of the Islamic prophet [Muhammad](#).

[\[edit\]](#)Muharram (Ashura)

In Pakistan, the first ten days of [Muharram](#) are observed officially. The 10th day of Muharram is marked in the memory of Imam [Hussain](#) (Aliahsalam), the grandson of Muhammad, who was a martyr, along with 72 family members, friends and followers during the [Battle of Karbala](#). It is marked mainly among the [Shia](#) community of Pakistan.

[\[edit\]](#)Jashn-e-Baharan

Main article: [Basant](#)

Jashn-e-Baharan, also referred to as *Basant*, is a pre-Islamic [Punjabi](#) festival that marks the coming of spring. Celebrations in Pakistan are centered in [Lahore](#), and people from all over the country and abroad come to the city for the annual festivities. [Kite](#) flying competitions take place all over the city's rooftops during Basant (now prohibited)^{[\[clarification needed\]](#)}. The fertile province of Punjab was intimately tied via its agriculture to the different seasons of the year. The arrival of spring was an important event for all farmers and was welcomed with a celebration, hence the name *Jashn* (celebration) *Baharan*(spring).

[\[edit\]](#)**Nowruz**

This festival is like [Nowruz](#) of [Iran](#), Afghanistan and Central Asia. In Northern Pakistan ([Chitral](#), [Gilgit](#) and [Baltistan](#)) Nowruz is celebrated as a socio-religious festival. It is also celebrated with much fervour in [Balochistan](#) and in almost all of Pakistan's major urban centres. The day coincides with the Spring Equinox on March 21, but the celebration continues for weeks. In Baltistan, the main features of Nowruz are the giving of coloured eggs to friends and polo matches. In Balochistan, the festival is marked with outdoor feasts, and the traditional jumping over a fire to wash away sins and usher in a fresh start. The origins of this festival are pre-Islamic and date back to when Pakistan was part of the [Achaemenid](#) and [Sassanid](#) Persian empires.

[\[edit\]](#)**Independence Day**

Main article: [Independence Day \(Pakistan\)](#)

On August 14, the people of Pakistan celebrate the day Pakistan gained its independence from [British India](#) and formed an independent state for Muslims. Ironically, one-third of the Muslims decided to remain in India. There are many celebrations all over the country, with people singing and dancing in the streets. Concerts are held with many pop and classical singers. Parades are held in the capital city ([Islamabad](#)). Many people decorate their houses and fly the [flag of Pakistan](#). At night, fireworks are used in many cities. Many people pray for the country and reflect on their pride in the country of Pakistan.

[\[edit\]](#)**Defense Day Parade**



Joint Services Parade on March 23, 2005 in the capital, Islamabad

Main article: [Pakistan Defence Day](#)

September 6 is another patriotic day, when the [Army of Pakistan](#) is put on display for the general public to show Pakistan arms. All Government officials attend the ceremony and medals and recognitions are awarded to special people for their work. In March 2007, the [Pakistan Air Force](#) (PAF) put on display the new joint manufactured Chinese-Pakistani aircraft called the [JF-17 Thunder](#).

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2009

Festivals in Pakistan

Shab-e-Barat :

It is a religious festival celebrated on 14th of Shaaban, the 8th Islamic month. Eventually, it happens to be just 15 days ahead of Ramadan, the holiest period of Islamic faith. The night of Shab-e-Barat symbolizes a night of forgiveness. During this time people usually pray to God in preparation of the holy Ramadan and also for forgiving all their previous sins. The festival of Shab-e-Barat is celebrated by Muslims all over the world with a great deal of enthusiasm. However, this festival is known to be among the more popular festivals that are celebrated in Pakistan. The festival of Shab-e-Barat is renowned for its famous celebrations. This festival is essentially celebrated in night; the sky gets brightened as a result of dazzling fireworks. Houses and streets are also enlightened by candles and electric bulbs. Various types of sweets and other desserts are distributed at random in the night, and also sent to friends and relatives. Some persons are also known to spend their time in charity works during this time. A very popular Islamic belief is that if someone prays to Allah (God) all through the night of this festival, he might be forgiven for all his sins. Some people also visit the mosques to offer prayer and practice meditation. Even, some Muslims are known to offer the optional Namaz during the late hours.

