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PIA urges patience as flight PK8303 crash speculation soar

Pakistan International Airlines is urging to avoid speculation about probable causes that might have led to the flight PK8303 crash on May 22. The appeal comes following a release of what is alleged to be the recording of the A320 pilot's last conversion with the ATC and headlines in various media sources claiming he ignored three warnings of the controllers just before the downing.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) released a statement updating the flight PK8303 crash aftermath on May 26, 2020. In it, the airline reinstated Arshad Malik's, the CEO of the carrier, previous appeal to the media to avoid '"speculations made by some self-acclaimed aviation experts at this time of grief and sorrow". The inquiry will be held in due course, the statement read.

On May 26, 2020. a team from the French Civil Aviation Safety Investigation Authority (BEA) arrived in Karachi and visited the crash site. BEA's specialists will assist the Pakistani authorities, namely the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board, which is leading the investigation of the accident. The preliminary report is expected to be completed within three months, by the end of August 2020.

But while the official authorities are just starting to unravel the chain of events that led to 97 people's deaths, fingers are already pointed to the airline's pilot.

Headlines in various media outlets suggest that the pilot ignored three warnings by air traffic control (ATC), including notifications to lower the plane's altitude. Similar content to that described in the reports, can also be heard in an audio recording circulating the social media. The recording is allegedly the last conversation between PIA PK8303 flight crew and ATC.

While a team of foreign experts belonging to the manufacturer of the A320 plane that crashed on May 22 in a thickly populated area near Karachi airport arrived here on Tuesday May 26 to offer help in the ongoing probe,

Airbus sent an 11-member team to Pakistan to what it described as an effort to provide full technical assistance to Pakistani authorities in charge of the investigation as well as the PIA.

The International Federation of Air Line Pilots` Association (Ifalpa), a global body, called for inclusion of one of its expert airline pilots as adviser to the president of the Aircraft Accident and Investigation Board (AAIB).

A team of Airbus experts visits the crash site to inspect it

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Passenger plane carrying 99 slams into houses near Karachi airport

Captain Sajjad Gul

The 97 people died when a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight carrying 91 passengers and eight crewmembers crashed into a thickly populated neighbourhood while trying to land at the Karachi airport on Friday May 22 afternoon.

At least two passengers, namely Mohammad Zubair and Bank of Punjab president Zafar Masud, miraculously survived the crash and were taken to hospitals, as rescue work after firefighting operations continued into the night.

It was 2.39pm when the PIA flight PK-8303 (Aircraft Airbus A-320, registration AP-BLD) carrying passengers from Lahore to Karachi crashed into the houses situated in Jinnah Garden (a Model Colony locality between the airport and Malir cantonment), the officials said.

An Eyewitness at the airport said, "It tried to land twice but its wheels were not coming out. And its belly touched the runway before the pilot pulled it up again. The second time he did that I saw one of its engines was on fire because it had brushed the runway. It didn`t return a third time but crashed here."

Witnesses said the aircraft had already caught fire before it came down with a bang. The pilot could be heard making mayday call in his last conversation with air-traffic controller just before the crash.

Footage that went viral on social media and later picked by TV channels showed plumes of blacksmoke rising from the residential area. Flames rising from the top-floor of a house could be seen in another clip. In one video, area people were seen rescuing a person, who was later identiñed as BoP president Zafar Masud, who miraculously survived the crash.

The area presented the 1001 of a war-torn site with the aircraft`s smouldering wreckage lying along with the rubble of damaged houses and burning vehicles.

Firefighters and rescuers as well as security forces reached the scene. However, the presence of a large number of onlookers, narrow streets, broken electric poles and overhead wiresmade the rescue job difficult. Heavy machinery was sent to the area to clear the rubble of the houses and search for bodies and survivors underneath.

Edhi and Chhipa ambulances shifted the deceased and the injured to different hospitals. The Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre received 53 bodies, while the Civil Hospital Karachi got 32 bodies. The health department spokesperson, Meeran Yousuf, confirmed to media that the death toll was 85 till midnight, while all the eight injured were area residents.

In a video statement, PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik said that the pilot of the A-320 flight coming from Lahore to Karachi was heard telling about a technical problem in his last conversation. `He was told both runways are ready for landing, but the pilot decided to go round. Why he decided this and what was the technical problem we will look into it,` Air Marshal Malik said.

The pilot of the ill-fated aircraft was also heard telling the air-traffic controller he lost `the engine` and making a mayday call in radio conversation with the control tower. He was asked to confirm whether he was belly landing and told that two runways were available.

Army troops and its firefighters were among the first responders as the site of the crash was close to the garrison.

Inter-Services Public Relations chief Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar said in a tweet that the Quick Reaction Force of the army and the Rangers reached the site and were carrying out relief and rescue efforts along with the civil administration.

He also tweeted that army`s aviation helicopters were also part of rescue efforts and were assessing damage. `Urban Search & Rescue Teams are being sent on site for rescue efforts,` he said.

The PIA CEO later told a presser in Karachi in the evening that it could take two to three days to complete the rescue operation at the scene of crash, where surface was still hot and a cooling process was going on late in the evening.

He claimed that the aircraft was technically sound and only a probe would help find what had actually happened. PIA would not be part of the probe committee, he said.

The incident sparked a debate within PIA as well as aviation circles as to whether or not PIA was following international safety standards and procedure.

A probe has been assigned to the Safety Investigation Board an independent body that falls within the aviation division as per standard operating procedures and only its report would determine the exact causes of the crash and fix responsibility.

SIB investigators visited the site and collected important evidence including the black box.

The ill-fated aircraft was flown by Captain Sajjad Gul, who was among the deceased. He was married and had four kids. He was a resident of Lahore.

The Pakistan Airlines` Pilots Association (Palpa) expressed deep sorrow over the loss of their beloved and experienced crew members, especially Capt Gul who it said had 24 years of service experience and 15,000-plus flying hours and considered among the most

Firefighters busy dousing flames at the plane crash site at Model Colony near the airport on Friday May 22. Rescue workers search the debris for survivors. This photo shows Bank of Punjab president Zafar Masud, who was on board the aircraft, being rescued. Rangers personnel taking two children from the accident site.

experienced pilots of the airline.

A PIA airhostess, Madeha Erum, was also scheduled to fly on the same plane. She said in a video statement that she was a flight attendant in PIA and detailed for the ill-fated flight but she did not board because of some issue.

Besides Captain Gul, First Officer Usman Azam, Farid Ahmed Chaudhry, Abdul Qayyum Ashraf, Malik Irfan, Amna Amir, Asma Shahzadi and Anam Masood were part of the cabin crew.

Survivor Zubair later told a Geo News programme that the pilot announced that the aircraft was landing in Karachi and he took the plane a bit down when two or three shocks were felt. The pilot flew it up after which the people started praying and for 10-15 minutes the plane kept flying.

After analysing the situation and viewing a place where there was not much rush he [pilot] announced that he was landing the plane but unfortunately it crashed,` he told the programme host. `The time duration was in between 10-15 minutes and the plane crashed nearly two-three minutes after the pilot announced that the plane was about to land.

Cockpit voice recorder found

As Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday 28 May ordered a transparent investigation into the air crash that claimed lives of 97 passengers and crewmembers in Karachi and said its findings would be made public, investigators found the missing cockpit voice recorder (CVR) of flight PK-8303 in the plane's rubble six days after the tragic incident.

The prime minister not only said the report on Karachi air crash should be made public, but also ordered that reports on all previous crashes in the country, including the 2016 Havelian crash, be also released.

As the flight data recorder (FDR) had already been found, a visiting Airbus team had on 27 May Wednesday allowed the authorities to lift the debris of the plane in Model Colony in order to find the CVR.

So a renewed search began for the missing recorder on Thursday morning in the presence of Airbus experts. The vital part of the ill-fated aircraft's 'black box' was soon found.

A spokesperson for the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) said in a statement the CVR had been handed over to the Aircraft Accident and Investigation Board (AAIB). The recorder would greatly help the investigators understand the circumstances immediately prior to the crash because it contains the complete record of conversations between the cockpit crew and air traffic controllers at the Karachi airport.

The AAIB, notified by the federal government on May 22 with Air Commodore Usman Ghani as its president, is supposed to furnish a preliminary report on the crash within a month of the notification date.

Both the FDR and CVR would be handed over to the 11-member team from Airbus so they could take them to France to decode them. Pakistan is among the countries that do not possess the technology to read or decode the 'black box'.

Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan confirmed at a press conference that foreign experts would take the two recorders to France to decode them. He said the plane's wreckage was being shifted to an empty hangar at the airport, where it would be reassembled for investigation purposes.

According to an Airbus statement posted on its website, the ill-fated A320, registration number AP-BLD, Manufacturer Serial Number 2274, first entered service in 2004 while the PIA had been operating it for past six years.

`It has been in operation with Pakistan International Airlines since 2014. The aircraft had logged around 47,100 flight hours and 25,860 flight cycles. It was powered by CFM56-5B4/P engines,` it said, adding that Airbus was providing full technical assistance to Pakistani authorities in charge of the investigation. `Technical support is also being provided by PIA and engine manufacturer CFM.

Pilots' body demands probe into tragedy

The Pakistan Airlines` Pilots Association (Palpa) has demanded a thorough investigation into the PIA aircraft crash by involving the association and international bodies.

However, Palpa made it clear that pilots would continue to operate rescue flights.

It also suggested that in addition to the technical investigation into the aircraft`s health prior to the flight, investigators must consider the working conditions of the ground staff and flight crew.

It called for involving bodies like the International Civil Aviation Organization and International Federation of Air Line Pilots` Associations in the investigation. `We will not accept the way the investigation carried out in the past and will not accept any inquiry into this accident without the inclusion of Palpa, Captain Imran Narejo, the association's general secretary, said.

These are the unfortunate incidents which Palpa strives to avoid by following internationally acknowledged air safety rules to make Pakistani airspace safest for flying. Unfortunately, Palpa has always faced criticism for demanding safety procedures and highest technical upkeep of aircraft and following international safety rules and regulations. Very recently Palpa was a target of hate campaigns by vested interests just because it wanted to follow stringent safety rules and regulations,` Mr Narejo added.

We appeal to the PIA management and the government to immediately order an inquiry into the incident and make its report available as soon as possible,` he said.

Expressing serious reservations over the abilities and past role of the Special Investigation Board (SIB), Palpa said to date no complete report of this board had been received. `We also suggest that after this incident, a competent board other than SIB should be formed,` he added.

Palpa was referring to a `preliminary` report of the SIB probe into the 2016 crash of a PIA domestic flight that killed all the 47 people on board, including singer turned-evangelist Junaid Jamshed. The report in which it claimed to have found a `lapse` on the part of the PIA and a `lack of oversight` by the Civil Aviation Authority was widely reported by the media in 2019, but it was still not officially released and there`s no word whether it was officially concluded or not.

On Dec 7, 2016, PIA aircraft ATR42-500 (PK-661) en route to Islamabad from Chitral had crashed into the mountains near tehsil Havelian of Abbottabad.

In a late-night press conference in Karachi, PIA chief executive Air Marshal Arshad Malik said the aviation ministry would oversee an inquiry into the incident.

We want the inquiry report to be completed as soon as possible but we cannot say when. We do not wish to interfere with the inquiry in any way,` he added.

He said the SIB was an independent government body that would oversee the investigation.

About relief activities relating to passengers` families, he said they were welcome to come and stay at airport hotels which had been vacated. `All affected persons are going to be accommodated in airport hotels and other government facilities in Qasr-i-Naz, he added.

Limited domestic flight operation resumes

After having been suspended for nearly two months, a limited domestic flight operation began on Saturday May 16 from Karachi airport when two flights one operated by the national carrier PIA and the other by a private airline Serene Air - left for Lahore and Islamabad, respectively.

The government had on Friday May 15 announced resumption of the domestic flight operations from Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta airports due to growing demand and ease in coronavirus restrictions across the country.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Airport Security Force had made elaborate arrangements to ensure social distancing during boarding, check-in and disembarkation. It was mandatory for every passenger to wear mask while entering the airport. In the aircraft, one seat each was left vacant between every two passengers.

The CAA said that the domestic flight operations would be expanded gradually. At present, on a weekly basis a total of 68 flights are scheduled to take off from Karachi airport, 32 each from Islamabad and Lahore airports, four from Peshawar and six from Quetta airport. Before suspension of the domestic flight operations, 369 flights used to depart from Karachi to different parts of the country on a weekly basis.

Meanwhile, a PIA press release said that its domestic flight operations partially resumed from Karachi. Flight PK-8304 carrying 84 passengers took off from the Jinnah International Airport and landed at Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore and returned to Karachi with 100 passengers as flight PK-8305.

The PIA is strictly following government regulations of social distancing. Wearing masks and keeping space has been made mandatory for passengers during travel and their temperatures were checked before and after the flight,` the press release said.

It said both flights were supervised and managed by Karachi and Lahore Airport Station Managers, Ahmed Alam and Ali Asghar Zaidi, and their respective teams.

As per the CAA`s directives, all PIA aircraft were being thoroughly disinfected before departure of flights, it added.

The PIA will operate one daily flight on the Karachi Islamabad-Karachi, and Karachi-Lahore-Karachi routes, whereas a weekly flight on Karachi-Peshawar Karachi, Karachi-Quetta Lahore routes and back i.e. Lahore-Quetta-Karachi.

A view of the first flight operated by Serene Air from Karachi to Islamabad as domestic flight operations commenced in Pakistan from 16th May.

PIA operation placed under essential service law

The government recently enforced the Pakistan Essential Services (Maintenance) Act, 1952 allowing the Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) to rescue, evacuate and repatriate Pakistanis and foreigners stranded in different countries.

The Act has been implemented with immediate effect and for a period of six months.

Consequent to the Covid19 pandemic, a large number of Pakistanis and diaspora are still stranded in various countries with expired visas and limited resources, according to a spokesman for PIA.

The spokesman in a press release said that in order to ensure an uninterrupted and continual operation of rescue, evacuation and repatriation efforts, the services of PIACL had been placed under the Essential Services (Maintenance) Act 1952, with an immediate effect and for a period of six months.

It is hoped that through the implementation of this act, the departments and employees of the company will generate greater synergy in achieving the objective of complete repatriation of stranded Pakistanis across the globe and the company will contribute positively to this national service, which is a gigantic task, considering the number of expatriate Pakistanis stranded abroad.

The government is cognizant and recognizes the efforts put in by the brave men and women employees of the national flag carrier by putting their lives at risk in operating over 160 flights and evacuating over 27,000 Pakistani and other nationals till date.

