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Chief Editor Abdul Sattar Azad
 Managing Editor Muhammad Faryal Azad
 Assistant Editor Musharraf Azad
 Associate Editor Shahida Hameed
 Resident Editor Waqas Masood
 Reporter Bazla Sardar
 Photographer S. Shahid Ikram
 Contributors Prof. Safdar Sandal
 Chief Correspondent Prof. Karamat Rajput.

Address B-65 Ablagh-e-Aamma
 (media) Cooperative
 Housing Society
 Block-8, Gulistan-e-Jauhar
 Karachi-75290
 Phone 34615924, 34661153
 Cell 0333-2194853
 Web. www.newflyerintl.com
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 Fax 34615924
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Lahore Waqas Masood
 123 HH Phase 4
 DHA, Lahore
 Cell: 0333-3872222

Islamabad 8-Huma Plaza Block-25
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 Tel: 2275946-7,
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AIRSIAL awards ground handling contract to SAPS

Photo taken on the occasion shows Mr. Fazal Jilani Chairman AIRSIAL and Air Commodore (R) Ahsan Mohammad Khan Executive Director SAPS (Shaheen Airport Services) signing the contract. Also seen in the picture are (L-R) Mr. Tariq Amin COO, Mr. Ameen Ahsan CEO, Mr. Qaiser Iqbal, Sr. Vice Chairman and Mr. Muhammad Umer Mir, Vice Chairman, AIRSIAL.



First batch of dual-seat JF-17 aircraft rolled out



Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan sits in the cockpit of indigenously manufactured dual seat JF-17 thunder aircraft.

The Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) Kamra has achieved yet another remarkable milestone by rolling out the first batch of eight dual-seat JF-17 aircraft recently.

To mark the momentous occasion, a grand ceremony was held at the Aircraft Manufacturing Factory, Kamra. Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan was the chief guest on the occasion, said a press release issued by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF). Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing and Executive Vice President of Aviation Industries of China (AVIC) Hao Zhaoping also attended the ceremony as guests of honour.

PAC chairman Air Marshal Ahmer Shehzad in his welcome address highlighted the salient features of the project. The Pakistan Aeronautical Complex and China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation (CATIC) also signed an agreement for co-production of Chinese commercial aircraft. Highlighting the time-tested friendship between China and Pakistan, the Chinese ambassador said the JF-17 was a testimony of Sino-Pak friendship and mutual cooperation.

Speaking on the occasion, the air chief congratulated the PAC and CATIC on the successful accomplishment of 2019 production target and completing the first eight dual-seat JF-17 aircraft in a record time of five months. He said that the serial production of the dual-seat variant was a landmark development for the JF-17 programme and a true manifestation of everlasting friendship between both countries. He said that the JF-17 Thunder was the backbone of the PAF.

Later, the Air Chief also inaugurated the JF-17 Dual-Seat Integration facility at Avionics Production Factory, Kamra. The facility will enable PAF to integrate avionics and weapon systems of choice with JF-17 aircraft, ultimately providing the much needed self reliance and operational flexibility.

Letter to the Editor Difference between theory & practice

Ever since Pakistan came into being on August 14, 1947, we have been pretending that we have Rule of Law in our country. The more we take to unlawfulness in our national life, the more we beat the trumpet of the Rule of Law. This trumpet is being blown at full these days. Thus one can say that unlawfulness is at bloom these days too.

Having been away from my country for four years, I visited Pakistan to meet my dear ones a couple of months back. When I landed in Karachi, It took me just 45 minutes from the aeroplane to the taxi stand including immigration & claiming my baggage. Every one did which was precisely his job. There was no doubt that I



felt myself a proud Pakistani.

My atrocities, however, began to grow when I asked the taxi driver to take me to my home in Gulistan-e-johar. My home is not more than eight km from airport by any route. I paid him almost Rs 200/= per km. The moment, I left the Cant area, the road & street lights just vanished away as they had never been there. Besides fears that I might would be robbed any moment, it looked as if I was traveling in a boat instead on the road.

During a month's stay in Karachi, I couldn't find any commutable road. Karachi which was once, a daily washed city, had turned into a filthy junkyard. The Karachiites are forced to dwell on polluted atmosphere; filthy water & staled vegetable and so on.

Let me leave this question on the readers to decide if it was the change that we had voted for & which we were forced to endure.

Prof Karamat Rajput,
Chief Correspondent,
The New Flyer International.



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CAA, ASF chiefs told to revisit security measures at all airports

The Sindh High Court has asked the directors general of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Airport Security Force (ASF) to hold a meeting to revisit the existing security measures at all airports and to modernise and revamp explosive detectors if further steps are required.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar also directed the CAA and ASF to improve safety and security arrangements at the airports, aerodromes, aircraft and civil aviation installations.

Disposing of a petition against manufacture and use of bomb detectors (Khoji) at the airports, the bench directed the ASF to maintain foolproof safety and security at all airports and also safeguard civil aviation installations against acts of unlawful interference in accordance with the provisions envisioned under Section 6 with other enabling provisions of the Airports Security Force Act, 1975.

“The Director General CAA and Director General ASF for their utmost satisfaction shall convene a high profile meeting within 15 days to revisit the security measures in the larger public interest and in case any further endeavours/measures are required to modernise and revamp the present detector “Khoji” and or some alternate or additional or any other advanced technology is required to be opted, added or preferred for improvising the safety and security measures at airports, aerodromes, aircraft and civil aviation installations/parking areas, the CAA shall make necessary arrangement for such equipment or technology for ASF,” the court ordered.

The bench in its order observed that though the ASF was confident with regard to performance of Khoji, it was further informed that the CAA was responsible for provision of such equipment to the ASF and thus if the court found it necessary to replace the existing equipment, CAA may be directed to provide latest and state-of-art alternative device for explosive detection.

It further stated that the petitioner wanted absolute ouster of Khoji detectors, but no alternative solution was suggested as a stopgap arrangement and at the same time the ASF in its reply stated that they were very much confident with the performance of their developed device Khoji and they were not using any banned ADE-651 explosive detector.

The ASF further maintained that the performance of Khoji was well authenticated and they detected thousands of ammunition and hundreds of arms at the main entrances of different airports and the armed forces and law enforcement agencies were also using the same device.

In its reply, the CAA reproduced the same assertion and said that it was responsible to provide equipment and the ASF was responsible to maintain and provide foolproof security.

The petitioner NGO stated that the purpose of filing the case to draw attention of the court to an alleged scam orchestrated by a British national who was involved in assembling and using of fraudulent bomb detectors, which allegedly affected the country in dealing with its security measures.

The petitioner further stated that these detectors were manufactured by a British company under the name and style of ADE-651 which claimed that their device could effectively detect the presence and location of various types of explosives

from a long range and Pakistan allegedly purchased ADE-651 detectors for the use of the ASF.

The petitioner alleged that despite banning the export of ADE-651 by the British government, the respondents took over the making and selling of this device under the brand name Khoji.

The counsel for the petitioner pleaded that the use of fraudulent bomb detectors should be put to rest by restraining its licensing, manufacturing and usage in Pakistan.

The deputy attorney general (DAG) argued that the ASF was responsible for taking effective measures for ensuring security of airports and its officers and members were subjected to the Pakistan Army Act for disciplinary purposes.

The DAG further asserted that ASF neither procured explosive detectors ADE-651 nor manufactured, used or sold it, adding that in 2008-2009, the ASF procured Sniffex explosive detectors, which were very costly and thus the ASF with the help of EME Engineers developed its own explosive detector Khoji, which were being used at the car parking gates for scanning of vehicles.

He further said that Khoji was developed by army engineers as an alternative technology for detection of explosives and arms/ammunition whereas the imported explosive detector Sniffex was found less effective in detection of explosive material.

The DAG argued that the petition was filed merely on presumptions with baseless allegations, whereas banned explosive detector ADE-651 was never procured by ASF.



A Pakistan Navy helicopter demonstrates firepower on Friday 27 Dec. Navy ship Tariq shows combat readiness through live fire in the northern Arabian Sea. A demonstration of ground-based air defence missile system was held at a coastal area. The display of firepower included firing by short-range air defence system. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi expressed his utmost satisfaction over the operational readiness of the Pakistan Navy fleet's coastal command and commended the officers and men for their professionalism.

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SC ignores request to overturn SHC order against PIA chief

The Supreme Court on Tuesday Jan. 21 ignored a request to overturn the Dec 23, 2019 Sindh High Court order of restraining Air Marshal Arshad Malik, chief executive officer of the Pakistan International Airlines, from carrying out any function as CEO of the national flag carrier.

A three-judge Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed shifted the responsibility of running the airline to its board of directors which was directed to take over the functions of the CEO/chairman.

The directives came on an appeal moved by Air Marshal Malik against the high court order.

On a petition filed by Safdar Anjum, a concerned citizen, the SHC had restrained Air Marshal Malik from carrying out any function as CEO of the airline.

The petitioner before the high court had contended that Air Marshal Malik was a senior serving officer of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and his appointment as PIA chief was made in utter disregard of the law laid down by the apex court in its Aug 3, 2018 judgement against the appointment of the then CEO.

Apex court resents appointment of 10 other PAF officers in national flag carrier on deputation

On Tuesday Jan.21, the Supreme Court expressed its dismay over the appointment of 10 officers of the PAF while noting that the CEO, who himself had joined the PIA on deputation, had brought in four air vice marshals, two air commodores, three wing commanders and one flight lieutenant, that too on deputation, in the airline.

The court was apparently not happy over the increase of PIA fares by 100 per cent during the term of the CEO and noted that another case pertaining to the appointment of the CEO was already pending before the Supreme Court.

Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, a member of the bench, observed that the court would like to see the advertisement for the appointment of the PIA CEO to consider whether the advertisement was designed with Air Marshal Malik in mind as he did not have the pre-requisite qualification, education or the expertise required for the job.

This came as a response to Attorney General Anwar Mansoor's assertions about "regular" appointment of the CEO by following proper procedures, including an advertisement in the media.

Justice Shah also cited a news item that a contract worth Rs700 million was awarded to an air commodore who had registered his company a few months ago.

"You are Malik running the affairs of the national flag carrier like those of a family entity," the court told Air Marshal Malik, wondering how he could manage the PIA when they had earlier miserably failed to run Shaheen Air.

The Supreme Court also summoned the record of the case currently being heard by the SHC and adjourned the hearing for two weeks.



AIR Marshal Arshad Malik



The Sindh High Court had restrained Air Marshall Arshad Malik from carrying out any functions as CEO of PIA on Dec. 23 till Jan. 22 on the petition of Mr. Safdar Anjum General Secretary and Sr. staff of PIA's one of the association.

TAAP expressed their concerns and reservation at Karachi Press Club. Photo taken on occasion shows some of Travel Agents holding a meeting in favour of the CEO, PIA.

Gulf Air opens 70th anniversary museum

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has celebrated the opening of its temporary museum at the Bahrain City Centre shopping mall which marks the start of a series of 70th anniversary celebrations in 2020. The official opening was under the patronage of Gulf Air's Chairman of Board of Directors Mr. Zayed R. Alzayani who cut the ribbon and launched the project in presence of the airline's board members, executive management and members of the Bahraini media.

The Gulf Air 70th anniversary museum celebrates 70 years of aviation in the Kingdom of Bahrain and showcases the airline's rich history since its take-off in 1950. It features exclusive and rare photography and memorabilia items from different decades of the airline's journey. Moreover, various aircraft models and Gulf Air's uniforms from different eras will be on display to highlight the evolution of the brand over the years. Other than celebrating history, the museum will also display the latest Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner Falcon Gold seat to highlight the future of Gulf Air. The museum will be open for the public for a limited period of time and will exclusively attract the local and regional footfall of the Bahrain City Centre

shopping mall.

At the official opening, Gulf Air's Chairman of Board of Directors Mr. Zayed R. Alzayani said: "We start our 70th anniversary celebrations with the opening of this museum. Gulf Air's history is very rich and it has touched the lives of every Bahraini if not every GCC national. The exhibited items represent various decades of our history and showcase the evolution of the brand and the business. I invite everyone to come and visit the museum and go back in time on a journey from 1950 until today".

Gulf Air will continue its fleet modernization programme in 2020 and will receive the final three Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners of the 10-aircraft order and will take deliveries of the brand new Airbus 321neo aircraft which will be dominantly deployed on the European long-haul routes. The airline recently announced its 2020 expansion plans with a number of European destinations: Milan as year-round with daily flights and Mykonos, Munich, Malaga and Nice as seasonal destinations all starting from summer 2020. Moreover, on the Eastern side of Gulf Air's hub, Kuala Lumpur will be launched in July 2020 with daily flights operated by the Dreamliner and Salalah, seasonally, in the summer.



Patrol jets, UAVs to make navy's air arm more efficient, says chief



A view of the maritime patrol aircraft and UAVs inducted into Pakistan Navy's fleet during a ceremony at the PNS Mehran on Saturday 4 Jan.

The induction of the marinised ATR aircraft equipped with weapons and sensors would substantially enhance the operational capabilities of the Pakistan Navy fleet's air arm. This was stated by Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi, while addressing a ceremony held on Saturday 4 Jan. for the induction of the state-of-the-art maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) and tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) into the Pakistan Navy fleet.

Admiral Abbasi, who graced the occasion as chief guest, highlighted Pakistan Navy's role in safeguarding the maritime frontiers and ensuring safety of sea lines of communication. He said that induction of another ATR into the cargo/para-drop role would provide added flexibility to the special forces' operations.

The chief guest said that induction of LUNA NG UAVs into the fleet's air arm would augment Pakistan Navy's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities in maritime domain, especially in creek areas and along the coastal belt. He urged the crew of the newly-inducted ATRs and UAVs to make optimum use of these platforms in order to contribute effectively to the combat potential of the PN's fleet.

While appreciating the detection of the Indian submarine by the PN aircraft in the post-Pulwama standoff, the admiral said he was glad that the PN's aviation fleet had proved its mastery and made the nation proud. He advised the aviators to keep the same spirit and be prepared for any eventuality that may arise anytime.

He said Pakistan Navy's developmental plans included the acquisition of unmanned combat aerial vehicles in support of maritime operations. The ceremony was attended by high-ranking officials, serving and retired aviators of the Pakistan Navy and sister services and representatives of the government departments concerned.

Emirates' long-serving boss to hand over controls this year



TIM Clark.

Tim Clark will retire as the president of Emirates Airline at the end of June 2020 after more than three decades at the state-controlled business that has helped to transform Dubai into one of the world's major travel crossroads.

Emirates Chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed al-Maktoum said on Tuesday Dec. 24 in an internal memo to staff that Clark would stay on as an adviser to the company.

