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**FLYER**

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## Int'l flights service resumes for Sialkot after three-month



International flights resumed at the Sialkot International Airport with the arrival of a direct flight (PK9206) of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) from Dammam, Saudi Arabia, recently with 135 passengers onboard after the airport remained closed for more than three months due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Senior PIA officials and leading people from travel trade accorded a warm welcome to the passengers on their arrival. The officials said the other international airlines have also resumed their international flight operations for Sialkot.

On this occasion, District Health Authority Chief Executive Officer Dr Muhammad Aslam Chaudhry said the Sialkot health department had followed standard operating procedures (SOPs) and set up counters to check passengers coming from abroad.

According to protocols, decided by the government of Pakistan and available at its website [covid.gov.pk](http://covid.gov.pk), 'passengers will undergo heightened screening at established health desks upon arrival to the airport. Screening will be carried out using thermal gun, thermal scanners and reviews by health professionals. These health desks have been set up with assistance from NDMA/NIH, while the human resource to augment the system is being provided by each respective province/federal unit.

Each passenger must submit a signed Passenger Health Form (signed during the flight or upon arrival) before leaving the airport to ensure record keeping of inbound passengers, and confirming their willingness to abide by quarantine/home-isolation.

The guidelines further say that asymptomatic passengers would be sent home, and added to the track and trace

system by respective provincial/federal authorities, and monitored to ensure self-isolation is carried out for 14 days. 'Symptomatic passengers will be tested and quarantined until availability of test results with option of paid/government quarantine facilities to be provided as per earlier policy.

The guidelines clearly say that 'there will be no meet and greet at the airport as per current SOPs, and only one person will be allowed to receive the passengers from parking' but there were reports that the PIA officials and the people from travel agencies welcomed the passengers at the airport.



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## PM orders fast track reforms in PIA

Prime Minister Imran Khan recently ordered expeditious reform of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to pull the national flag carrier out of the tailspin.

Revitalising national institutions like PIA would require both administrative restructuring and transparent utilisation of the available resources,' Mr Khan said, while chairing a meeting on the affairs of the airline.

He called for pursuing a comprehensive reform strategy and undertaking the planned changes on priority basis.

The loss-making national carrier has struggled to come out of crisis for decades despite induction of new planes and various changes introduced from time to time.

Aviation experts believe that the poor state of affairs at the airline have been because of poor management, bad service and loss of business to Gulf airlines because of the country's liberal open sky policy. Entry of fareastern carriers including Chinese airlines after the start of CPEC caused more business losses for it.

Unending crises have, meanwhile, diminished employees' motivation level. Last month's crash of a PIA aircraft while landing at Karachi exposed its deteriorating flight safety standards and badly damaged its reputation.

PIA's balance sheet is currently showing accumulated losses of Rs434 billion, while its total liabilities, excluding loans, have grown to Rs247 billion against assets of Rs103 billion.

Restructuring the airline has been on PTI government's agenda ever since it came to power in 2018. One of the first steps taken by the current government in this regard was appointment of Air Vice Marshal Arshad Malik as CEO of the airline in 2018.

The prime minister was told by the airline officials that number of improvements were achieved last year, including a 46 per cent growth in passenger revenue, 11pc increase in freight revenue, 43pc raise in income from the engineering department and improvement in earnings from UN charter flights.

They further claimed to have substantively cut expenditures. The officials, at the meeting, argued that stage was now set for 'long term course correction' but cautioned that 'complex' and 'deep organisation wide transformational restructuring was needed' for that. They proposed a review of National Aviation Policy 2015 and preparation and implementation of a five-



Prime Minister Imran Khan chairing a meeting that discussed reforms in PIA

year strategic business plan.

Frequent changes in top management, political interference, inadequate unancial support from the government and over-staffing in 'non-core' areas were flagged as other problematic areas.

Mr Khan said putting the state owned organisations back on track was one of the

priorities of his government because their losses had to be ultimately borne by the taxpayers. 'It is, therefore, important to expedite the reform process,' he emphasised.

The government has begun rolling out a reforms plan for the state-owned enterprises.

## International flights resume in Pakistan

The government has allowed resumption of international flight operations to and from all international airports in the country except Gwadar and Turbat airports from Saturday 20 June.

Spokesman for the Aviation Division Abdul Sattar Khokhar said in a press release on Friday 19 June that the permission for international flight operations would be subject to restrictions and limitations as decided by the competent authority from time to time in the light of the current Covid-19 scenario and implementation of health protocols.

Additionally, cargo, special and diplomatic flights would continue to be authorised as per procedure in vogue, the spokesman said. Adherence to the relevant applicable standard operating procedures would be mandatory for all airline operators, he said.

The government recently had announced a new policy for inbound passengers with a resolve to transport approximately 200,000 people within a month. The implementation of the new policy will start from Saturday 20 June which the government said would bring significant enhancement in the capacity to bring back stranded Pakistanis from across the world.

Meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority issued a NOTAM (notice to airmen) after the government authorised international passenger and charter flights to and from all international airports of the country, except Gwadar and Turbat airports.

The notice to airmen said: 'Government of Pakistan has authorized international passenger and charter flights to and from all international airports of Pakistan except Gwadar and Turbat airports in accordance with restrictions and limitations for scheduled international flight operations as approved by the competent authority.

Slot timings as decided by the authority shall be strictly followed with sufficient separation between arrivals and departures to ensure compliance with health protocol.

Cargo, special flights and diplomatic flights shall continue to be authorized as per procedure in-vogue.

However, authorizations granted exclusively for outbound international passenger flight operations shall cease with effect from June 25.' The NOTAM said all airlines and operators would be required to adhere to the applicable respective standard operating procedures (SOPs) issued from time to time.



## Emirates to resume flights to Dubai from Sialkot

Emirates will resume scheduled flight services to Dubai from Sialkot on June 24. Flights from Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad to Dubai were resumed earlier by the airline.

Asiatic Public Relations Network Senior Media Manager said in a press release that Emirates will serve all routes with its modern Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, offering both economy and business class services. From Dubai, customers can connect to the airline's current network of 40 destinations. On flights from Dubai to Pakistan, the airline will only carry cargo. Besides Sialkot, Emirates has also announced to resume scheduled services to nine more cities including Colombo (from June 20), Istanbul (from June 25), Auckland, Beirut, Brussels, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh (all from July 1) and Barcelona, Washington DC (from July 15).

Emirates Pakistan Vice President Mohammad Sarhan said: 'Thanks to Pakistani and UAE authorities' support and partnership, Emirates has been able to provide smooth and safe journeys for those who need to travel; we look forward to adding flights to more destinations in the coming weeks. As we gradually return to regular services, our number one priority will always be the health and safety of customers, our crew and our communities.'

Emirates will add more flights in July to other cities including London, Heathrow, Manchester, Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich, Madrid, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Dublin, New York, Toronto, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong.

Customers can book to fly between destinations in the Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe or the Americas with a convenient connection in Dubai, as long as they meet travel and immigration entry requirements of their destination country.

The airline has implemented a comprehensive set of measures at every

step, to ensure safety of its customers and employees on the ground and in the air; measures include distribution of complimentary hygiene kits to all customers, which include masks, gloves, hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes.

However, travel restrictions remain in place and travellers will only be accepted on flights if they comply with the eligibility and entry requirements of their destination countries.

## Visa of stranded foreign nationals extended for two months

The federal government has extended for another two months the validity of visas for foreign nationals stranded in Pakistan due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The expired visas will now be treated as valid till Aug 31. According to an official of the Ministry of Interior, the decision has been taken in view of the outbreak of Covid-19 and as part of the government's measures to stop the spread of the deadly virus through 'any interaction with the public at large'.

The notification is in continuation of the previous one issued on April 29 extending all types of visas, issued to foreign nationals, till June 30. The exemption will be applicable to all visas expired since March 15.

All such visas shall be deemed to be valid till August 31, 2020,' the official said.

The ministry has informed the Foreign Office, Federal Investigation Agency's immigration department and directorate general of the Immigration and Passports about the decision.

Answering a question, the official said foreign nationals whose visas expired before April 15 should contact the section concerned of the ministry.

The first extension in visas had been announced in the first week of April extending such visas till April 30. A day before the deadline another notification had been issued to give a further extension of two months that was scheduled to expire on June 30.

## Saudi Arabia to hold 'very limited' Haj this year

Saudi Arabia recently announced it would hold a 'very limited' Haj this year owing to the coronavirus pandemic, with pilgrims already in the kingdom allowed to take part.

The decision, fraught with political and economic peril, comes as Saudi Arabia struggles to contain the virus amid a new spike in daily cases and deaths.

It was decided to hold the pilgrimage this year with very limited numbers... with different nationalities in the kingdom,' the official Saudi Press Agency said, citing the Haj ministry.

Haj, a must for able-bodied Muslims at least once in their lifetime, represents a major potential source of contagion as it packs millions of pilgrims into congested religious sites. Any decision to limit the event risks annoying Muslim hardliners for whom religion trumps health concerns.

A watered-down Haj would represent a major loss of revenue for the kingdom, which is already reeling from the twin shocks of the virus-induced slowdown and a plunge in oil prices. It could also trigger renewed scrutiny of the Saudi custodianship of Islam's holiest sites the kingdom's most powerful source of political legitimacy.

A series of deadly disasters over the years, including a 2015 stampede that killed up to 2,300 worshippers, has prompted criticism of the kingdom's management of Haj. A full-scale Haj, which last year drew about 2.5 million pilgrims, was unlikely after authorities advised Muslims in late March to defer preparations due to the fast spreading disease.

Earlier this month, Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim nation, emerged as one of the first countries to withdraw from the pilgrimage after pressing Riyadh for clarity, with a minister calling it a 'very bitter and difficult decision'. Malaysia, Senegal and Singapore followed suit with same announcements.



## Emirates employees face 50pc basic pay cut

**E**mirates has decided to reduce 50 per cent basic salary of its employees in grade four and above, including those in equivalent grades, from July 1.

The airline's executive vice president human resources issued an update on the salary reduction, saying: 'We continue to navigate the impact of Covid-19 on our business and are reviewing all possible options to preserve our cash position. As a result, we have had to take the difficult decision of extending and widening the reductions on basic salary until September 30.' He said that from July 1 the reduction would be 50pc on basic salary for all employees in grades four and above, including those in equivalent grades. This will also be applicable to outstation employees subject to local legislation and consultation requirements.

The official said the decision had not been taken lightly, but it reflected the severe conditions the company and the whole aviation industry were facing.

Meanwhile, Emirates will resume its 'outbound' flights from three cities of Pakistan to bring back stranded UAE residents.

## Emirates resumes flights from Pakistan after two months

**A**fter a gap of over two months, Emirates has resumed scheduled services from Pakistan while ensuring implementation of measures for the health and safety of its customers and employees



at all contact points.

As the airline will operate seven flights from Karachi, five from Lahore and two from Islamabad to Dubai every week, the first scheduled flight of Emirates will take off from the federal capital on Thursday.

The flight operations had remained suspended over the past two months amid travel restrictions imposed globally due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

According to a press release issued on Tuesday, Emirates is operating 14 weekly flights to Dubai, including seven from Karachi, five from Lahore and two from Islamabad, using its modern Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

Passengers can book tickets on Economy and Business Class from Pakistan; the airline is flying UAE residents and citizens, as well as cargo to Dubai.

From Dubai to Pakistan, the airline is flying in only cargo.

Travellers will only be accepted on these flights if they comply with the eligibility and entry criteria requirements of the UAE government, the airlines said.

Emirates Vice President, Pakistan, Mohammad Sarhan, said: 'We are extremely pleased to resume services successfully from Pakistan, and thank the authorities for the arrangements and their assistance.'

Emirates have implemented a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the traveller's journey to ensure the health and safety of customers and employees at all touch points. Our customers travelling with us will find these measures reassuring and comforting.

The press release added that social distancing measures had been applied and baggage would be disinfected at all three airports. The boarding sequence has been staggered in Economy Class and passengers' board by row, from the last row to the first, in small numbers.

Customers transiting through Dubai International airport and boarding another Emirates flight go through thermal screening after disembarkation. Transfer desks at the airport have protective barriers and for extra assistance, airport staff dressed in personal protective equipment (PPE), direct

customers from a safe distance.

Emirates is currently flying from Karachi daily, from Islamabad on Thursdays and Saturdays and from Lahore on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays.

## Etihad resumes flights from Pakistan

**A**bu Dhabi's Etihad Airways is to start operation from Pakistan nearly two months after coronavirus-related lockdown, with flights scheduled from Karachi and Lahore on June 13.

According to a senior aviation official, Etihad Airways will be resuming its twice-weekly flights from Karachi and Lahore for outbound passengers only.

Etihad Airways can't bring passengers from abroad [inbound] due to government restrictions; however, they are allowed to repatriate people stranded in Pakistan,' said the official.

The limited flight operation is expected to restart from Islamabad very soon, he added.