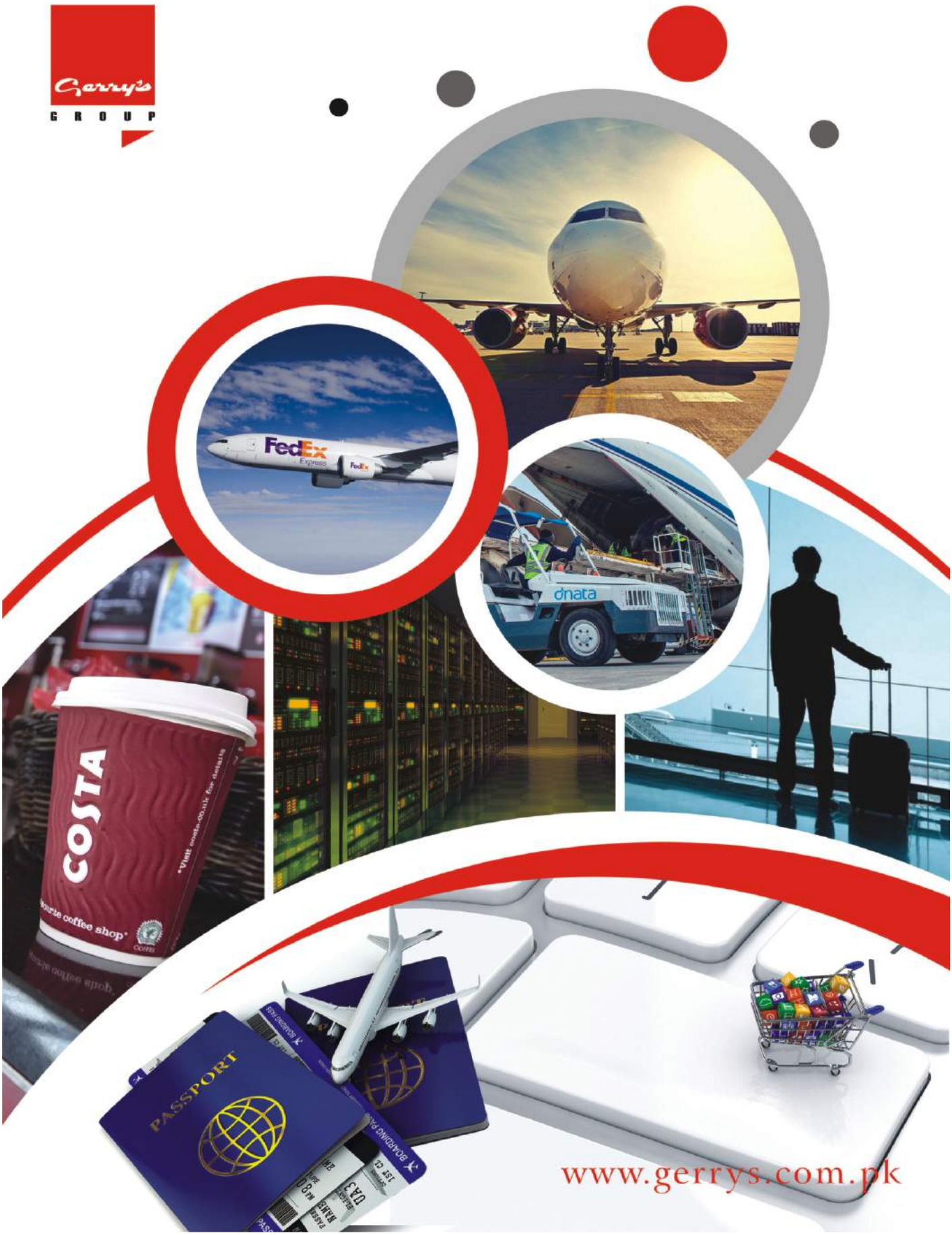
The spokesman said that PIA had been operating special flights to repatriate Pakistanis stranded abroad despite the risk of corona virus and had brought back more than 27,000 people so far.

He said the PIA CEO received complaints from thousands of people who had been waiting in different countries to be repatriated to their home country.

PIA would continue the operation with the government permission till the last Pakistani returned home, he said.

The spokesman announced that PIA would also repatriate the bodies of those who had died abroad.

PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik said the organisation had the full support of all government circles and national institutions in this mission for which he was sincerely grateful.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Living close to the airport is at risk

Airline operations were first identified with environmental hazards in1950 when the turbine engine aircraft made their debut for commercial transportation. The major noticeable effect was the exhaust plumes from "The engine. In he last 50 years, it has been realised time and again that aircraft too have an adverse effect on the environment, particularly the air quality, noise level and the ozone layer.

As the number of aircraft has multiplied to meet the competition between different countries, the discharge of pollutants into the atmosphere continues to mount without let or hindrance.

The operations at the Karachi airport too have gone up by leaps and bounds in the recent years. The number of landings and take-offs, for instance, increased from 9,198 in 1950-51 to 12,356 in 1960-61, where after it almost doubled and aggregated 22,281 in 1970-71. There was next ten years when landings, take-offs totalled 37,689 in 1980-81. In 1990-91, the total operation from 25 in 1950-51 to 125 in 1990-91. With the operation of airlines in the private sector, this number has increased to over 175 and again more than double in recent years.

Air pollution

.Emission of carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide takes place in different proportions during an aircraft's off. Calculating on the basis of 125 landings and takes-off daily, the pollution load is estimated at 0.25 ton of sulphur dioxide, 3.125 tons of nitrogen oxides, 5.8 tons of carbon monoxide and 0.18 ton of particulate matter which includes 0.02 kg of the cancer-producing substance, benzopyrene, per day. The macro-environment of the airport is thus charged with acidic is thus charged with acidic fumes and hazardous material.

The pollution load may not appea. appreciable and it could be argued that the vast open area between the runway and the residential colonies produces the desired dilution effect to reduce the hazards of emissions. The pollution load also does not appear to be high compared to that emitted by Karachi's vehicular traffic which amounts to 170 tons of carbon monoxide alone. The impact of the latter is on the city of Karachi while that of the city of Karachi while that of the former is restricted to the residential area surrounding the airport.

Thus people residing in Malir Cantonment, Model Colony, Malir Extension Colony Gulshan-e-Jamal and Gulistan-e-Jauhar receive the shower of aircraft pollution and are vulnerable to some disease hit her to unknown to them.

Noise pollution

The landing of an aircraft is accompanied by a loud road and the noise level approximates 95 to 110 dB at the runway and 75-80 at a distance of 3 km where the residential colonies of Gulshan-e-Jamal, Malir Cantonment and Model Colony are located.

At Pahalwan Goth and the army barracks in Malir Cantonment which are directly under the flyway of the air-crafts, a peak noise is obviously of a brief duration but it is erratic and unpredictable and creates a highly stressed condition for the population living in the goths and the residential buildings in the Malir Cantonment and the barracks housing the army personnel. In recent years the airline operations at the Karachi airport have become a perpetual source of nuisance for more than one million people, particularly at night when the background noise level is reduced to 55 to 65 dB due to thinner traffic. It may be pointed out that night operations are not undertaken at the airports of the industrialised countries.

High altitude flights

Nitrogen oxides as noted above,are among the major air pollutants discharged by the combustion of the jet fuel. The pollutant reacts with ozone and destroys it. Supersonic aircraft may not generate very high quantities of nitrogen oxides but they have the capability to release them at high altitudes. The introduction of supersonic flights can therefore be instrumental in the depletion of the protective ozone layer. The depletion of layer by the chlorofluorocarbons, CFCs, has been duly noted by the industrialized countries and CFCs production is being regulated. Due concern has also been shown by the world community on the role of the super-' sonic flights and Pakistan should follow the example because the area north of the Quetta-Multan axis is vulnerable to the adverse effects of ozone layer depletion and there could be an increase in the incidence of skin cancer and cataracts there.

Impact on health

Studies on the ill-effects of noise from aircraft reaching a level of 95 to 105 dB 560 times a day on a community resident three to five km away resident three to five km away from the airport suggest a 20% higher mortality rare in all cases compared to residents at a distance of 10 to 15 km. Noise-induced stress causes hypertension, heart problems, and a variety of ailments. Nervous breakdown has also been noted among residents who live in close proximity of airports. The stress pattern has become all too familiar and has manifested in a variety of ways including an interruption in communication and conversation and transient psychosis.

High rise buildings

As new colonies come up and the population density around the Karachi airport multiplies, adding to the stress and anxiety of the city's dwellers, it is time that plans were taken in hand for another airport at the earliest.

On May 22, 2020, a PIA A320 plane from Lahore to Karachi crashed in a densely populated area near Karachi airport killing 97 of the 99 passengers and crew members on board. A teenage girl on ground also died later.

The plane crash took place in Model Colony area. the plan probably due to some technical fault crashed over residential area of Model Colony Karachi resultantly about 20 houses and some cars were damaged and heavy human casualties.

It may be noted that no high-rise buildings or multi-storied houses lay on the final approach of the Heathrow. The investigators in finalising their crash report must also take note of the mushroom growth of housing colonies around the Jinnah International Airport among the other reasons.

PIA cancels agreements with employees associations

A day after the government enforced the Pakistan Essential Services (Maintenance) Act, 1952, the management of Pakistan International Airlines has cancelled working agreements with all PIA employees associations, with the exception of the Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA).

The step has been taken to allow the PIA to rescue, evacuate and repatriate Pakistanis and foreigners stranded in different countries.

In a notification issued by the PIA management, all employees associations, other than the CBA, have been de-recognised with immediate effect and for a period of six months.

The CBA is the sole constitutional body for representing and negotiating on behalf of the employees with the management.

The de-recognised associations include the Pakistan Airline Pilots Association, Senior Staff Association, Airline Technologists Association of Pakistan, Society of Aircraft Engineers of Pakistan and Pakistan Airline Cabin Crew Association.

These associations represent PIA employees only, and not the workers of other airlines.

The PIA management has proceeded with the de-recognition of these associations on account of operating imperatives and to bring the company out of the strangleholds of various groups attempting to create a shadow and or parallel management.

This is, however, with the assurance that these measures are not against the employees but simply to ensure smooth operations of the company, the notification said.

In this connection, individual letters have been written to the heads of the a aforementioned associations, hence forth the only recognised body for negotiation would be the CBA which is legitimised under Section 19 of the Industrial Relations Act, 2012.

All matters brought forward by these associations will no longer be entertained; however, individual grievances, if any, would be considered and treated on merit.

Consequent upon the termination of agreements, appropriate admin orders have been issued separately.

The letters issued to the heads of the employees associations also state that all attempts have been made not to reduce the salary, allowances and other perks of employees.

PIA chief says fares to be rationalised after complaints

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has promised to `rationalizes` its fares, following complaints by passengers they are being overcharged for special flights.

Air Marshal Arshad Malik, the chief executive officer (CEO) of the PIA, held out the assurance that he would look into the assertion of overcharging based on high operating costs associated with these flights.

The national flag carrier has recently been facing complaints of high fares and Ghulam Sarwar Khan, the minister for aviation, took up the case with the CEO in a meeting in Islamabad recently.

The aviation minister had inquired about the fares. In response, the CEO had explained that as most of the flights were ferry flights or were flown with limitednumber of passengers due to ceiling put forth by the government, to make such flights economically viable, slightly higher fares were being charged.

The CEO was also concerned over the recent spate of complaints, said a spokesperson for the airline, adding that he had simultaneously ordered of ficials to consider revision of fares for benefit of expatriate Pakistanis in this time of need.

A meeting was held here at Islamabad between Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan and PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik to review the special operations to bring back stranded Pakistanis and for repatriation of foreigners stuck in this country.

Various arrangements, including safety measures, disinfection of the planes at and outside Pakistan, adherence to various safety protocols and safety of crew, were deliberated upon.

During the discussion, the minister inquired about the fares being charged by PIA on its special flights.

The minister was informed that as most of the flights were ferry flights or were flown with limited number of passengers due to ceiling put forth by the government, to make suchflights economically viable, slightly higher fares were being charged from the passengers.

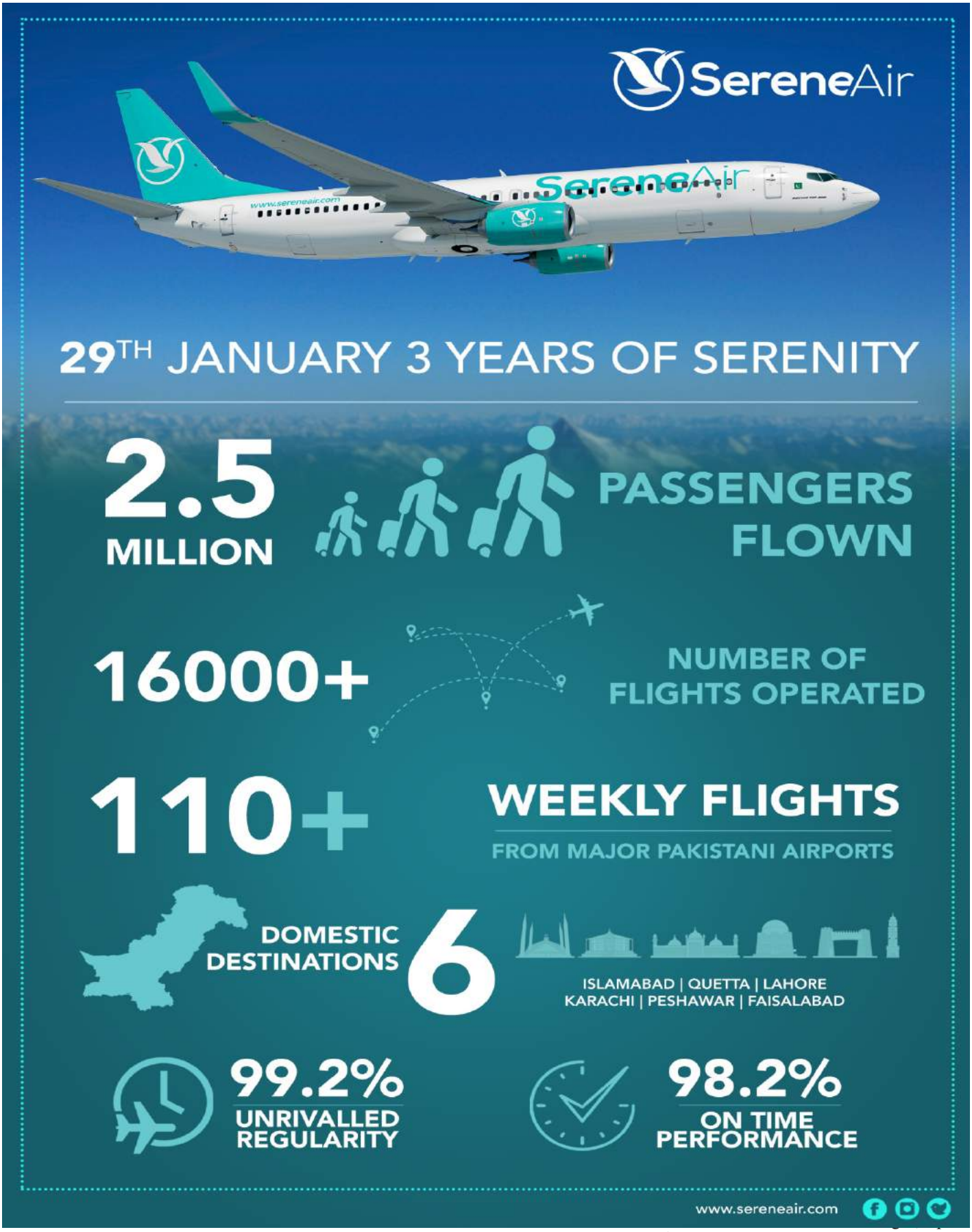
Mr Malik assured the minister that he would look into the assertion of overcharging based on high operating costs associated with these flights.