"Through wars, economic recessions, disasters natural or manmade, and various industry upheavals, Tim has ably steered and grown Emirates to its standing today as the world's largest international airline, and an eminent player in the global airline industry," Sheikh Ahmed said in the memo.

An Emirates spokeswoman confirmed the retirement.

Clark, 70, joined the airline as a founding member in 1985, having previously worked at Gulf Air and Caledonian Airways.

The British national became Emirates' president in 2003.

"Tim is a giant of the industry. He had the vision behind Emirates and has cultivated the airline to where it is today," said independent aviation consultant John Strickland. Knighted in 2014 for his services to British prosperity and the aviation industry, Clark has since been referred to by many in the industry, including those at Emirates, as "Sir Tim".

Sheikh Ahmed, a member of Dubai's ruling family who has been the airline's chairman since inception, praised Clark as being central to Emirates success and Dubai's emergence as a global aviation hub.

"His achievements are too many to recount individually, but they will all be remembered," he said in the memo.

Emirates, profitable for the past 31 years, has been crucial to putting Dubai on the map and its transformation into a global financial and tourism hub.

Launched in 1985 with aircraft leased from Pakistan International Airlines, Emirates today operates a fleet of 270 aircraft to 159 destinations, according to its website.

It carried close to 60 million passengers in its last financial year, and operates the single largest fleet of Airbus A380 superjumbo jets. The airline has in recent years faced a slowdown in growth.

Air India exits Sabre GDS

Sabre Corporation, the leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, issued a statement recently regarding its relationship with Air India. The following is for attribution to Kristin Hays, vice president global communications for Sabre:

"After a successful 20-year relationship, Air India has decided to discontinue distributing its content through the Sabre GDS. Consequently, Air India content is no longer available to Sabre-connected travel agencies, effective. "We are very disappointed that Air India decided to withdraw from Sabre. We believe that access to Sabre's global network of travel agencies provides great value to Air India.

"We have worked with Air India for the better part of a year to reach a new agreement, in anticipation of the existing contract expiring and after receiving a termination notice from the carrier. Unfortunately, after extensive negotiations, we have been unable to come to a new agreement. "Our teams will continue to work with Air India to finalize an agreement that meets the needs of Sabre, Air India and travel buyers.

"Sabre remains committed to GDS agreements that meet our airline customers' unique needs while also balancing the needs of the travel buyers who rely on Sabre for robust travel content."

Gulf Air temporary suspends of services to Iraq

Gulf Air, the National Carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, would like to inform that all flights arriving and departing from Baghdad and Najaf in the Republic of Iraq have been suspended until further notice, due to the safety and security situation in Iraq.

The Gulf Air Contact Center will contact all passengers affected by this situation and advises travelers to check the airline's website before travel date or to call the Gulf Air Contact Center for more information on 02135654483 before heading to the airport.

Gulf Air will provide its passengers with the latest developments as soon as the security situation improves and the National Carrier resumes its operations. Accordingly, Gulf Air apologizes to its affected passengers for any inconvenience this may cause, which is beyond its control.

The Airline continues to monitor the security situation in Iraq, where the safety and security of passengers and crew is its top priority.

Airbus demonstrates first fully automatic vision-based take-off



Airbus demonstrates first fully automatic vision based take-off

Airbus has successfully performed the first fully automatic vision-based take-off using an Airbus Family test aircraft at Toulouse-Blagnac airport. The test crew comprising of two pilots, two flight test engineers and a test flight engineer took off initially at around 10h15 on December 18 and conducted a total of 8 take-offs over a period of four and a half hours.

Rather than relying on an Instrument Landing System (ILS), the existing ground equipment technology currently used by in-service passenger aircraft in airports around the world where the technology is present, this automatic take-off was enabled by image recognition technology installed directly on the aircraft.

Automatic take-off is an important milestone in Airbus' Autonomous Taxi, Take-Off & Landing (ATTOL) project. Launched in June 2018, ATTOL is one of the technological flight demonstrators being tested by Airbus in order to understand the impact of autonomy on aircraft. The next steps in the project will see automatic vision-based taxi and landing sequences taking place by mid-2020.



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CJP berates CAA officials for lack of facilities at airports

The Supreme Court on Friday Jan 10 expressed resentment at officials of the Civil Aviation Authority over non-provision of proper facilities at airports and directed the CAA director general to submit a report within two weeks about improvements that had been made in the operations of airlines.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed also called a report from the CAA chief regarding facilities being provided at the airports to passengers in case of flight delays.

The bench that also comprised Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah asked the senior officials of the CAA to inform it of the maintenance, operations and collective security of the airports, details of number of incidents as well as complaints received regarding delays in flights and compensation to passengers and what action had been taken on such incidents/grievances.

Acting CAA director general Tanveer Ashraf Bhatti was found absent in court when the bench took up the matter regarding a compliance report on implementation of an earlier court order issued during the hearing of a suo motu case about inconvenience to passengers in baggage handling and delayed flights.

The chief justice expressed serious resentment at his absence and directed the officials of the CAA, who were in attendance, to immediately call the acting DG in court.

He also came down hard on aviation authorities and observed that smuggling of currency, weapons and contraband items were being made through the airports and deplored that there was no video recording when the recovery of such items was made from suspects.

He further observed that proper facilities were not available at airports as generally the passengers were seen sitting on ground when their flights got delayed.

An additional director of the CAA submitted that all the facilities were available at the New Islamabad Airport and efforts were being made to improve the facilities at other airports.

The chief justice snubbed the official and said that he knew about the facilities available at the airports as he had been

travelling on a regular basis.

The acting director general of the CAA turned up during the proceedings and the chief justice expressed his displeasure for not attending the court on time, asking him whether he was unaware of the court's directives.

It may be recalled that the then CJP Mian Saqib Nisar had taken a suo motu notice about inconvenience to the passengers in baggage handling and delayed flights and on March 31, 2018 a two-judge bench headed by the then chief justice had directed the CAA to file a report about action against airlines for delayed flights and said that the CAA and other agencies had to facilitate the passengers.

During the same hearing, the deputy attorney general had submitted a report regarding the recommendations of a commission which proposed several steps for facilitation of the passengers.

The commission's head had submitted that there was no mechanism for providing facilities to the passengers in case of delayed flights, adding that in the last three months as many as 260 flights were cancelled and over 100 flights delayed at Karachi and Islamabad airports.

While taking the recommendations on record, the then chief justice had also constituted a monitoring committee comprising senior officers of the Airport Security Force, CAA and the Federal Investigation Agency to ensure implementation of the recommendations and also directed the CAA to file a report of actions taken against officials of airlines for delayed and cancelled flights and submit a report.

Heathrow Airport has installed a system to block drones entering its airspace

London's Heathrow airport has deployed a system designed to block drones entering its airspace following a string of recent attempts that threatened Europe's busiest travel hub.

The airport, classified as a flight restriction zone by authorities, is now using a product manufactured by France's Thales SA to detect and identify drones. The French company declined to detail the contract's value or the precise specification being used at Heathrow.

Heathrow chose a holographic radar system developed by Aveillant Ltd., a Cambridge, England company acquired by Thales in 2017. Its technology is now part of the French defense contractor's anti-drone solution, EagleShield.

The radar system is also used at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport. It can detect drones as far as 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) away in all directions, according to Aveillant's website. Appropriate countermeasures can then be deployed.

Representatives for Thales wouldn't say what Heathrow planned to use as a countermeasure, but said drone-disabling technology was not part of its contract with the airport.

Away from transit hubs, common solutions include the use of radio waves to jam the signal used by a pilot to control a drone, or take over control of the unit. Other methods include dispatching eagles or giant nets to pull craft out of the sky.



2020: revolutionary year for the \$700B worth global aviation

2019 brought a challenging period for aviation industry. Boeing MAX grounding, “flight shame” movement, airline bankruptcies and other important events made a huge impact on the annual results. However, positive news like the fact that 2019 was the safest in the last five years brightened up the day.

Based on the outcome of last year, certain expectations have been set for 2020. They are served by a number of trends that are to appear in the horizon of this ever-changing, inherently demanding industry.

Passenger-focused solutions

The global trend towards customer experience is currently being reflected in a variety of industries and aviation is no exception. It is extended across a number of fields, including researching, planning, airport experience and more.

Airports and airlines are now focusing on passenger-oriented rather than product-oriented decision making processes. The adoption of the newest technologies are helping the companies meet the customers' demands and personalise their flying experience on board and at the airport.

Those technologies are advanced enough to accelerate the transactional activities of the passenger, those include check-in, baggage screening, security and customs making them more efficient. 5G network has also been integrated in order to provide greater connectivity and customer choice. The airports and airlines are taking the desires of millennial and Generation Z audience into account by offering 'local', 'instagrammable' meals. They have begun sourcing their products from smaller suppliers located not as far away, which turns their supply chain into a more complex one yet caters the needs of their customers.

Sustainable options

Sustainability has been at the forefront of all industries for some time now and it has proved to add value.

Considering aviation's total contribution to climate change, the biggest and most significant one comes from carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from aircraft.

In order to reduce the carbon footprint when aircraft are taxiing, lighter



airframe components and trials are taking place on the ground. OEMs are investing in methods that would help reducing aircraft fuel consumption.

With an aim to introduce passengers to the reality of it and the improvements that shall be made, there will be monitors installed in the aircraft showing the amounts of real-time CO₂ emissions.

However, new power and flight systems' integration is not possible with the current aircraft designs. Greener tomorrow requires reviewing absolutely all business processes from rethinking of aircraft design and airframes to their operation and in-flight services.

The results of the tests lead to further experiments, which also means heavy costs. Yet although it all may have a negative influence on travelling costs, the governments and the leaders of the industry are ready to prioritise environmental impact and waste reduction.

Artificial intelligence

In order to improve efficiencies and maintain high levels of security, artificial intelligence-based systems will be adopted by airlines.

Virtual assistants and chatbots will take the customer services and flight bookings to another level. Automated processes will decrease the need of human resources and the queuing times will be reduced by involving facial recognition software into the process. In order to improve the ride to the airport and the confusing experience in it, robotic assistants will be there to help passengers.

Machine Learning (ML), data analytics and robotic technology will assist in analysing and predicting

passenger behaviour and record it, which will determine whether airport design, customer experience and profitability can be improved. Elon Musk recently stated that Tesla cars will soon talk to people. The same is expected in aviation industry new-era aircraft that are able to talk to passengers about relevant matters.

Biometrics

Although the adoption of biometrics is yet at the early stage in the aviation industry, the first step has already been made. Airlines and airports have started investing in facial recognition and fingerprint technology with several trial runs that have already been carried out. The areas where this technology has been tested in include check-in, security as well as lounge access and boarding.

The main aim for this is to reduce security lines speeding up the passengers' boarding process, which leads to reducing the need for staff. In the long run, as facial, fingertip or even palm-vein recognition emerges, paper and mobile boarding passes will become history.

Incorporating this technology would be significantly beneficial for all passengers, airports and airlines.

Blockchain system

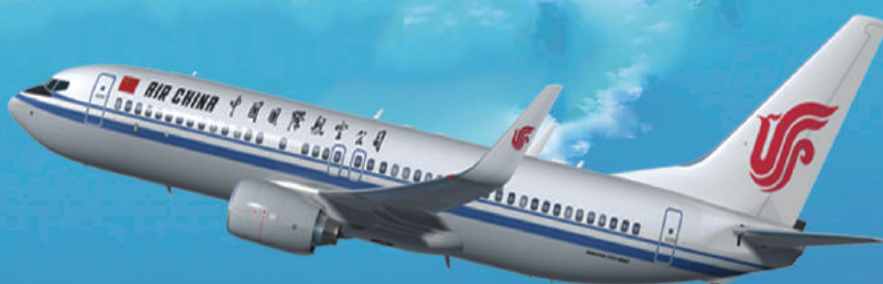
Now that the airline industry and regulators have fully embraced the blockchain technology, there are huge expectations for the improvement of safety and security operations. This technology allows companies to refuse using paper for processing all the information needed recording and storing bookings, tracking the spares and aircraft parts as well as conducting aircraft parts census.

Blockchain technology is also seen to have a potential in dealing with increasing passenger flow by helping with passport and visa controls, which will eventually cause a closure of manual verification.

In conclusion, rising customer expectations along with innovative technology implementation and other relevant solutions set 2020 to be a transformational year for the world of aviation. It is forecast for the sector to have a net profit growth again this year, however for the market players to achieve that and evolve, it is essential that all are prepared to adapt the predicted trends of 2020.



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CA945	北京-伊斯兰堡-卡拉奇 Beijing-Islamabad-Karachi	15:30-18:40-22:25	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	A330-200
CA946	伊斯兰堡-卡拉奇-北京 Islamabad-Karachi-Beijing	20:30-00:05-09:10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	A330-200



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Fax: +92-21 35370276

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Etihad's cargo IATA CEIV certification opens membership to cool chain association

On the back of its recent successes in obtaining IATA CEIV certifications for both its pharma and fresh products, Etihad Cargo, the cargo and logistics arm of Etihad Aviation Group, has announced an extension of its cold chain global business partnerships by joining the exclusive Cool Chain Association as well as Pharma.Aero.

The affiliation with the two cross-industry associations, which includes pharma shippers, CEIV certified cargo communities, airport operators and other air cargo industry stakeholders, provides the UAE-based carrier with active participation in the development and enhancement of industry standards and processes.

The news comes less than a year after Etihad Cargo became the first regional carrier and airport Hub in the Middle East to be awarded CEIV certification in Pharmaceutical Logistics, and only the second carrier in the world to obtain the CEIV certification in Perishables Logistics (Fresh) two weeks ago. Its dedicated TempCheck and FreshForward products provide specially designed, temperature-controlled equipment to transport pharmaceuticals and perishable items in the quickest possible time, adhering to the highest compliance guidelines.

Andre Blech, head of cargo operations and delivery at Etihad Aviation Group, said: "Our memberships of the Cool Chain Association and Pharma.Aero are testament to the progress Etihad Cargo has made over the past 18 months as we continue to drive forward our ambition to provide reliable end-to-end air transportation for perishable and pharmaceutical shippers."

The Cool Chain Association will provide Etihad Cargo with a strategic conduit for knowledge exchange and technological ideas, in addition to a tailored platform to expand its current government, industry and supply chain partnerships on a global level.