Earlier, Etihad Airways had suspended flights to Pakistan since a ban on commercial flights was imposed on March 21 to contain the spread of Covid-19, the disease caused by new coronavirus.

Pakistan had also suspended international flight operations on March 21 for two weeks to limit the spread of Covid-19. It was later extended to May 31.

According to the airline's website, 'Until June 30, 2020, we'll be operating a number of flights between Abu Dhabi and destinations around the world.'







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## Pilots, ATC blamed for PIA crash

Presenting the preliminary investigation report of the last month's crash of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft near Karachi airport, Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan on Wednesday June 24 told the National Assembly that "overconfident pilots" and the Air Traffic Control (ATC) officials were responsible for the tragedy as they did not follow the set procedures at the time of landing.

According to the minister, the ill-fated aircraft was "100 per cent fit" for flying and there was no technical fault in it. Similarly, Mr Khan said the pilot and the co-pilot were experienced and "medically fit". The air crew did not point out any technical fault even while making the final approach for landing, he added.

However, according to the minister, the pilots were not focused at the time of landing and throughout the flight they had discussed the Covid-19 issue.

"Corona was on the nerves of the pilot and his co-pilot. Their family members were affected. They listened to the (ATC) instructions and then again started discussion on the coronavirus," the minister said, adding that he had himself heard the recording of the CVR (Cockpit Voice Recorder) that recorded all the conversation that took place in the cockpit cabin throughout the flight time.

On May 22, the PIA's A320 aircraft crashed in a densely populated area of Karachi near Jinnah International Airport, killing 97 of the 99 passengers and eight crewmembers on board. A teenage girl on ground also died later. The Lahore-Karachi flight (PK-8303) had crashed while making a second attempt to land.

Quoting from the report, Mr Khan said the first irregularity noticed by the ATC was that the aircraft was at 7,200 feet, instead of standard 2,500 feet, when it was 10 miles away from the runway. When the control tower officials informed the pilot about it and asked him not to take the position for landing, the pilot "ignored" it and said that he would manage it, the minister said.

The minister said it was not known as to why the pilot, who had lowered the landing gears when the aircraft was at 10 nautical miles, pulled it back when it reached five nautical miles.

The pilot, he said, touched down the runway without lowering the landing gears, thus damaging both its engines and then took off to make another landing attempt.

At this point, the minister said the control tower was at fault too for not informing the pilot about the damage to



the engines and for not issuing further instructions.

"The ATC (controller) should have informed when he saw the engines on fire. The control tower did not inform the pilot [so it] was at fault too. When the plane took off again, both engines were damaged," the minister said.

Mr Khan said the plane was on auto-landing but the pilot brought it back to manual system just before the crash. He said the plane fell on the houses in a locality near the airport while making the second attempt to land.

"The pilot as well as the (air traffic) controller both did not follow the set procedures. The pilot ignored the instructions and controller did not inform him (the pilot) about the damage to the engines caused due to friction," the minister said.

Mr Khan said the data from the Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) and the CVR was decoded in the presence of foreign experts in France.

He said the complete report of the incident would be presented before the parliament by the end of the year and claimed that the inquiry was being conducted in a fair and transparent manner.

### Action against pilots

The aviation minister disclosed that there were 860 active pilots in the country, and 262 pilots had appeared in exams through proxies. Moreover, he said, the degrees of four pilots were found to be fake.

Mr Khan said fake degrees and licences were issued to the pilots and almost 30 per cent of the pilots had fake or improper licences and did not have flying experience either. Declaring it a national

security issue, the minister said the government had started taking action against all such pilots.

In the first phase, the minister said, 54 such pilots were identified and show-cause notices had been issued to 28 of them. He said nine of them confessed they were unqualified and were seeking pardon.

He announced that the government had taken the decision to do restructuring of the PIA, instead of privatising it.

Shortly after the crash, the government had formed a committee, headed by Air Commodore Usman Ghani, who is president of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board (AAIB) to determine the causes of the crash and issue a report in a month.

An 11-member team of Airbus, the manufacturer of the A320 aircraft, also visited the country and investigated the site of the incident to offer technical assistance to the local investigators.

### Past accidents

The minister also presented the conclusion of the reports of the four previous plane crashes that took place between 2010 and 2019, saying all the accidents, except the PIAATR's crash near Havelian last year, were due to the pilots' mistake and their "error of judgment".

The minister said the pilots were responsible for Air Blue crash in 2010, Bhoja Air crash in 2012 and the last year crash landing of a plane in Gilgit. He said Air Blue and Bhoja Air crashes occurred due to "human error and various breaches of flying discipline". He said the technical fault in the Chitral incident was "so complicated" that the plane manufacturer itself had not been able to reach a conclusion yet.

The minister, however, promised that its inquiry report would be presented in August.

Later, speaking at a news conference, Mr Khan said 860 pilots had been serving in PIA, Air Blue, Serene Air, private flying clubs and also in foreign airlines. He said a senior officer having a good reputation had been appointed to verify the licences and to check academic qualification of the pilots.

Besides the departmental actions, he said criminal proceedings would also be initiated against those having suspicious licences and exams.

"Unfortunately, the pilots are so influential that nobody can question them over anything. However, monitoring of employees has started on a daily basis on which strict actions will be taken", he said.



## **PIA to ground 150 pilots with 'Dubious licences'**

**T**he management of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has decided to ground its 150 pilots.

Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan disclosed in the National Assembly on Wednesday 24 June that a large number of commercial pilots possessed 'dubious licences'.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez told media that "about 150 pilots are being grounded."

He said the management has now written to the Civil Aviation Authority to urgently provide the list of other licences found to be dubious and all of them will be indefinitely grounded pending inquiries against them.

"Those found at fault will be terminated from service after following a due process," he said.

The spokesman acknowledged the findings of the preliminary investigation report shared with the parliament by the aviation minister on the plane crash of May 22 which claimed 97 lives and reaffirmed PIA's resolve for further improving safety standards within the company using the findings of the report as guiding principles.

He said that the investigations into dubious licences issued by the aviation regulator were highlighted by the PIA itself in the aftermath of the incident occurred in Panjgur in November 2018 where an ATR skidded off the runway, using the same hot and high approach and then making some elementary level mistakes.

That incident prompted an inquiry into the pilot's credentials which were found to be dubious. The same was reported to the regulator and the PIA requested the government to constitute a highlevel inquiry into the matter which the aviation minister ordered immediately.

A thorough forensic audit was conducted into the licences of all the pilots obtained within the country. The PIA management continuously followed up for expediting the inquiry process and highest executive office of the country also intervened.

Meanwhile, the PIA tracked another 15 such pilots and all of them were grounded pending clearance from the inquiry board. That did cost PIA Rs175-200 million in terms of salaries of such pilots, not to mention additional perks and privileges.

The spokesperson said that based on

the internal assessment of the situation consequent to this tragic event, the PIA will be making additional recommendations to the regulatory authority for further improvement which is the order of the day, saying that the regulator would be needed to firm up and bring about zero-tolerance towards misdemeanours in the grant and checking of licences.

Mr Hafeez said some of flights may be cancelled consequently but safety takes precedence over commercial interests and only pilots with impeccable service records and clear credentials will operate the flights.

He said in order to ensure that safety is never compromised again, a Flight Data Monitoring Unit has been established through which now the PIA will itself measure, analyse and identify trends of PIA flights network-wide for corrective or preventive measures based on international established commercial aviation standards.

## **Residents hit by PIA plane crash get cheques**

**T**he Pakistan International Airlines has distributed cheques among those residents of Model Colony whose property and vehicles were damaged in the May 22 plane crash that claimed lives of 97 passengers and crewmembers.

According to a press release, the cheques were distributed at a programme held at the airlines' head office here. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's federal and provincial lawmakers from Karachi Akram Cheema, Aftab Hussain Siddiqui, Firdous Shahmim Naqvi and others gave the cheques to the affected.

PIA's Chief Operating Officer Aijaz Mazhar, senior officials Khalilullah Sheikh, Amanullah Qureshi, Soban Nazir, Younus Khan, Muhammad Shuaib and the affected residents were present.

However, the press release did not mention the compensation amount given to each affected person.

The PIA said it was providing all possible support and assistance to the persons injured on the ground and whose houses and vehicles were damaged due to the air crash.

It said that the initial damage costs pertaining to houses and vehicles were ascertained by the PIA and government officials immediately after the incident.

Besides this, a technical surveyor had also been appointed by the insurance company who has evaluated the damages and the final claim amount will be settled accordingly,' it added.

The national carrier had provided temporary accommodations to the affected residents and those sustained injuries on ground were provided full medical support and hospitalization.

It had arranged provision of six month's rent to the affected, including house owners and tenants, to provide interim and immediate relief to them.

A special prayer was also held for the victims of the air crash and for the speedy recovery of the injured on the ground.

## **PIA to bring home thousands of Pakistanis stranded in Saudi Arabia, UAE**

**T**he Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has decided to operate over 100 flights to bring back more than 10,000 Pakistanis stranded in Saudi Arabia and 15,000 in the UAE.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said recently that after the permission was granted by the government the national flag carrier would fly empty planes from Pakistan only to bring back passengers.

He said that additional flights had been scheduled for the convenience of passengers because of rush and fast sale of tickets due to limited availability.

Some of the PIA offices had been closed due to lockdown restrictions in these countries in the wake of Covid19 pandemic. However, tickets could be purchased through the airline's website or its booking offices in Pakistan and through travel agents.

Hours after the decision to resume flight operations was announced by the Aviation Division, the prime minister welcomed the expected return of Pakistanis stranded abroad.

In a tweet, the prime minister said: 'we will partially open airspace for intl flights. This is being done specially to help our Overseas workers who have suffered most in this pandemic but have shown great courage & made us proud. We welcome you back home & our govt will facilitate you in every way.'



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## Sialkot International Airport resumes operation

**A**fter the construction and repair of SIAL (Sialkot International Airport) runway, it was opened on June 12 for all types of flights. All the airlines arriving at Sialkot International Airport have started scheduling their flights.

The airlines have started their flight operations to/from SIAL. The first flight of PIA operated on June 21, from Damam to Sialkot. The flight PK 9246 arrived at the evening with 140 passengers and 8 crew at the airport. Emirates has also started its cargo flights, from Sialkot, the first flight EK-618 arrived at SIAL at evening of Friday June 26 and departed from SIAL to Dubai with 40 tons of cargo at the same night. Air Arabia has also started its scheduled operation on Friday June 26 after March 26, 2020 as it was lockdown. The first flight arrived at night from Sharjha to SIAL with 168 passengers and departed from SIAL with 77 passengers at same night.

The people of the area are rejoicing with the commencement of air operations at the airport. It may be recalled that due to Corona, all the flights operation was stopped on March 26, 2020, so the SIAL management took advantage of this



opportunity and decided to start repair work on runway of the airport, but due to lockdown across the country the work was severely affected but Chairman SIAL Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi, the Vice Chairman Ch. M. Afzal Shaheen and CEO Maj. Gen (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir used all their resources in this difficult situation and repair work of the runway completed timely.

The efforts of convener, construction committee, SIAL, Mr. Zulfiqar Ahsan

Bhatti in this regard are commendable, while resident Engineer NESPAK Saud Barkzai, Airport Manager Nazir Ahmed, Project Manager SIAL, Eng. Hassan Nawaz's team and SVO Col (R) Ghiasuddin, also deserve congratulation. In this regard cooperation of chief Security Officer Airport Security Force, Additional Director Tariq Mahmood Butt and other subordinate officers and personals were also exemplary.

### Gulf Air imports more than 80 tons of medical supplies in May



**I**n response to national COVID-19 mitigation efforts, Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has successfully imported 82 tons of medical supplies from India with partner medical suppliers.

Throughout the month of May, Gulf Air has operated 4 cargo flights from and to different cities in India, carrying back medications, medical equipment and hygienic products. Additionally, on May

27, Gulf Air operated a historic first in-a-series of cargo flights to Guangzhou, China, importing 21 tons of medical supplies in which the airline has utilised all compartments of its aircraft to maximise storage space.

Gulf Air is working alongside members of Team Bahrain to ensure sufficient availability of medical supplies during these unprecedented times. During April, Gulf Air also operated 6 flights to import 90 tons of medical supplies from India.

### Gulf Air resumes flights from Pakistan

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, confirmed the return of operations out of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan starting from 31 May 2020 with resumption of direct flight from Islamabad International Airport to its hub Bahrain International Airport with flights from other cities in Pakistan being added in the coming days. In compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority in Pakistan, flights will only operate with passengers

out of Pakistan.

Due to the Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak, Gulf Air has temporarily suspended all flights to its 7 destinations in Pakistan (Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Faisalabad, Multan, Sialkot and Peshawar) in compliance with the order from the Civil Aviation Authority in The Islamic Republic of Pakistan from 21 March 2020.