On the other hand, Aviation Minister Sarwar Khan chaired a meeting with Aviation Secretary Hassan Nasir Jamy and senior officers of the division. The aviation secretary highlighted ongoing ef forts of the Civil Aviation Authority to reclaim hundreds of acres of encroached land.

While emphasising the need to speed up the anti-encroachment efforts of Civil Aviation Authority, the aviation minister showed firm resolve to get rid of the illegal occupation of CAA land.

The federal minister instructed the officers of the aviation division to put this matter on the highest priorityin order to settle the land issues of Civil Aviation Authority, without any delay and to be updated on this matter on weekly basis.

He was also briefed about the action taken by the aviation division on complaints received on the Prime Minister`s delivery unit portal.



$3,000 (£2,500) per month.

Boeing scraps $4.2bn deal to buy Embraer

Boeing announced recently it was pulling out of a $4.2 billion deal to acquire the commercial plane division of its Brazilian rival Embraer, the latest in a string of setbacks for the troubled US aviation giant.

The companies had planned to form a jointventure in which Boeing would take an 80 percent stake in that division. The deal had been due to be finalized.

But Boeing said it was exercising its right to pull out of a preliminary deal reached in July 2018. It said in a statement, `Embraer did not satisfy the necessary conditions.

Boeing has worked diligently over more than two years to finalize its transaction with Embraer,` said Marc Allen, the Boeing executive who led the joint venture plan.

He said that over the past several months the companies held extensive talks on what he termed unsatisfied conditions in the initial accord.

We all aimed to resolve those by the initial termination date, but it didn`t happen,` Allen said, without explaining what the unresolved issues were.

Airbus considers restructuring, 10,000 jobs at stake

Airbus is reportedly preparing a restructuring plan that would cut thousands of jobs, in order to alleviate the impact of the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis.

Airbus President and CEO Guillaume Faury reportedly told its executives on May 14, 2020, that a restructuring plan would be presented next month. It could involve the loss of 10,000 jobs, according to the sources of the British daily the Telegraph.

The information was confirmed by another source of the French media La Depeche, which added that the plan could be "heavier than that of Power 8" – a previous restructuring in 2007. Due to the problems encountered by the A380 program, the previous plan had led to the layoff of 5,000 people. This time, the source claims the reduction could reach 10% of the workforce, meaning that more than 13,500 jobs could be impacted.

The number was not officially confirmed by the manufacturer, yet it said it would take "all necessary measures to ensure the future of Airbus".

In a letter sent on April 24, 2020, Faury warned that Airbus was "losing money at an unprecedented speed". Without immediate action to alleviate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the survival of the manufacturer was at stake.

Airbus A400M achieves Automatic Low Level Flight certification

RAF A400M performing low level flights in Wales ©Scott Norbury

The Airbus A400M new generation airlifter has achieved a new decisive milestone after the certification of its Automatic Low Level Flight capability, offering a unique capability in its class for a military transport aircraft.

The certification campaign, performed in April above the Pyrenees and central France, involved operations down to 500ft, including transitions from low level flight to other operations like aerial delivery.

This first certification phase concerns operations with Visual Meteorological Conditions, meaning with crew visibility. There will be a second phase including Instrumental Meteorological Conditions, without visibility, to be certified in the second quarter of 2021.

Annual air show and aviation publication goes digital

Smoke on...Go!, the annual photobook which features South African air show event and performer news, has now widened its reach by launching a website and monthly newsletter.

The newsletter will feature in-depth views and interviews on all things to do with both aerobatic and commercial flying, breaking aviation industry news, local and international pilot profiles and insight from top industry specialists. The website will also include monthly tutorials aimed at both the commercial and aerobatic pilot.

"From our extensive experience within the aviation industry, we know that besides our talented pilots and aviators, there are also thousands of aviation enthusiasts in South Africa. This website is now another platform that speaks directly to them and supports the popular annual publication," says Hayley Horan, managing director of Creative Space Media.

"South Africa boasts some of the finest aviation talent in the world and we want to honour these heroes of the sky. Whether in the midst of the air show season, or today with all aerobatic planes grounded and all air shows cancelled or postponed, there remains a real interest and passion for this type of aviation news," she says.

While Covid-19 has severely impacted the running of air shows and aviation events both locally and internationally, the industry is optimistic that air shows will resume and continue to be some of the most popular and best-attended outdoor events in South Africa in the future.

Monthly editorial contributors include local and international aviators and aviation specialists, including Captain Scully Levin, one of South Africa's aerobatic display pilots, with over 50 years of air show flying and 38 years of commercial airline flying under his belt.

What happens when you flush an aircraft's toilet?

Have you ever wondered what happens when you flush an aircraft toilet? What causes the loud noise, and where is the waste stored on the aircraft? It is actually a great pressure-based system, developed in the 1970s, that is used on all commercial aircraft, as this article explores.

The aircraft toilet working differently to ground toilets.

The modern aircraft toilet

The toilet that we all know and use on aircraft today is a vacuum-based system, with a non-stick bowl. It was invented (and patented) in 1975 by James Kemper (you can view the US patent details here). The system is mostly water-free, clearing the bowl instead by suction.

This offers several advantages over a water-filled system, as is usual in toilet systems on the ground. It is much cleaner for a start (imagine the spillages during turbulence or sudden movements). But it is also lighter as there is no need for a large tank of water for flushing. If you think how many times a toilet can be used on a full 747 or A380, you can imagine the weight saving.

When Does An Aircraft Get Written Off?

There hasn't been much change to aircraft toilets since these were introduced, at least not the technology. Airlines frequently change the toilet designs and layouts of their bathrooms. Sometimes these changes are towards the large and luxurious, such as the spacious toilets and showers on some A380 aircraft, and sometimes towards the small and simple, such as space-saving versions installed on the Boeing 737 MAX (measuring just 24 inches from wall-to-wall).

The modern toilet on a Qatar Airways Boeing 787.

The 737 MAX has some of the smallest toilets in the air.

Vacuum suction

So how does the vacuum toilet work? When the flush button is pressed, a valve at the base of the toilet bowl opens, a small amount of blue disinfectant liquid (known as Skychem) flushes through, then the contents are sucked out of the bowl by suction. This is the 'whoosh' sound you hear when flushing.

This suction works by pressure difference. The waste tank is kept at a lower pressure than the cabin (it is not pressurized like the cabin is). There is also a vacuum pump in the system which is used when there is not sufficient differential pressure (this explains how the toilets still work on the ground). Once the valve in the toilet bowl is opened, the pressure difference causes air from the toilet bowl to be sucked rapidly out.

The storage tanks are tempted via suction once the aircraft is one the ground.

The waste and Skychem solution then flows through pipes to the rear of the aircraft. It is stored in large sealed tanks and emptied once on the ground, either by tanker or pumped into an underground storage system.

Old toilet systems doing without the vacuum

Before the development of the vacuum system, aircraft toilets were chemical-based. These are flushed using a combination of water and disinfectant, and stored in tanks directly below the toilets. Such a system would be much heavier, though, and also potentially less pleasant, with the tank usually closer to the toilet rather than at the rear of the aircraft.

Chemical toilets date back to the 1920s, with British company Elsan developing some of the earliest ones. These were used extensively on transport and bombing aircraft during the Second World War. In the UK, there were known simply as 'Elsans' and, while practical, they would frequently spill their contents.

What's the gain of flying a smaller single-aisle during COVID-19 recovery?

As flying recommences after country lockdowns, the fill factors for the flights will be low for an extended period.

Airlines and the OEMs are anticipating the low load factors. For instance, Delta has not deferred any Airbus A220 deliveries but is postponing deliveries of larger aircraft. How much of an advantage is a smaller aircraft when opening up the traffic again?

We compare the operational costs of the Airbus alternatives, the cost of flying the A220-300 is compared with the A320neo.

Summary:

- The A220-300 is about 25 seats smaller than the A320neo. It's smaller airframe makes for lower fuel costs and airway/landing fees.
- There are savings on the crew side as well, as both flight and cabin crew costs less.
- Finally, modern systems, a composite wing, and a fuselage made of advanced materials promise lower maintenance costs than the A320neo.

Why did Boeing build the 777?

What was the market like for Boeing to build the 777? And what role has the plane type gone on to serve in the Boeing lineup? Let's explore.

Boeing 777-200LR.
The market before the Boeing 777

In the 1990s, Boeing was in a unique place. Its line of smaller aircraft, such as the Boeing 737, had slowly been getting bigger and led up to the design of Boeing 767. Additionally, it is a very successful long-range Boeing 747 that had been popular in carrying many passengers far away, although it did have one or two flaws (which we will get to in a minute).

Then in the 1980s, the FAA ruled that some twinjet aircraft could be rated to fly up to three hours without having an airport nearby (ETOPS). Airlines no longer needed to use a four-engined Boeing 747 to fly between Europe and the United States, and thus could use a more fuel-efficient aircraft Boeing 767 or Airbus A300.

Alas, these planes didn't carry as many passengers as the Boeing 747. While airlines saved on fuel consumption, airlines found that they were making less money with fewer seats. These events created the demand for a new aircraft, with the fuel savings of a twin jet, but the capacity to carry as many passengers as the Boeing 747.

Boeing decided to meet with eight different airlines to see what they needed and if there was a gap in its offering. They met with:

- All Nippon Airways,
- American Airlines,
- British Airways,
- Cathay Pacific,
- Delta Air Lines,
- Japan Airlines,
- Qantas (who would never order the Boeing 777),
- United Airlines

Airlines pointed out the gap between the Boeing 747 and the 767, and that a new jet could fit both markets.

Besides, around the late 80s, many rival DC-10 and L-1011 aircraft were approaching retirement, and there was not an improved replacement model on the market.

The Boeing 777 in 2001. Photo:

Boeing's answer to the market

Surprisingly, the Boeing 777 was not the first answer to this market gap!

Boeing came to the table with the Boeing 767X, a sort of double-deck monstrosity that had the paper benefits of the twin-engine and improved passenger capacity. This design would mean that the Boeing 767 production line would remain, as well as the savings by using the same cockpit, engines, and more.

Boeing originally wanted to stretch or double-deck the 767. Photo: Air Canada

The 767X design was not popular with airlines, who wanted the ability to entirely modify the interior and wanted a design that was cheaper to operate.

Boeing conceded and decided that they would need to come up with a completely clean-sheet new design, one that took on board the airlines' input and met their particular design conditions.

The 777 would be the first aircraft wholly designed on a computer and would be bigger than all other twinjet or trijet airplanes flying at the time but smaller than the 747. Boeing would also bring to the table improvements in "airfoil technology, flight deck design, passenger comfort, and interior flexibility," as mentioned by Boeing in its history of the Boeing 777.

The aircraft would go on to be incredibly popular and become a cornerstone product of not only the Boeing commercial aircraft line but airlines as well. Boeing is soon to deliver the latest version of the Boeing 777, the 777X, and usher in another few decades of one of the best aircraft ever to be built.

COVID-19 & the role of pollution

COVID-19 is the most burning topic to talk about these days all over the world.

The world think-tank is thus trying to explore this life threatening virus from all aspects. The most competent persons of the world are of the opinion that presenc of pollution in the air is helping various viruses damage human life globally.

The study, published in SCIENCE DIRECT tells that the high level of pollution in northern Italy should be considered an additional co-factor of the high level of mortality recorded in that area. Thus, high levels of air pollution can raise the risk of dying from Covid-19.

The most underlying pollution-related conditions have caused severe damage to human life. However, the medical professionals say it is too early to prove a direct relationship between COVID-19 & POLLUTION

World-wide attempts are on way to draw a map of the most polluted cities based on authentic database to support national authorities in these regions so that they can prepare their epidemic response plan accordingly.

A US study suggests Covid-19 death rates rise by about 15% in areas with even a small increase in fine-particle pollution levels in the years before the pandemic.

These particles, one-30th of the diameter of a human hair, have previously been linked to health issues including respiratory infections and lung cancer.

Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich chair of epidemiology Air pollution reveals that efforts are in line with earlier reports on hospitalisation and mortality due to pneumonia. As per first findings in this regard the role of pollution is substantiating our suspicion and the hypothesis that severity of the Covid-19 infection may be augmented by particulate matter air pollution.

Another study, at the University of Siena, in Italy, and Arhus University, in Denmark, suggest a possible link between high levels of air pollution and Covid-19 deaths in northern Italy. It is also a dire need of present scenario that population, age, differing health systems, and a variation in prevention policies across regions should also be taken into account.