Stavros Evangelakakis, Chairman of the Cool Chain Association and Global Product Manager, Cargolux, said: "The CCA brings together industry leaders from across the cool chain to network, share insight, and trial new ideas. CCA members are focused on driving genuine change in the pharma and perishables cool chain with a focus on contributing to reducing waste and improving the lives of patients by ensuring transportation meets



the requirements of the shipper, and Etihad will bring valuable insight and input from an airline perspective. We look forward to their contribution."

Etihad Cargo's Pharma.Aero membership carries active participation at IATA LAPB meetings and regulation updates, ensuring its seat at the centre of industry-wide decision-making processes.

Nathan De Valck, chairman of Pharma.Aero, said: "We welcome Etihad Cargo into the Pharma.Aero membership and look forward to their active contribution in our project groups to further improve pharma handling processes in collaboration with the pharmaceutical manufacturers. As the first Middle East carrier to join Pharma.Aero, Etihad Cargo marks the expansion of our global membership into that region."

Ousted Boeing CEO to still get over \$62m

Former Boeing Chief Executive Dennis Muilenburg, who was criticised for his handling of the 737 MAX crisis, will receive no severance package, the company disclosed recently.

Muilenburg also will not garner 2019 compensation under an annual bonus plan, the company said in a securities filing.

Muilenburg was ousted last month as the grounding of the MAX has dragged on after two deadly crashes.

"Mr Muilenburg is not entitled to and did not receive any severance or separation payments in connection with his retirement after more than 30 years with the company," Boeing said in the filing.

Muilenburg, who worked at Boeing for 34 years, also forfeited \$14.6 million in 2019 performance awards the company

said.

However, Muilenburg will still receive pension, deferred compensation benefits and long-term incentive awards totalling \$62.2 million, according to figures in the filing.

Muilenburg also holds options to purchase nearly 73,000 shares at around \$76, well below Boeing's current share price of \$329.92.

Boeing on December 23 announced Muilenburg's exit, replacing him with ex-General Electric executive and longtime Boeing board member David Calhoun.

First Airbus BelugaXL enters service



The first out of six Airbus BelugaXL has entered services and already flown on the first operational flight. The BelugaXL is a key part within Airbus industrial system, providing the airframer with 30% extra transport capacity to support production of Airbus commercial aircraft.

The new BelugaXL aircraft will work alongside BelugaST to boost transportation of large Airbus aircraft components. The remaining five planes are due to join the fleet of Airbus transporters in the period of 2020-2023.

According to a statement, Airbus BelugaXL, just as its predecessor, will operate from 11 destinations across Europe.

The new transporter is expected to add extra capacity as it has the largest cargo bay cross-section of all existing cargo aircraft worldwide; it can carry two A350 XWB wings compared to the BelugaST, which can only carry one.

The BelugaXL program was launched in November 2014. Five years later, in November 2019, it received Type Certification from the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and completed the entire phase of flight testing before officially entering service in January, 2020.

Planes brought down by missiles

Iran on Saturday Jan. 11 said its armed forces had unintentionally shot down the Ukrainian airliner which crashed outside Tehran. The ill-fated Boeing 737 crashed on Jan. 8, killing all 176 passengers and crewmembers on board.

Here is a recap of other planes hit by missiles over the past four decades.

298 killed, Ukraine

July 17, 2014: Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 is shot down over rebel-held eastern Ukraine en route to Kuala Lumpur from Amsterdam. All 298 people aboard the Boeing 777 were killed, including 193 Dutch nationals. The Kiev authorities and separatist pro-Russian rebels accused each other of firing the missile that downed the flight.

11 killed, Somalia

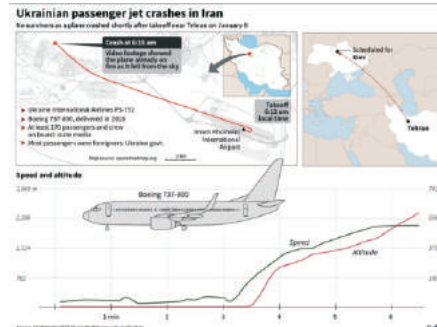
March 23, 2007: An Ilyushin Il-76 cargo aircraft belonging to a Belarusian airline was shot down by a rocket shortly after takeoff from Mogadishu, killing 11 people. The plane was transporting Belarusian engineers and technicians to the country to repair another plane hit by a missile earlier.

78 killed, Black Sea

October 4, 2001: 78 people, mostly Israelis, were killed when their Siberia Airlines Tupolev Tu-154, flying from Tel Aviv to Novosibirsk, exploded mid-flight over the Black Sea. A week later Kiev admitted that the disaster was due to the accidental firing of a Ukrainian missile.

290 killed, Gulf

July 3, 1988: An Airbus A-300 belonging to Iran Air, flying from Bandar Abbas in Iran to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, was shot down in Iran's territorial waters in the Gulf shortly after takeoff by two missiles fired from a US frigate patrolling the Strait of Hormuz. The 290 passengers



Ukrainian passenger jet crashes in Iran

on board were killed. The United States paid Iran \$101.8 million in compensation.

269 killed, Sakhalin

September 1, 1983: A Boeing 747 belonging to Korean Air (then called Korean Air Lines) was shot down by Soviet fighter jets over the island of Sakhalin, after veering off course. All 269 people on board were killed. Soviet officials acknowledged five days later that they had shot down the South Korean plane.

108 killed, Sinai Desert

February 21, 1973: A Libyan Arab Airline Boeing 727 flying from Tripoli to Cairo was shot down by Israeli fighter jets over the Sinai Desert. All but four of the 112 people on board were killed. The Israeli air force allegedly acted after the Boeing flew over military facilities in the Sinai, then occupied by Israel. Israeli authorities claimed fighters opened fire when the plane refused to land.



Rescue teams work amid debris after a Ukrainian plane carrying 176 passengers crashed near Imam Khomeini airport here on Wednesday Jan. 8. Everyone on board was killed. The victims mostly included Canadian and Iranian nationals.



THIS handout picture released by the Ukrainian presidential press service shows President Volodymyr Zelensky placing flowers at a memorial outside Kiev on Thursday Jan. 9 for the victims of the plane crash.

Russian airlines continue to use Iran's airspace



Russian airlines continue to use Iran's airspace, the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency informed on its website. This reported by TASS.

"Russian airlines continue to use Iran's airspace with security measures recommended by the Federal Air Transport Agency taken, including correcting the flight's routes and schedule," the message informs.

The federal agency added that Russian plane crews had not noted any negative factors in the work of the Iranian air control. "Members of the session have stated that the measures taken to ensure safety of flights within the Iranian air space are enough for now," the message informs. "The Federal Air Transport Agency continues to monitor the situation. If necessary, additional security recommendations will be made for Russian air carriers."

On January 8, Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737 travelling from Tehran to Kiev crashed near the Iranian capital shortly after takeoff from the Imam Khomeini International Airport. All people onboard, 167 passengers and 9 crewmembers, were killed. Most victims were Canadian and Iranian citizens. On January 11, Iran's Armed Forces General Staff released a statement admitting the plane had been mistakenly shot down. According to Iranian Brigadier-General Amir-Ali Hajizadeh, the plane was misidentified as a cruise missile by the air defense force.

On January 8, the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency recommended Russian passenger airlines to avoid the airspace over Iran and Iraq, as well as the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. The airlines then announced alternative routes. Rossiya, Pobeda, S7, Azur Air airlines fly over Iran's airspace, while Aeroflot carries out direct flights to Tehran. The schedule for those flights from Moscow and Tehran has been postponed by several hours starting January 11.

Call for transparency after Iran's plane shooting admission

Iran said on Saturday Jan. 18, it unintentionally shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet, killing all 176 people aboard, in an abrupt about-turn after initially denying Western claims it was struck by a missile.

President Hassan Rouhani said a military probe into the tragedy had found that "missiles fired due to human error" brought down the Boeing 737, calling it an "unforgivable mistake".

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei offered his condolences and ordered the armed forces to address "shortcomings" so that such a disaster does not happen again.

The acknowledgement came after officials in Iran had for days categorically denied Western claims that the Ukraine International Airlines plane had been struck by a missile in a catastrophic error.

The jet, which had been bound for Kiev, slammed into a field shortly after taking off from Tehran's Imam Khomeini International Airport before dawn on Wednesday Jan. 8.

It came only hours after Iran launched a wave of missiles at bases hosting American forces in Iraq in response to the killing of top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani in a US drone strike.

The aerospace commander of Iran's Revolutionary Guards accepted full responsibility. But Brigadier General Amirali Hajizadeh said the missile operator acted independently, shooting down the Boeing 737 after mistaking it for a "cruise missile".

The operator failed to obtain approval from his superiors because of disruptions to his communications system, he said. "He had 10 seconds to decide. He could have decided to strike or not to strike and under such circumstances he took the wrong decision."

Hajizadeh said he had informed the authorities on Wednesday about the unintentional strike, a comment that raised questions about why officials had publicly denied it for so long.

In Twitter messages, angry Iranians asked why the plane was allowed to take off with tensions in Iran so high. A group of Iranians demanded Khamenei step down because of the disaster.

For his part, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote on Twitter that "human error at time of crisis caused by US adventurism led to disaster", citing an initial armed forces investigation into

the crash.

Iran had come under mounting international pressure to allow a "credible" investigation after video footage emerged appearing to show the plane being hit by a fast-moving object before a flash appears.

Rouhani said that when the tragic incident happened Iran was on alert for possible US attacks after Soleimani's martyrdom. "Iran is very much saddened by this catastrophic mistake and I, on behalf of the Islamic Republic of Iran, express my deep condolences to the families of victims of this painful catastrophe," the president said.

Rouhani added he had ordered "all relevant bodies to take all necessary actions (to ensure) compensation" to the families of those killed.

"The perpetrators of this unforgivable mistake will be prosecuted." The majority of passengers on the flight PS752 were Iranian-Canadians but also included Ukrainians, Afghans, Britons and Swedes.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky demanded Iran punish those responsible for the downing of the plane and pay compensation.

"We expect Iran... to bring the guilty to the courts," he said on Facebook, before his office announced he would speak later on the phone with Rouhani.

Sweden demanded a "complete and transparent probe" while Afghanistan said families of 13 of its citizens killed in the tragedy "deserve answers".

Iran has invited the United States, Ukraine, Canada and others to join the crash investigation.

It is Iran's worst civil aviation disaster

since 1988 when the US military said it shot down an Iran Air plane over the Gulf "by mistake", killing all 290 people on board.

Trudeau's call

A "furious" Prime Minister Justin Trudeau demanded that Iran provide Canada with "full clarity" on the incident.

Trudeau said he made the demand in a call with Iran's President Hassan Rouhani.

At a televised press conference, Trudeau said he told Rouhani the admission was "an important step" but "many more steps must be taken".

"A full and complete investigation must be conducted," he said. "We need full clarity on how such a horrific tragedy could have occurred."

"Iran must take full responsibility," Trudeau said.

Trudeau said he insisted to Rouhani that Canada be allowed to participate in the investigation.

Three members of a Canadian rapid deployment team were on their way to Iran, and should be on the ground within hours to support families of the Canadian victims, he said.

"I am, of course, outraged and furious that families across this country are grieving the loss of their loved ones, that the Iranian Canadian community is suffering so greatly, that all Canadians are shocked and appalled at the senseless loss of life," Trudeau said.

"Yes, I'm furious that there are Canadian families that have lost their parents, their children, their spouses and it's a huge tragedy for the entire country and not just for the Iranian community," he said.



IN this file photo taken on Oct 23, 2019, Boeing 737 MAX airplanes are parked at Grant County International Airport in Moses Lake, Washington. Boeing employees bantered about whether the 737 MAX was safe to fly and joked that the aircraft was "designed by clowns who in turn are supervised by monkeys", according to emails released late Thursday Jan. 9. "Would you put your family on a MAX simulator trained aircraft? I wouldn't," a Boeing employee wrote to a colleague in one newly released exchange conducted about eight months before the first of two fatal MAX crashes. "No," the colleague answered.



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Qatar Airways announces eight new destinations



Qatar Airways has made this announcement: Qatar Airways announced new destination plans for 2020.

New destinations:

Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan Two weekly flights (starting 30 March 2020)

Almaty, Kazakhstan Two weekly flights (starting 1 April 2020, increasing to four weekly flights from 25 May 2020)

Cebu, Philippines Three weekly flights (starting 8 April 2020)

Accra, Ghana Daily flights (starting 15 April 2020)

Trabzon, Turkey Three weekly flights (starting 20 May 2020)

Lyon, France Five weekly flights (starting 23 June 2020)

Luanda, Angola Four weekly flights (starting 14 October 2020)

Siem Reap, Cambodia Five weekly flights (starting 16 November 2020)

Qatar Airways currently operates a modern fleet of more than 250 aircraft via its hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), to more than 160 destinations worldwide. The world's fastest-growing airline added several exciting new destinations to its growing network last year, including Rabat, Morocco; Izmir, Turkey; Malta; Davao, Philippines; Lisbon, Portugal; Mogadishu, Somalia; Langkawi, Malaysia; and Gaborone, Botswana.

Lufthansa breaks passenger records in 2019

The airlines of the Lufthansa Group carried a total of 145 million passengers in 2019, representing an increase of 2.3 per cent compared to the previous year.

With around 1.2 million flights, the seat load factor amounted 82.5 per cent,



again an increase of one per cent.

Both figures thus exceed the records recorded in 2018.

The network airlines recorded an increase in the number of passengers in 2019, in particular at the hubs in Zurich (up 5.7 per cent), Vienna (up 5.1 per cent) and Munich (up 2.5 per cent).

The number of passengers at the Frankfurt hub grew by 0.4 per cent in 2019.

In 2019, total freight capacity was 6.3 per cent higher than in the previous year.

At the same time, sales decreased by 2.1 per cent in this period.

At 61.4 per cent, the load factor was 5.3 percentage points lower than in the previous year.

In 2019, the Eurowings Group carried a total of around 28.1 million passengers, 1.4 per cent less than in the previous year.

At 82.6 per cent, the seat load factor during this period was 1.2 percentage points higher than in the previous year.

Plan to rename Heathrow after Churchill never moved ahead

Newly public documents reveal that former British prime minister John Major was interested in renaming Heathrow Airport after wartime leader Winston Churchill but never moved forward on the idea.

Documents released recently show that Major considered the idea in 1996 after receiving a letter urging him to drop the stupid name of Heathrow from the UK's busiest airport.

"New York has Kennedy Airport, Paris has De Gaulle and we have the stupid name of Heathrow," wrote businessman Harvey Spack to the prime minister.

"It should be renamed with the name of the greatest man of the century, who has

no truly great memorial in our country. I can only see this as a tremendous boost to the 'feel-good factor' for all of us."