The airline, being one of the few airlines regionally and globally to operate scheduled flights during the outbreak, has shown flexibility and agility to the government orders, civil aviation directives and airport closures around its network and has been responsive to continuous changes and updates regarding operations to and from its network destinations. Gulf Air will continue to monitor the readiness of airports and plan the resumption of its operation to most of its network.



## Why are most cabin crew female?

The majority of the world's cabin crew are women. That's a fact. However, it's a widely accepted notion that a lot has been done for gender equality in the past few decades. That said, when it comes to the diversity of those who help us inflight, gender equality is particularly lacking. So, why are most cabin crew female? Is anything being done about it?



*Why are most cabin crew female?*

### A history of the female flight attendant

In the Western world, it's common to think that gender equality has become a lot more progressive. Many fundamental rights have been won for women in recent history. However, when it comes to the aviation industry, in some senses, there is still a long way to go. Not only are many of the cabin crews in our skies women but airlines continue to advertise a gender-bias for these roles. However, that wasn't always the case.

Paradoxically, when cabin crew were first employed, flight attendants were exclusively male. Heinrich Kubis became the world's first flight attendant back in 1912 as part of the German airline DELAG which operated zeppelins.

Top 10 Innovations That Could Change How We Fly

At that time, the role of cabin crew was primarily concerned with safety and not with attending passengers with food and drink. Following on from Kubis' employment, airlines continued to seek male staff to work within the aircraft. It wasn't until some 18 years later that the first female cabin crew member joined an airline.

Ellen Church joined Boeing Air Transport in 1930 and worked on aircraft as a registered nurse. It was from this moment that the role of the flight attendant began to evolve in order to include a more attentive approach. As a result, airlines looked to female nurses to provide care for passengers inside the cabin. The effect was an influx of female applicants who helped to create the basis of cabin crew today.



*Women only became cabin crew in the 1930s.*

### Why are flight attendants still predominantly female?

Because of how rapidly the persona of the flight attendant became associated with women, females began to dominate as a stereotype. However, it wasn't only by the applicants' doing that this happened. In the middle of the 1900s, airlines imposed strict rules (many of which still prevail today) on the weight, age, marital status and appearance of these cabin crew. The idea was to not-so-subtly capitalize on the sexuality of women.

The cabin crew dress code for women garnered a lot of support and subsequent profits from male business class travelers who most commonly took international



*Female cabin crew were ordered to wear revealing clothing in order to secure more profits.*

flights at that time. The gender of a cabin crew member really was all or nothing.

Much of what remains today in the characteristics of a typical cabin crew member has been created from stereotypes that were formed in the mid-1900s. Today, women consistently make up over 75% of the cabin crew workforce in the US. It's a

job that's presented as being very glamorous and feminine which has alienated much male interest.

Can we expect a shift in the dynamic of cabin crew in the coming years?

### Is the industry changing?

Despite a high proportion of women being employed as cabin crew, there are signs that the industry is changing. Slight inclines have been noted in the number of male applicants seeking positions as flight crew.

However, for those men who want to become cabin crew, there is a fundamental barrier in their way. Not all airlines are adopting what could be called avant-garde attitudes against discrimination. What may seem like sexism is just the way



*Men are now applying for positions as cabin crew but women still outnumber them.*

business works for some airlines around the world. For example, Indigo the low-cost Indian airline advertises solely for female cabin crew in both experienced and inexperienced positions. On its website, it says that it only accepts applications from:

*"Female Indian nationals, with an Indian Passport, between 18 to 27 years of age."*

The question that this scenario raises is: should airlines be forced to change their business model to support more male flight attendants?

Unfortunately, as long as rules like this continue to exist, it's unlikely that the cabin crew subsection of the air travel industry can undergo the radical change that it needs. It is clear that more men are applying for roles in this industry but the incentive for them to succeed in this role is not as universally accepted as it is for women.

Do you believe that more men should be flight attendants? Is the industry trying hard enough to create gender equality? Have your say in the comments.



# IATA: Airlines will need further help to get through the winter, overall bookings are down 82% year-on-year



IATA has released this statement:

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) warned that the airline industry faces a hard winter and called on governments around the world to continue providing relief measures as the COVID-19 crisis continues.

Airlines are expected to post a loss of \$84.3 billion in 2020 and government financial relief is a lifeline to many airlines. The bulk of airlines make their money in the northern summer season, while the winter season, even in the best of times, is a struggle to remain profitable. For example, the 2019 net profit margin for European airlines followed the normal seasonal pattern and was 9% and 17% respectively in Q2 and Q3 (northern summer). But it started at -1% in Q1 and finished the year at 2% in Q4 (northern winter). The winter season will be even more challenging amid the recovery from COVID-19.

Public opinion research in the first week of June 2020 showed greater caution among travelers in returning to travel. Only 45% of travelers surveyed intend to return to the skies within a few months of the pandemic subsiding. A further 36% said that they would wait six months. That is a significant shift from April 2020 when 61% said that they would return to travel within a few months of the pandemic subsiding and 21% responded that they would wait about six months.

The survey findings are corroborated in key passenger trends demonstrating continuing market uncertainty:

- Overall bookings are down 82% year-on-year compared to June 2019.
- Long-haul forward bookings for the first week in November 2020 are 59% below normal levels. Historical trends show about 14% of airline tickets are sold 22 weeks in advance of travel. Current bookings for 1-7 November show that tickets have been sold to only 5% of the 2019

number of passengers.

- Passengers are booking closer to the time of travel. Bookings for travel 20 or more days in the future accounted for 29% of bookings made in May 2020, down from 49% in 2019. Similarly, 41% of bookings made in May 2020 were for travel within 3 days, more than double the 18% in May 2019.

“People are returning to the skies but the horizon of uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis is extending. Forward bookings are down, and people are hedging their travel bets by booking closer to the time of travel. Airlines in the Northern hemisphere rely on a strong summer season and a predictable booking curve to get them through the lean months. But neither of these conditions are in place and airlines will need continued help from governments to survive a hard winter. Airlines will need much more flexibility to plan schedules around these changing consumer trends. Financial and operational flexibility equals survival,” said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA’s Director General and CEO.

IATA highlighted four key areas where governments could assist airlines:

- Extending the waiver from the 80-20 use-it-or-lose-it rule in the Worldwide Airport Slot Guidelines. In these extraordinary times, airlines need much more flexibility to plan schedules and business critical decisions should not be compromised by slot allocation guidelines designed for normal times. “There were good reasons why the 80-20 rule was waived for the summer season. Regulators should apply the same common-sense approach again and waive the rule for the winter season as well. Airlines need to focus on meeting what consumers want today, without trying to defend the slots needed for what their schedule might look like a year from now,” said de

Juniac.

- Continued financial assistance in ways that do not increase industry debt levels which have risen sharply. Some governments are exploring measures including subsidizing domestic operations and waiving airport and air traffic control charges.
- Extensions to wage subsidies and corporate taxation relief measures. The wage subsidy schemes have provided some \$35 billion in relief to airlines. Tapering these more slowly would give airlines more time to recover and minimize job losses. Relief for corporate and indirect taxes such as VAT, passenger taxes or fuel taxes would support market stimulus.
- Avoiding increases in charges and fees. While airports and air navigation service providers have suffered revenue falls, steep increases in charges must be avoided during the restart period as this will severely impact airline financials and market recovery. Similarly, governments should cover the costs of new health measures imposed as a result of COVID-19.

“Each day sees more people traveling. That’s good for the economy. The numbers are moving in the right direction, but we are by no means anywhere near normal or sustainable levels of activity. Financial relief measures are still desperately needed. And policy-relief measures like a slot usage waiver remain critical. Governments need to grant that by no later than the end of July to provide at least that certainty for this beleaguered and battered industry,” said de Juniac.

From John Hopkins: Meanwhile the number of new COVID-19 worldwide cases is not showing signs of slowing down.

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## **DHL Express launches the UK's only direct route from Hong Kong to East Midlands airport**

**D**HL Express, the world's leading international express delivery service provider, has launched the UK's only direct cargo route from Asia to the UK, with the first flight landing at East Midlands Airport.

The route has been introduced in response to the increasing demand from businesses for shipments from Asia, across the spectrum of medical, industrial and consumer goods.

It will run once a week, departing Hong Kong carrying material exclusively for the UK, arriving at East Midlands Airport. Goods will then enter the delivery cycle to be distributed across the UK.

The aircraft operating on the route is a Boeing 747-8 Queen of the Skies, one of the most fuel-efficient freighters currently available, with a cargo capacity of 100 tonnes. Some 95% of the goods on board will be time-definite products, covering everything from medical to industrial to e-Commerce shipments.

Ian Wilson, CEO DHL Express UK & Ireland, said: "As lockdowns in many countries around the world begin to ease, we're seeing a sustained growth in demand for goods from Asia, covering all of the usual high value or time-critical products like technology, medical and industrial goods. We have introduced this new direct route operating into EMA as a direct response to this, and as part of our ongoing adaptations to the network to enable us to best serve our customers."

Karen Smart, managing director, East Midlands Airport, said: "We very much welcome DHL's continued investment in its EMA operation. It is fitting that currently the only direct cargo flight to the UK from China comes into EMA which is home to the UK's largest dedicated air cargo operation. This new route is further evidence of the airport's vital role as a global hub for time-critical goods and a facilitator of world trade. As one of the UK's most strategically important infrastructure assets, EMA is well-placed to support the gradual steps being taken by countries to re-start manufacturing and exports as they ease their way to normality following COVID-

19 as well as being key to unlocking the UK's economic potential in the coming years."

In addition to the Hong Kong EMA

## **Etihad Guest launches new mobile app**

**E**tihad Guest has launched a new mobile application which allows UAE-based members to spend their miles seamlessly at selected malls in Abu Dhabi and Al Ain.

Matched with a sleek user interface, the app makes it easier for customers to access benefits, track rewards and find personalised offers.

While Abu Dhabi residents are currently encouraged not to leave their homes due to the ongoing situation with the coronavirus pandemic, as restrictions are eased, Etihad Guest members who link their Visa card credentials to the Etihad Guest app can automatically earn and spend miles using 'Miles on the Go' technology in all stores in Yas Mall, World Trade Center Abu Dhabi Mall (WTC) and Al Jimi Mall when they next use that card.

Up to five Visa cards can be added at once. UAE based Members who link their Visa card will earn one Etihad Guest Mile and one Tier Mile for every AED 3 spent plus additional mall benefits will be added in the near future.

Robin Kamark, Chief Commercial Officer, Etihad Aviation Group, said: "Our members told us they wanted to hear from us while on the go and have more ways to use and earn miles. At a time when travel is restricted, Tier Miles, usually only earned by flying or spending on an ADCB or FAB co-branded Visa credit card, will now be rewarded to members for everyday spends, helping them move up to the next level in the Etihad Guest programme."

UAE residents wishing to turn even more of their purchases into rewards can also sign-up for a co-branded Visa credit card through the new app.

Globally, Visa cardholders are able to redeem dedicated discounts through the app and future enhancements will also allow members to earn and burn miles internationally on everyday shopping, dining and recreational activities.

The app allows members to check their Etihad Guest Miles balance and Tier

route, DHL Express has also introduced two additional new routes from EMA to JFK Airport and Miami International. Later this month, a new flight from EMA to Los Angeles will also be introduced. All routes are in response to the demand for time-definite deliveries to the USA, and to ensure the DHL Express network continues to provide the best possible connectivity and service for customers at this critical time.

Status instantly, as well as with their transaction history and the rewards earned with their Etihad Guest credit cards. Members can search for Etihad Airways flights, upgrades or even hotel bookings and holiday packages. They can also browse Etihad's Reward Shop which showcases a range of over 3,000 leading brands in electronics, fashion and gifts, all of which can be purchased on the go or saved to the favourites list.

"Seamless technology will allow members to login to the easy-to-use app using facial recognition or the fingerprint scanner, providing instant and secure access to rewards. A self-learning chatbot will additionally provide 24-hour support. We have also made it easier for Guests to access any of our global Lounges by providing a virtual membership card," added Kamark.

## **CAA closes Lahore airport runway for two months**

**T**he Civil Aviation Authority has given permission to repair the main runway at Lahore's Allama Iqbal airport, according to a notification.

The 18-L runway at the airport has been closed for all the flights and the airlines have been told to use runway 36-L instead.

The work on the main runway will start on June 4 and it will reopen on August 4 for domestic and international flights, the CAA said.

In a very surprising way, the CAA also instructed the airlines to curtail the number of passengers in order to reduce the weight of planes. It warned that it would take action and impose fines if airlines ignore its instructions



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## SIAL elects new Chairman and Vice Chairman



Mr. Mian Naeem Javed Chairman



Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman

The board of directors of SIAL (Sialkot International Airport Limited) has unopposed elected Mr. Mian Naeem Javed as its Chairman and Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen as Vice Chairman for 2020-21. The Vice Chairman has been elected 2nd time which is first time in the history of SIAL, he was also elected as Vice Chairman SIAL in 2018 and worked for two years. Mr. Mian Naeem Javed was nominated by the founder Chairman Mian Riaz, Mr. M. Hanif Khan former Chairman, Eng. Khawar Anwar Khawaja founding Chief Executive & former Chairman SIAL. Chaudhry M. Afzal Shaheen was nominated by Ch. M. Javed Director, Mr. Dawood Sair, Director, Mr. Zulfiqar Ahsan Bhatti Director and Mian Atiqur Rehman Director SIAL.