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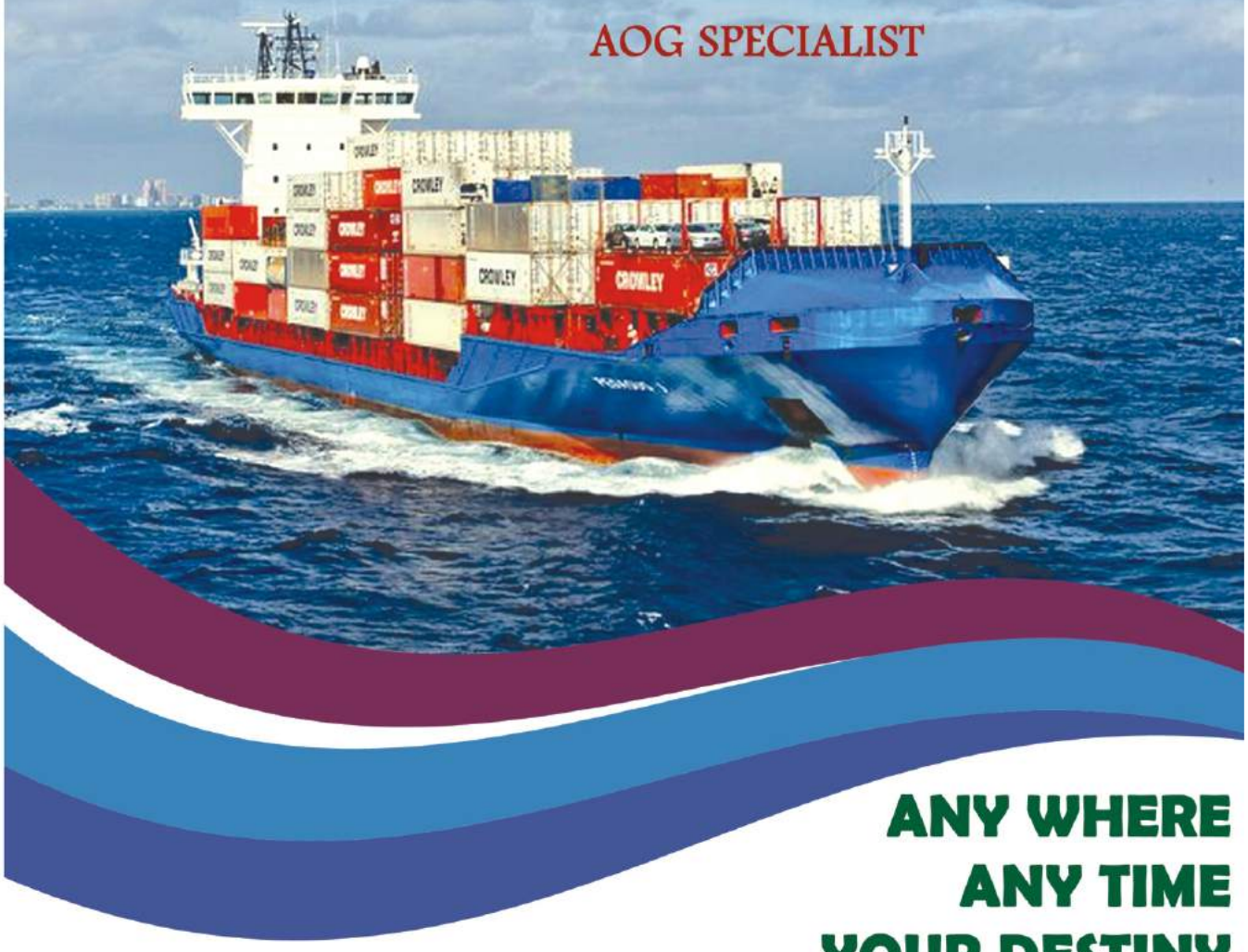

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Aviation in tatters

When Pakistan`s first aviators started their operations, they had no idea the type of adversities the industry was going to face. From the weak government bureaucracy to unsafe operators, the aviation industry in Pakistan has had its fair share of challenges.

The pandemic can prove to be the last nail in the coffin for aviation businesses if not handled properly. Pakistan`s airports are a gloomy sight nowadays. Before, they were usually bustling with life with flights coming and going and student pilots learning the trade of the sky as airport handlers were hard at work making sure everyone is safe.

Covid-19 put a stop to all that and business owners feel that they will not be able to handle pressures for much longer. There is a mixture of actors responsible for this, from weak government policies to the locals that are ignoring standard operating procedure (SOP) protocols.

The government recently lifted strict lockdown measures to ease the pressures of declining economic activity. For the aviation industry that is the saving grace that it was looking for. However, while the lockdown has been lifted, people are not following the guidelines that were given by the government. Social distancing and essential-travel procedures are being ignored.

This can result in a negative backlash for the aviation industry. We all know that in the coming weeks, we will see a spike in the number of Covid-19 patients, and it might call for the government to go into lockdown again.

Aviation businesses will have to follow suit, even if they were strictly following SOP protocols.

Speaking with a spokesperson from Sky Wings Flight Academy, a Karachi based flight school, I learned how Covid-19 has reduced its business exponentially. `The pandemic has grounded all flights; no student or instructor is getting anywhere close to the number of hours they were logging earlier this year.

For a business like this, it can take years to recover because of the long chain of causation in the industry. Airlines are not operating at full capacity, meaning there is less demand for pilots resulting in flight schools having lesser students. This will also lead to other aviation businesses losing demand. `It can take years to recover even after the pandemic is over. We can only run at capacity if big aviation is running at capacity,` said the spokesperson.

The government has a major role in ensuring the nation`s businesses are safeguarded. Nonetheless, aviation businesses are leading their own charge to ensure safety because their confidence in the government has gone down.

Imran Aslam, a leading aviation expert in the country said: `when the lockdown was enacted, the government gave an option to apply for a special SOP to continue operations for certain businesses. Even during these tough times, government officials were looking for their own advantage, rather than the greater good for our nation`s economy. These SOPs were being sold to whoever had the deepest pockets, while honest businessmen were being put out of business.

Logistics and travel account for more than 12 per cent of the world`s GDP. In Pakistan, air and sea cargo is the bread and butter for many. Domestic flight traffic nearly came to a zero in the past month.

Stranded travellers and rotting goods became a common sight in Pakistan`s big cities.

The government needs to start thinking of a specialised Covid-19 response policy for the aviation industry. If that is not done in the close future, businesses and workers will have to start packing their bags and gear up for unemployment.

Battered consumer confidence to slow recovery: IATA

Faltering consumer confidence will slow the recovery of air travel once coronavirus restrictions end, the sector`s main global body warned recently, citing bleak new survey data.

More airlines are likely to follow Virgin Australia into administration without swifter government support, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) predicted, and fuel hedging will prevent many from benefiting from cheap oil.

Domestic and short-haul travel will pick up first, IATA said, but the demand upturn has been tepid in China and absent in Australia even after new Covid-19 cases have dwindled.

Once market travel restrictions and lockdowns are relaxed, there`s still an issue about whether there will be demand from passengers to come back and fly,` IATA Chief Economist Brian Pearce said during an online media presentation.

Domestic air traffic is down 70 per cent worldwide, IATA said.

The Geneva-based organisation expects the near-total shutdown of global aviation to cut industry revenue this year by more than half, with the $314 billion hit threatening 25 million jobs, and is backing airline demands for government support.

Some 40pc of air travellers plan to wait at least six months before resuming their habitual flying, according to the IATAcommissioned survey published on Tuesday, and 69pc say they will do so only after their personal finances stabilise.

The online poll of 4,700 consumers was conducted by Rockland Dutton with sample sizes of 300-500 in each of 11 countries.

In Europe, where the cycle of coronavirus spread, containment and travel reopening is lagging behind Asia, major carriers have locked in fuel costs through hedging, Pearce said.

Many airlines are therefore `unable to take advantage of the low prices even if they were actually flying`, Pearce said a day after US crude futures turned negative for the first time in history.

The collapse of Virgin Australia, which entered voluntary administration, shows that many airlines will need quicker public support to survive, IATA`s Director General Alexandre de Juniac also said.

The example of Virgin Australia is a perfect illustration of the warning we have put forward and the requests we have put in front of governments,` he said.-Reuters.

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SIAL news in pictures

Vice Chairman SIAL (Sialkot International Airport Limited) Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen Presenting a shield to Mr. Muhammad Azeem Noori Ghuman founder of the Tehsil, Sambrial, Mirza Abdul Shakoor, Media Manager SIAL also seen in the picture.

The founder chairman SIAL Mian Muhammad Riaz presenting a cheque for Rs.500,000/- to Mr. Shaukat Ali, Headmaster Govt. High School Narowal for its improvement, Vice Chairman SIAL Ch. M. Afzal Shaheen, Mr. Raza Munir (former Vice Chairman) Ch. M. Javed, Mian Atique ur Rehman, and Ahsan Karl Ali Shabir Director of SIAL also present on the occasion.

Director SIAL Muhammad Javed Chaudhry presenting a cheque for Rs.100,0000/- to Mr. Zafar Iqbal Jafry Secretary General Kidney Patients welfare Association for Sialkot kidney Hospital donation from SIAL. Mr. Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry Convener CSR Committee SIAL, Ch. Raza Munir Director SIAL, Mian Atique ur Rehman, Humayun Iqbal Malik and Mr. M Irfan also present on the occasion.

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Etihad makes first commercial flight between UAE and Israel

Etihad Airways has made a cargo delivery of COVID 19 aid to Tel Aviv with the Israeli Ambassador to the UN saying that he hoped this would be followed by direct commercial passenger trips between the two countries.

"For the first time, Etihad cargo plane just landed at Israel's Ben-Gurion airport! Hopefully soon, we will see passenger flights, too", said Danny Danon on Twitter. "Having visited, I know the UAE is a fascinating place, and look to continue improving relations between our countries."

A Boeing 787-9 flew from Abu Dhabi on May 19 to Tel Aviv, carrying supplies destined for Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza areas.

Etihad, a state-owned, long-haul carrier, earlier confirmed the flight Tuesday to Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport. "Etihad Airways operated a dedicated humanitarian cargo flight from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv on 19 May to provide medical supplies to the Palestinians," the airline told The Associated Press. "The flight had no passengers on board."

"Etihad Airways operated a dedicated humanitarian cargo flight from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv on 19 May to provide medical supplies to the Palestinians," Etihad told AP. "The flight had no passengers on board."

The two countries have never established diplomatic ties since the state of Israel was first founded in 1954. Israeli aircraft are not permitted to cross through Emirati airspace, and all outbound cargo destined for the state must transit through a third country such as Jordan or Egypt.

AP said that Emirati government officials did not respond to multiple requests for comment. The UAE's state-run WAM news agency issued a statement saying Etihad had delivered 16 tons of protective gear, medical items and ventilators "to curb the spread of COVID-19 pandemic and its impact in the occupied Palestinian territory." It did not acknowledge the flight nor its significance.

Etihad Airways increases the number and frequency of special flights worldwide

Etihad Airways is continuing to increase the number of special flights it is operating worldwide to and from Abu Dhabi.

Throughout May and June, the airline will increase frequencies on previously announced special flights and will add new services to Belgrade, Dublin, Geneva, Milan, Paris Charles de Gaulle, and Toronto.

In addition to the recently launched link between Melbourne and London, Etihad will also add services to Sydney, allowing a direct transit connection to and from the UK capital via Abu Dhabi.

Etihad continues to follow UAE and international government, regulatory and health authority directives, and is playing its part in helping to limit the spread of COVID-19. The airline has implemented an extensive sanitisation and customer safety programme and is practicing the highest standards of hygiene at every part of the customer journey. This includes catering, aircraft and cabin deep-cleaning, check-in, health screening, boarding, inflight, crew interaction, meal service, disembarkation and ground transportation, among others.

Schedule of special flights (effective 19 May 15 June 2020). Subject to change.

Those wishing to book are advised to visit to view their options, and to remain informed on the appropriate entry regulations at their end destination. Flights are also available for booking through the mobile app, by calling the Etihad Airways.

- Amsterdam: 20, 22, 27, 29 May & 1, 3, 8, 10, 15 June
- Barcelona: 24, 31 May & 7, 14 June
- Belgrade: 21 May
- Brussels: 24, 31 May & 7, 14 June
- Dublin: 23, 30 May & 6, 13 June
- Geneva: 23, 30 May & 6, 13 June
- Frankfurt: 24, 31 May & 7, 14 June
- Jakarta: 21, 28 May & 4, 11 June
- Kuala Lumpur: 23, 30 May & 6, 13 June

Sharp reduction in cargo handling as land, air and sea routes closed

The sharp reduction in cargo handling will slash export growth during the ongoing quarter.

Export cargo handling at the Karachi ports declined nearly 42 per cent in the last 38 days owing to closure of shipping lines and order deferrals by international buyers.

Karachi ports, which handle around 76pc of the country's export cargo, have seen containers piling up at ports between March 22 to April 28 mainly due to order cancellations and non-availability of ships.

Data compiled by the Pakistan Customs showed total export containers shipped between March 22 till April 28 fell to 43,114 from 74,421 in the same period last fiscal year, showing a decline of 42pc.

The fall in shipments is expected to bring down total exports to the United States and European markets. Meanwhile, as retailers across the world have shut down their businesses, only a few are honoring their import commitments with local manufacturers.

The data showed that around 11,969 export containers have piled up at Karachi ports since March 22, of which 5,065 export were stuck at Model Customs Collectorate (MCC) exports while another 6,904 were pending at Port Qasim.

At the same time, arrival of export containers at ports between March 22 to April 28 also declined by 26.26pc as ports received 55,083 shipping containers during the period compared to 74,708 last year.

In addition, exporters have already withheld their consignments after receiving cancellation or deferment messages from their international buyers.

Further break-up showed that arrival of export cargo at Port Qasim was much lower compared to MCC (exports), Karachi.

Arrival of export containers at Port Qasim dropped by 39.1pc as it received 26,093 containers during the period under review as against 42,846 over the corresponding period of last year.

On the other hand, cargo at MCC (exports), Karachi fell to 28,990 containers against 31,862 containers during the same period last year.

The sharp reduction in cargo handling is likely to bring down the country's trade volume by the end of this quarter. Pakistan's trade with India had already fallen to zero following the suspension of trade activities between the two neighbours.

In addition, trade through western bordersChaman and Torkham -- to Afghanistan and the onward to the Central Asian States has also declined significantly owing to the spread of coronavirus. Only $61m worth of goods were exported to Afghanistan during March. The government has virtually banned all kinds of exports to Afghanistan except kinno to contain the spread of pandemic.

In addition to the land and sea routes, only 15pc of the export cargo is dispatched through air but that has also been severely affected due to air space closure.

In order to offset some of the impact from falling exports, the government recently allowed exports of textile masks. The government is also considering allowing shipments of Chloroquine drug to treat Covid-19.

Apparel Forum Chairman Jawed Bilwani told media that exporters are now receiving export orders regarding anti-bacterial fabrics and other items.