The letter indicated that Spack knew Major and felt comfortable addressing him as Dear John.

Major wrote back expressing interest: "Thank you for your intriguing idea about renaming Heathrow Airport after Sir Winston Churchill. I am looking into this, and I am grateful to you for raising it."

But Major never proposed the change.

The sprawling airport was named Heathrow after the small village of that name that was removed to make way for it.

While Churchill never received the honour, slain Beatle John Lennon did get similar recognition from his home city: when the Liverpool airport was renamed Liverpool John Lennon Airport in 2001.

It was the first British airport named after an individual.

IATA: Stable pax demand growth

November's moderate result reflects the continuing influence of slower economic activity, geopolitical tensions and other disruptions, including strikes in Europe.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced global passenger traffic results for November 2019 showing that demand (measured in revenue passenger kilometres or RPKs) rose 3.3 percent compared to the same month in 2018. This was unchanged from October's result and below the long-term trend. Capacity (available seat kilometres or ASKs) increased by 1.8 percent, and load factor climbed 1.1 percentage points to 81.1 percent, which was a record for any November. All regions saw annual increases in traffic. "November's moderate result reflects the continuing influence of slower economic activity, geopolitical tensions and other disruptions, including strikes in Europe. On the plus side, positive developments in the US-China trade talks, in tandem with signs of improving business confidence, could support an uptick in travel demand. In the meantime, continued modest capacity growth is helping to maximise asset efficiency," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director general and CEO.

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EASA recommends flights over Iran be avoided below FL250

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) issued a Conflict Zone Information Bulletin recommending that flights over Iran be avoided at levels lower than 25,000 feet.

The Bulletin is valid until 16 July 2020 and reflects the conclusions of the EU Integrated Aviation Security Risk Assessment Group, which comprises EASA, the European Commission, European External Action Service and the EU Member States.

It states: "Due to the hazardous security situation, and poor coordination between civil aviation and military operations, there is a risk of misidentification of civil aircraft. Due to the presence of advanced air-defence systems, it is advised to be cautious with the risk associated to civil aviation. The risk to operations is assessed to be HIGH for Flight Levels below 250."

As the situation in Iran is currently very dynamic, a more restrictive recommendation, issued on 11/01/2020 by EASA and the European Commission, also remains in place. This recommendation states that overflights of Iran at all levels should be avoided until further notice, as a precautionary measure.

This recommendation was issued to EU National Aviation Authorities in response to Iran's admission that it had accidentally shot down flight PS752. This

recommendation does not have the more formal status or fixed time limitation of a Conflict Zone Information Bulletin and may, therefore, be adjusted quickly, as appropriate, in response to any new information as it becomes available. EASA says it continues to monitor the situation closely.

Emirates Aviation University honours its graduates

Emirates Aviation University celebrated its 30th graduation ceremony, honouring more than 243 students. Held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline and Group, the graduation ceremony took place at the university's campus in Dubai Academic City.

The graduation ceremony was attended by Dr Ahmad Al Ali, Vice-Chancellor of Emirates Aviation University, Mohammed Mattar divisional senior vice president Emirates Airport Services, Adel Ahli manager engineering training, Professor Liza Bayliss-Patt from Coventry University, officials and government representatives, family and friends of the graduates.

Dr Ahmad Al Ali, vice-chancellor of Emirates Aviation University said: "The graduation ceremony is one of the most significant and meaningful events in the University's calendar, I would like to congratulate all students and wish them all the luck in their careers. EAU continues to grow both nationally and internationally. We are proud to have become the first university in the region to be awarded the Royal Aeronautical Society validating our BSc Aeronautical Engineering and BEng Aerospace Technology/ Mechanical Engineering programmes. Further we have achieved European Aviation Safety Agency "EASA" accreditation for our Applied Bachelor in Aircraft Maintenance Engineering. Both these accreditations provides graduates with the necessary skills to be able to excel in the aviation engineering industry anywhere in the world."

Stowaway child found dead in plane at Paris airport

A child stowaway was found dead recently in the undercarriage of a plane at a Paris airport, officials said, having probably frozen to death or asphyxiated on the flight from Ivory Coast.

The child, aged around 10, had clambered into the underbelly of the Air France Boeing 777 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. It took off evening and landed at Charles de Gaulle airport, north of the capital, early.

The corpse, not warmly dressed, was found in the plane's undercarriage cavity after landing, in what Air France described as "a human tragedy".

Sources close to the investigation said the boy was about 10 years of age, and that he had "died either from asphyxiation, or from the cold".

Temperatures drop to about minus 50 degrees Celsius (-58 degrees Fahrenheit) at altitudes of between 9,000 and 10,000 metres at which passenger planes generally fly. The undercarriage is neither heated nor pressurised.

In recent years, several clandestine passengers, notably adolescents from Africa, have been found frozen to death or crushed in the undercarriage of Western-bound planes.

"Aside from the human drama, this shows a major failing of security at Abidjan airport," an Ivorian security source said, asking how a child, alone, could gain such access.

The last such case in France dates to April 2013, when the body of a boy, likely a minor, was similarly found in the undercarriage of a plane from Cameroon.

Laure Palun, director of an association helping migrants, said this type of drama was the inevitable result of the "closure and control of borders".

"It questions the logic of European migratory policy: As soon as there is no route for legal migration, people have to hide to reach the country they wish to go to, and this results in such tragedies." Ivory Coast is a comparatively vibrant economy in Africa with annual growth of eight percent since 2012. But illegal immigration to Europe has skyrocketed in recent years.

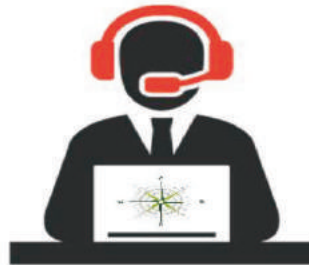


Two World War II bombs were successfully defused in this western German city on Sunday Jan. 12, hours after thousands of people were evacuated from the surrounding area. The bombs were 250-kilogram American and British bombs. Authorities initially thought they had detected four bombs but later clarified that only two were found.



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SIAL News in pictures



Picture shows the Founding Chairman SIAL, Mian M. Riaz addressing at the SIAL Secretariat on the occasion of a special meeting of Sialkot International Airport. Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi Chairman, Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman and Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir, CEO SIAL also seen in the picture.



Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi Chairman SIAL presenting a shield to Mr. Ali Gazanfar, Mian M. Riaz Founding Chairman and Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman SIAL also sharing the occasion.



Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman SIAL sharing happy moments with Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Peer Noor-ul-Haq Qadri, Mr. Abdul Shakoor Mirza PRM SIAL also share the occasion.



Governor Punjab Choudhry Muhammad Sarwar has recently visited Sialkot International Airport (SIAL). He admired the business community of Sialkot to build an airport on self help basis. He promised the management of SIAL to ask Punjab government to give the special package to build link roads to the airport from city. Photo taken on the occasion show the Governor addressing while Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir CEO, Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi Chairman and Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman SIAL and Mr. Umer Dar on dais.



Group photo shows the delegates of AIM with Founding Chairman Mian M. Riaz, Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi Chairman, Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir CEO SIAL.



SereneAir CEO Message



Mr. Muhammad Safdar Khan Chief Executive Officer Serene Air

1. ALHUMDULLILLAH. By the grace of Allah, SereneAir today completes three years of operations. We all bow our heads in humility and gratitude to Allah SWT for granting us the present enviable status in the Aviation Industry. SereneAir is now an established brand and has set new benchmark for hospitality and quality of service.

2. The journey of these years has been full of challenges, competition and hard work. Every challenge we faced enhanced our resolve to serve our valued passengers better and all our efforts revolved around the

concept that the most important asset of Serene is its valued passengers.

I am pleased to inform that besides setting the new records of On Time Performance (98.2%) and Regularity (99.2%), SereneAir has carried 2.5 million passengers since January, 2017. This number in itself speaks of our performance and your preference of Air Travel. I want to thank all our valued passengers for their support and in helping us to maintain our lead in the market.

I also want to commend every member of my team for their hard work and perseverance to attain and maintain our 'BEST' position in the

Industry. Every segment of SereneAir has played its role and has been instrumental in building the enviable image of SereneAir.

SereneAir INSHALLAH would launch the International Operations in the near future. The management is working anxiously to provide better options of travel to our valued passengers on regional and International routes. We are confident that sooner than later, SereneAir would become the first choice of our valued customers in the International arena as well.

Lastly, I would like to dedicate this special day to our valued passengers.

SereneAir celebrates 3rd anniversary

SereneAir celebrated its 3rd anniversary on January 19, 2020. The colourful function was held at Ramada Plaza Hotel Karachi. It was attended by the large number of airline's staff.

Addressing on the occasion Mr. Muhammad Safdar Khan Chief Executive officer of SereneAir congratulated the staff for three years of successful domestic operations of the airlines. He told the gathering that the airline will start international flights very soon. He also announced to give a special package to the airline staff. A lavish dinner was hosted for the guests followed by lucky draws, many gifts were given to the lucky winners.



Mr. Muhammad Safdar Khan CEO Serene Air addressing on the occasion.



Mr. Nihal Akbar Regional Director (South) Serene Air conducting the lucky draws.



Mr. A. S. Azad Editor Flyer International talking to Mr. Muhammad Safdar Khan CEO and Mr. Nihal Akbar Regional Director Serene Air



Mr. Muhammad Safdar Khan CEO SereneAir with the Sr. staff

Brexit- the last nail ...

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

The British as an empire first made an exit from the world arena in the twentieth century and now they have made an exit from the European Community, the EU as named. This chain of thought and action in this direction has been termed by them as Brexit, the most proportionately chosen name, however. The Raison d'etre behind Brexit has again been the mindset of the colonial past, composed of exclusiveness and a feeling of superiority, an exalted living as a separate country from the mainland Europe, despite being located in the same region and continent. Added to this, they have liked to call themselves as dwellers of Island-England, rather than be a part of the mainland Europe despite the fact of being only a few kilometers away from



mainland Europe. 'English Channel' divides France and England consisting of a sea cleavage of 34 Km, besides a similar sea connection exists between Belgium and England. I have had the opportunity of voyaging by ship to England through both of these coasts with a few intervening occasions of course, by air-travel too to Heathrow Airport.

France and Germany have propagated unification and co-operation instead of separation, but the British do not share their enthusiasm with the view that the Germans will and have been dominating Eurozone. Behind the argument of Brexit for the British, has been the notion and the nation that the United Kingdom is, has been purviewing its colonial past, for periods extending over two centuries and thus has enabled them to call their country as "Great Britain" because of having ruled in parts of nearly all continents of the world, mainly in the mid seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And now



because of their feeling of the past, the slogan as such, of Brexit has been coined by them for forsaking EU and saying, "Let's put the GREAT, back into their Great Britain". The 'Great' obviously referring to the British Empire that boasted once the fact, that the 'Sun doesn't set on Great Britain'. True, but the acknowledgement of British colonial past has been replete with vandalism and needs to be analyzed especially in the context of Asia and in particular our Sub-continent India; what it did to India and how it should be seen as we progressed after the British left in the new decades of the 21st century. The Great Britain and its colonial past were not great at all. In fact, it has been a nightmare of an exploitive ruthless period for what was done to the Sub-continent in the name of progress and priority. Through manipulation, violence and exploitation, the British enjoyed prosperity in their homeland at the cost of people, advertantly made poor in their colonies. In today's age of information, public freedom, liberty and international law, the morality and context of the past must be set right before the eyes of the world, vividly declaring the difference between the victim and the oppressors. The oppressors of the past now stand exposed and screwed from all sides of international opinion. The victims are coming up in full swing to come out of the past despondency.

In 1500s, the Spanish, the Portuguese, the Dutch and the French had gone into the

unchartered territories of Africa and South America. The innocent people in these lands welcomed the strangers, but the later butchered them and through sheer brutality and inhuman treatment, many a nations were brought into subjugation through wars and violent tactics. The Spanish and French ventured into Africa and South America. Late to the menace of this colonial game joined the British, who began their journey of plundering and looting distant lands with their arrival in Bengal in the 1700s. The East India Company was set up to find trade routes and to establish colonies, as an initial plan. The British had superior fire power but that is not only what they had used to subjugate and mutilate other nations, who were more humane to have welcomed them, as their guests. The British in order to gain demonic dominance used another weapon and that was the 'divide and rule' policy. This succeeded in the form of defeat of Siraj ud Daula in Bengal in the beginning by conspiring against him through his chief minister Mir Jaffar. And thereafter, the exploits and stories of violent manipulation never ended. Piece by piece, the British exploited the Indian Sub-continent to enrich their homeland back in England. By way of academics, the industrialization of the British Empire was based on de-industrialization of the Indian Sub-continent. Colonialism was a means to dominate other nations. Any other definition of the colonial past cannot be offered. The dominance was conducted



(PM Boris Johnson pleading for a YES vote for Brexit, in the House of Commons)





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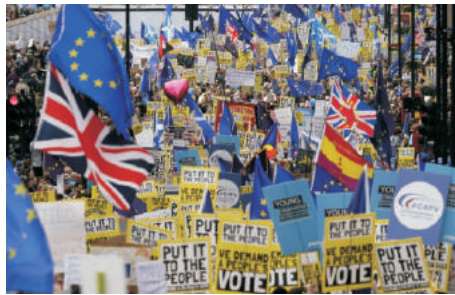
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only through massive exploitation and violence. The effects of colonial rule cannot be calculated, the least that can be done, is that the moral depravity can be seen in history, as what it actually tells us.

From the time that the British arrived in the Sub-continent, the percentage of world trade being conducted from India called once the 'Golden Sparrow', was 23% of the total world which was reduced to 4% when the British left. The first thing that the British did in every area they overpowered was that they completely burned down and destroyed the local handicrafts and small industries that existed. In Bengal for instance, hands were offered to be cut off, for a mere 100 rupees paid, in order to stop the local and un-marveled weaving industry. In place, supply lines were established to buy raw materials at almost negligible rates and sent back to their home country. London was flooded with riches that were looted from local population through these manipulations. The raw materials and craftsmanship that were the daily bread and butter for the local population, was used to feed the empire-machinery in England. The goods produced there, were in return forcibly sold to the conquered areas at high rates. Duties and taxes were collected at exorbitant costs on agricultural produce and properties. The local labour was no exception and not much hired. Only a few hundred British officers and troops were treated as a royalty. They were given swathes of land and properties and could do anything they pleased, with the masses. They systematically built systems to destroy the livelihood of people being ruled, as per policy, made them poor to ensure that they served the empire. For over a hundred years, 'The East India Company' kept waging wars and lay waste large areas of Bengal, Punjab and Southern parts of the Sub-continent, until the people of India revolted that gave rise to the War of Independence in 1857, nicknamed by the British as 'Ghaddar'. I knew no other name than Ghaddar (mutiny instead of War of Independence) as this word was so written in our text books and taught to us in our school days of fifties and sixties. Soon after this War of Independence, the British made an exception by declaring India to be governed directly by the Crowned Queen herself and declaring it to be a jewel in the crown of the British Empire, like Indian government has now done by annexing and declaring Kashmir as part of Indian Union, against the wishes of the people and against the resolutions of the UN. The discredit goes to the UK again to have left behind such a legacy, unfortunate for the Sub-continent.