Mr. Jahangir, office secretary SIAL performed the duty as election officer. At the time of election Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi, Chairman. Mian M. Riaz Mr.



Naeem Yousaf Media Manager Mirza Shakoor and other directors of SIAL were also present on the occasion.

The newly elected Chairman Mian Naeem Javed has served as president, SCCI (Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Zila Nazim Sialkot and has been serving as Chairman Business Promotion Committee of SIAL for last three years. He is also one of the pioneers directors of SIAL. Chaudhry M. Afzal Shaheen has served as Union Nazim

Sambrial with Mr. Naeem Javed.

The Directors of SIAL former Chairmen, Vice Chairmen congratulated the newly elected Chairman and Vice Chairman. They expressed their solidarity with both of them and hoped to work dedicatedly to facilitate the passengers as well as further development of the airport. They also emphasized to continue the work already has started by Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi to improve the facilities at the airport.



Group photo taken with the new Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed and Vice Chairman Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen shows with them the present Chairman Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi, Mian Riaz, Eng. Khawar Anwar Khawaja, Mr. Hanif Khan, Mr. Zulfiqar Ahsan Bhatti and other directors of SIAL





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## China airfreight rates come back down to earth

"China-to-Europe and China-to-USA per-kilo rates are continuing to slide down by US\$1.06 and \$0.57 respectively," he points out. "Shanghai-to-Europe primarily weighted by price drops into Frankfurt have collapsed by \$1.68," he adds.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong has now overtaken Shanghai's prices into the USA, with a spread up to 30 cents altering the dominance of mainland Chinese exports, Peyton Burnett reveals.

"The forward curve reflects the drop-out of the index price, down 50 cents and 55 cents regarding China-to-Europe/China-to-USA in June. The full China-to-Europe 2020 price is lifted by indicative offers of about \$3.80, whereas China to USA has dropped by 25 cents on a weakening immediate outlook."

Elsewhere, Peter Stallion, broker at freight and commodity derivatives inter-dealer brokerage Freight Investor Services (FIS), observes there are still a number of socio-political economic factors that will affect the flow of more air cargo in consumer goods. "Across the Pacific, threats of trade war escalation, the scrapped Chinese airline ban, and a potential second [COVID-19] wave in Beijing rock a number of fundamental drivers for growing non-medical cargoes," he notes.

Delta Air Lines and United Airlines are planning to resume flights to China, after the United States government reversed its decision to ban all scheduled Chinese passenger airline operations between the USA and China.

However, the decision to authorise the return of two weekly Chinese flights may be "amended, modified, or revoked at any time and without hearing," warned the US Department of Transportation.

Meanwhile, Beijing has shut down its biggest vegetables market amidst a new cluster of Coronavirus cases.

## Britain finds wreckage but not pilot of US F-15 jet

Britain's coastguard said recently it had located the wreckage of a US Air Force fighter jet that crashed during a training

mission in the North Sea but the pilot was still missing.

The F-15C Eagle went down after taking off from the RAF Lakenheath base near the town of Mildenhall in eastern England.

The base is home to the 48th Fighter Wing, which has operated from there since 1960 and has more than 4,500 active-duty military members.

Search efforts by Her Majesty's Coastguard have located wreckage from the downed F-15C Eagle and recovery efforts are underway, the 48th Fighter Wing said in a statement. 'The pilot is still missing, and search and rescue efforts continue.' The Maritime and Coastguard Agency confirmed the wreckage was located by a search and rescue mission comprised of a helicopter 'and other aircraft in the area', along with lifeboats. 'The search is ongoing,' it said.

The single-seater plane went down 74 nautical miles (137 kilometres) off the East Yorkshire coast. Citing a flight tracker website, Sky News television said the plane had circled in the area before disappearing.

Manufactured by Boeing, the twin-engine F-15C entered US Air Force service in 1979, according to Jane's security and defence group.

A total of 211 of the 409 F15-C aircraft produced are in service today.

Royal Air Force spokesman Martin Tinworth said the aircraft has an 'exceptional flight safety record'.

A US F-18 fighter jet crashed near the town of Ely, in eastern England, in October 2015, killing the pilot, after taking off from RAF Lakenheath.

The previous October, an F-15 from the base crashed into a field but the pilot ejected safely. In January that year, four airmen were killed when a US helicopter crashed during a low-flying training exercise.



## Another Indian spy drone downed in AJK

Pakistan Army troops shot down an Indian spy drone after it intruded in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) from across the restive Line of Control (LoC) on June 5 Friday, military's media affairs wing said.

Pakistan Army troops shot down an Indian spying quad copter in Khanjar sector along LOC. The quadcopter had intruded 500 meters on Pakistan's side of the LOC, said the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) director general Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar in a tweet.

Khanjar sector is located in Samahni tehsil of AJK's Bhimber district. It is the same area where Pakistan had downed an Indian jet and captured alive its pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman, in February last year. He was returned by Pakistan after 60 hours as a goodwill gesture.

Amjad Aziz, a journalist based in Samahni, told media that Pakistani troops hit the Indian drone from their bunker at about 8:55am.

The drone fell in Nihala Chahi village, which lies in the closest proximity of the heavily-militarised LoC, where a young villager picked it up and handed over to Pakistan army personnel after a short while, he said.

As tensions along the LoC are escalating, Indian troops have also been frequently sending quadcopters for aerial photography of Pakistan army posts, as part of their intelligence-gathering operations and target selection before carrying out cross-LoC shelling.

In his tweet, the ISPR chief said that it was 8th Indian quadcopter to have been shot down by Pakistan Army troops in the ongoing year.

In the latest incidents late last month, one each Indian spy drone was downed by Pakistani soldiers in less than 48 hours in Rakhchikri sector of Haveli district and Nekrun sector of Neelum valley.



The quadcopter after it was shot down on Friday June 5.

## Air cargo operations at Frankfurt Airport are running at full speed



“[Some] 3.5 billion respiratory protection masks and other protective equipment in 22,000 shipments plus medical equipment and pharmaceuticals as well as urgently required industrial goods, post, packages and food for the German and European markets. That sums up air cargo in Frankfurt since the worldwide lockdown due to the SARS-COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March”, says Harald Gloy, chairman of the board of Air Cargo Community Frankfurt and board member of Lufthansa Cargo AG.

While almost all passenger aircraft have been grounded for around ten weeks, cargo planes are in constant use and particularly from Frankfurt Airport, Europe's leading air cargo hub. The airport enjoys a central position in Europe with good motorway links and also has Europe's largest handling capacity for perishables and chilled goods, a cutting edge animal station, a wide variety of forwarding agents and authorities on site as well as industry and trade customers in the surrounding area all these are reasons cited by Gloy for the airport's prominence.

Systemic relevance of air cargo

“When supply chains break down in times of crisis, only air cargo has the ability to link industry and trade on intercontinental markets within hours. Air cargo is therefore of systemic relevance to Germany as an exporting country, but also for Europe as a whole”, said Gloy.

“Demand for cargo capacities remains high. With the slump in passenger traffic, the option for loading additional cargo on these aircraft has disappeared. That's why around 50 airlines in Frankfurt are now using passenger aircraft just for cargo transport”, explains Michael Müller, board member of the Air Cargo Community and executive director labour relations and member of the Executive Board of Fraport. And this is happening although the so-called “Preighter” planes are more difficult to load and unload due

to their limited space and narrow doors.

Different cargo structures

“Another challenge is the 30% increase in the number of packages on peak days fivefold and the number of recipients in relation to tonnage (by weight),” says Patrik Tschirch, managing director of the cargo handling company LUG and also a board member of the Community.

As a result of the shift towards an enormous import volume and the almost complete elimination of transfer cargo, flexible cooperation between the partners involved is essential. “Within the Community, we have spent years working on digitised and automated processes also in collaboration with the authorities and forwarding agents. But right now, it is becoming evident how indispensable digitisation is. Customs officials will be aware of this if they know in advance which consignment is critical, as will HGV drivers, who will be given a pick-up time and will not have to wait for hours at the airport or rest area. As a Community, we will work even harder to push this forward together with the authorities to make Frankfurt even more competitive as a location,” says Tschirch.

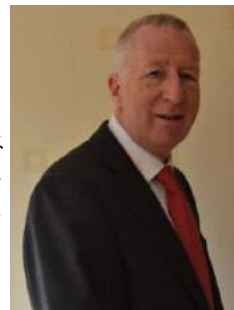
A tough business

Even if air cargo is currently the turbo powering the airline business, only half of normal transport capacity is available, explains Gloy. The other half, the lower deck of passenger planes, is grounded, as we know. The enormous demand for protective equipment is only a short-term effect, according to Gloy. Since last year, air cargo has been suffering from a sharp drop in global production and in demand for machine and vehicle parts and pharmaceutical products. In particular, exports from Germany have fallen by 20% since March. That means that the most crucial air cargo is missing. Flight timetables and crew deployment has to be constantly adapted to changing restrictions and regulations on a global basis. “We are therefore a long way from normal flight operations,” says Gloy.

Air Cargo Community Frankfurt is an association of over 50 airlines, forwarding agents, ground handling companies, airport operators and service providers. Together, they are committed to air cargo at Frankfurt airport and to the region.

## UK freight forwarders pin hopes on a trade deal

Commenting on the confirmation by the UK government of new border controls and procedures from the end of the Transition Period, the trade



association for UK freight forwarders questioned whether the phased transition will succeed in giving the companies that manage cross-border trade between the UK and EU enough time to make the necessary preparations to facilitate the revised arrangements.

Robert Keen, director general of the British International Freight Association (BIFA) says that BIFA members, the freight forwarders that handle a significant proportion of that trade, will also be hoping that the transfer of the Border and Protocol Delivery Group from HMRC to the Cabinet will have the galvanising effect of ensuring the readiness of the border for the end of the transition period.

He says: “A recent survey of our members, revealed that the majority of respondents believed that an extension to the transition period is desirable, if no trade deal is agreed by December 31st 2020, and UK trade with the EU is conducted on WTO lines.

“With that option now off the table, we hope that a trade deal between the EU and UK can be agreed before the end of the year.

“Even with a phased transition for the new border processes, and the promise of an additional £50 million investment in Customs IT infrastructure and training, we remain concerned on a number of issues, including the recruitment of staff qualified and experienced in Customs procedures, and the lack of available time to train newcomers, which is not a five-minute job.

“In effect we have a plan, but as always, the devil will be in the detail. For instance, how long will it take to build the infrastructure that the government recognises will be required? “And it remains to be seen whether the EU will reciprocate with a similar phased transition for UK exports to the EU.”



## Turkish Airlines becomes the largest operator in Europe

COVID-19 is creating new airline rankings as some airlines restart operations at a faster pace than others.

Turkish Airlines has made this announcement:



Turkish Airlines, flying to more countries than any other airline, was reported as the busiest operator in Europe recently after successfully restarting domestic and international passenger operations. On June 17, 2020, Turkish Airlines had 400 flights in Eurocontrol area for the first time an airline has that number since March 24, 2020.

EUROCONTROL is a pan-European, civil-military organisation dedicated to supporting European aviation. They confirmed that Turkey's national flag carrier operated 359 flights during the first week of June from its home at Istanbul Airport. On 14th June three aircraft were able to take off simultaneously with the opening of Istanbul Airport's third independent runway, a momentous occasion for the future of Turkish aviation.



With the resumption of services, Turkish Airlines also announced new 'Guidelines for Safe Travel' and two new inflight services to protect the health of its guests. Prepared with scientific data in mind, the flag carrier is distributing "Hygiene Kits" containing a face mask, disinfectant and antiseptic tissue to its guests, while "Hygiene Expert" cabin crews were appointed to flights to enforce all on-board hygiene and social distancing measures for the healthy travel of passengers.

Turkish Airlines' aircrafts are

disinfected prior to every flight via thorough cleaning methods. Hygiene in the cabin is ensured as all contact points in the aircraft are comprehensively cleaned using chemicals safe for human health, and with methods that are proven scientifically to be effective. Special equipment and chemicals are used for different surfaces such as seats, windows, screens and lavatories.

Turkish Airlines aircraft



## 17-year-old pilot survives Zodiac CH 601 kit plane crash into trees



A Zenith Aircraft Zodiac CH 601 HD, the same model which crashed into trees in Victoria (buildandfly.shop)

A 17-year-old pilot and his grandfather miraculously survived when their Zenith Zodiac CH 601 HD crashed in the Gippsland region of Victoria with their kit plane left dangling precariously in trees.

The accident took place recently evening but little was known about the incident until the man who discovered the pair was tracked down by the ABC.