A similar confirmation also came from Zubair Motiwala, Chairman Council of All Pakistan Textile Associations, who said that exporters are receiving orders for anti-bacterial and anti-fungus cloth, pillows cover, medical gowns, towel, bed sheets, and mask.

He claimed that several exporters received orders and inquiries regarding these products amid coronavirus outbreak across the world.

The government has recently released refunds as well as cash subsidies to export-oriented sectors to help these sectors overcome liquidity crunch. The government believes the industry will use the funds to give wages to workers and will not transfer the amount to other sectors.

Cargo Jet Charters on the rise

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed aviation. From passenger to cargo transportation, demand is being met by new reliable players in the market. Kyle Patel from BitLux explains this new normality.

The pandemic has changed the travel industry forever. That is not an overstatement. Social distancing, quarantines and the inability to travel has paid a toll on what drives passengers to fly. Whereas just some months ago people flew for business or pleasure, now safety and reliability top the list. The previous explains why private aviation has increased its demand worldwide during Covid-19, operating repatriation, humanitarian, and cargo flights around the globe.

Commercial air cargo has also suffered due to restrictions and closure of runways. The flexibility of private aviation has served as a lifeline for the transportation of goods worldwide, offering the capacity to land at almost any runway while delivering supplies of all sorts, from dangerous goods to valuable items.

BitLux has extensive experience with executive jet charter, regional and international cargo charter, and precious handling cargo. We have worked with nearly everything from manufacturing components to some of the world's finest art. We've also used nearly everything, from regional propeller cargo aircraft to 767-300s for humanitarian relief, registering an increase of 40% in cargo charters during the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period of last year.

Just as an executive charter flight, private air cargo transportation is a fully tailored service from collection to transportation and delivery. Communication and tracking are also key, the two most valued traits by customers, and which charter companies thrive to deliver on every operation. Also important is their expertise in the coordination of supply chain needs, air courier requests,

and overcoming any demands, including shipments to remote locations, extremely tight timelines, and customs clearance documentation.

What aircraft will transport my cargo?

Aircraft selection allows for great cost-efficiency. Why charter a large plane when you only need a turboprop to transport medication or sensitive documents? Cargo charter companies have access to thousands of different aircraft and will always be able to source the ideal plane, while also sticking to your requested budgetary constraints in a timely, efficient, and effective manner.

The previous is also a trend for other private aviation operations on the rise during the past months, repatriation flights and humanitarian missions. The coordination and knowledge from the private charter company is key, especially for repatriation flights where synergy is needed between diplomatic personnel in order to provide the best possible service for families stranded in foreign countries.

Furthermore, humanitarian missions transporting medication and medical supplies have also used private aircraft around the globe during the coronavirus outbreak. Sometimes it's the only way to reach isolated communities in need of treatment. The same is the case for natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, or forest fires; private aviation adapts to almost every runway in the world thanks to the wide diversity of models that adjust to every type of operation.

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Saudi Arabia to restart domestic flights

Saudi Arabia is to resume some domestic flights from Sunday May 30th as it eases restriction measures.

Sixty flights will resume each day in the first phase.

"The resumption of domestic flights will be phased, to cover all domestic destinations within two weeks," regulator GACA said in a statement.

Local travel was suspended as part of measures to fight the spread of coronavirus on March 20. GACA said it will be working in coordination with airports, air carriers, and companies operating in the civil aviation sector to meet the demand in the local market.

"The authority completed its operational preparations to gradually lift the suspension of domestic flights, to ensure a safe travel journey for travellers through Saudi airports, while taking all necessary precautions and health measures," the regulator said.

Saudi Arabia has reported total Covid-19 infections in the Kingdom as 76,726 and the death toll to 411.

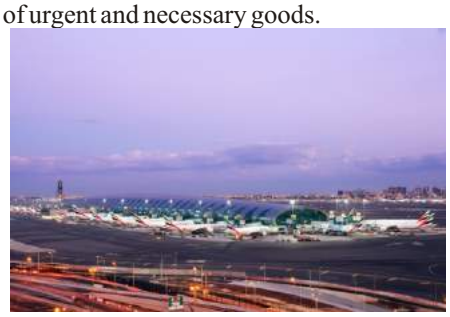
Emirates to resume passenger service to 9 cities SkyCargo expands to 75 destinations

Starting on May 21, 2020, Emirates will resume scheduled passenger flights to 9 cities in 8 countries, including connections between the UK and Australia via Dubai. We look forward to reconnecting with Chicago, Frankfurt, London Heathrow, Madrid, Melbourne, Milan, Paris, Sydney and Toronto. We are working closely with the authorities to resume flights to more destinations.

In other news, Emirates SkyCargo has expanded its weekly scheduled cargo flight operations to cover 75 destinations across six continents. Through its wider reach, Emirates SkyCargo is able to transport essential commodities and other urgently needed cargo more rapidly across the world, allowing exporters and importers across markets to benefit from direct access to widebody cargo capacity.

Some of the destinations recently included in Emirates SkyCargo's network include Colombo, Conakry, Dakar, Dhaka, Dublin, Khartoum, Kuala Lumpur, Perth and Quito.

In addition, Emirates SkyCargo has also upped frequency of flights to several key destinations such as Amsterdam, Beijing, Bengaluru, Brussels, Chennai, Chicago, Frankfurt, Hanoi, Johannesburg and London allowing businesses more choice and flexibility in having their cargo shipped to customers and supplementing additional cargo capacity for the transport of urgent and necessary goods.



Over and above scheduled flight operations, Emirates SkyCargo also operates charter flights in response to customer demand.

Since March 2020, Emirates SkyCargo has played an important role globally in the transport of urgently required medical supplies including personal protective equipment such as masks and gloves, pharmaceuticals, healthcare equipment, electronics such as laptops and mobile phones as more people around the world have turned to online working and learning, food items including fruits, vegetables, sea food and meat. The carrier operated over 2,500 flights in the month of April. Currently Emirates SkyCargo is operating more than 100 flights a day from its hub in Dubai.

THAI flies stranded thais in the US back home from Seoul to Bangkok

Sqn. Ldr. Anirute Sangrit, Vice President, Flight Operations Department, Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI), and Head of THAI Operations Control Center (TOCC), said that THAI and the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized the special flight TG655 on the Seoul-Bangkok route which departed from Seoul, Republic of Korea at 21.00 hours (local time) on 15 May 2020 and arrived in Bangkok at 00.46 hours on 16 May 2020 to fly 204 stranded Thais in the US traveled with Asiana Airlines from New York and Los Angeles for a connecting flight with THAI from Seoul to Bangkok following the COVID-19 outbreak.

To reduce the risk of transmission among cabin crew and passengers, physical distancing procedures were applied in every service: check-in, passenger boarding, seat arrangement, serving in-flight meals in disposable boxes to avoid physical contact, and disembarking. The cabin crew were required to wear protective suits, medical masks, and gloves while providing services, and observe passengers with possible symptoms.

THAI, as the national flag carrier which has been providing services for 60 years, is always prepared to fly Thais home during this difficult time.

THAI celebrates 60th anniversary with ROP triple miles promotion for online ticket issuance

THAI Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) celebrates its 60th birthday anniversary with the THAI 60th Anniversary, Earn x3 ROP Miles promotion offering triple mileage to Royal Orchid Plus (ROP) members who make reservations and issue tickets via thaiairways.com between 1-2 May 2020.

Mr. Wiwat Piyawiroj, THAI Executive Vice President, Commercial, said that the THAI 60th Anniversary, Earn x3 ROP Miles promotion was set up to celebrate the airline's 60th birthday anniversary on 1 May 2020. Triple mileage will be offered to both international and domestic THAI and THAI Smile passengers in all eligible classes that are booked and issued tickets online via thaiairways.com during 1-2 May 2020 and for traveling between 1 December 2020- 31 March 2021.

Gulf Air cooperates with local companies in importing 9 tons of medical supplies

In line with national efforts aimed at combating the Coronavirus (COVID-19), Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in coordination with a number of Bahraini enterprises specialising in medical supplies, assisted in the importation of 9 tons of medical items needed to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19, as well as general medications, medical equipment and hygienic products.

The medical drugs and equipment were chartered on special Gulf Air flights in an initiative spearheaded by Team Bahrain.

The collaboration between the national carrier and the local companies is to ensure the Kingdom possesses an abundant supply of medical drugs and equipment during this time to serve the shared goal of a safe and healthy community for all.

Gulf Air Introduces its 'Golden Principles' for Health and Safety of Passengers and Crew

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, in response to the global outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 has introduced a bundle of 'golden principles' to maintain health and safety of its valued passengers and crew members. These principles come in addition to what the airline has carried out since late February when the outbreak has emerged regionally and globally and will continue to be reviewed when necessary and reassessed on a regular basis. The golden principles of existing and newly introduced practices are:

Modifying seating arrangement: Gulf Air will maintain distances on-board between all passengers on all its operating flights. Ground staff and cabin crew will seat passengers as far as possible from each other depending on the flight load to maintain the required social distances between all passengers.

Maintaining a distance: Gulf Air check-in counters and boarding gates are designed to make sure passengers maintain a safe distance between each other.

Supporting safe interactions on-board: All cabin crew members are fully trained to follow the international guidelines in regards to personal protective equipment which are available on-board. Gulf Air recommends that all passengers wear a mask and use disposable gloves while travelling.

Shared spaces are spotless: All aircraft are disinfected and decontaminated after every flight. Procedures include wiping down all surfaces - seat belts, in-seat controls, tray tables, overhead lockers, air vents, door handles and lavatories.

Meals on-board: All meals and beverages on all flights are served in disposable containers with disposable cutlery and cups. Falcon Gold and Economy meals are now limited to a selection of cold meals and snacks.

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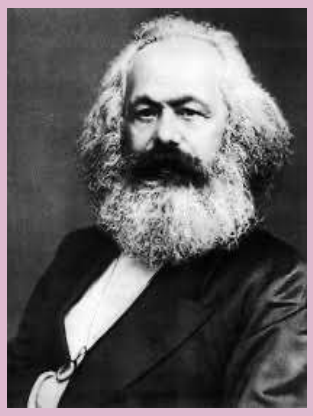
ADVENT OF CAPITALISM AND ITS AFTERMATH

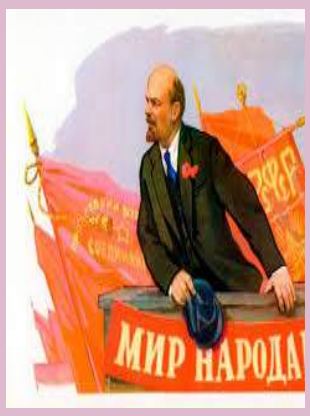
(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

In history the businessmen have played

a pivotal role in the life of men. To begin with the early stages of history, the traders used their prowess to undertake hazardous journeys for marketing and selling their merchandise of daily use in territories other than their own. This was a time when means of communication were scanty and the traders faced great hardships in their journeys by going through the looming dangers of loot by dacoits and savage tribes who were always in the lurk for merchant ships. All these dificulties were endured for the obvious reason of getting profits that accrued from their business- activity. The profession has always been regarded as a respectable one. An explicit desire on the part of businessmen that existed in the past was that the profits gained should be received by them in the form of gold as gold was considered to be a safest currency which would protect their wealth. The traders and nations by means of collecting gold increased their riches and power. Christopher Columbus used to say that 'gold is so precious that through it one could buy even the paradise'.

Accumulation of wealth and using the power of it could safely be given the name of 'Capitalism'. In the 'Medieval Ages' this system was called 'Mercantile Capitalism'. In this process, the traders bought merchandise at cheaper rates from one place and sold them at higher price in other places, after determining an 'Exchange Value' (price) that was available under the circumstances in the marketing areas.





Hegel, Karl Marx (German thinkers) & Lenin (The Russian revolutionary,)

In the 'Middle Ages', when the European traders came to India and other parts of Asia, they had in fact nothing special to bring with them from Europe and what they did was that they bought cloth, spices and indigo, paid in the form of silver and carried these items to European markets making huge amounts of profit. The merchants of Venice (Italy) called the 'Princes' because of their fabulous wealth were famous in this trade.

They carried also warships with them to ward off pirates in the Mediterranean seas. But when there emerged an 'Industrial Revolution' in the nineteenth-century Europe, the trend of trade also got changed. Now the industrialists produced goods in their factories and sold them at higher prices in other countries of the world where such industries were not founded. The 'Industrial Revolution' in Europe, at one side brought about prosperity among the industrialist class making them opulent and haughty and at the other hand, created a poor and an obsessed working class whose l abour was abused i.e., paid much less than what they deserved. The system came to be known as 'Industrial Capitalism', which produced new strata in

Venice Italy

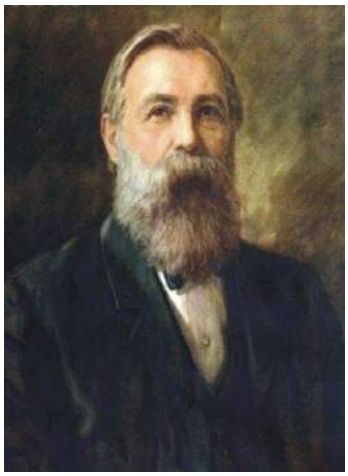
society namely the industrialists or capitalists, an upper and a lower middle class among them who were termed as bourgeois and petit-bourgeois. The workers were called 'proletariat' also further classified according to their grades of work. The proletariat altogether, was at the fag end. They were made to work for 18 hours consistently and they also included destitute women and children. Conditions of their living were much less than satisfactory. In the colonies of workers, there were no corridors of fresh air; no channels of clean water and no exits of dirty water. All were dumped in one living place which made the life miserable for them. Excess of work, malnutrition and pollution in their environment told upon their health, made them sick and weak. Fatal tuberculosis became the common disease. One could not think of imparting education to their children. Span of their lives squeezed and they fought a battle of survival and as verily said, 'horses cannot be fattened in the thick battle', fitted them the most. This was a battle of 'haves and have not's and it was on. The situation presented two opposite features; figuring industrialists who lived a prosperous life and their workers lived an abject, miserable life.