Apart from the exploitation in trade,

taxes, labour and property, the British did something so disastrous that its effects, can be felt even today. From numbers-point of view, the English officers and troops that could be sent to colonies were few compared to the indigenous population. In order to cover up this complication, the British formed allies in the form of conspirators, dictators or detractors who were readily available in our society and who could easily betray their own people. The prize offered was ruler ship or dependent-rule under the British officers.



The Nawabs, the Maharajas and local chiefs' that helped the British armies take control of India, changed their loyalties and the landscape of the Sub-continent, forever. Even today, the families that are contesting elections in Pakistan and India are the ones that had co-operated with the foreign invaders to take control and exploit the land. The progress of England and the destruction of prosperity in the sub-continent, owes a lot to these families. As Pakistan and India have gone to war over Kashmir three times, the policies of the tyrannical partition and demagogic decisions of the Dogra family in Jammu (who had joined the British camp) in deciding the fate of Kashmiris are a fresh reminder of how much damage the British had caused to this part of the world. Millions of people died and millions others were destroyed for over 200 years at the hands of the British-Raj, the Great Britain was not great at all, but minutely small, by all means and standards of morality and ethics.

Mr. Shashi Tharoor, a vocal MP from Kerala, India, has given a detailed account of British atrocities in the Sub-continent in his book "Inglorious Empire", and he is of the view that people of Britain owe damages and should pay reparations to Pakistan and India for the exploitation exacted upon them for over 200 years. There is no justice in history, but it must be pointed out that time does not spare the oppressors. The colonial era has ended and the colonized nations have now acquired independence from 1925 to 1975; thanks to the events after the two World Wars. It can only be hoped that the effects of a tormented past do not come in the way of future progress of these nations. The post-

colonial resurrection of nations has yet, raised huge challenges and many of them are struggling to escape the vicious cycle of violence, maladministration, poverty and political adrift caused by colonialism. But at least the ship is sailing now in the right direction. According to a survey, a two third population in the United Kingdom is still proud of their colonial past. Perhaps now is the time to speak up and to let them know that the only past legacy they should remember is of shame and remorse in the name of a shared humanity.

But no! the British people's recent YES to the Brexit by an acclaimed majority of votes in their parliament, proves to show their ml or ashamed of their past brutalities, cast over the innocent peoples of the world and it is still their desire to subsist and continue with their dreadful past history. The feeling of being different from the rest of the civilized Europe, with whom they have disassociated themselves through passage of Brexit bill, shows a nostalgic ego of emperorship they once had but which should have been dead long ago. By displaying their megalomaniac behavior they have merely put a last nail in the coffin of their Great Britain. Their majority vote in favour of Brexit displays a complex of guilt to still remain Exclusive or Great even in Europe. Their effort is a jolt to the common cause of Europe and a disruptive role in its joint economy. The people and their government in Britain must realize that their time is gone and that they are a secondary power now, as they have behaved practically in the past few decades by playing only as a second fiddle to the US policies and by having obeyed their dictates as subservient, in cases of an onslaught on Iraq and for Libyan, Syrian and Afghanistan bifurcations and freshly in the Iran imbroglio. They got involved in the 'Spring Uprisings' of the middle East and North African states, at behest of USA. Their obedience continues unabated with a seldom independent policy and that too, always at the cost of sufferers who mainly to belong to the Muslim world. This is the criteria of their politics.

Brexit, will become a big challenge for UK and for the existindset that they do not feel regretful third Prime Minister (Boris Johnson) who is trying to see it through, whereas the earlier two Prime Ministers (David Cameron and Teresa May) had to bite the dust. A similar thrust awaits, as the people demand a public vote. A weak democracy is a weak state and that is what a past colonial state is poised to be, in the absence of a popular vote being the demand of the people to decide about Brexit, correctly. The largest and the oldest constitutional democracies of the world are in trouble.



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CPEC moving into high gear

THE inauguration of the 300-megawatt Gwadar coal-fired power plant in November was the first major sign in a long time, signifying that the multibillion-dollar China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative was back on line.

The plant's launch was preceded by the 9th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meeting that had signalled renewed eagerness of both Beijing and Islamabad to reboot the project, which had otherwise been on a slowdown since early 2017.

The formation of the controversial CPEC Authority and the appointment of a retired general as its head, a decision some allege has effectively shifted the CPEC's stewardship from civilians to the military, are also being seen in the same context. There is also a general expectation that the bilateral cooperation around the corridor initiative is going to get a new push in 2020, as it enters the second phase of its development and its focus shifts to the country's troubled areas, especially in Balochistan.

The second phase focuses on industrialisation, socio-economic development, agriculture modernisation and tourism.

With the military now in full control of the corridor initiative, Beijing's influence on how the Imran Khan government, which didn't appear much bullish on the project in the beginning, handles CPEC schemes in the future has also grown.

The two sides have also agreed to start or escalate work on different new or stalled transport and energy schemes, including the \$9.2 billion railway line (ML-I) to upgrade the track from Peshawar to Karachi, the construction of highways for completing eastern and western corridor routes, securing borders with Afghanistan and Iran to protect CPEC projects, etc.

Both sides used the last JCC to broaden the scope of future collaboration around CPEC to industrial and agricultural development, copper/gold mining, oil and gas exploration, affordable housing, social sector, and poverty alleviation, moving away from the large energy and transport infrastructure schemes undertaken in the first phase.

Officials related to CPEC projects hope that the government would provide a new impetus to the project in 2020. Asad Umar, who was given charge of the planning and development ministry on Chinese insistence on his return to the



cabinet, couldn't be reached for comment. However, he recently said that the benefits of CPEC would start to trickle down to productive sectors of the economy, including industry and agriculture in 2020.

The second phase of the CPEC development would build on the success of the early harvest projects that had helped remove energy and road bottlenecks and focus towards generating greater economic activity and job creation, Mr Umar said. "The second phase focuses on industrialisation, socio-economic development, agriculture modernisation, and tourism promotion. Central to the second phase is the development of three special economic zones (SEZs) Rashakai, Allama Iqbal Industrial City and Dhabeji on a priority basis to attract large foreign direct investment and reverse the tide of deindustrialisation," he added.

Hasan Daud Butt, the previous CPEC project director, expects the focus to shift towards upgrading the Peshawar-Karachi railway track, SEZs, fibre-optic connectivity and the development of Gwadar city in 2020, and hopes that the newly formed CPEC Authority (read military) is going to play a crucial role in the second phase of development.

But there are some who are not so optimistic, insisting that a combination of Pakistan's ongoing economic and financial troubles and an adverse American narrative about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), of which CPEC is an important part, may likely hamper a faster movement on the corridor project in the near term.

"Growing American opposition to the BRI in the wake of ongoing tensions with China and Pakistan's financial issues could frustrate the plans to put CPEC on a fast track in 2020," said an Islamabad-based development consultant, who refused to give his name because of personal reasons.

In support of his argument, he pointed out that the IMF's demand for greater scrutiny of the Chinese investments and loans along with US Secretary of State

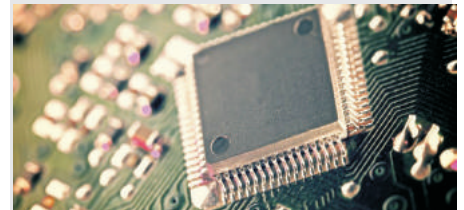
Mike Pompeo's warning in August 2018 that any "potential IMF bailout for Pakistan should not provide funds to pay off Chinese lenders" were mainly responsible for the pause in the work on CPEC.

Others don't buy this argument. "CPEC has pretty much been on a slowdown since late 2017, but it has been internal and bilateral economic and political dynamics that have been decisive rather than outside pressures," Andrew Small, the author of *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's New Geopolitics*, told media.

"The US stance is significant largely in the context of the battle for international opinion over BRI. Unlike during the previous phase, when the US was fairly neutrally or even positively disposed towards CPEC, there is now greater interest in pointing out flaws and failings in BRI's flagship initiative," he said in reference to the remarks made last month by senior US diplomat Alice Wells.

But he does not expect the American stance to have much of an impact on the multibillion-dollar project. "CPEC's fate will continue to be far more dependent on Pakistani and Chinese political choices and the economic dynamics in Pakistan; there will just be additional scrutiny and criticism of the whole thing coming from the US side," he said.

US and China end trade war



The US and China have signed an agreement to halt the trade war that has weighed on the global economy for nearly two years. The so-called phase one deal leaves in place tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars of Chinese imports, however. The deal includes stricter rules on intellectual property in China to a pledge by Beijing to purchase at least \$200bn in US goods and services over the next two years, as well as a commitment by China not to manipulate its currency.

The deal has been welcomed by Boeing. President and CEO Dave Calhoun said that the company "applauds Presidents Trump and Xi as well as Vice Premier Liu, Secretary Mnuchin and Ambassador Lighthizer for their leadership in building a fair and mutually-beneficial trading relationship between the United States and China".



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British lawmakers finally approved historic Brexit deal

Britain's parliament finally approved Brexit recently, allowing it to become the first country to leave the European Union by the end of this month, ending years of arguments that toppled two governments and divided a nation.

The House of Commons erupted in cheers after MPs ratified Prime Minister Boris Johnson's divorce deal with Brussels 330 votes to 231, drawing a line under an extraordinary era of political drama and chaos.

For much of the time since the 2016 Brexit referendum, lawmakers have been at each others' throats over how, when or even if Britain should leave its closest trading partners after nearly 50 years.

Some viewed Brexit with horror, fearing that it stripped them of their European identities and turned Britain into an insular, less important nation. Others embraced it with fervour, viewing it as a chance to "take back control" from officials in Brussels and see Britain regain

some of its past might.

But Johnson's comprehensive victory in last month's general election brought an abrupt end to the turmoil, giving his Conservatives a parliamentary majority with which to push it through.

MPs gave their initial blessing to the EU Withdrawal Agreement Bill before Christmas, and the government set aside just three days this week for detailed scrutiny of the complex text.

But few MPs even bothered to turn up, with both sessions ending early, while the government easily saw off opposition attempts to amend the text.

The momentous day on which Johnson effectively gets permission to abandon the European integration project was all but media.

Instead, it became a footnote to Prince Harry and his wife Meghan's decision to quit royal front-line duties christened "Megxit" and shaping up to be equally complicated and divisive.

"We will be leaving the EU on Jan 31. We will have delivered on the PM's commitment to get Brexit done," a government spokesman said, echoing Johnson's election mantra.

Britain's main opposition Labour party, bruised by its worst beating at the polls since 1935, voted against Brexit knowing the battle had been lost.

We "may not win many votes in parliament just now, but we can win the moral argument", said Labour's Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer, a potential successor to Jeremy Corbyn as party leader. "Whatever [Johnson] says about the wider issues, he must know the government has got this wrong."

The Brexit bill must still be passed by the unelected House of Lords and the European Parliament, seen as a formality.

All eyes are now on another major challenge: the negotiation of a new relationship between Britain and the remaining 27 EU nations, which form the world's largest single market.

Non-textile exports show marginal growth

Exports of non-textile products went up nearly five per cent year-on-year to \$3.781 billion during July-November in FY20 owing to cash support to various sectors and currency depreciation.

The persistent increase shows exports of non-textile products have rebounded in the ongoing fiscal year reversing the declining trend seen during last few years. The trend indicates a natural diversification of the export base owing to highest-ever depreciation of the rupee, which was highly concentrated in few textile-based products.

Under various subsidies schemes, the government had extended cash support to leather manufacturers, footwear, sports goods, surgical, engineering goods, furniture, meat and meat products, fish products and cutlery manufacturers in a bid to increase non-textile exports.

The data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed carpet and rug exports increased by 4.44pc during the first five months of current fiscal year from a year ago. The slight increase shows that depreciation of rupee has helped Pakistani exporters to get market access and compete with Chinese and Indian exporters.

However, sports goods' exports went

down slightly by 2.01pc and foreign sales of footballs were up by 14.73pc.

Tanned leather exports witnessed a negative growth of 18.78pc in July-Nov from a year ago.

Data showed a year-on-year decline of 35.52pc in exports of petroleum products. Petroleum products, crude and naphtha contributed in overall decline in the sector's exports.

After a long time, exports of leather products rebounded jumping by 11.21pc during this period. This was mainly led by sales of leather garment, leather gloves, followed by other leather products.

Footwear exports went up by 22.72pc

on back of leather footwear and others, surgical goods and medical instruments by 10.94pc. However, engineering goods dipped by 2.13pc during the year under review.

Year-on-year exports of gems surged 62.73pc. However, export of molasses dropped by 97.8pc, and jewellery 8.79pc, while those of cement and

furniture fell by 5.27pc and 19.6pc respectively.

In the food basket, exports of rice witnessed a robust rise of 38.58pc in the five months of current fiscal year from a year ago. The growth was witnessed in both basmati and non-basmati rice. This will be the highest export proceeds of rice from Pakistan in five months owing to shortage of the commodity in the major rice producing countries.

Exports of sugar, meat and tobacco are the other three major commodities which recorded an impressive growth. Furthermore, exports of fish, vegetables, and fruits also increased.



Foreign sales of footballs, one of the leading export items of the country, grew by 15 per cent during 5MFY20.

New fuel, emission standards for shipping from January

ON Jan 1, 2020, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) is set to impose new emission regulations designed to curb pollution produced by the world's ships.

The new IMO rule is poised to ban shipping vessels using fuel with a sulphur content higher than 0.5 per cent. At present, the upper limit on sulphur oxides is 3.5pc, unless the ships are equipped with exhaust-cleaning systems known as scrubbers, down from 3.5pc.

The change is drastic. This meant ships would require a fuel product to meet the more stringent rules. It also means; ships found in violation of the new law risk being impounded as ports are expected to police visiting vessels.

When the rule was announced, most in the industry felt, it could be disruptive to the global economy, and specially to the shipping industry. After all, maritime transport is critical to the global economy. As per the United Nations, more than 90pc of the world's trade is carried by sea.