Ryan Collins told the broadcaster, "The old bloke was trying to find his glasses and I think the young kid was trying to find his phone."

The pair were thought to be flying from Traralgon, east of the Latrobe Valley, to Yarram in the East Gippsland region of Victoria

## Air New Zealand will fly to Shanghai for first time since February



A pair of Air New Zealand Boeing 787-9 at Auckland Airport. (Rob Finlayson)

Air New Zealand will operate one return service per week between Auckland and Shanghai for the first time since February.

Before the pandemic, the airline flew seven times per week to the Chinese city, but it was the very first to be axed as the pandemic spread.

However, both countries are still enforcing strict border controls that mean only residents can enter before undergoing 14-day quarantine.

The new route comes despite the airline still operating a significantly reduced international network, with only limited flights to Australia, Hong Kong, LA, Niue, Narita and Norfolk.

## Delta has received approval from Shanghai government to resume flights



Delta Air Lines has received approval from the Shanghai government to resume flights from June 18.

Delta Air Lines has received approval from the Shanghai government to resume flights from June 18, a company spokeswoman said recently, paving the way for the carrier to resume services to China after months of suspension due to COVID-19. It is still awaiting for the decision from the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) on how many flights it can resume and when it can do so, the airline said. Delta has filed an application to operate two weekly flights from Seattle to Shanghai via Seoul, it said.

## Naeem Akhtar, Chief Executive Halifax grieved

Mother of Mr. Naeem Akhtar (Chief Executive Halifax and Director SIAL) and widow of Babu Barkat Ali passed away on 11th June 2020. She was at the age of 90.

She has left behind four sons and three daughters. She was very generous, loving mother and guiding force to her husband Babu Barkat Ali to establish Halifax & Co. in 1938. Babu Barkat Ali was the first to establish a musical instrument factory in Sialkot.

In their separate condolence messages, the SIAL directors and other prominent members of business community of Sialkot conveyed their heart felt grief to Mr. M. Naeem Akhtar and prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude.

The Flyer International and its staff also expressed their deep sorrow and grief over the demise of Mr. Naeem's mother. The Flyer prays and request to all to pray and make dua for the departure soul.

## Thai Airways to resume international flights on August



**T**hai Airways International will resume international flights on 37 routes starting Aug. 1, one month later than originally planned.

The national flag carrier plans resumption of services on 26 routes, including to and from Paris, New Delhi, Guangzhou and Frankfurt.

On Aug. 2, services will resume on the Beijing, Brisbane and Brussels routes, followed by those to Auckland and Jakarta the following day.

The timing of resumption of flights to Milan, Rome, Moscow, Vienna, Stockholm, Sapporo, Fukuoka, Sendai, Kathmandu, Oslo and Colombo are yet to be announced.

Meanwhile, THAI's sister company,

Thai Smile Airways, will resume operations of all domestic routes on June 19.

The ailing national flag carrier is now under court sanctioned bankruptcy protection and is undergoing a process of rehabilitation.

Thailand's Tourism and Sports Minister Pipat Ratchakitprakarn disclosed that, during the first five months of this year, there were 690,000 tourist arrivals, a drop of 59.97 percent, or 10 million fewer

than during the same period last year.

Revenues from tourist arrivals for the same period dropped 489 billion baht (US\$1 5.8 billion), or 59.57 percent, to about 332 billion baht.

Domestic journeys in the same period were recorded at 40.1 million, representing a sharp drop of 58.19 percent, while revenues from domestic tourism also dropped 57.86 percent to about 191 billion baht.

## Each passenger aboard crashed plane insured for Rs5m: PIA

The ill-fated A320 aircraft that crashed into a thickly-populated neighborhood near Karachi airport on May 22 was insured for \$19.7 million and every passenger was insured for Rs5m each.

The hull insurance of [the aircraft] AP-BLD 2274 is US\$19.7 million and the amount will go to the owner [of the plane] from whom the PIA acquired it on lease,' spokesperson for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) Abdullah H. Khan told media.

In aviation, the 'hull insurance' provides coverage for the physical damage of an airplane, whether the damage occurs on the ground or during flying. Mr Khan said that being a government company the National Insurance Company Limited (NICL) was the insurer and Marsh was the reinsurance broker.

A Reuters report said that AIG was the lead reinsurer. The NICL had insured the entire fleet of aircraft 'owned or operated' by the PIA for the period between Dec 30, 2019 and Dec 29, 2020, according to the certificate of insurance posted on the PIA website.

The aircraft in question was owned by the Celestial Aviation Trading 34 Limited, Ireland, which would get the insurance amount, not the PIA. Ninety-seven passengers and crewmembers of flight PK-8303 from Lahore to Karachi died in the plane crash. Only two passengers miraculously survived.

About the passengers, the PIA spokesperson said they were also insured by NICL for Rs5m each. 'The family of each victim is being provided Rs1m for making arrangements for burial. In addition, the legal heirs of those who died in the crash would get Rs5m each.

He said PIA would process and submit the claims on behalf of every affected family after completing the required legal formalities. 'Last time, it took five-six months to get insurance amount,' he said referring to the 2016 ATR

crash near Havelian in which all the 47 aboard died.

Crash probe continues the work to lift the debris and wreckage of plane continued while teams of local investigators of the Aircraft Accident and Investigation Board (AAIB) and Airbus inspected the crash site as well as equipment and parts collected so far from different angles.

Officials said the affected street of Jinnah Garden in Model Colony, where the plane crashed, would be cleared in a day or two. Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan had recently told reporters that the plane's wreckage was being shifted to an empty hangar at Karachi airport, where it would be reassembled for investigation purposes.

An 11-member team of experts belonging to Airbus arrived in Pakistan on May 26 to offer Pakistani investigators technical assistance in their ongoing probe. It took to France the aircraft's flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder the two components of the black box to decode them.

Sindh government's spokesman and the chief minister's law adviser Murtaza Wahab said in a tweet that more bodies of the deceased passengers had been identified through DNA testing.

He said the DNA matching process did on at a Karachi University laboratory to identify the dead bodies.

President wants process expedited in Islamabad, President Dr Arif Alvi directed PIA chief Air Marshal Arshad Mehmood Malik to expedite the process of paying compensation to families of the victims. He gave him the instructions during a briefing at Aiwan-i-Sadr.

Air Marshal Malik briefed the president on the investigations into the crash and the relief efforts made by PIA. He said that so far the dead bodies had been handed over to the heirs of the victims.

The president said the air crash was a great tragedy and it had shocked the entire nation.



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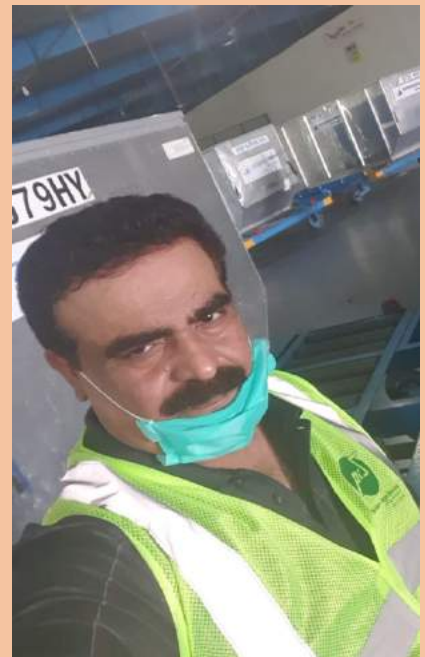
## SIAL news in Pictures

Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi Chairman SIAL inaugurates the most modern equipped with the latest technology and state of the art 'Lost & Found Baggage Enquiry Office' at Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) Mian M. Riaz founder Chairman, Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman and Maj. Gen (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir CEO SIAL also share the occasion.



Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi inaugurated SIAL flyover constructed at Sublime Chowk Kashmir Road Sialkot. Photo shows PM advisor Usman Dar, DC Dr. Nasir, SCCI president Malik Ashraf, Mr. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman SIAL and Sahabzada Hamid Raza were also present on the occasion

## Pakistan Cargo Services operates freighter flights



Pakistan Cargo Services has started to operate Chartered freighter flights from Lahore to Ostrava (Czech Republic) and from there to distribute to Europe/UK Russia/CIS states and many other destinations by Trucking. They have operated many flights very successfully.

Mr. Muhammad Yousaf Chairman Pakistan Cargo Services.



## Textile, auto sectors disappointed with lack of incentives in budget

**A**utomobile, textile and employee federation representatives have shown their disappointment over the absence of measures to cut the cost of production or create jobs in the Budget 2020-21.

Pakistan Automotive Manufacturers Association (PAMA) Director General Abdul Waheed Khan told media that in the light of massive downturn, the auto industry was expecting a stimulus package at least in the shape of withdrawal of unnecessary and avoidable taxes such as additional customs duty (ACD), additional sales tax (AST), federal excise duty (FED) of 2.5-7.5 per cent depending on engine power and turnover tax.

While the budget had nothing in this regard, he said the government did not even consider the association's proposals regarding the advance tax under Section 148 or corporate tax or other important measures. He said the government's intervention is inevitable to revive the auto industry at this critical juncture when sales have come down by over 50-80pc in various segments during the 11 months of the current fiscal year leading to low revenue collection.

He said the auto industry has suffered due to frequent policy changes and other factors like exchange rate parity, demand collapse and the recent lock down. 'The government should have announced a stimulus package in Budget FY21 to revive the auto industry,' he added.

Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts and Accessories Manufacturers former chairman Mashood Ali Khan said the budget has nothing for auto manufacturers. The government should have abolished ACD, AST and FED to bring down vehicle prices besides cutting down turnover tax to 0.5pc from the existing 1.5pc. However, the budget has not provided any relief to the ailing auto sector. He added that manufacturers would face hard times in coming months in absence of any relief from the government and sluggish demand.

'While existing assemblers and vendors will suffer badly due to falling sales and lack of support from the budgetary measures, Pakistan is unlikely to witness any fresh investment as the budget lacks any incentives,' Mashood said. Association of Pakistan Motorcycle Assemblers Chairman Mohammad Sabir Sheikh said that 'no measure has been taken in the budget to bring down the price of two wheelers which is a common man's transport.

He said this was a time for the government to announce a people-



*Export-oriented industry representatives say they were not provided relief in the budget. Exporters had demanded the government to restore zero rating or bring down 17 per cent general sales tax to 4pc.*

friendly budget under the current coronavirus crisis and lock down scenario which has wreaked havoc on the auto industry. Employers Federation of Pakistan President Ismail Suttar said the budget lacks out-of-the-box solutions to jumpstart the economy, cut down manufacturing costs, create jobs or incentivise exporters amid reduction in business orders.

He said the broader policies and incentives such as reduction in utility

costs were expected to induce growth in breadwinning industries.

Suttar said the budget should have been postponed this year due to the uncertain environment as the Constitution does not mandate a budget when it would cause wide-scale uproar from the business community. The GDP is revised down to negative 1.5pc and around 18.4 million people are expected to be unemployed. Hence, the highly ambitious target of Rs 5 trillion in tax collection makes little sense, he added.

Pakistan Apparel Forum Chairman Muhammad Jawed Bilwani said the textile export industry was offered no remedy in the budget to combat against the 17pc sales tax. Exporters had demanded the government to restore zero rating or bring down 17pc general sales tax to 4pc.

He said the government's financial managers have made this budget in a closed room, without holding any consultation or meeting with real stakeholders.

## Textile exports tumble 36.5pc in May

Pakistan's textile and clothing exports tumbled for the third consecutive month in May falling 36.5 per cent year-on-year to \$751.128 million compared to \$1.185 billion in the corresponding month of last year, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed recently.

Compared to 64.5pc decline in April, when textile and clothing exports fell to \$403.834m year-on-year the lowest level in almost 17 years, month-on-month proceeds in May fared better owing to a recovery in international orders. The easing of lockdown in the North American and European countries-top export destinations for Pakistani textile goods will help revive the sinking exports. The Covid-19 has collapsed the demand for country's exports during the last four months.

A significant decline was seen in trade shipments since Mar 15 the date since coronavirus cases spiked in major export destinations especially in Europe and North America.

However, exports on land routes were allowed in May to Iran and Afghanistan.

It was only in February when the textile and clothing exports jumped nearly 17pc on a year-on-year basis. This growth was reported after a long time as the past few years had been marred by single-digit increases. Details showed readymade garments exports dipped 46.28pc in value and drifted much lower in quantity by 68.16pc during May while those of

knitwear dipped 33.93pc in value and 38.87pc in quantity, bed wear posted negative growth of 22.17pc in value and 29.28pc in quantity.

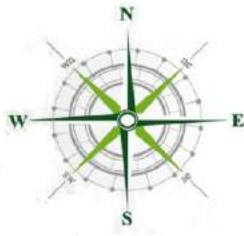
Towel exports fell 42.59pc in value and 50.96pc in quantity, whereas those of cotton cloth dipped by 41.42pc in value and 55.56pc in quantity. However, exports are expected to revive in June as exporters have resumed production to honor international orders.