A severe repellence against this system came in the form of recurrence of ideologies of Socialism and Communism which had first originated in history with Plato and Aristotle, the great Greek thinkers. Plato had gone so far to plead a theory of 'family communism' in order to have a selfless society; claiming more allegiance to the state than to the family. Similarly, the works in modern times of 'Hegel' advocated an 'Absolutist State', Karl Marx and Friedrich Engel, (the German thinkers), propounded communism and a classless society, eliminating bourgeoisie oppression under industrial capitalism. The theories created a social and an economic chaos and left an indelible impact for emergence of countries based on communism like the 'Soviet Union' and a largely allied communist-world, ruled by iron hands of men like Lenin and Stalin consecutively, later by no less authoritarian Nikita Khrushchev to be followed by less powerful 'Mikhail Gorbachev. The later, succumbed and lived to bring 'Soviet Union' out of the quagmire of communism synchronizing with a gradual shift to free economy system prevailing in rest of the world. The 'Soviet Union', one of the duos-world- powers lived for seventy years before it disappeared from the map of the world. The gloom did not end here, however. The fall of communism saw Russia's most prized assets sold off to a small circle of business tycoons later known as 'oligarchs' and their control of the state power called as 'oligarchy' in Political Science. A staggering 35 per cent of wealth in Russia is owned by just 110 people. It has the highest level of inequality of wealth in the world. Vladimir Putin and Mikhail Friedman, who made their fortunes in the 90s, are still high on the list of Russia's richest men dominant at economics and politics simultaneously.

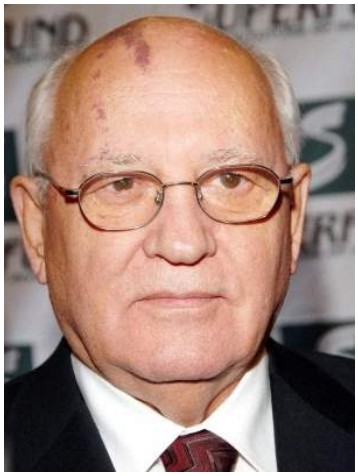
The Western European countries on the other hand made a stride and achieved a diametrical transformation in the shape of creation of 'Welfare states', providing 100% free education , free medical facilitation, a high standard of living for their citizens . In fact every conceivable amenity of life was made available to the common man. The conditions of work in factories improved dramatically and an 'International Labour Organization' (ILO) was formed under the 'United Nations Organization' (UNO) charter, which monitored the working conditions of laborers the world over, including prohibition of child labour and a guaranteed provision of all kinds of 'social welfare services' to the workers which continued even after they had completed term of their jobs. Any conceivable amenity of life was provided especially in the Scandinavian states, to their citizens. The system is known of a 'Welfare State' as often referred to, had been introduced first by Caliph Umar in The Islamic State of the early seventh century AD and has proudly been acclaimed now to be possessed and practiced by the Scandinavian States, like Sweden, Norway, Finland and (more prominently) Denmark.

Once in Gothenburg (Sweden), I was invited by a business friend at his home for a dinner. On the way to his home, he pointed to a house which belonged to the manager of his own company. The house looked equally good as was his own , but the interesting part that he told me , was that the net-income of his manager was more than his own income as he had to pay many 'social welfare taxes ' to his government from which the manager enjoyed a holiday. In the end the manager led a more comfortable life than the owner of the company, also because that he had a fixed and high salary with no fear of losses that usually entail a business. Later in the evening, I was introduced with the said gentleman and I realized that the manager looked happier and financially more sound than my business friend. In case a women employee in the company begot in a family way during her service; she was paid full salary by the employer even when her doctor advised her to stay home with an addition of some allowances also paid for the un-born babe.

In the modern 'Welfare States' of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and some others, the social and economic gap among the people has gone down to a minimal level and it is further shrinking . It is undoubtedly an ideal form of any economic system that has so far filtered through the ages and it must be the envy of any country of the modern world to follow and develop accordingly in letter and spirit.



Friedrich Engels



Michail Gorbachov.

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IATA board declares principles for industry re-start

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has announced a commitment by the airline CEOs on its Board of Governors to five principles for re-connecting the world by air transport.

The principles are:

1. Aviation will always put safety and security first: Airlines commit to work with our partners in governments, institutions and across the industry to:

   Implement a science-based biosecurity regime that will keep our passengers and crew safe while enabling efficient operations.

   Ensure that aviation is not a meaningful source for the spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19.

2. Aviation will respond flexibly as the crisis and science evolve: Airlines commit to work with our partners in governments, institutions and across the industry to:

   Utilize new science and technology as it becomes available, for example, reliable, scalable and efficient solutions for COVID-19 testing or immunity passports.

   Develop a predictable and effective approach to managing any future border closures or mobility restrictions.

   Ensure that measures are scientifically supported, economically sustainable, operationally viable, continuously reviewed, and removed/replaced when no longer necessary.

3. Aviation will be a key driver of the economic recovery: Airlines commit to work with our partners in governments, institutions and across the industry to:

   Re-establish capacity that can meet the demands of the economic recovery as quickly as possible.

   Ensure that affordable air transport will be available in the post-pandemic period.

4. Aviation will meet its environment targets: Airlines commit to work with our partners in governments, institutions and across the industry to:

   Achieve our long-term goal of cutting net carbon emissions to half of 2005 levels by 2050.

   Successfully implement the Carbon Off setting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA).

5. Aviation will operate to global standards which are harmonized and mutually recognized by governments: Airlines commit to work with our partners in governments, institutions and across the industry to:

   Establish the global standards necessary for an effective re-start of aviation, particularly drawing on strong partnerships with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

   Ensure that agreed measures are effectively implemented and mutually recognized by governments.

"Re-starting air transport is important. Even as the pandemic continues, the foundations for an industry re-start are being laid through close collaboration of the air transport industry with ICAO, the WHO, individual governments and other parties. Much work, however, remains to be done. By committing to these principles, the leaders of the world's airlines will guide the safe, responsible and sustainable re-start of our vital economic sector. Flying is our business. And it is everyone's shared freedom," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.

IATA: heavy new debt levels will weigh down airlines' recovery

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has released an analysis showing that the airline industry's global debt could rise to US$550 billion by year-end. That's a US$120 billion increase over debt levels at the start of 2020. US$67 billion of the new debt is composed of government loans (US$50 billion), deferred taxes (US$5 billion), and loan guarantees (US$12 billion). US$52 billion is from commercial sources including commercial loans (US$23 billion), capital market debt (US$18 billion), debt from new operating leases (US$5 billion), and accessing existing credit facilities (US$6 billion).

Financial aid is a lifeline to get through the worst of the crisis without folding operations. But during the re-start period later this year, the industry's debt load will be near US$550 billiona massive 28% increase. Government aid is helping to keep the industry afloat. The next challenge will be preventing airlines from sinking under the burden of debt that the aid is creating," said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's Director General and CEO.

In total governments have committed to US$123 billion in financial aid to airlines. Of this, US$67 billion will need to be repaid. The balance largely consists of wage subsidies (US$34.8 billion), equity financing (US$11.5 billion), and tax relief/subsidies (US$9.7 billion). This is vital for airlines which will burn through an estimated US$60 billion of cash in the second quarter of 2020 alone.

Over half the relief provided by governments creates new liabilities. Less than 10% will add to airline equity. It changes the financial picture of the industry completely. Paying off the debt owed governments and private lenders will mean that the crisis will last a lot longer than the time it takes for passenger demand to recover," said de Juniac.

The kind of aid provided will influence the speed and strength of the recovery. IATA urged governments still contemplating financial relief to focus on measures that help airlines raise equity financing. "Many airlines are still in desperate need of a financial lifeline. For those governments that have not yet acted, the message is that helping airlines raise equity levels with a focus on grants and subsidies will place them in a stronger position for the recovery," said de Juniac.

A tough future is ahead of us. Containing COVID-19 and surviving the financial shock is just the first hurdle. Post-pandemic control measures will make operations more costly. Fixed costs will have to be spread over fewer travelers. And investments will be needed to meet our environmental targets. On top of all that, airlines will need to repay massively increased debts arising from the financial relief. After surviving the crisis, recovering to financial health will be the next challenge for many airlines," said de Juniac.

Mango export target cut by 40pc

Mango exporters have set a target of 80,000 tonnes for this year, a drop of 40 per cent, due to low production of the fruit and severe impact of coronavirus related lockdowns globally.

The target is 50,000 tonnes less than last year's export target of 130,000 tones. Global lockdowns have led to a sharp decline in demand for Pakistani mangoes.

Reduction in flight operations and an extra-ordinary increase in freight charges have further hit mango exports, according to the Patron-in-Chief of All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) Waheed Ahmed.

`Last year, Pakistan's 130,000 tones of mango export earned $90 million which is now feared to drop to $50m this time. With the sharp reduction in the export target this year, revenue generation of valuable foreign exchange would be seriously impacted,` he stressed.

Due to climate change, Punjab`s share in mango production has fallen to 35 per cent from 70pc, while Sindh faces a reduction of 15pc from its usual share of 29pc in total mango production duringthe current season, he said The global pandemic has led to shutdowns of international markets. The slowdown in the aviation sector, tourism industry and shopping malls has led to a significant drop in demand of various items novelty items, including mangoes, in foreign markets.

Ahmed said that airlines have enhanced their freight charges three times up from Rs175 per kilogramme last year to Rs550 per kg for the Europe. Freight charges for Gulf countries, which were Rs80 per kg last year, have been enhanced to Rs240 per kg this year, thus multiplying the cost of shipment, he added.

Of the total export volume of mango, 55pc is exported by sea, 20pc by air and another 25pc via land routes.

Due to the exorbitant increase in freight charges by the airlines, export of mango by air is feared to be reduced by 70pc this year, Waheed said.

A man purchases mangoes from a vendor. The fruit production has been hit due to climate change.

New tariff policy to reduce duties, says Razak

With eyes fixed on the upcoming budget, the Ministry of Commerce has evolved a comprehensive tariff policy including reducing customs and regulatory duties on raw materials and semi-finished products.

The plan is being developed for budget 2020-21 in a fashion to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and encourage import substitution of major consumer items in the country, Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood told media.

He said that as part of reforms his ministry has identified almost 1,600 tariff lines for duty reduction in the upcoming budget.

These tariff lines are related to raw materials and semi-finished products, which are currently subject to a customs duty of more than 5pc and additional customs duty.

In the last budget, Dawood said his government had reduced customs duty to zero per cent on 1,638 tariff lines, which involved mostly raw materials. `For this year, we are considering to reduce duties on an almost similar number of tariff lines,` he said, adding nothing has been finalised as yet.

At the same time, he said the commerce ministry will also identify tariff anomalies for rectification in the upcoming budget. `We have already identified a number of anomalies in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Since November 2019, the adviser said his ministry has started consultations with the stakeholders to get their proposals. `We will try to consider all their recommendations in the upcoming budget,` the adviser said.

He said that in the next two budgets 2020-21 and 2021-22 the tariff rationalization plan will be completed and the main focus of the reforms is to promote `Make in Pakistan`.

The adviser claimed that in the pre-coronavirus period, deindustrialisation trend was halted by the ruling government. `It was one of our major achievements` he said. However, he said that there is now a great pressure on the domestic industries in the post-pandemic world.

According to Dawood, the focus of tariff reforms in the next budget is reducing the input cost of industries. `Now there is a pressure on Make in Pakistan, he said, and his ministry will concentrate on domestic commerce to consider all-out support for industries.

He said the revival of industries will help to provide employment opportunities for those who lost their jobs due to the coronavirus outbreak in the country and subsequently lockdown.

Pakistan imports consumer items, most of which are from China. There is a big scope for import substitution as most of the products require simple technology.

The country spends millions of dollars every year on importing consumer items like value-added food products, personal care, home appliances and other household items.

Electronic appliances, rubber tyres, pharmaceutical items, plastic toys, Tupperware, earphones, bulbs, handbags, stationery are already being imported from China in bulk.

In the early 1980s, the import substitution policy was replaced by export-oriented industrialization which instead created an import-oriented economy. The Covid-19 again set the stage for reversing the trend to import substitution in the country.

Trade resumes with Iran after Zero Point opens in Taftan

Trade activities between Pakistan and Iran resumed on 15 May Wednesday after two more trade crossing points were reopened in Taftan following a decision taken by the National Command and Operations Centre last month.According to official sources, these trade gateways were closed two-and-ahalf months ago after the coronavirus outbreak in Iran and later their closure was extended as the pandemic penetrated in Pakistan as well.

As many as 17 Iranian trawlers loaded with food items and LPG gas tankers arrived in Pakistan through transit gate, besides import of edible commodities commenced after the reopening of Zero Point Gatein Taftan.

Officials of the local administration in Taftan said trade activities between the two countries would continue thrice a week according to standard operating procedures.

Exporters expect fresh orders

Fresh orders are being anticipated by country`s exporters who say the global slowdown, due to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown in many countries, has created space for Pakistani exports.

The further added that while some export orders were cancelled, many are on hold but will resume once things normalise.

Pakistan witnessed a steep fall of 54 per cent in exports in April which has damaged the government`s confidence as it tries to control the repercussions of the pandemic.

Since March, the government has been providing several incentives to boost exports but the pandemic seems to be destroying this strategy.

I believe most of the orders are on hold. These are orders which are for summer and are on hold while some have been cancelled,` said Zubair Motiwala, Chairman Council of Textile Association of Pakistan and the vice chairman of Businessmen Group.

Interestingly, Americans are not ready to buy Chinese products due to the tariff war between the two countries and this has created space for Pakistani products, particularly for the textile sector,` he added.

Initially when the pandemic made its way to Pakistan, many exporters maintained that their orders were cance Hed due to the fasts pread of the virus.

Not all export orders were cancelled. Our orders are intact but on hold. We will continue to export once the global markets is normal, even at the minimum level,` said Amir Azia, an exporter of readymade garments to Germany and other European countries.

The exporter added that many companies in Pakistan have orders on hold and are waiting for green signals to go ahead.

We also expect fresh orders since the global markets which have faced lockdown for three months and this has created a large space for exporters,` said Amir.

The export industry is currently working at 25pc of its capacity. In case of higher orders, the government must improve transportation so that workers can reach factories,` he opined.

Motiwala also said that Pakistan would get fresh orders from the USA. However, the global markets have significantly reduced by 40pc due to pandemic`s grave consequences, he noted.

We have started exporting new products like medical masks on large scale to Europe and the USA,` he said.

He said Pakistan is exporting highly quality medical masks and other medical equipments which would help the country to reduce its sharp fall of exports in April.

The exporters urged the government to develop a new export policy after the pandemic. They also called for creating opportunities for new products, particularly low cost items.

69 export units resume operations in Karachi

As many as 69 export-oriented units related mainly to textile and other sectors have been allowed to resume operations in Karachi after fulfilling the standard operaung procedures (SoPs) laid down by the Sindh government .