By far, it is also the most cost-effective way to move goods and raw materials, across the globe.

The most dire consequences of the change in rules were predicted by Phillip K. Verleger, in his July 1, 2018 article '\$200 Crude, the Economic Crisis of 2020, and Policies to Prevent Catastrophe,' underlining the global economy was faced with an economic crash of horrible proportions in 2020, for want of low-sulphur diesel fuel.

In order to examine the implications of the new rules, the US Senate held an Oversight Hearing on Dec 10. "There is still some disagreement over what those exact impacts will be," said Sen. Lisa Murkowski, the chairman of the US Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

"But I'm glad to see a consensus or at least something resembling a consensus - among many analysts that the impacts of IMO 2020 will be less than what was projected just a year ago.

Derrick Morgan, senior vice president at American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers testified, that "it is becoming increasingly clear that refining and shipping industries are prepared for IMO 2020. Major bunker fuel refiners and suppliers have been testing fuels for much of the year, and very-low-sulfur fuel oil (VLSFO) is already being supplied at major ports around the world."

He also said the International Energy Agency has reported that "ports, shipowners and refiners have stepped up



Maritime transport is critical to the global economy as over 90pc of the world's trade is carried by sea.

preparations, and major bunkering hubs such as Fujairah, Rotterdam, and Singapore are said to have large volumes of compliant fuel available."

Linda Capuano, the head of the US Energy Information Agency testified, "We anticipate that the IMO 2020 regulations will put upward pressure of about \$2 per barrel on light, sweet crude oil prices in 2020, which will moderate in the following years."

The markets are calm. There is no panic, as was anticipated about a year ago. Major oil companies and shipowners have spent billions of dollars preparing for the changes. Matthew Smith, director of commodity research at ClipperData, told CNBC that he believed there is going to be "very strong compliance" with the new rules at a rate of around 90pc.

In order to meet targets, buyers appear preferring crude with higher yields of IMO-compliant fuel. Abu Dhabi's highly sought after crude, 'Murban' appears falling out of favour, as the world's top refiners seek out types of crude that produces more low-sulfur, high-viscosity marine fuels.

Demand is rising for grades such as Russia's ESPO, trading this month at a premium of \$8 to \$8.40 a barrel over its benchmark price. How the rules would be implemented is yet to be sorted out. The protocol is still to be established. One candid example is the UAE, with Fujairah port acting as a hub for regional shipping. Reports are now saying that though, the UAE has ratified the IMO 2020 rules, it may not rush to punish non-compliant ships when new rules will be effective from Jan 1.

Some others also need to play catch up. Almost 100 haven't signed up the IMO agreement yet. These include Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, Israel, Iraq, Mexico,

Pakistan, and Egypt.

The Suez Canal, a trade artery between Europe and Asia passes through Egypt. How these countries would police the non-compliant vessels using their waters are still to be ascertained.

However, as per IMO, those countries that have ratified the bill, represent 97pc of the global fleet. This means, the laggards, including Pakistan, will need to join the club, sooner rather than later.

Six injured as giant cruise ships collide off Mexico

Six people were injured on Friday Dec.20 when two enormous cruise ships operated by US-based Carnival collided off Mexico's Caribbean coast, the company said.

"Oh my God!" a man can be heard saying in a dramatic video of the Carnival Glory crashing into the Carnival Legend as it docked at the popular island resort of Cozumel. "Someone could have died!" he said.

Videos posted online show the 290-metre (952-foot) Glory slowly arcing through the azure water off Cozumel towards the 294-metre (963-foot) Legend, then making impact with a loud boom.

The Legend's massive bow then scraped along the back of the Glory, leaving the tip of the other ship's stern a mangled jumble of wreckage.

"Carnival Glory was in the process of docking when it made contact with Carnival Legend which was already docked," the company said in a statement.

Pakistan full of hidden natural wonders, says PM

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that Pakistan is a land of unimaginable beauty, hidden natural wonders and untapped tourism potential.

He said this on Sunday Dec.29 in a Twitter message which came after a travel magazine, Wanderlust, listed nine destinations of Pakistan for adventurers in 2020, from the magical Himalayan valleys to lunar landscapes of bubbling mud volcanoes.

The magazine described the 2020 hot list destinations in Pakistan that offer diversity of extraordinary natural beauty without crowds.

Wanderlust lists from world's longest Baltoro Glacier, stretching 63km, to 800-metre tall Trango Towers, world's highest Deosai plateau, Hunza Valley and Attabad Lake, Neelum Valley, Lake Saiful Maluk in the northern parts of Pakistan to Thar Desert and Hingol National Park, in the west and south of the country as hot list for travellers.

The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) recently organised a consultative workshop in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme to take the process further and finalise a 'national tourism strategy'.

During the workshop, members of the National Tourism Coordination Board (NTCB), private sector tourism experts and members of thematic working groups shared their recommendations and suggestions.

NTCB chairman and Special Assistant to the PM Syed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari inaugurated the workshop and appreciated the contribution of participants in the tourism sector. He said that the government welcomed constructive and productive feedback of experts and private sector representatives, which would be incorporated in the tourism strategy. The proposed strategy would provide a roadmap for achieving important milestones in a more organised and systematic manner, he added.

PTDC Managing Director Syed Intikhab Alam said the draft 'national tourism strategy' had been developed in consultation with all major stakeholders. The PTDC has planned to promptly incorporate comments and recommendations of private sector experts and NTCB members, he said.

Meanwhile, British Backpacker Society (BBS) has stated that Pakistan, with improved law and order, and inclusive steps taken by its government, may see a huge influx of foreign tourists

in coming years as the world's rapidly growing tourist and travel destinations of the next decade.

Pakistan, after clinching top position in the recently issued ranking of the United States-based travel magazine (Cond Nast) for the 2020s best tourist attractions, has now been declared as third highly potential adventure travel destinations of the world by the BBS, according to APP.

The BBS, in its previous list of the world's best tourist destinations issued in 2018 had also regarded Pakistan as number one tourist attraction, besides describing it as one of the friendliest countries on earth, with mountain scenery that is beyond anyone's wildest imagination.

The BBS is an organisation dedicated to promoting and enabling sustainable adventure travel in emerging tourism markets.

Unlike the previous practice, the BBS is looking for a decade-wise perspective this year and will be issuing the ranking of those countries, which it believes as top 10 fastest growing adventure tourism destinations of the world during the next 10 years, BBS President Samuel Joynson told APP in a telephone conversation.

He said the BBS members had voted Pakistan as one of the highly potential tourism markets of the future as it started from a higher base. Pakistan offers much more to travellers and tourists, he added.

Mr Joynson appreciated the government's steps for the promotion of tourism, particularly for hassle-free access of the foreign tourists to the country.

He said the new e-visa system and abolishment of No-Objection-Certificate for foreign tourists depicted that the incumbent government had put tourism at the front and centre of its policy agenda.

The e-visa initiative is a huge step forward and very positive as so many BBS members now can easily travel to Pakistan without any hindrance, he remarked.

He underlined the need for projecting Pakistan's tourism potential overseas through an advertisement campaign and projection on the social media.

To a query, he said the government should focus on building mid-range hotels in its northern region as the tourists were facing a major challenge of accommodation.

He also called for upgrading the existing transportation and road infrastructure.

Qatar ruler allowed to export falcons



The federal government has issued a special permit to Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to export 200 rare falcons from Pakistan to his country during the 2019-20 hunting season, it is learnt here reliably.

According to sources, the falcons of highly rare species Saker and Peregrine are used for hunting the internationally protected houbara bustard during winters in the country. Oil-rich Arab hunters keep a large number of falcons to pursue their houbara bustard hunting.

As falcons age with time, hunters need to change their aged falcons with younger ones that could hunt houbara bustard more efficiently. Hence, an export permit was requested by Qatar and duly issued by Pakistan.

Residents of colder central Asian region, falcons follow migratory birds, including houbara bustard, southwards during winters.

Keeping in view their dwindling population, trapping and trading of the falcon species are banned.

The sources said that by issuing falcon export permits the government was promoting and patronising underground black wildlife market as falcons could not be trapped, sold and purchased here legally. The falcons for export would have to be purchased from traders dealing in wildlife illegally.

The sources said that export permit (No: DCP (P&I)18/6/2019-20 Falcons / Qatar), issued by the foreign ministry's deputy chief of protocol Mohammad Adeel Pervaiz, stated that the embassy might export 200 falcons from Pakistan to Qatar for personal use of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar.

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Exotic species outnumber native trees along city's streets



Amaltas, popular for its medicinal properties, presents a spectacular view.

The exotic *Conocarpus* heavily dominates streets of Karachi, which exhibits extremely low flora diversity with exotic species outnumbering native ones. Several major streets do not have any trees at all while countless trees have been uprooted for redevelopment of urban infrastructure over the years, says a Karachi University (KU) study recently published in an international journal.

Titled Town socio-economic status and road width determine street tree density, the study is published in the *Urban Forestry and Urban Greening*.

Led by their research supervisor, Dr Zafar Iqbal Shams, six students of the Institute of Environmental Studies collected the data during 2016-17. They were: Mubah Shahid, Zara Nadeem, Shafaq Naz, Dania Raheel, Darakshan Aftab, Tayyab Raza Fraz and Muhammad Sohaib Roomi.

An important initiative in recent years, the research based on the data collected from 18 (defunct) towns of Karachi provides detailed information about the species planted along streets, its relation with the socio-economic status of residents, as well as gaps in the government approach towards city's plantation.

According to the study, there is a lack of appreciation and dearth of knowledge regarding street trees in Karachi despite growing importance and understanding about urban forestry.

"Karachi exhibits low species diversity mainly due to repeated planting of one or few species on its streets over the years. Overreliance on a few species could be a potential threat of their

complete elimination from the streets due to diseases, pests or environmental changes."

Overall, the study recorded 62 species (30 native and 32 exotic) along city's streets. Of them, the proportion of 54 species, many of which were native, was less than one per cent.

The street tree community, according to the study, had 62 per cent plants of *Conocarpus*, demonstrating its dominance on the streets.

Top five species recorded were; *Conocarpus*, *lignum*, neem, white fig and eucalyptus.

The study also found that the towns of high-income residents demonstrated high tree density compared to those of low-income residents.

The study attributed this pattern to high land value, better infrastructure of roads and sidewalks in high-income areas and lack of interest by relevant civic agency in plantation in low-income areas.

Some towns of low-income residents, Orangi, Baldia and Korangi, however, were found to have greater species richness.

"The civic agency generally removes all the trees, while planting one or two species of its choice. For that reason, Orangi Town had the highest species diversity and one of the lowest tree densities.

"Lyari, a town of lowest-income residents, had the lowest tree density and one of the lowest species diversities, which shows lack of appreciation of street trees by both the agency and local residents.

"Moreover, the town lacks wide verges and spacious median on its streets, which

could be one of the reasons of low tree planting."

Ashady section of the Karachi Zoo.

Some affluent towns demonstrated very low species diversity, mainly due to monoculture planting on their streets. For instance, Gulshan-i- Iqbal demonstrated low species diversity.

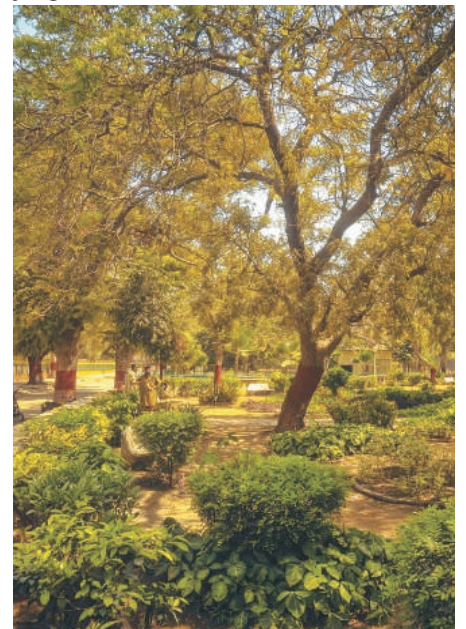
"The town accounted for 75 per cent trees of *Conocarpus* in its street tree community. Low species diversity in street tree community is one of the most serious management issues that show its over-reliance on merely a few species," the study says.

The study found that species' diversity on the streets of Karachi is lower than that of 22 US cities and the towns of Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Highlighting the strong presence of exotic species on Karachi's streets, the study refers to some other researches and states that these species are less suitable for planting in an urban area compared to native species, which support significantly greater diversity and density of avifauna than those of exotic species.

The exotic species listed by the study include curtain fig, rusty fig, *prosopis juliflora* (keekar), *Leucaena leucocephala* (jantar), royal palm, cassia tree, jelly bean tree, copper pod, rubber plant *Pithecellobium dulce* (jangle jalebi), *Delonix regia* (gul mohar), tamarind (imli) and *Morus nigra* (shahtoot).

The native species include date palm, pink siris, peepal, bamboo, coconut, banyan tree, moringa, barn, amaltas and jangli badam.



A shady section of the Karachi Zoo.

Don't kill Conocarpus

Asked how city's street tree cover could be improved, Dr Shams recommended an end to monoculture plantation a very common trend for the last few decades on Karachi's streets.

"Decades ago lignum was monocultured on the streets followed by eucalyptus and then conocarpus from 2005 to 2015. The recent study shows that 62 per cent of street trees are of conocarpus species, which is an over-representation of a single species," he said.

However, Dr Shams strongly rejected the idea of uprooting a single tree of

Conocarpus, arguing that there were a lot of vacant spaces, particularly in low-income areas of the city, where trees of other species could be planted.

"As the study shows that the proportion of some 54 species was less than one per cent, we should try to grow more of these plants after carrying out soil survey, consultation with some ecologists and community engagement to ensure their long-term wellbeing," he said.

The number of these species, he pointed out, should be increased which would naturally decrease the proportion of Conocarpus, which is not an invasive species," he suggested.

According to Dr Shams, the city cannot afford to remove all the exotic species as its tree cover is already very thin.

"In the urban forestry nowadays, exotic species are not an issue but rather the invasive species the ones which spread and replace other species without human assistance and are extremely dangerous for local flora. For instance, keekar and jantar," he said, adding that all exotic species were not invasive.

The Conocarpus like eucalyptus improve soil conditions in waterlogged areas and could be planted after a thorough land survey, he said.

Research on Moenjodaro has slowed down over last 40 years, moot told

The three-day international conference on Indus script has concluded that work on Moenjodaro civilisation has considerably slowed down during last four decades with increasingly lesser archaeological investigations and follow-up research.