Last week, the government lifted the ban on exports of seven products classified as personal protective equipment (PPE) in a bid to allow manufacturers to honor international orders. Exporters are already receiving inquiries about PPEs from foreign buyers as government allowed exports of disposable gowns, disposable gloves, face shields, biohazard bags, goggles, shoe covers and hand sanitisers with immediate effect.

Previously, the government allowed exports of textile masks as well. Among primary commodities, cotton yarn exports dipped by 51.29pc while yarn other than cotton by 52.28pc, made-up articles excluding towels by 41.05pc, and raw cotton 100pc. Exports of tents, canvas and tarpaulin increased by a massive 112.35pc during the month under review.

Between July-May FY20, textile and clothing exports declined 6.06pc to \$11.567bn, from \$12.313bn over the corresponding period last year. In rupee terms, the proceeds of the sector jumped 9.52pc.





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## Call to benefit from global funding opportunities to develop marine resources

**A**t a webinar organised on Monday June 8 to mark the World Oceans Day, speakers talked about the marine potential Pakistan possessed and underscored the need for benefitting from international funding opportunities available to develop ocean resources in a sustainable way.

The event was jointly organised by the National Institute of Oceanography, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)-Pakistan and the Ministry of Science and Technology.

The theme of the day this year is 'Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean'.

In his opening remarks, IUCN country representative Mahmood Akhtar Cheema pointed out though Pakistan's seabed territory had grown by 50,000 square miles, the budgetary provision had not been increased accordingly.

In this respect, Pakistan can benefit from the Green Climate Fund and the World Bank that has a component on the blue economy,' he said, adding that policies couldn't be implemented without necessary funding resources.

He emphasized the need for developing public-private partnerships to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and cited the SDG 17, which was about strengthening means of implementation and revitalising the global partnership for sustainable development.

Cheema also recalled Pakistan's international commitment under which the country was required to declare 30 per cent of its marine area protected.

Director General of the National Institute of Oceanography Dr Nuzhat Khan said oceans were greatly affected by growing pollution, climate change and rising acidity.

Pollution has always been a problem and human beings are the source of pollution. The theme of this year's oceans day is 'Innovation for a Sustainable Ocean'. Therefore, our engineering industry has to play an important role in designing ships, boats, cars and other machinery that is environment friendly so that oceans can benefit from the new innovations.

Participants also spoke about the need for ecotourism in the country and discussed issues pertaining to this industry.

Churna Island Meanwhile, the World Wide Fund for Nature Pakistan (WWF-P) in a statement on the World Oceans Day called upon policymakers to declare



*About pictured sailing by the Churna Island.*

Churna Island as a marine protected area.

Pakistan is blessed with marine waters which support livelihood of thousands of fishers and are home to diverse marine life. This rich asset, however, faces multiple threats including plastic pollution, disposal of untreated sewage, use of harmful fishing nets, overfishing and rise in temperatures,' said director general WWF-P Hammad Nagi Khan.

He shared that as the Arabian Sea harboured unique marine life, we should make concerted efforts to create more marine protected areas and develop their management plans.

In this respect, he spoke of the need to declare Churna Island as Pakistan's second marine protected area a status which would protect this natural treasure for generations to come.

Without a conscious effort to actively protect the health of our oceans, these places of natural wonder will become more and more rare,' he added.

The organisation also released a short video showing underwater life in Churna Island.

The footage developed by Nyal Mueenuddin, a WWF-P film-maker, showcased the rich biodiversity of Churna Island which included different types of corals and a number of fish species such as the Indo-Pacific sergeant, silver moony, neon fish, sweeper and two species of jellyfish.

Located at around six kilometres from Mubarak village in Karachi, Churna Island is a perfect patch of rocks which gives the look of an Egyptian pyramid from some distance.

Being a transboundary island between Sindh and Balochistan, it is a popular destination for tourists and is one of the few places where a variety of corals have been found.

Experts are of the view that Churna Island is the ideal candidate to be designated a marine protected area after Astola Island. Through this effort, Pakistan

will achieve compliance with Aichi Target 11, which requires that by 2020 at least 17pc of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10pc of coastal and marine areas of a country are conserved.

To conserve the rich biodiversity, critical marine habitats and enjoy the beauty of the Arabian Sea, WWF-P urges policymakers to declare more MPAs where no fishing is allowed.

These safe spaces will mean that there are always places for fish to grow and reproduce.

This will not only improve livelihoods of local fishers but also help restore ocean ecosystems naturally,' the WWF-P said.

## In a first, ship with fertiliser for Afghanistan berths at Gwadar Port

A ship carrying 16,400 tonnes of DAP fertiliser for Afghanistan anchored at the Gwadar Port on Friday 29 May.

The ship brought fertiliser from Australia under the Pak-Afghan Transit Trade Agreement.

This is the first time Gwadar port is being used for import of urea by the Afghan government.

The chairman of Gwadar Port Authority, Naseer Ahmed Kashani, said that with the arrival of the urea-loaded ship, the Gwadar Port had been opened for Afghan transit trade. 'Another ship loaded with 16,000 tonnes of urea and 500,000 tonnes of sugar and wheat would reach the port next month,' Mr Kashani told media, adding that urea consignment would be sent to Afghanistan by road.

The opening of Gwadar Port for Afghanistan's import and export of goods would create a lot of job opportunities for the people of Gwadar and Makran.

We are happy to see start of trade activities at the Gwadar Port which will improve the living standard of the local people,' Muhammad Essa Baloch, who runs a small business in the area, said.

He said the opening of the port would also help the transport sector to flourish in the area and would provide jobs to the local people



*Trucks line up at Gwadar Port before fertilizer is unloaded from the ship*



## EU tells UK post-Brexit deal vital during virus crisis

The European Union's chief Brexit negotiator told Britain recently that the economic damage wrought by the coronavirus crisis made it especially important the sides reach a new trade deal.

EU and UK negotiators will enter a fourth and last scheduled round of talks this week that could determine if a comprehensive new agreement is struck by the year-end deadline.

Britain formally left the other 27 EU nations in January but still largely operates as if it were a member of the bloc under a year-long transition for both sides to adjust to the new realities.

Brexit supporters are also upset that London will continue making contributions to the EU budget during the transition under a deal reached last year.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has vowed not to extend the talks past the current deadline something he must do by the end of June and the prospects of a broad new deal look bleak.

Chief EU negotiator Michel Barnier told The Sunday Times that London and Brussels could not afford to make the economic situation even worse by breaking off their nearly 50-year partnership without arrangements for what comes next.

If we don't get an agreement then that will have even more consequences. And then of course those will be added to the already very serious consequences of the coronavirus crisis,' Barnier said.

So I think that we have a joint responsibility in this very serious crisis, which affects so many families with so many deaths, so many people sick, so many people unemployed... to do everything we can to reach an agreement and I very much hope that we will do so.' The previous round of talks ended in acrimony in May.

Johnson is expected to work out the best way forward with EU chiefs Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel at a summit held shortly before the June deadline to extend the talks by up to two years.

The European Union is willing to offer Britain preferential trade terms if Johnson signs up to the major standards and regulations followed by the remaining members of the bloc.

Johnson's team argues that the whole point of Brexit was to give Britain the right to set its own rules. Britain's top negotiator David Frost reaffirmed that London 'will always put a lot of emphasis on economic and political freedom at the end of this

year and thus avoiding ongoing significant payments into the EU budget'.

Barnier accused UK negotiators of renegeing on the commitments Johnson signed up to in a non-binding political declaration that accompanied the sides' formal divorce deal.

The UK has been taking a step back two steps back, three steps back from the

original commitments,' Barnier told The Sunday Times.

A British government source shot back that Brussels 'needs to inject some political reality in into its approach'.

What is clear is that the conventional approach will not get us much further,' the British government source told the Mail on Sunday.

Johnson reportedly believes that the political benefits of meeting his pledge not to extend the talks past this year outweigh the cost of a no-deal divorce in a world suffering through a historic economic collapse.

## Govt vows greater transparency in second phase of CPEC

The government on Thursday June 18 vowed greater transparency and lesser reliance on loans during the second phase of ChinaPakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

CPEC Authority Chairman and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information retired Lt Gen Asim Bajwa said the Phase-II of CPEC would be started after 'full preparation and in an institutional manner' while ensuring 'full transparency'.

He was speaking at the signing ceremony of business cooperation agreements between leading Chinese entrepreneurs and Heavy Mechanical Complex (HMC) in Taxila for revamping of the facility.

Pakistan and China had agreed in April on the launching of the second phase of CPEC during Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Beijing for attending a meeting of Belt and Road Forum. The second phase was then envisioned to focus on development of Special Economic Zones, agriculture sector and socio-economic development.

The multi-billion-dollar joint PakChina undertaking for infrastructure development was launched in 2015 during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Islamabad. The Phase-I of the project was mostly about setting up of energy projects and developing road networks linking Gwadar Port with Kashgar.

Gen Bajwa said that all projects of Phase-I of CPEC held up or delayed because of procedural or technical issues would be completed on priority basis.

Eight power generation projects have been completed, which added nearly

6,000MW of electricity to the national grid, while another nine are in the pipeline.

The CPEC has faced criticism from the United States. American officials say its projects lack transparency and have added significantly to Pakistan's foreign loan burden. Both Islamabad and Beijing have strongly rejected US criticism as propaganda.

The Foreign Office, while rejecting US allegations, had earlier said that CPEC was transparently contributing to national development and issues in the execution of the project were bilaterally addressed by Beijing and Islamabad through existing mechanisms. It had further clarified that public debt relating to CPEC projects was less than 10 per cent of the total debt burden.

Gen Bajwa said reliance on loans would be decreased through promoting business-to-business ties between Chinese and Pakistani entrepreneurs in Phase-II.

We are looking at foreign direct investment in the next phase, and foreign companies and entrepreneurs partnering with local investors and businessmen,' he said.



Managing Director of the Heavy Mechanical Complex Zaheer Shah and Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing express happiness after the signing of a contract between the CPEC Authority and Chinese companies recently.

## Customs reforms in the works

The government has decided to introduce two major reforms to the Pakistan Customs in the budget for next fiscal year for cross-border movement of goods under the Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), media has learnt from knowledgeable sources.

The reforms are in line with the World Trade Organization (WTO) procedures.

The WTO launched the TFA in 2013 to ease border trade across the world and the agreement was ratified by Pakistan in October 2015.

The TFA came into effect on Feb 22, 2017, after ratification from two-thirds members (110) of the organisation.

As part of its commitment to agreement, the government will introduce new rules in the budget for advance rulings. The deadline set for its implementation is Sept 30.

These will bind the Pakistan Customs to give an advance ruling at the request of a person, who intends to import or export goods. The advance ruling covers determination of classification, origin or value of goods or applicability of a particular relief or exemption on goods prior to its import or export.

The ruling under the TFA will help release and clearance of goods and shall be valid for a specific period depending on the nature of imports or exports ranges between three to 12 months.

The second major reform is to implement Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) programme before September. The AEO programme aims to facilitate secure trade supply chains through simplified procedures.

The WTO member countries have committed to these reforms in three categories: A, B and C. Pakistan implemented the reforms under A category after the TFA was ratified.

The proposed commitment for reforms in the upcoming budget are mostly related to the B (transition period) and C (upon receiving assistance and support for capacity building) categories.

Pakistan has already committed to implement 11 measures under the C category of the TFA. Of these, the government has notified nine measures. The remaining two were partially notified.

Pakistan has requested assistance and support for capacity building for a total number of 11 measures. However, the donor arrangement for the technical support to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has not been notified.

Under the C category commitments,

Pakistan has also notified to implement three measures: making all information available on internet, expedited shipments and average release times before September. The indicative deadline for another reform implementation risk management is June 30.

The FBR is yet to clarify whether it will comply with these reforms before the deadline or not.

An official note from the Ministry of Commerce said that the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development has said the TFA implementation would reduce trade costs by 14.5 per cent.

Developing countries like Pakistan will also be able to diversify their exports and enter new markets.

The TFA will also help countries attract more foreign direct investment, increase customs revenues and curb corruption through transparency.

Beyond these quantifiable economic benefits, the agreement will also improve systems and customs procedures.

The TFA contains provisions to expedite movement, release and clearance of goods. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and compliance issues.

## Sialkot Chamber calls for relief package

The Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) recently urged the government to announce a relief package for exporters and ensure early clearance of refunds.

The manufacturing and export sectors were ignored in budget 2020-21, even though the industry was suffering a financial crisis and now a pandemic, a press release issued by the chamber said.

SCCI Senior Vice President Khurram Azeem Khan said the Covid-19 pandemic had triggered recession and the value-added export sector is affected severely.

'The export industry was expecting some relief from government in this budget to overcome their financial problems. However, no such support or relief was announced for the export sector in this budget,' he said.

'Huge liquidity of the exporters had been stuck in the outstanding Income Tax,

Sales Tax, DLT and Customs refunds rendering it difficult for the businesses to cope with the situation. No timeline has been announced for payment of pending refunds which is a matter of grave concern for the business community,' he added.