Pakistan Apparel Forum Chairman Jawed Bilwani said some 17 export-oriented factories/ manuf acturing units were permitted to operate on April 17, followed by 52 units the following day.

The Home Department`s order said the record received from Labour and Human Resources was examinedand various companies were found fulfilling the criteria as per the SoPs ie verification of export order by Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), undertaking by CEO/owner on ensuring arrangements within their premises as per the criteria for COVID-19 prevention and list of workers/staff/management who will be present in the premises during operations.

Bilwani said the TDAP has verihed 418 applications from exporting units and 349 balance companies would provide undertaking to the Home Secretary before starting operations. He said more exporters are applying for starting their units.

Uzbekistan looks to Pakistani ports

Uzbekistan on 7th May formally sought Pakistan's support for accession to the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (Q T TA) in a bid to utilise Karachi and Gwadar ports for its trade operations.

The formal request was made by Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister, Sardor Umurzalcov during a video conference with Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Razak Dawood. Uzbekistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Furgat Sidikov also joined the meeting held at the Ministry of Commerce in Islamabad.

The QTTA is a transit trade deal among Pakistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to facilitate the passage of goods and traffic. A road project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will provide access to China and the Central Asian States to Pakistani ports.

Responding to the request, Dawood assured Pakistan's support for Uzbekistan in QTTA.

Pakistan plays a central role in the QTTA which is believed to be an alternative route bypassing Afghanistan and relying on the Karakoram Highway via China to reach Central Asian States.

Uzbekistan also sought the establishment of Joint Working Group for trade and investment cooperation.

An official statement following the meeting said that Uzbekistan requested Pakistan to support its cause in accession to QTTA, and share its experience on achieving the Generalised System of Preferences Plus status.

Dawood apprised the Uzbek side that a memorandum of understanding for Pakistan-Uzbekistan Joint Working Group on Trade and Investment will be ready for signing after seeking approval from the cabinet of Pakistan.

During the meeting, it was resolved that all out efforts would be made to enhance bilateral trade relations, establishing joint ventures in various areas including agriculture, textile, pharmaceuticals, tourism and construction.

Pakistan's exports to Uzbekistan stood at $13.190 million FY19 as against $9.254m over the previous year.

Similarly, Pakistan's imports from Uzbekistan are very negligible as it stood at $5.449m in FY19 as against $3.640m over the previous year.

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CAD jumps to $572m in April as exports fall

The current account deficit (CAD) during the month of April rose to $572 million compared to just $9m in March, data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed recently.

However, the cumulative deficit during the first 10 months of this fiscal year fell to $3.343 billion against $11.449bn in the same period last fiscal year.

The month-on-month increase in the deficit came on the back of sharp decline in exports, which fell by 54 per cent to $957m compared to $2.08bn in the same period last fiscal year.

The county is likely to face a total current account deficit of around $5bn by the end of this fiscal year.

However, the emergence of Covid-19 pandemic has put the country`s export growth at risk. The sharp reduction in figures for April are likely to worsen in May as most of the export orders bound for north American and European countries have either been cancelled or are sitting idle at the ports.

The SBP data showed exports in the first 10 months slightly declined to $19.65bn from $20.135bn in the same period last year. However, imports fell significantly to $36.09bn against $43.447bn in the same period last fiscal year.

The sharp reduction in imports helped narrow the trade balance to $19.058bn during the first 10 months of this fiscal year compared to $27.242bn last year.

The government has succeeded in bringing down the current account deficit in the current fiscal year, as it had risen to an unsustainably high level of $20bn eroding its ability to continue paying foreign obligations.

The quarter-wise data showed Jan-March posted a higher deficit compared to the preceding quarter of OctDec FY20. The deficit during Jan-March was $739m against $540m in Oct-Dec.

The current account deficit has been on a declining trend in the current fiscal year, however the pandemic has changed the outlook for further improvements as the country`s exports have suffered a massive blow amid sharp demand contraction for goods across the world.

But the G-20 debt relief initiative is expected to provide the much-needed cushion to the government as it will allow the government to defer debt payments by $2.4bn for a period of 12 months and save foreign exchange.

If approved, the moratorium will help government maintain its forex reserves. Pakistan has been battling to keep its reserves in double digits.

However, in order to maintain the falling trend in current account deficit, the government must work on improving exports as they play a key role in keeping the deficit at a sustainable level. The lifting of lockdown may improve exports inthe next comingmonths.

Exports to Gulf states jump 36pc

Pakistan`s exports to the Middle Eastern countries increased by 36 per cent during the current fiscal year, data released by the Ministry of Commerce showed recently.

The ministry claimed that the growth in export proceeds was achieved owing to several initiatives but did not share any details on the actions.

Three major commodities posted impressive growth between July 2019 and April.

The rice exports to the region increased by 59pc in value from $264 million to $420m, meat from $127m to $200m, an increase of 57pc during the period under review. And fruits and vegetables exports enhanced from $70m to $140m, an increase of 100pc.

The data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan showed exports to the UAE surged by 28pc during the July-March period. The export value reached $1.244bn this year as against $971.173m over the corresponding months of last year.

Pakistan`s export to Saudi Arabia increased by 42.9pc to $352.164m during the July-March period this year as against $246.419m over the corresponding months of last year. Pakistan`s exports to Saudi Arabia mainly include rice, fruits, vegetable preparations, apparel and clothing, and made-up articles of textile.

Currently, negotiation on a preferential trade agreement covering both tariff and non-tariff barriers are pending before the two governments.

Exports to Qatar increased 50pc to $108.898m during the July-March period this year as against $72.49m over the corresponding months last year. Similarly, exports to Bahrain also witnessed a growth of 8.33pc to $52.856m as against $48.789m over the corresponding months last year.

Pakistan`s exports to other countries in the region remained stagnant during the period under review.

Meanwhile, exports to Iran during the July-March period stood at $0.055m as against $2.892m over the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan mostly trades on a barter basis with Iran, which does not account in the official figures. On the other hand, the country`s exports to Afghanistan, once Pakistan`s second-biggest export market after the United States, dropped by 10.8pc to $789.437m as against $885.779m over the corresponding months last year.

Pakistan has closed its border stations with Afghanistan since Mar 15. Only $61m worth of goods were exported to the neighbouring country during March. The government has virtually banned all kinds of exports to Afghanistan except kinno.

A slice of the moon for sale

One of the world's largest lunar meteorites goes on private sale at Christie`s, valued at two million pounds ($2.49 million).

The moon rock, weighing over 13kg, was probably struck off the surface of the moon by a collision with an asteroid or comet and then showered down on the Sahara desert.

Known as NWA 12691, it is thought to be the fifth largest piece of the moon ever found on earth. There is just 650kg of moon rock known to be on earth.

`The experience of holding a piece of another world in your hands is something you never forget,` said James Hyslop, Christie`s head of science and natural history.`It is an actual piece of the moon. It is about the size of a football, a bit more oblong than that, larger than your head.` Like many meteorites that are discovered, it was found in the Sahara by an anonymous finder, then changed hands.

Scientists can be certain that it is from the moon after comparing it with rock samples brought back by the United States Apollo space missions to the moon.

In the 1960s and 1970s the Apollo programme brought back about 400 kilograms of moon rock with them and scientists have been able to analyse the chemical and isotopic compositions of those rocks and they have determined that they match certain meteorites,` said Hyslop.-Reuters

US college to help set up heritage centre in Baltistan varsity

The Boston Architectural College (BAC) and the University of Baltistan, Skardu, have agreed to jointly launch a US-funded academic partnership project for 'cultural heritage management' in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Under the agreement, BAC will help the varsity establish its 'cultural heritage centre' in Skardu.

The understanding about the partnership was reached during a 60-minute teleconference among the officials of the varsity, BAC, US Department of State and US Embassy the other day, according to a press release issued here on 21st April 2020.

Both the institutions have agreed to collaborate in faculty and student exchanges for capacity building, curriculum development, field school development, preservation and documentation of cultural heritage of GB.

The meeting was attended besides others by Prof Mohammad Naeem Khan, Vice-Chancellor, University of Baltistan, Mr Don Hunsicker, Dean Faculty, School of Design Studies, BAC, Ms Eleni Glekas, Director of Historic Preservation, BAC, Dr Laura Tedesco, and Manager Cultural Heritage Programmes, Department of State, Washington.

Previously, the meeting, scheduled for March 19 in Islamabad, was postponed due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The BAS will help the varsity launch its BS undergraduate degree programme in social and cultural studies. The Boston-Baltistan partnership programme will focus on the study of GB cultural heritage, including preservation of rock inscriptions and manuscripts, material conservation and historic preservation, digitisation and documentation and cultural exchange and travel between Pakistan and the United States.

The project will be funded by the US State Department and the US Embassy under Pakistan grant awards, and will help in tourism development and economic growth in GB.

Leopards, jackals spotted in park as virus clears way

In this May 6 photo, Islamabad Wildlife guard Imran checks the hidden cameras to observe animals movement on the hiking trail on Margalla Hill National Park.

Leopards, jackals and other creatures living in Islamabad`s treecovered hills have been enjoying a rare respite from the throngs of hikers and joggers that normally pack the trails.

Rangers in the Margalla Hills National Park saw animal activity increase soon after the city was locked down in March to counter the coronavirus.

Islamabad`s normally reclusive leopards have been roaming onto deserted pathways, and social networks are rife with talk of purported sightings.

Motion-triggered wildlife cameras have been clicking away as animals explore areas they had long been nervous to visit.

There is a big increase in the number of animals (seen) in the national park,` ranger Imran Khan told AFP.

Images the park provided to AFP include pictures of leopards padding along paths, an inquisitive jackal and a muddy boar.

Wildlife is comfortable as there are no visitors here.

They are wandering here comfortably, which is a good sign for the jungle,` Khan said.

The park was locked down for about a month and foot traffic remains light as families, picnickers and walkers stay away during the fasting period of Ramadan.

Sakhwat Ali, Islamabad`s assistant wildlife director, said the space is home to 38 mammal species, 350 bird species and 34 reptile species, including 27 types of snake.

Ali added that rangers are conducting a survey and had already noticed new creatures.

There are some species of butterfly which were not reported earlier, but these are visible now,` Ali said.

Lockdownsin various cities around the world have seen urban wildlife grow bolder as people stay home. A gang of goats was spotted in a Welsh town and coyotes were seen exploring deserted streets in San Francisco.

Malls, barber shops and beauty salons reopen across Turkey

Lines formed outside of shopping malls in Turkey as they opened for the first time in seven weeks, albeit with strict hygiene requirements.

Barbers, hairdressers and beauty salons also were back in business as the Turkish government gradually eases the restrictions on public activity it enacted to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus.

The government has laid out strict operating guidelines for reopened businesses. Shopping malls must check entering customers for fevers and ensure everyone wears face masks. The number of customers allowed in at once is capped under a formula of one person per every 10 squaremetres of floor space.

Providers of personal services such as hairdressers and barbers are required to work only by appointment, to wear both surgical masks and transparent plastic face screens, and to use disposable towels and other single-use supplies.

Private broadcaster HaberTurk TV showed municipal officials in Istanbul inspecting hair salons to make sure the shops were following the new regulations.

Hairdresser Oguz Kutlu gives hair treatment to his customer Elena Kuznetsova, both wearing protective masks, on the first day of the reopening of his hair salon which was closed since March 21 amid the spread of the coronavirus disease in Istanbul

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Himalayan lynx's attack on markhor caught on camera

In a very unusual occurrence, a Himalayan lynx was caught hunting a markhor on camera on the steep rocky cliffs of Chitral valley by a World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan (WWF-P) filmmaker assisted by a Khyber Pakhtunkhwa wildlife department team.

According to officials, this is for the first time that a nocturnal hunter and highly elusive animal has been filmed in the area.

The lynx, locally considered a rare species, is known to be present in Chitral and other northern areas of Pakistan, including Gilgit-Baltistan, although its exact distribution and range are not known.

While filming a group of markhors in the Tooshi Community Game Reserve, outside Chitral town, we spotted a Himalayan lynx preparing for a hunt.

The wild cat did not attack the large group of passing markhors, but it caught a yearling markhor, which was grazing by the riverside along with its mother,` WWF-P filmmaker Nyal Mueenuddin told media.

Mr Mueenuddin was recently on a mission to Chitral to film the Kashmir markhor with the support of KP wildlife department.

According to the team, when the lynx was sure that the prey had been killed, it retreated to a nearby tree to rest. The camera team waited for about an hour and a half before the lynx returned to the site of the hunt and began eating the carcass.

We were able to move close to the lynx feasting on the markhor as there was a river between us and the lynx.

Afterwards, the wild cat returned to the cliffs where it perched itself on a rock to rest and digest. The crew also captured drone images of the cat on the rock,` said Mr Mueenuddin.

Highlighting the threats to the Himalayan lynx, WWF-P Director General Hammad Nagi Khan said the Himalayan lynx was one of the last remaining apex predators in the area and played an essential role in maintaining the balance and health of the overall ecosystem.

`By protecting wild ungulates in the area with the help of local communities, we can help revive the declining population of many scavengers like lynx. There is a need to reduce human-wildlife conflict as it poses a serious threat to these species,` he said, adding that without the lynx this habitat would be irreparably disrupted.Commenting on this rare shoot, Mohammad Idrees, Divisional Forest Officer, Chitral wildlife division, KP wildlife department, said that lynx attacks on ungulates, like the Himalayan ibex and markhor, had been reported for the past many years and were common in Chitral, particularly in the Chitral Gol National Park.

He said that humans were the biggest threat to wildlife due to growing human population, retaliatory killings, habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, deforestation and lack of awareness regarding ecosystem and food chains.

`The lynx competes with the snow leopard and wolf for food in its habitat range. Our wildlife teams are vigilant and work in close coordination with local communities to protect and conserve biodiversity of the area,` he said, adding that the department was planning to conduct a survey in the near future to assess lynx population.

According to WWF-P officials, population of the Kashmir markhor, once nearly extinct in the area, has substantially grown, thanks to communit y-base d conservation actions taken by the government and other partners.

`An increase in the wild ungulate population provides the lynx with wild prey and reduces chances of its attacks on the livestock, which can force locals to kill the predator in retaliation,` Mr Idrees said.

The lynx looks alert as it begins to feed on the prey in Chitral.