Dr Kaleemullah Lashari, convener of the moot titled 'Indus Script Moenjodaro 2020' said during his speech at the concluding session held at Moenjodaro site on Jan. 11 Saturday that the conference reviewed available research on Indus script through its workshop sessions before reaching the conclusions.

He said that it was discussed why decipherment attempts made in past fell short of desired results and failed to provide satisfactory answers to relevant questions. The workshop sessions looked into comparisons in the study of coherence in differentiation within the inscriptions, their size and renderings on seemingly uniform seals and other materials, he said.

It was felt that most of the corpus of scientific work had been reported and published with its stereotypical connection, which itself must have been a stumbling block to the earlier attempts. Comparative study on the seals coming from secure stratigraphy from Harappa during recent excavations with the material coming from Ghagghara basin had shown satisfaction that the related dating worked very well, he said.

Thus, it was felt that field books from earlier excavations should be made available to scholars so that chronological understanding in respect of signage and inscription could be utilised, he said.

He said the moot recommended establishment of a database which could make available relevant material through networking so that huge archives were listed and reproduced in digital medium

for easy use.

He said that this type of research required a multidisciplinary approach. For this, grants for research and awards within and without the universities for scholars should be offered and Higher Education Commission must play its role. The subject of archaeology was becoming increasingly less popular for its less worth in job market, he said.

He said that to create more jobs, they needed to follow European model in which archaeological impact assessments were part of development laws and no digging was possible for any construction until the assessment was done.

Sindhi Language Authority and language departments be connected so that more and more assistance was made available to research. The Higher Education Commission should come forward and assist the universities in this connection, Lashari recommended.

Sindh Minister for Culture, Tourism and Antiquities Syed Sardar Ali Shah said

later that the recommendations were very valuable and would be implemented. Without further delay all the material on Moenjodaro and other Indus sites lying locked both at home and elsewhere in the world would be brought back under the guidance of scholars, he said.

He said that he fully agreed with the recommendations and would soon begin implementing them starting with the establishment of a data resource centre on Indus civilisation at Moenjodaro.

He said that since the Indus civilisation was spread across Pakistan and through India, "I raise this demand from today's forum that we need to create more corridors of culture like Kartarpur to celebrate and share our common past and heritage," he said.

The minister said the year 2022 would mark completion of a century since the day Moenjodaro was unearthed and this moot was the beginning of the three-year "Celebrate Moenjodaro" programmes, which would feature seminars, awareness walks, research workshops and other activities.

In the concluding session, a book titled Studies on Indus Script containing the papers read out at different sessions of the moot was launched.



FOREIGN experts sit on the stage at the venue of the conference on Saturday Jan. 11.

Sabre Karachi in collaboration with Qatar Airways rewarded agents at the wrap up of their highly successful joint promotion.



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Travelling to the Neelum valley



Rati Gali Lake, Neelum Valley

It is no wonder then that the picturesque valley has been seeing fewer and fewer visitors and the tourism industry in Neelum Valley has seen a major decline. Curiously, the government of AJK celebrated 2019 as “the year of tourism”, but locals working in the tourism industry look back at the year differently.

THE TROUBLE WITH TOURISM

A school that was damaged by Indian shelling in



Neelum Valley in October 2019.

Khawaja Riaz works as a tour operator in Neelum Valley. In previous years, he would host an average of 12 to 15 major group tours during the peak tourist season between May and September. But this year he brought only three group tours of 40 people each to the valley.

According to Riaz, his company has to often change the itineraries of their group tours, sending travellers to alternate destinations such as Naran, Swat and Gilgit-Baltistan because of frequent Indian shelling in AJK. “Only a few people dare to visit an area under fire,” he says. Most do not want to put their lives in danger. “Neither can we put their lives at risk just for the sake of our business,” Riaz says.

A majority of the scenic areas that tourists want to visit are situated close to the LoC. The 240-kilometre-long bow-shaped Neelum Valley is situated in the northeast of Muzaffarabad. The valley is known for its scenic beauty, pleasant weather, waterfalls, high mountains and lush green valleys. The Neelum River slices through the valley. The destinations in the region most popular with tourists include the historic Sharda Town, Ratti Gali Lake, Chitta Khatta Lake, Patlain

Lake, Keran, Upper Neelum, Kutton, Jagran, Baboon Valley, Arang Kel and Toabutt.

The valley has inspired many nature-lovers to call it heaven on earth. But with its entire length on the LoC, for 14 years, the area has remained a battlefield between Indian and Pakistani forces, following the beginning of an armed freedom movement in India-held Kashmir in 1989. The only major road linking Neelum Valley to the rest of AJK remained closed for over a decade. Indian snipers targeted the vehicles and pedestrians from across the Neelum River, a stone's throw away.

The 14-year-long warlike situation has left almost all major markets and villages destroyed. Educational institutions, hospitals and other government and private infrastructure were also damaged. Children were born and reached teenage years, never knowing what peace looks like.

And then, finally, India and Pakistan signed a ceasefire agreement in 2003 and it seemed like things would change.

ATEMPORARY BOOM



Sheikh Bela, Neelum Valley

Locals thought their troubles were behind them. The Neelum Valley Road opened and brought with it some temporary relief to the people. Locals started rebuilding their lives and homes, and re-establishing their businesses. Educational and socio-economic activities also resumed in the region. Above all, tourists from across the country started to flock the far-flung area that had remained virtually inaccessible for over a decade.

The rare boom in the tourism industry brought the locals multiple opportunities to earn, subsequently becoming a major source of income for many families in the region. Besides larger government and private sector investors, locals also set up small- and medium-scale guest houses where they hosted tourists and earned a happy livelihood for themselves.

In 2014, only 114 guest houses were registered in Neelum Valley. In 2016, the

tally had risen to 314. By the end of 2018, a list compiled by the tourism department showed the number of guest houses in the area had reached 520.

According to the tourism department, approximately 600,000 tourists visited Neelum Valley in 2014.

But it all met an abrupt end when the Indian Army resorted to unprovoked shelling on the civilian population and it became a matter of routine after the killing of Hizbul Mujahideen militant commander Burhan Wani in July 2016.

According to data provided by district police in Neelum Valley, the number of tourists dropped to 365,500 in 2015 and declined further by 70 percent in next two years owing to the uncertain situation. When the political situation showed signs of improvement in 2018, the number spiked once again to 215,760.

But this temporary relief ended soon. Following the Balakot attack in February 2019, frequent exchange of fire at the LoC became the norm again. The number of tourists instantly showed a decline. In 2019, only 170,856 tourists visited the area till October 10.

Neelum Valley is a seasonal tourist destination. May-September is the peak season, while very few tourists visit during the winters due to the harsh weather and snowfall. Those affiliated with the tourism industry have only five months to earn enough money to sustain themselves and their families for the entire year. “But this season, hotels and guest houses stood empty as people shied away from entering the area for their security and well-being,” tour operator Riaz tells Eos.

TOURISM ECONOMY



Kashmiri women carry firewood

According to Khawaja Raeesuddin, an officer at the tourism department, an estimated 20,000 people, most of them locals, directly or indirectly depend on tourism for their livelihood. Investors have hired hundreds of locals as cleaners, cooks, waiters, drivers, porters and tour guides. Shopkeepers, suppliers and taxi drivers have benefited. A considerable number of villagers sell their fruits such as

apples, grapes, cherries, apricots and plums to tourists. "But none of them consider tourism as a sustainable source of income due to the uncertainty," Raeesuddin says.

According to State Disaster Management Authority figures, 12 out of 59 civilians killed and 73 out of 263 injured at the LoC during 2019 belonged to Neelum Valley; no tourists were harmed. Additionally, the shelling also damaged partially or completely a total of 309 houses, 79 shops, 18 vehicles, two schools a hospital and a mosque.

"This year many of the guest house owners were unable to even pay the rent [for the houses]. How will they manage to pay the salaries to their staff?" asks Raeesuddin. "As a result, many of the workers either remained unpaid or moved to work in other cities."

Why then did his department deem 2019 "the year of tourism?" Venturing an explanation, Raeesuddin claims that the government planned many activities, including adventure sports competitions, family galas, cultural and food festivals. But nothing went according to plan and these events had to be called off because of the security situation.

The first-ever international paragliding tournament in Muzaffarabad had to be cancelled last year after test flights, Raeesuddin says. Arrangements for the tournament activities were disrupted by the situation at the LoC as well as in India-held Kashmir.

DEVELOPING A BRIGHTER FUTURE



A market that was damaged by Indian shelling in Neelum Valley in October 2019

The government of AJK has been investing a major part of its development budget for the construction of roads and building other infrastructure, mainly in those areas with major tourist attractions. In order to develop tourism effectively, a 190-kilometre-long 'tourism corridor' is underway, which will connect four districts Muzaffarabad, Jehlum Valley, Bagh and Rawlakot. The Government of Pakistan has provided a seed grant of 8 billion rupees while the prime minister of AJK, Raja Farooq Haider, has been seeking private sector investment, particularly from overseas Kashmiris, in the major road network improvement project, to strengthen public-private partnership in the emerging business

opportunities in the region.

According to Mushtaq Minhas, minister for tourism and archaeology, the government has adopted an unprecedented ordinance to promote tourism through public-private partnerships. The AJK Tourism Promotion Ordinance 2019 is the first of its kind which, as claimed by Minhas, "would enable the tourism department to lease out land or buildings to private investors in the territory, to establish lodging facilities for tourists in different areas of AJK."

Some non-governmental organisations have also joined hands with the government to promote tourism, by skill building and providing financial assistance to locals, enabling them to maximise their gains from the emerging business.

The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), the Himalayan Wildlife Foundation (HWF) and the Akhuwat Foundation launched a collaborative project to train 100 local families in tourism and hospitality management, and to provide them interest-free loans to renovate the extra space of their homes to rent out as guest rooms to travellers.

But these efforts could not achieve the desired result as the situation at the LoC remained uncertain throughout the season.

AN 'UNDECLARED BAN' ON FOREIGN TOURISTS



A polo match in the valley

AJK remained a no-go area for decades for foreigner tourists. On January 26, when the PTI-led federal government updated its visa policy and started granting visas on arrival to tourists from 50 countries, and conditionally abrogated the requirement of a no-objection certificate (NoC) to visit AJK, it was expected that, gradually, the region would receive visitors from abroad. But it remains an unfulfilled dream as the number of foreigners visiting AJK could not enter triple digits.

AJK has not been able to enjoy the fruits of Prime Minister Imran Khan's new tourism policy because most of the tourist attractions remain inaccessible for foreigners. A tourism official, speaking on

the condition of anonymity, says that an "unannounced ban" remains imposed, as defence authorities do not allow foreign tourists to enter AJK from entry points and turn many of them back to Islamabad.

SAFETY THE PRIORITY

A trained and well-equipped 'tourism police' was also launched this year in AJK to facilitate tourists during their visits. According to the AJK police department, initially, 120 tourism police personnel have been deployed at Kohala, Bararkot and Azad Pattan, the three points linking AJK with Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Eventually, the tourism police's presence will be extended to all districts of AJK, according to an official. Besides extended patrolling, a helpline has also been established to enable tourists to directly access the tourism police in case of any emergency.

"Tourism is among the top priorities...and we are investing a huge amount to make these areas accessible to attract more tourists," Syed Asif Hussain Shah, additional chief secretary of AJK tells Eos. "But tourism is directly linked with peace. Tourists cannot travel in bombproof vehicles or stay in bunkers," he points out.

Govt issues special permit for export of 150 rare falcons to Dubai

The federal government has issued special permit to Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum for the export of 150 rare falcons from Pakistan to Dubai during 2019-20 season, it is learnt reliably.

According to highly placed sources, the highly rare falcons species — saker and peregrine — are used by Arab hunters to hunt the internationally protected houbara bustard.

The sources said that Arabs needed some young falcons so that they could hunt houbara bustards more efficiently.

Residents of the colder Central Asian region, houbara bustards to avoid harsh weather conditions in their habitat migrate every year southwards to spend the winter in a relatively warmer environment in Pakistan.

Falcons are protected under various international nature conservation conventions, including the Convention on

International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES). Trade in falcons is banned under local wildlife protection laws.

The sources said that in the absence of legally trapped falcons and legal wildlife (falcon) traders “falcon exporters” purchase illegally trapped falcons from wildlife traders operating in the black underground wildlife markets.

They said the export of rare falcons to Dubai would encourage illegal wildlife trade in the country.

The sources said that the trans-boundary movement of falcons was monitored closely by the Switzerland-based CITES and Pakistan is a signatory to that convention and has to follow it.

The sources said that besides violating various international nature conservation agreements as well as local wildlife protection laws the government by issuing falcon export permit to the Dubai ruler was also putting at risk the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Plus status given to it by the European Union under which its exports have easy access to highly lucrative multi-billion European market.

According to them, Pakistan has to observe international nature conservation treaties and if it violates these agreements the European Union, which regularly reviews the GSP Plus status given to countries to see if they are following these agreements, could strip off that facility which could seriously affect foreign exchange earnings of the country.

The sources said that the request for issuance of the export permit for 150 falcons was sent by the UAE Embassy in Islamabad and subsequently the foreign ministry's deputy chief of protocol Mohammad Adeel Pervaiz issued and sent the export permit (No: DCP(P&I) 2019 — 20 Falcons/UAE) to the UAE Embassy in the federal capital. The permit says that 150 falcons could be exported for the vice president and the prime minister of the UAE.

The sources said that a few days back Mr Pervaiz, also issued a special permit to Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to export 200 falcons to Qatar during season 2019-20 so that he could also change his aged falcon flock with the younger ones.

Illegal wildlife trade thrives online despite conservation efforts



An endangered Sekker falcon was trapped and sold for Rs9.9m in Balochistan using social media. Trappers wait to capture falcons when they escape the Siberian winter and migrate 5,000 miles to the coast of Balochistan.

Illegal wildlife trade is thriving on social media and on platforms such as OLYX and Facebook, impeding conservation efforts that aim to protect threatened and endangered species.

According to World Wide Fund (WWF) Pakistan Senior Director Programmes Rab Nawaz, trade in exotic birds and animals is impacted by social media because of the accessibility of photos and videos of these species, and by “the increasing popularity of online animal marketplaces.” Mr Nawaz said unlawful trade in birds and animals on social media was a cybercrime but it had been a daunting task to convince governments to monitor and arrest those involved in online illegal wildlife trade. Efforts to block websites that promote illegal trade in species in Pakistan have not been successful either, he said.

Exotic birds, including endangered falcons and migratory ducks (white headed ducks) and Siberian cranes, endangered turtles, scorpions, reptiles such as leopard geckos and monitor lizards as well as animal hides and trophies are being traded on social media in violation of the law. A senior Ministry of Climate Change official said an endangered Sekker falcon that had been trapped in Qila Saifullah was auctioned for Rs9.9 million and pictures of it were shared on Facebook.