The SCCI urged the government to revive zero-rating on five export-oriented sectors, stressing that it is essential for saving the industry and to promote ease of doing business in prevailing economic crisis.

## IT policy can boost exports, says WB

Pakistan needs information technology (IT) and IT enabled services with a digital trade policy framework to embrace the evolving environment, says a new World Bank report on economic policy for export competitiveness in Pakistan.

The ingredients for a successful reform strategy should include interventions in three policy areas: regulatory capabilities and governance, sector-specific policies and complementary supporting policies.

The report, 'Digital Pakistan: A Business and Trade Assessment' said that it is still unclear what the postCovid-19 business landscape will look like, but IT and IT-enabled services will play a more prominent role than they do today. In addition, automation and artificial intelligence will play a more significant role in this industry, it says.

Pakistan is the second highest exporter of information, communication and technology (ICT) services from South Asia, after India, with more than \$1 billion in exports. Although export growth has been robust in the past few years, Pakistan's market share of computer services exports has remained low, at around 0.2 per cent.

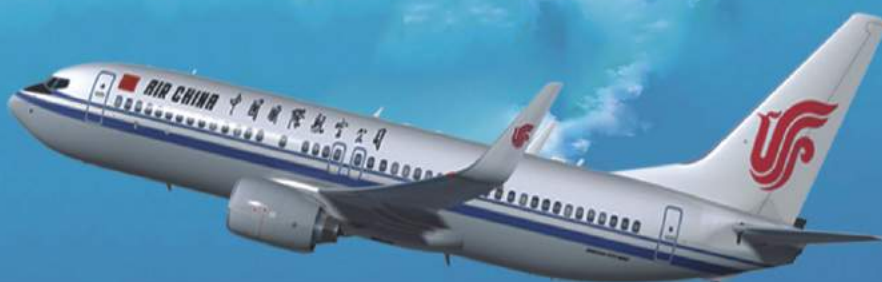
With a stable base, low cost of operations, a growing domestic market and a reasonably strong network of overseas workers across the world, the industry has a lot of growth potential.

However, skills mismatch and poor infrastructure problems, high tariffs and inefficient tax regimes and poor perception as an IT investment destination due to economic and other factors are holding the industry back.





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



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**Letter to the Editor****You left us alone**

**E**veryone has to depart one or the other day for the eternal world. But, a few of them give us an irrecoverable loss.



Allama Talib Johri's sad demise left behind several of us stranded. He was like a father for his admirers. He loved people immensely. When his funeral prayer was held, his followers screamed in his grief.

He was a learned person who had tremendous command on Quran, Hadith, Principles of Fiqah, Arabic, Persian, Philosophy, Logic, History, Culture, Traditions, Mathematics, Psychology, Economics etc...

People from different schools of thoughts and professions used to visit him for discussion on various topics. Unfortunately, many of the intellectuals are hard at their hearts & love to beat their own trumpet. They wouldn't listen to others. On the contrary, beside being a tremendous orator, Johri was a marvelous listener too. He listened to people with full concentration and used to give confidence to others to express their views during discussions. He used to give answers with logic & softness. He was a genius and astute person. He responded precisely in situations what had been the need & demanded of time. He served the community a lot both on individual & collective levels. One can't forget his visit to Abbas Town in extremely tense and the most dangerous situation. No one could dare to come out of his home after blast but he made his way through. His appearance in the sit-in at various parts of the country was liked & appreciated worldwide. He was the last scholar in the Sub-Continent who received education from the leading Shia scholars of his time. His enthusiasm, energy and passion remained remarkable till his death.

His followers listened to his sermons with four ears. His admirers used to visit his house for years to benefit from his wisdom & knowledge.

I too visited his home occasionally.

My stranded feelings tell me that his room has now become a memory for us. Actually, as a community we have turned orphans without him.

Saadat Abbas

**Bringing down the statues**

**A**fter the shocking death of 46-year-old black American George Floyd on May 25 at the hands of a white policeman, the Black Lives Matter movement in the US and Europe has once again, this time around perhaps in a more concrete way, given the entire world a chance to reflect upon the unsavoury parts of our collective history.

The movement is putting pressure on authorities to revisit history and bring about necessary reforms to improve the criminal justice system and put in place laws that can end discrimination against minorities. To drive their point home, the protestors in the US and UK have uprooted statues and other monuments to individuals depicting their societies' racist past. On the second day of protest, slave trader Edward Colston's statue was torn down in Bristol and chucked into the harbour. The images of uprooting the figure went viral in no time.

Karachi, with the city's colonial maazi, has had its fair share of monuments, some of them carved in marble.

Interestingly, and it doesn't matter which side of history you stand, a majority of them have disappeared from their original places.

It has been documented that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert's statues, among several others, were removed in the 1960s when Gen Ayub Khan ruled the country to prevent the rise of right-wing forces prior to the visit of a leader of a Muslim country. Those sculptures were plopped into the warehouse of the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) and in a certain section of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) building. Attempts, ever since, have been made to restore some of them.

It has to be said, though, that when it comes to Sindh in general and Karachi in particular the first British name that springs to mind without thinking twice is of Charles Napier, because he was the one who conquered the province in the early 1840s. Remember the phrase 'I have sinned! So the logical question that history buffs need to ask with

reference to monuments in Karachi: was there ever a Napier statue, such as the one in Trafalgar Square in London, in the Sindh capital? Difficult to answer. What can be said with certainty is that until a few years after the country's independence, there used to be an obelisk

near the Native Jetty Bridge that reminded everyone of Napier's rule in the region. Where it went is anybody's guess. Probably, someone who didn't like to be reminded of the British Raj took it away. Probably.

But then there were personalities bigger in royal stature than Napier; for example, Queen Victoria, whose, it seems, more than one statue adorned the city's important pre-independence works of stonemasonry. Architect Dr Noman Ahmed says, 'Her statue was a prominent feature of Frere Hall [premises]. It disappeared a few months following the creation of Pakistan. There was a statue of architect James Strachan, which too does not exist anymore. Its picture, however, can be seen at the municipality building.

Sculpture making is an art. Those who designed buildings in colonial times took it as an essential art form, so much so that there were some buildings in which pedestals for statues were designed before the main structure because it increased the aesthetic value of its central or external elevation. They were part of a 'planned activity', as it happened in Frere Hall's case. Similarly, the NED University building used to have a statue of Nadirshah Eduljee Dinshaw which was removed some years back,' says Dr Ahmed.

Hamid Akhund, secretary of the Endowment Fund Trust for Preservation of the Heritage of Sindh, says, 'I remember the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the Karachi Chamber of Commerce building. I don't know where it's gone. There were also some statues thrown away by the KMC, such as one of Queen Victoria and brass justice statues, which we retrieved and cleaned when we did the Jewel in the Crown exhibition. They're now at the Mohatta Palace Museum.

The Mama Parsi School and another Parsi school across that road, too, have statues.

All of this reiterates the fact that Karachi has always been an aesthetically rich town whose beauty is not mutually exclusive to its history.





## Sabre announces strategic moves to further position company for success

Sabre Corporation, the leading software and technology Company that powers the global travel industry, announced recently that it is taking critical steps to successfully position the Company for long-term growth. This includes the strategic realignment of its airline and agency-focused businesses, as well as other measures to support the new organizational structure.

Sean Menke, Sabre's president and chief executive officer stated, "we announced a critical step toward completing our transformation into a new Sabre. We began this transformational journey over two years ago with the unveiling of our SabreNext strategy and the creation of our Travel Solutions organization. Our leadership team has completed plans to strategically realign and fully combine Sabre's airline and agency-focused businesses to provide a stronger, more seamless experience for our customers."

### A New Sabre: Strategically Realigning its Business

Sabre's leadership team has been driving transformational change and building a foundation to position the Company for growth. The team has been focused on three areas: the security, stability and health of its technology products and services; enhancing collaboration across the Company's business segments to accelerate the creation of end-to-end solutions for its customers; and building a leadership team throughout the organization that will lead Sabre into the next phase of its journey to become the trusted technology partner of the travel industry. The Company announced a critical step toward completing its transformation to better serve its customers and generate long-term growth opportunities across the business.

Menke continued, "Sabre is mission-critical to the travel ecosystem. While we had to put certain initiatives and technology investments on hold in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we remain steadfast in our commitment to helping our customers operate more efficiently, drive revenue and offer personalized travel experiences that benefit travellers, travel suppliers, and agencies. This pandemic has caused major shifts in the travel ecosystem resulting in the changing needs of our airline, hotel and agency customers. We have taken this opportunity to accelerate the organizational changes we began in 2018

to address the changing travel landscape. Sabre's new organization is built upon the premise that the retailing, distribution and fulfillment of travel will continue to evolve over the next decade and each of these elements will become even more interconnected and interdependent."

### One Sabre: Delivering Value to Customers Through a Collective Lens

- The strategic realignment of its business segments will further enable Sabre to deliver on its promise to retail, distribute and fulfill travel by serving its airline and agency customers through a collective lens. In addition, the Company reaffirms its long-term vision to create a new market for personalized travel, as it takes steps to become the technology platform positioned at the center of the business of travel. The Company also remains committed to the strategic initiatives it first announced in February of this year.
- To that end, Sabre will continue to:
- Focus on **creating personalized offers** with IT capabilities, processes and intelligence that allow suppliers to retail personalized offers through all channels, with an eye toward delivering experiences that today's travelers want and unlocking more value per passenger boarded.
- Drive the **future of distribution**, including NDC, by increasing the value of supplier offers and the value of the GDS, enabling airlines to distribute personalized offers through the Company's marketplace and through their direct channels.
- Unlock growth potential in the fast-growing **low cost carrier (LCC) market** by creating more ways for LCCs to retail and distribute content and scaling the offerings of recently-acquired Radixx.
- Deliver a **full-service property management system** to better serve enterprise hotels, collaborating with Accor, to build a full service property management system that will combine with its best-in-class central reservation and state-of-the-art limited service property management systems



within a fully unified, cloud-native platform designed for hoteliers of all property classes, sizes and geographic regions a milestone in the global travel industry.

- Transform Sabre's technology in a 10-year **preferred, strategic partnership with Google** that includes: (1) improving Sabre's technology capability by migrating the Company's IT infrastructure to Google Cloud's highly available and secure services with advanced support and greater flexibility; (2) utilizing Google's data analytics tools to enable Sabre to enhance the capabilities of current and future products; and (3) designing a broader innovation framework with Google that seeks to optimize the talent and assets of both companies to imagine, develop and deploy future capabilities that will advance the travel ecosystem, benefiting all market participants.

### The Sabre Team: Creating a lean, focused and rewarded workforce

- In addition to its business realignment, to further position the Company for success, Sabre announced several measures it will implement with regard to its global workforce. More specifically, the Company shared the following:
- Team member furloughs will end on or before July 6, 2020
- By July 6, 2020, Sabre will restore employee compensation back to 100% of base pay, ending voluntary and involuntary pay reductions that took effect in March and April across the world
- Sabre is adopting a flexible, safe and productive remote work program that will enable its global workforce to "work from anywhere," to the extent work from home/remote work programs are allowed under local laws.
- A right-sizing of the Company's global organization includes a reduction in force that is expected to impact approximately 800 team members across 43 office locations. This is in addition to the separation of approximately 400 participants in Sabre's previously announced voluntary severance and voluntary early retirement programs.

The Company's strategic realignment and related actions are expected to be substantially complete early in the third quarter of 2020. Further details regarding the new Travel Solutions organization and leadership team will be announced publicly in early July, when the new structure goes into effect.



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## ***Pandemic may negatively impact revenue from adventure tourism***

**W**ith the cases of coronavirus rising and international flights not resuming anytime soon, it is less likely that Pakistan will see any of the royalty it received from adventure tourism every year.

Pakistan earned more than Rs40 million last year as the royalty fee from climbing and trekking expeditions compared to Rs20 million and Rs30 million over the past years as the rupee depreciated against the US dollar.

Just when the entire world was going into the lockdown in February, the Gilgit-Baltistan Council and the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) had received applications from 25 climbing expeditions and as many trekking groups.

Adventure seekers, including veteran mountaineers, mostly from European countries, had applied for permits to travel to the northern areas.

According to the ACP, applications are processed and permits issued by May and groups start arriving after middle of June to climb five of the highest peaks in the world such as K2, Nanga Parbat and Broad Peak.

To attract even greater numbers of international adventure tourists and especially climbers, Pakistan had reduced the royalty fee by 40pc. And just when we were starting to get more and more adventure seeking tourists the coronavirus hit us and it has taken a toll on the tourism industry,' ACP Secretary Karrar Haidri told media.

According to the ACP, in Gilgit-Baltistan, where the Karakoram peaks are located, the regional council requires no permit to open areas.

However, in the restricted areas, adventure seekers need a trekking permit and must pay to ascend higher than 6,500 metres.