Flashman's Hotel

THIS refers to Rawalpindi Cantonment Board`s decision to construct car parks on two sites to be completed before Eid. One of the two sites Flashman`s Hotel is a private property spread over 2.33 acres of land located at the most prime commercial area of the Rawalpindi cantonment engulfed on three sides by Bank Road, Shabbir Sharif Road and Haider Road. It is owned by Associated Hotels of Pakistan Ltd, a private limited company registered with SECP.

Flashman`s Hotel, a landmark of Rawalpindi, is one of the four hotels. The other three are Faletti`s Lahore, Dean`s Peshawar and Cecil`s Murree, originally owned by Associated Hotels of India Ltd a subsidiary of International Oberoi Hotels.

In 2001, three hotels were privatised with the exception of Flashman`s. In 1960, Associated Hotels of Pakistan Ltd was incorporated and 13 percent of shares were offered to the public and the rest of 87pc remained with Mr Oberoi, an Indian national born in Bhaun, Chakwal district.

After the 1965 war, the majority shareholding was declared enemy property, Initially, PIA managed these hotels for about 10 years and later the shares were transferred to the PTDC in1976.

Thomas Charles Flashman inherited this property in `fee simple` and transferred it to Associated Hotels of India Ltd through a conveyance deed dated March 22, 1917. A `fee simple` estate is one in which the ownership is entitled to the entire property with unconditional powers of disposition during one`s lifetime.

Twice before, in 2016 and 2019, the cantonment board attempted to encroach upon this land but was prevented by the court which issued a stay order, which is in force till today.

This time they have taken over the entire land and started construction under the cover of Covid-19 only to dispossess the private owners of it in violation of the court orders in complete disregard of the norms of justice.

Athar Shah Jaidi passes away

Athar Shah Khan, the renowned writer, playwright and the actor who created an iconic character Jaidi which he himself played with endearing zaniness, passed away here on Sunday 10 May. He was 77. He leaves behind his wife and four sons.

Mr Khan was born in the Indian state of Rampur on Jan 1, 1943.

After independence his family opted to migrate to Pakistan and came to Lahore where he acquired his early education. He graduated from the Urdu Science College, Karachi, and then obtained a master`s degree in journalism from the University of Punjab.

Mr Khan wrote and performed in several shows and plays for radio (such as Rang hi rung Jaidi ke sang) and television (Hello hello, Intizar farmayey, Burger family, Jaidi in trouble, Ba adab ba mulahiza hoshiyar, etc). He contributed to quite a few films as a story and dialogue writer, including Bazi and Manjhi kithey dhawan (Punjabi).

However it was in the mid-1970s, after coming to Karachi to write a TV play, that his popularity increased manifold.

For one of his plays he penned the character of Jaidi, a bespectacled goofy man who has limited proficiency in the English language but likes to think he has total command over it; and has the same idea about his knowledge of life and its intricacies which invariably ensnares him in funny situations. The producer asked Mr Khan to play the character himself because no one could do justice to it; and the rest, as they say, was history.

He became a household name and his recognition as Jaidi upstaged his tremendous writing abilities. A memorable line from the play where he tries to display his love of the English language is: `There are many boys in the world, highly educated, matric second division.

Mr Khan was an incredibly creative person. Although he was known as a showbiz celeb, his reputation in the literary world was no less formidable. He wrote short stories in the earlier part of his career and was a poet of high merit.

His ghazals were published in literary journals but, again, it was his penchant for creating rib-tickling gata`at and ghazals that overshadowed his serious poetry, and because of which he would be regularly invited to mazahiya mushairas.

Hamare ilm ne bakhshi hai hum ko aagaahi; Yeh kainaat hai kiya is zameen pe sab kiya hai; Magar bus apne hi baarey mein kutchh nahin maloom; Maror kal se jo maidey mein hai sabab kiya hai. [My knowledge-seeking nature has made me wise; I know about the universe and all that exists on Earth; And yet I don`t know much about myself; What caused this rumbling in my tummy?] In the last decade or so, his health deteriorated. He suffered a heart attack and was also diabetic. Consequently, he cut down on his participation in programmes that had to do either with poetry recitals or TV shows. In 2001, he became the recipient of the President`s Pride of Performance award.

This writer remembers working alongside Mr Khan at an advertising agency in Karachi in the latter half of the 1990s. He was heading the creative department of the company. During the conversations that we had, he`d often talk about the financial aspects of show business, which was why he had joined the world of advertising. What had kept him going, intellectually, was his love of literature. In those days, he used to quote the following two lines by poet Liaquat Ali Asim: Warna Sugrat mar gaya hota; Us plyale mein zahr tha hi nahin. [Socrates would have died; There was no poison in the cup.] Mr Khan`s funeral prayer was offered at Masjid-i-Aqsa in Gulshan-i-Iqbal and he was laid to rest in the Sakhi Hasan Graveyard, Karachi.

The Flyer International prays and request to all to pray and make dua for the departure soul. He will be missed and remembered by the hearts he cared the most and amused by his talent.

Deserted Thai beaches lure rare turtles to build most nests in 20 years

Thailand has found the largest number of nests of rare leatherback sea turtles in two decades on beaches bereft of tourists because of the coronavirus pandemic, environmentalists say.

From wild boars patrolling the Israeli city of Haifa to deer venturing into London suburbs, virus closures are drawing wildlife into the abandoned streets of many cities.

In Thailand, with 2,765 infections and 47 deaths, travel curbs ranging from a ban on international flights to an appeal to citizens to stay home have brought a collapse in tourist numbers, but freed up the beaches for wildlife.

The 11 turtle nests authorities have found since last November were the highest number in 20 years, said Kongkiat Kittiwatanawong, the director of the Phuket Marine Biological Center.

This is a very good sign for us becausemany areas for spawning have been destroyed by humans,` he said. No such nests had been found for the previous five years.

If we compare to the year before, we didn`t have this many spawn, because turtles have a high risk of getting killed by fishing gear and humans disturbing the beach.

Leatherbacks are the world's largest sea turtles. They are considered endangered in Thailand, and listed as a vulnerable species globally by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

They lay their eggs in dark and quiet areas, scarce when tourists thronged the beaches. People have also been known to dig into their nests and steal eggs.

Late in March, staff at a national park in the southern province of Phanga Nga bordering the Andaman Sea found 84 hatchlings after monitoring eggs for two months.

A newly-hatched baby leatherback sea turtle is seen before making its way into the sea for the first time.

France reopens some beaches

Runners and swimmers rediscovered the sea air recently as France opened a selection of Atlantic coast beaches closed during the coronavirus lockdown, while the Lourdes sanctuary prepared to welcome back Catholic pilgrims this weekend.Local officials have reopened a number of beaches on the west of France, banning any `static presence seated or lying down`, including picnicking.

Walkers, swimmers, individual watersports practitioners and anglers are welcome, provided they respect the social-distancing rule of one metre (3.3 feet) between individuals, said a tweet from the LoireAtlantique department.

Other beaches remain off-limits, however, including Deauville in Normandy, a favourite with Parisians, for whom it is a 2.5hour train ride away.

If we say we will open the beaches, everyone will descend on them and it will be aterrible crowd,` Deauville mayor Philippe Augier told the France 3 broadcaster.

Beaches on the Mediterranean coast and the North Sea could reopen from this weekend for walks and sporting activities, say local officials.

France started emerging from a two-month lockdown, which the government credits with saving tens of thousands of lives by limiting the spread of the coronavirus, but which has exacted a heavy economic toll.

The country remains on high alert, with heightened precautions in so-called `red zones `including Paris and the wider Ilede-France region where the virus remains active. Cafes, restaurants, bars, many schools, parks and gardens remain shuttered in these areas, on top of a nationwide ban on gatherings of more than 10 people.

In lower-risk areas, local officials can apply for permission to reopen beaches and lakes.

People walk on the beach as kite-surfers practise in La Baule as France softens its strict lockdown rules.

Europe`s beaches reopen as lockdowns ease

Germany`s Bundesliga became the first major European football league to return from coronavirus lockdown, playing in empty stadiums as leisure-seekers across the continent flocked to newly reopened beaches.

The re-openings are a tentative step towards a return to normality in some of the countries worst affected by the pandemic, which has killed more than 307,000 people, infected over 4.5 million, wrought vast economic havoc and brought life to a halt.

There are also signs that countries are relaxing border controls imposed months ago to stop the spread of Covid-19.

Italy, for a long stretch the world's worst-hit country, announced recently that EU tourists will be allowed to visit from June 3 and a 14-day mandatory quarantine period will be scrapped.

Russia has announced its own football league will return next month and has pushed ahead with plans to lift restrictions despite recording its highest daily death toll, with 119 fatalities.

Spain`s Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said the government would seek to extend the country`s state of emergency for `about a month`, until the transition out of lockdown is completed.

In France, the first weekend after the most strict measures were lifted saw many venture out into the spring sunshine and hit the beach.

In the French Riviera city of Nice, keen swimmers jumped into the surf before 8am.

Here comes the sun With the northern hemisphere`s summer fast approaching, governments are moving to help their key tourism industries salvage something from the wreckage.

Parasols and sunloungers havepopped up on coastlines in Italy and Greece, which opened its beaches.

Pedri Alatras, a worker at the Kavouri beach near Athens, said disinfecting lounge chairs after each customer was a burden.

I also have to wear gloves when it`s almost 40 degrees (Celsius, 104 Fahrenheit),it`s exhausting but we have to respect the measures,` he said, when temperatures hit 38C.

The sun sparked alarm in parts of England, with officials warning people to stay away from newly reopened beauty spots due to fears of overcrowding.

Malls reopened in the Philippines` capital Manila but saw only a trickle of customers, while in Vietnam, hundreds queued for tourist boats at the newly reopened UNESCO heritage site of Ha Long Bay.

After Europe's power house Germany tipped into recession this week, the government said it would give an aid package worth 57 billion euros ($62 million) to help local authorities weather the onslaught.

Air Canada has become the latest firm to slash staff due to the pandemic, saying it made the `very painful decision` to lay off half its workforce.

In the US, the world`s worst-af fected country with more than 87,000 deaths and 1.4 million cases, more than 10 per cent of the population is now unemployed.

Trump has been keen to ease lockdown measures as he seeks re-election in November, but some areas are resisting. Lockdown measures in New York City have been extended until May 28.

The virus is still surging in Latin America, and Chile`s capital Santiago spent under total lockdown for the first time after it saw a 60 per cent leap in confirmed cases.

People wearing masks walk along the beach.

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Pearl-Continental Hotel Bahria Town to open soon in Rawalpindi

The five-star hotel to offer premium hospitality in the upscale suburb of Rawalpindi.

To compliment the lifestyle of the upscale suburb of Rawalpindi with high-end hospitality, Hashoo Group has signed a Memorandum of Understanding between Pakistan Services Limited and AAA Associates to open a Pearl-Continental Hotel in Bahria Town Phase 8, Rawalpindi.

Speaking about this new hotel, Hashoo Group Hospitality Division, Chief Operating Officer Mr. Haseeb Gardezi highlighted the significant economic growth and employment opportunities that the opening of the brand-new five-star hotel will bring in the area. Mr. Gardezi said, "We are pleased to partner with AAA Associates to make a landmark entrance with our Pearl-Continental brand in the heart of Bahria Town".

The Chairman of AAA Associates Mr. Fawad Bashir and Managing Director, Lt. Col. Retd. Shahzad Ali Kiani added: "We are honoured to contribute to a society where we see vast opportunities and a promising future with one-of-a-kind lifestyle", He also added that "Pearl-Continental Hotel will be a part of AAA Octa Multipurpose development in the business district of Bahria Town Phase 8".

Within the development the five-star hotel will feature a minimum of 120 rooms and suites, a variety of fine-dining multi-cuisine restaurants, a spa and fitness center, activity areas for children, as well as meeting rooms and large event spaces. The hotel will be a part of the multi-purpose AAA Octa Building , which not only will be one of the tallest buildings of Punjab but will also feature a theme-based mall, office spaces and an executive club to cater to a host of leisure and business activities. The building will be an expression of cultural construction making it one of its kind architecture in Pakistan with a mesmerizing view of an infinite pool, scenic and monumental surroundings of Bahria phase 8.

Pearl-Continental Hotel Bahria Town will expand Pearl-Continental's presence in Pakistan, adhering to its commitment of delivering quality standards to both resident guests and visitors from all around the world.

GB lawmakers demand Khunjerab Pass reopening for trade

The opposition and treasury members in the GilgitBaltistan Assembly on Thursday May 7 demanded the reopening of Khunjerab Pass on the PakistanChina border for trade.

During an assembly session chaired by Speaker Fida Mohammed Nashad here, the lawmakers said the border reopening would facilitate the delivery of medical equipment for Covid-19 patients from China to Pakistan.

Javed Hussain of the Pakistan Peoples Party said on a calling attention notice that the Covid-19 pandemic had badly hit economies across the world.

He said the Khunjerab Pass was closed in Dec and reopened in April every year for Pak-Sino trade and travel but the border wasn`t opened last month due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The lawmaker said hundreds of Chinese containers loaded with goods and bound for Pakistan were stranded in China and thousands of Pakistani traders had financial problems due to the border closure.

Now when the Covid-19 situation in China and GB is improving, the GB government should take appropriate steps to reopen the border,` he said.

Mr Javed said the Khunjerab Pass was opened in Feb this year for the transportation of the coronavirusrelated medical supplies donated by China.

He demanded the early reopening of the border to address the prob-lems of GB traders.

Law minister Aurangzeb Khan told the house that the federal government should order the Khunjerab Pass reopening for trade after developing and enforcing standard operating procedure in line with the World Health Organisation`s guidelines to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Deputy Speaker Jaffarullah Khan supported the call and said if the federal government could reopen the country`s other border crossing points, it should do the same with the Khunjerab Pass.

He also demanded the establishment of quarantine centres.

Opposition member Sikandar Ali Khan condemned the Indian government`s statement about the GB status and said it was meant to confuse the people.

He said GB was part of Pakistan and would remain so. Opposition member Rizwan Ali said GB Chief Minister Hafeezur Rehman had announced that the Nagar-V constituency would be made a subdivision, but action on that hadn`t taken place yet.

Law minister Aurangzeb Khan said paperwork and other requirements for the purpose had been completed.

He said after the cabinet`s approval, the Nagar-V subdivision draft would be tabled in the next assembly session.

Opposition leader Mohammad Shafi Khan said the Supreme Court of Pakistan had allowed the federal government to set up the GB caretaker government to hold elections as the region`s assembly would complete tenure on June 24 this year.

He demanded of the government to take the leaders of the house and opposition into confidence about the development process.

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