Eid-ul-Fitr :

This religious festival is celebrated on 1st of Shawwal, the 10th month of Islamic Calendar. Eid-ul-Fitr starts the day after Ramadan (the Islamic holy month of fasting) ends, and is verified by the sighting of the new moon. It is a joyous occasion with important religious significance. It is a day of forgiveness, moral victory, peace of congregation, fellowship, brotherhood and unity. Muslims celebrate not only the end of fasting but also thank God for the self control and strength that Muslims believe God gave them. It is a time of giving and sharing, and many Muslims dress in holiday attire. Eid-ul-Fitr is called "The Lesser Eid" compared to the Eid-ul-Adha is called "The Greater Eid". On the day of the celebration, a typical Muslim family awakes very early, does the first everyday prayer, and is required to eat a little symbolizing the end of Ramadan. They then attend special congregational prayers held in mosques, large open areas, stadiums and arenas. The prayer is generally short and is followed by a sermon. Worshippers greet and embrace each other with hugs in a spirit of peace and love after the congregational prayer. After the special prayers festivities and merriment are commonly observed with visits to the homes of relatives and friends to thank God for all blessings.

Eid-ul-Adha:

This religious festival celebrated on 10th of Zilhaj, 12th month of Islamic Calendar by Muslims as a commemoration of Ibrahim s (Abraham s) willingness to sacrifice his son as was commanded by Allah. It is one of two Eid festivals celebrated by Muslims whose basis comes from the Quran. Like Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Adha begins with a short prayer followed by a sermon. Eid-ul-Adha annually falls on the 10th day of the month of Dhul Hijja of the lunar Islamic calendar. Eid-ul-Adha occurs the day after the pilgrims conducting Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.



Festivals in Pakistan.

Shab-e-Barat :*

Religious festival celebrated on 14th of Shaaban, the 8th Islamic month. Prayers, fire works, exchange of sweet dishes and visits.

Eid-ul-Fitr* :

Religious festival celebrating end of fasting month on 1st of Shawwal, the 10th month of Islamic Calendar. Special prayer after sun-rise, exchange of sweet dishes, visits.

Sibi Festival: (Last week of February)

At Sibi (Balochistan). Traditional sports, handicrafts exhibition, folk music and dances.

Sindh Horse & Cattle Show: (Last week of February)

At Jacobabad (Sindh). Similar activities as in Sibi Festival.

Jashan-e-Larkana: (Last week of February) At Larkana (Sindh). Traditional sports, exhibition of handicrafts, folk music and dances.

Basant

With the advent of spring Basant Festival is celebrated with pomp and show in mid February every year in Lahore. In other words this is the spring festival.

Alleging that kite flying is a Hindu event is also sheer ignorance. The sport originated in China about 5000 years ago, when Hinduism was in non existent. Why single out kite-flying then, especially when it is a source of joy for the old and the young men and women? The simple reason is that Hindu at Basant Festival fly kites for enjoying Basant. With times Muslims who were living together with Hindus in the sub-continent also join them in kite-flying. Since then Muslims are taking participation in just kite-flying at the time of Basant connotating it as Pala Urant. Now a days people of Lahore enjoy it by kite flying competition and by visiting the shrine of saint Madho Lal Hussein, where they assemble to pay their benediction.

Lahore is becoming the main focal point for the celebration of this festival in Pakistan. People traditionally fly kites on the roofs of their buildings. It is commonly observed that rest houses, hotels and house of relatives of the participants are fully packed with guests from all over the country. Moreover some five star hotels also arrange this function on their roof top for foreigners and other high class gentry. They also arrange variety of dishes with musical concert. Sometimes Lahories on this occasion become emotional and in this state create law and order problems for the administration. Some of them use metal thread for kite-flying. Their such a deed oftenly imposes, besides life threat, a serious problem for WAPDA when the thread touches the live wires.

Inspite of the fact Basant Festival which has no links with the Muslim culture is becoming very popular and being celebrated in Lahore regularly every year with zeal and fervent.

Nauroze: (21-23 March)

Celebrated only in Gilgit, Hunza, Skardu and Chitral. Polo, foot-ball, volley-ball and hockey

matches, folk dances and music.

Pakistan Day *: (23 March)

Commemorating the anniversary of Pakistan Resolution passed on March 23, 1940. Military parade at provincial capitals and Islamabad.

Mela Chiraghan (Festival of lamps):

(Last week of March)

Held for 01 week outside Shalimar Gardens, Lahore.

Horse & Cattle Show:

(End of March till 1st week of April).