Holding up his phone, the official then played a video shared online of a compound with nearly two dozen falcons trapped inside. Trapping and capturing migratory falcons has been banned in Pakistan since 2005.

“Another falcon is on sale in Peshawar for Rs70,000. The seller also posted his mobile phone number for more details on the bird,” he said, showing a social media page where the

advertisement had been posted.

According to the ministry, between 4,000 and 6,000 falcons of various species could have been trapped from January to December 2019..

“At this rate migratory falcons will go extinct in the next five to 10 years. The Sekker falcon – a bigger, stronger, more agile species of falcon – is a particular favourite with the Arabs. Though Arabs bring captive bred falcons with them when they come to hunt Hubara Bustards in Pakistan, they prefer trapped Sekker falcons for their better hunting instincts and skills,” the official said on condition of anonymity.

Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) confiscated a mounted Ibex trophy that was being sold on OLYX illegally for Rs65,000. The board also



Conservationists confiscate a truckload of stuffed wild goats sold on social media in Gilgit-Baltistan

confiscated a leopard skin from a seller advertising it on the same platform.

“Its sellers have two more leopard skins. The big cats were possibly killed not too long ago,” said IWMB Wildlife Officer Zaheer Khan.

The Punjab Wildlife Department rescued and released a falcon in the Rawalpindi district that was also on sale on social media two weeks ago.

One of the directors of the department, Rizwana Imtiaz, told media that there was an endless war against traders illegally dealing in wildlife.

“We come across two to three advertisements related to the sale of animals almost every week. We have a dedicated staff that monitors such illegal activities on social media,” Ms Imtiaz said. Conservationists lament that failure to implement laws that protect wildlife counters efforts to save threatened and endangered species.

While the federal and Punjab governments are endeavouring to fight unlawful trade in wildlife in their jurisdictions, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan governments have not taken concrete action to do so.

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Tourism will be promoted through regional connectivity: minister



Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan speaks at the ceremony in Islamabad.

Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan said recently that the government has taken a number of steps to improve the economy and tourism by promoting regional connectivity through the aviation sector.

He was speaking at a ceremony held at a hotel in Islamabad to issue a 'Tourism Promotion and Regional Integration (TPRI)' licence aimed at promotion of tourism opportunities.

Under the TPRI initiative, which has been made a part of the National Aviation Policy 2019, foreigners would be issued licences to launch projects aimed at promoting tourism in the country. The minister appreciated the efforts made by the Aviation Division in formulation of the National Aviation Policy.

He said the introduction of a separate class of TPRI licence was an important development towards promotion of tourism and regional connectivity in Pakistan.

Mr Khan said the initiative of developing tourism sector along with regional connectivity was an important step for the economic development of the previously isolated areas of the country.

"When we say there should be one Pakistan for every person it means that we have to take care of those communities who live in remote and beautiful areas of Pakistan. We need to come closer to each other for unity, and air connectivity plays a pivotal role in this."

The minister said he realised that there were challenges; people had relatively limited purchasing power and finding a decent accommodation at

economical rates could be difficult but let's be optimistic and hope that things would gradually improve.

"We want to explore our country and are eager to meet our people in all corners of our homeland."

He said this new category of travel

Emerging medical tourism industry in Pakistan

MEDICAL tourism, or seeking medical treatment in a foreign country, often at a much lower cost than in one's country of origin, has a long history in Pakistan. In the 1980s, Pakistan had a bustling black-market organ transplant industry. But this was short-lived, as new legislation prevented the proliferation of smuggled and illegally obtained organs. Since then, Pakistan has emerged as a strong contender for a new and lucrative medical tourism industry.

Low operation costs, high availability of educated physicians and developing medical industries have been cited as some of the most significant factors in this untapped market. However, Pakistan needs to address many issues before it can reap real benefits.

The global medical tourism industry is set to be worth almost \$38.5 billion by 2020. In 2012, the UK's Health Protection Agency estimated that 55,000 people went abroad to seek medical treatment. Of them, almost 70 per cent visited nations like Pakistan, India, Poland and Hungary.

Of the Pakistani medical tourist demographic, most patients come to Pakistan for fertility and cosmetic operations, whereas a small minority visit for cardiac surgery.

Cost has been the primary driving factor for individuals seeking medical treatment in these nations. For example, an in vitro fertilisation operation in the United States can cost as much as \$8,100, whereas in Pakistan the same operation can be done in \$2,000, a 75pc decrease.

Additionally, many other basic procedures can be done at a similar cost ratio. The primary reason for this is the increasing foreign exchange rate. Since December 2017, the Pakistani rupee has lost almost 50pc of its value compared to the US dollar. While such devaluations may not be good for the economy on a macro scale, it does lower costs for foreigners seeking to get treatment in Pakistan.

While Pakistan has significant potential in the field of medical tourism, there remain equally significant barriers to the field's success. A large number of highly trained physicians is paramount in the industry's development. Pakistani

was the right step to provide an opportunity to the world to explore the beauty of Pakistan without any worries of journey. People will now be able to spend more time at their cherished places in minimum traveling time and without any hassle.

physicians are known to receive global admiration. With more than 50 medical schools, Pakistan produces around 30,000 physicians every year, according to the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. While this is sufficient for a successful medical tourism industry, many physicians leave Pakistan seeking higher pay in other countries.

Pakistan currently has 0.8 physicians per capita compared to the 2.5 per capita in other developing nations, according to the World Health Organisation. An average physician in a government hospital makes around \$6,000 per year compared to an average of \$189,000 per year in the United States. Enticing physicians to remain and practise in Pakistan will be the first hurdle needed to be passed in order to successfully lay the foundation of Pakistan's medical tourism industry.

Security in Pakistan has been another barrier to medical tourism in Pakistan. Pakistan currently ranks 5th in the world for kidnappings, with an annual rate of 15,000, of which 10-20pc are for ransom. And although terror-related deaths have been falling in Pakistan since 2011, they remain among the highest in the world with over 1,000 deaths in 2017.

This environment has developed a negative perception of Pakistan. As such, 36 countries have issued a "Reconsider Travel" advisory on Pakistan, including the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom. Ensuring the safety of foreigners and improving the perception of Pakistan internationally will be a necessary step in developing Pakistan's medical tourism industry.

While other barriers and challenges remain, such as healthcare infrastructure and government reform, none are more significant as the availability of highly trained physicians and security assurance.

With a new government in Islamabad and a mounting economic crisis, the road forward towards the medical tourism industry is far from certain. Currently, no legislature in parliament or provincial assemblies has addressed the need

for more expenditure in healthcare. But with the untapped potential driven by low treatment costs, Pakistan's ability to become a global medical tourism hub has never been greater.



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Population of houbara bustard in Punjab declining: report

The population of houbara bustard has declined in Punjab over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019, suggesting that hunting of the bird in the province is not sustainable, says a report recently approved by the Houbara Bustard Commission.

Appointed by the chief justice of the Lahore High Court in 2017, the commission was tasked with conducting field surveys to assess whether the hunting of houbara bustard was sustainable.

To estimate the bird's population at three sites and across Punjab, data was collected as per standard protocols and analysed using standard principles of statistics.

"The overall estimated population of houbara (bustard) in Punjab was 6,223, 6,759 and 5,302 individuals during December 2017, December 2018 and December 2019 surveys, respectively, suggesting a decrease in the population of houbara in Punjab province over the years," says the second supplemental report of the commission.

This report dated Dec 26, 2019 follows two earlier reports of the commission — the final report dated Feb 25, 2018 and the supplemental report dated Feb 8, 2019.

According to the findings of the recent report, estimates of houbara bustard population for 2019 when compared with those of 2018 and 2017 have shown decrease in Cholistan (from 4,299 in 2017 to 3,575 in 2019) and Thal area (from 591 in 2017 to 0 in 2019).

However, a slight increase was observed in Rajanpur-Rojhan area (1,333 in 2017 and 1,880 in 2018) when compared between 2017 and 2018 and decrease (1,880 in 2018 and 1,727 in

2019) when compared between 2018 and 2019.

During the December 2019 surveys, it was observed and confirmed that more feeding points were established in the sampled transects after 2017 and 2018 surveys at the Cholistan site. Further, it was reported that about 500 captive birds were released at the Cholistan site in September 2019 before the surveys.

A few birds tagged at both legs were also observed during the survey. The addition of feeding points and captive birds in the counts has also affected the comparison of 2018 and 2017 results.

"In fact, the population decline that has been established during 2019 surveys could be more severe if the feeding points were not added and captive birds were not released before the December 2019 surveys.

"We highlight, in conclusion, that populations of houbara observed in sampled transects (direct counts) and estimated populations have declined in the Punjab over the three-year period from 2017 to 2019. This suggests that hunting of houbara in the Punjab province is not sustainable," the report says.

The commission found that Arab dignitaries supported significant development activities in the areas, particularly in the fields of human development, housing, access to potable water, health and education and infrastructure development (roads and airports).

"They have also resourced better wildlife management in some of the areas that has impacted on the revival of indigenous wildlife species such as the Chinkara in Cholistan under pressure and threat from illegal hunting.

"These findings are applicable to the areas surveyed by the commission's teams in Cholistan and Rajanpur-Rojhan. However, such level of support and commitment was not found in Thal area."

The LHC had imposed a complete ban on hunting houbara

bustard and other rare migrating birds in January 2018 till a final survey of the hunting areas by a commission.

Advocate Sheraz Zaka and Kalim Ilyas on behalf of petitioners had submitted that houbara bustard was a vulnerable species and that the government should be restrained from allowing hunting permits before the next survey to be held in November.

The commission headed by Dr Pervez Hassan formulated survey teams, including representatives of the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, Punjab Wildlife and Parks Department, International Union for Conservation of Nature-Pakistan, Zoological Survey of Pakistan and Houbara Foundation International Pakistan.

UAE launches multi-entry tourist visas for all

The United Arab Emirates on Monday 6 Jan. introduced a multiple-entry visa scheme valid for five years for all nationalities, with the aim of turning the Gulf state into a tourism hub.

"#UAE Cabinet chaired by @HSHkMohd, approves new amendment for tourist visas in #UAE," the government of Dubai Media Office tweeted, referring to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the UAE prime minister and ruler of Dubai.

"The new tourist visa will be valid for 5 years and can be used for multiple entries and is open for all nationalities," the Dubai Media Office wrote.

Sheikh Maktoum said on Twitter that the UAE currently attracts 21 million tourists a year.

Travellers from Africa, some South American countries, Arab states outside the Gulf, and European states from outside the European Union and former Soviet Union previously needed visas.

In October, Dubai is to host Expo 2020, a big-budget global trade fair.



A FAMILY enjoys the snow in Muree on Tuesday Jan. 7. Following the extension of winter vacations in schools in Punjab, many families are visiting the hill station to enjoy the snowfall.



Artists present a Sindhi dance during a cultural show held to mark the birth anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah at the PNCA in Islamabad

"Hotel One NLC Collection" to launch soon in Attabad, Gilgit Baltistan



Hashoo Group, owners and operators of Pakistan's largest chain of hotels, in collaboration with National Logistics Cell (NLC), to introduce their select service brand Hotel One in the culturally rich region of Gilgit Baltistan (GB).

To provide premium hospitality in one of the most picturesque locations in Pakistan, Hotel One of Hashoo Group joins hands with National Logistics Cell to construct select service resort hotels under the brand name "Hotel One NLC Collection." For this, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Hotel One (Pvt) Ltd. and the National Logistics Cell.

Speaking on this new joint venture, Hashoo Group Chief Operating Officer, Hospitality Division, Mr. Haseeb Gardezi said: "We are pleased to partner with the National Logistics Cell to build and develop resort hotels in Gilgit Baltistan and later in other regions of the country, with a pilot project at Attabad Lake." He also highlighted that this strategic partnership brings decades of technical and engineering expertise of NLC combined with over 50 years experience of hospitality management from Hashoo Group. Mr. Haseeb Gardezi also underscored importance of the economic activity and employment opportunities that the opening of Hotel One NLC Collection will generate in region of Gilgit Baltistan.

The General Manager, Planning and Business Development, NLC, Colonel Kamran Ghafoor (Retd) said: "We are proud to present opportunities for tourists to explore the Attabad region in Gilgit

Baltistan, enabling them to enjoy their stay in a modern, comfortable and exotic location. We are looking forward towards expanding this strategic partnership to other parts of the country."

First resort of Hotel One NLC Collection will be located at the scenic Attabad Lake. It will offer guests the modern comfort of a contemporary lifestyle. The resort hotel will feature a minimum of 25 rooms with a variety of cuisines that will be served to domestic and international tourists. As famous as the valley is for its beauty, the people of Hunza are also well-known for their friendliness and hospitality.

Attabad lake, formed in 2010 as a result of geographic transformation, is only 14 kms away from Karimabad, Hunza and has become one of the biggest tourist attractions in Gilgit-Baltistan offering activities like boating, jet skiing, fishing and other recreational activities.

Malam Jabba attracts crowds after snowfall

Tourists have thronged the Malam Jabba Ski Resort after the winter season's first snowfall.

The visitors, including women, are seen skiing, sliding, snow-tubing, ice-skating, and riding a chairlift to the snow-covered peak.

Ahmad Raza of Lahore said Malam Jabba was his 'dream tourist place' in both summer and winter seasons but the local mountains when covered by snow charmed his heart more.

"I along with friends hiked up to the peak amid heavy snow, which is the most memorable adventure of my life," he told media.

Other adventure seekers said Malam Jabba was a multi-fun tourist resort, where visitors not only enjoyed the serenity of the gorgeous landscape bathed in white but also participated in the winter sport activities.

"For the first time in life, I've come to such an enchanting place all covered by snow. I'd seen snowfall and snow-

capped landscape only on TV but this time around, I have experienced all that by myself. It's all amazing," said Ihtesham of Rawalpindi.

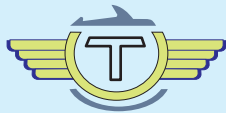
He said the chairlift ride amid piles of snow was wonderful.

Many, who had visited Malam Jabba earlier too, said the hill station gave a spectacular view in the summer season and had its own charm but the snowy view in the winter season was simply magical and matchless.

"Today, we made limitless fun in snowy spots. I don't like to leave such a beautiful place. I've captured Malam Jabba's magical scenes and will share them on our social media pages," said Shazia of Islamabad, who was accompanied by Irum and other friends



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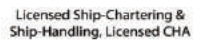
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