At Dera Ismail Khan. Local games, folk dances, music, cattle races and exhibition of local handicrafts.

Jashan-e-Shikarpur: (In April for 01 week)

At Shikarpur, Sindh. Cultural activities, local sports and handicrafts exhibition.

Eid-ul-Azha * :

Religious festival commemorating the great sacrifice offered by Prophet Abraham.

Celebrated on 10 Zilhaj, 12th month of Islamic Calendar. Collective prayers after sun set, sacrifice of goats, sheep, cows or camels and distribution of meat among relatives, friends and poor.

Joshi or Chilimjusht: (14-15 May)

Kalash festival of welcoming spring, held in Kalash Valleys near Chitral. Folk dances, music and exchange of dishes.

Shandur Polo Festival

Traditional polo tournament between the teams of Chitral and Gilgit is being held on the highest polo ground of the world - The Shandur Pass (Chitral district). Allied activities include folk music, folk dances and other competitions. A tent village along Shandur Lake will be set up in cooperation with the local administration.

Utchal: (15-16 July)

A harvest festival, celebrated by Kalash people in Kalash Valleys, Chitral.

Eid-e-Milad-un-Nabi *:

Birth Anniversary of Prophet Hazrat Mohammad (P.B.U.H). on 12th of Rabi-ul-Awwal - the 3rd month of Islamic Calendar.

Independence Day *: (14 August)

Meeting, processions, rallies, decorations and illustrations all over the country.

Defense of Pakistan Day: (06 September)

Parades and exhibitions of military equipment at Rawalpindi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta and Karachi. Visits to the war memorials. (No national holiday except Armed Forces)

Air force Day: (07 September)

Display of latest aircraft of Pakistan Air force and air shows at Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta.

Phool: (20 - 25 September)

Held in Kalash Valleys near Chitral. Reaping grapes and walnuts, dancing and singing.

Lok Mela: (1st week of October, for one week)

Folk Festival held at Islamabad. Folk Music, songs, music contests, folk dances, craftsmen at work, exhibition and sale of handicrafts. The festival presents a unique opportunity to watch the culture and craft of the whole country at one place.

Chowmas: (18-21 October)

Held in Kalash Valleys near Chitral. Welcoming of winter with first snow-fall. Activities restrict to indoor.

Karakoram Car Rally:

A colorful closing/award giving ceremony was held in Hunza Valley. Prizes, shields, certificates were distributed among the ralliers. SAF-International Karakoram Car Rally was also planned for year 2001, but it was postponed. International Karakoram Car Rally has been proposed to be held during the month of November in 2002 as part of the International Year of Mountains celebrations

Birthday of Allama Muhammad Iqbal: .(09 November)

National Poet * .

National Industrial Exhibition Islamabad:

Exhibition and sale of Pakistan's industrial products and handicraft items

National Industrial Exhibition Lahore:

(3rd week of November for 15 days)

Held at Fortress Stadium, Lahore. Exhibition and sale of industrial products and handicrafts of Pakistan.

National Horse & Cattle Show Lahore:

(3rd week of November for 05 days)

Held at Fortress Stadium, Lahore. Cattle races, cattle dances, tent-pegging, tattoo show, folk music, dances, bands, cultural floats and folk games.

The show has been described as an eloquent expression of Pakistan's heritage and an authentic account of its agricultural and industrial achievement's. It is held in Lahore Fortress stadium at the end of February or at First week of March. The fortress stadium, the venue of the show is thronged by active participants, foreign visitors and peoples who watch the festival with great enthusiasm, verve and aplomb.

A large number of them are interested in watching and appreciating the best breeds of livestock. Many derive pleasure by watching other activities such as display parade of animals, dances by horses and camels, polo matches, tent pegging, dog shows and their races, vaudeville acts of stuntmen, mass display of military band, rhythmically physical exercise by the children.

Tastefully decorated industrial floats and torch light tattoo shows. Additional attractions

include a subtle interplay of lights to weave enticing patterns at night and breath taking acts by foreign groups. The show began as a modest exhibition organized by the army to project the cattle wealth of the country in the early fifties.

Today it is an international event to which come dignitaries from abroad and visitors and foreign tourists. The organizing committee comprises representatives of a number of agencies including army, rangers, LMC schools, the police, industrialists and the art councils.

Christmas and Birth Anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam*: (25 DecemberA