This fee varies with altitude and is based on a group of up to seven people. After the 40pc discount, the group fee was reduced to \$7,200 for the second highest mountain in the world 8,611 metre-high K2.

Each additional member beyond seven was charged \$1,200. Similarly, the group fee for 8,001 metres and 8,500 metres was reduced to \$5,400 and each additional member the charges were \$90

For peaks as tall as 7,501 metres and 8,000 metres, the new group fee was \$2,400 and each additional member had to pay \$300.

Likewise, the government charged \$1,500 from groups intended to climb

7,001 metres and 7,500 meters peaks and each additional member was to pay \$180. And to climb 6,501 metres to 7,000 metres, the group fee was set at \$900 with each additional member paying \$120.

Although these fees are already low, further discounts are sometimes also available, said the ACP.

Earlier this month, tour operators and the ACP besides other concerned stakeholders developed standard operating procedures (SOPs) to assist the government to restore tourist activities.

They argued that several countries had demonstrated that Covid-19 transmission from one person to another can be slowed or stopped if effective measures were adopted.

The document was addressed to the collective tourism sector such as hotels, tour operators, travel agents, transport companies and similar establishments.

The SOPs refer to drivers wearing protective gear, temperature checks at hotel entrances, protocols to use elevators and dining at restaurants, separate check-out areas, training and health care of staff etc.

## ***Expedition team finds ancient Christian relic in Skardu***

The first probable evidence of early Christian presence in Skardu was discovered on a mountain by an expedition team from the University of Baltistan, it was announced on Sunday 14 June.

The research and expedition team of Professor Dr Muhammad Naeem Khan, Dr Zakir Hussain Zakir and Dr Ishfaq Hussain Magpoon visited the site to study an ancient Christian cross along with local villagers and mountain guides.

The huge cross made of marble rock material and weighing more than three to four tonnes (approximately seven by six feet in size), was found around two kilometres from the base camp located high in the mountains of Kavardo village in Skardu of Baltistan division, overlooking the River Indus, the team said.

The Christian cross represents the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and is the best known symbol of Christianity.

According to the team, the cross could be 900-1,000 years old, perhaps signifying the time when Buddhism was in decline in the region and Islam was to later emerge in the Himalayan and

Karakoram valleys. This first-ever discovery of such a relic in Baltistan marks the association of this land with Christianity.

While Kavardo village is said to have come into existence 1,500 years ago, the researchers said they are assuming the rock of which the cross is made up of could be even older going as far back as the Middle Ages. They further said that the design of the ancient cross, with unequal arms, seems influenced by Buddhist carving traditions and could be the work of Buddhist converts.

Dr Zakir of the expedition team was of the opinion that this discovery could indicate the presence of Europeans in these valleys.

## ***Dubai to allow foreign tourists from July 7***

Dubai, whose economy is reliant on tourism and retail, said it would allow foreign visitors to enter from July 7, while those with residency visas would be able to enter in a further easing of its coronavirus lockdown.

Those entering would have to present certificates to show they had recently tested negative for the coronavirus or would undergo tests on arrival at Dubai airports, the Dubai government's media office said in a statement recently.

Citizens and residents would be permitted to travel abroad from Tuesday June 23, it added.

The new announcement will allow thousands of people affected by the worldwide restrictions in passenger air traffic since the start of the pandemic to resume their travel plans,' the Dubai media office said in the statement.

It also said that international health insurance, Covid-19 tests and a completed health declaration form were mandatory for tourists visiting Dubai.

The announcement comes more than two months since the United Arab Emirates introduced strict measures to curb the spread of the new coronavirus.

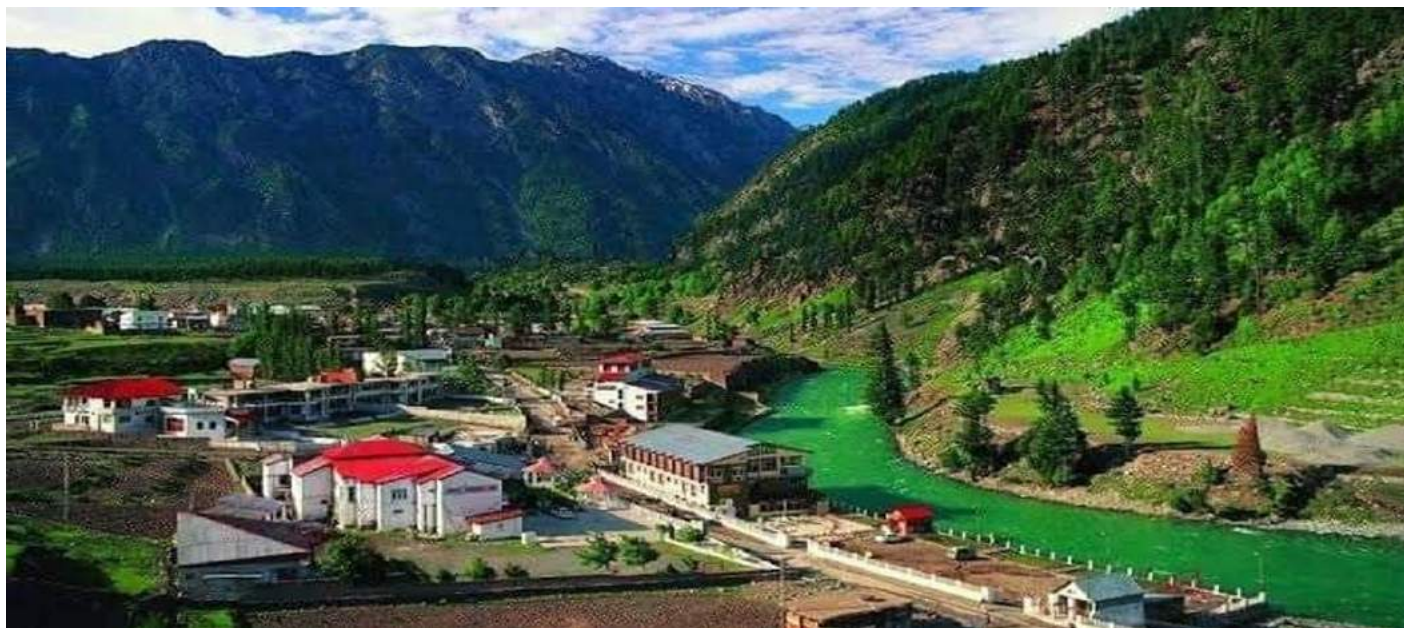
The UAE halted all passenger flights in March and banned foreign citizens from entering the Gulf Arab state except those holding UAE residency, who required UAE government approval before returning.

In recent weeks, many of those restrictions have been eased, allowing the resumption of a few flights, while domestic restrictions such as the closure of shopping centres have been lifted and private businesses have reopened.

The UAE allowed citizens and residents to travel to countries deemed low-risk for catching the coronavirus.



## Revival of tourism industry TRAC formulates the strategies & SOPs



The Tourism Recovery Action Committee (TRAC) has formulated a three-pronged strategy to mitigate socio-economic impact of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) on tourism sector which has been remained closed since impositions of the lockdowns across the country for containing the virus spread.

The TRAC also developed the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for hotels and accommodation facilities, food outlets/eateries, tours operator companies, tourist transportation and airlines to address issue of health, hygiene and safety of the tourists, employees and businesses.

The committee was formed by the National Tourism Coordination board (NTCB) recently to evolve immediate support measures for tourism businesses and strategy for recovery of the tourism industry after evaluating the rapidly evolving situation in the country in the wake of Coronavirus.

The committee was well represented by all the provincial governments, tourism related associations and experts from the private sector.

The strategy, developed by TRAC, would not only revive tourism on fast-track basis but also help revamp the sector to yield better results in the post COVID-19 situation. The TRAC also underlined the need for reducing fear factor and inculcating discipline amongst the businesses of tourism sector, said a news release issued by the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC).

According to the PTDC, both the documents had been shared with all provincial governments and tourism related associations for implementation. It hoped that the measures suggested by TRAC for the tourism revival would help handle the prevailing situation in effective manners.

PTDC Managing Director, Syed

Intikhab Alam said the NTCB at the Federal level would coordinate with relevant ministries and organizations for implementation of the measures suggested by the TRAC.

“The travel and tourism industry around the globe faced unprecedented challenges of survival. As per revised statistics from UNWTO (United Nations World Tourism Organization), international tourism can be declined to 60-80 per cent in the year 2020, making it worse for the tourism industry worldwide,” the PTDC noted.

Likewise, travel and tourism industry of Pakistan is facing the same economic crisis and hurdles in operation due to travel restrictions.

Moreover, tourism sector of Pakistan comprises of small and medium entrepreneurs and daily wagers whose source of income has a steep decline due to prevalence of COVID-19 crisis.





## World's most rich and diverse 30,000 rock carvings to sink in Basha Dam

**K**arachi At this point in time, survival of some ancient rock art may not be the most important item in Pakistan, but here it is anyway. There is a possibility that due to the construction of the Diamer-Basha Dam, some 30,000 carvings and inscriptions will sink in water and will vanish forever.

A collage of carvings and inscriptions of different periods has pointed that this extraordinary heritage is on the brink of destruction on the proposed site of the Diamer-Basha Dam.

The mountainous region of Pakistan which lies between the western Himalayas, the Korakoram in the east and the Hindukush in the west. Here, the junction of the ancient routes made the upper Indus a cradle and crossroads of different civilizations.

Invaders, merchants, pilgrims, travelers, researchers and artisans from different origins, religions, times, eras and cultures used the legendary silk route and its branches to enter in the region. Many of them left their cultural and religious signs on the rocks, boulders and cliffs.

The sun-tanned smooth rocks attracted more visitors and settlers to carve their own signs, symbols, inscriptions and artworks on the same locations. And hence, gradually a rock art archive accumulated in the area and eventually became a wonderland of some 50,000 rock carvings and 5,000 inscriptions from different civilizations ranging from the eighth millennium BC to the coming of Islam (since the 16th century AD) in the region.

The diversity of the rock carvings in the region turned the area into one of the most important rendezvous of petroglyphs in the world.

The Shatial, Thor, Hodur, Thalpan, Naupura, Chaghdo and other sites of northern Pakistan having clusters of carvings but the Basha-Diamer area holds thousands of very important rock carvings.

The site represents hundreds of inscriptions in Brahmi, Sogdian, middle Persian, Chinese, Tibetan and even ancient Hebrew languages. Some 80 per cent of the writings are in Brahmi language.



These writings not only provide insights into the religious and political situation but also show the name of the rulers and a rough date of the time. These details of the inscriptions helped the experts arrange them chronologically.

In 1884, a Hungarian traveler, Karl Eugen discovered a Buddhist carving in present Baltistan. In 1907, a veteran explorer, Ghulam Muhammad unveiled another Buddhist petroglyph from the Diamer district.

When the 750 km long, Karakorum Highway (the modern Silk Road) inaugurated in 1978, thousands of more engravings came to view which inspires a German scholar, Karl Jettmar to further explore the rock art wealth.

In 1980, Karl Jettmar and Pakistan's father of archaeology, Ahmed Hassan Dani launched a Pak-German study group to systematically investigate the ancient rock art in the region.

Another research project entitled "Rock Carvings and Inscriptions along the Karakorum Highway" was initiated in 1983. The Heidelberg Academy of Humanities and Sciences and the Department of Archaeology of Gilgit were responsible for the study group. Professor Harald Hauptmann has been the head of the project since 1989 as a successor of Jettmar.

in the third millennium BC, agriculture started in the region and carvings of horses were observed for first time. Then in the beginning of the first millennium BC, the area witnessed invasions by new ethnic groups such as the Sakan tribes. They carved sketches of Eurasian animals, most of them very interesting, bizarre and mythical in nature.

Later, another bunch of carvings appeared representing more mythical creatures, horses and warriors with Persian attire. These depicted the Iranian influence in the region and the expansion of Achaemenid Empire in sixth century

BC.

In the first century AD, Buddhism emerged in the area as new belief system and reached its peak between the fifth and eighth century. Many spectacular carvings of Buddha and stupas sacred buildings and related inscriptions were found carved in the same era.

According to the Hauptmann, the historic period of early Buddhism started from this area because of findings of old Indian style Khorashti language or Sanskrit. The veneration of Buddha and names of different kings show the climax of Buddhism in this area.

Although addressing Pakistan's energy crisis is an urgent need and the Basha Dam would help bridge the gap between the demand and supply of power, the conservation and mitigation of these carvings is also very important.

When asked Hauptmann about mitigation of the rock carvings in one hand and the need of the dam on the other, he said, "We (as an archaeologist) have to respect the decision (to build the dam) but it is very sad for us to lose one of the most rich and diverse rock art provinces of the world."

According to Hauptmann, the Basha Dam will drown 32 villages and displace more than 25,000 people.

He added that some 3,000 very important stupas and similar number of drawings will be submerged after the construction of the dam. He called to establish a cultural center in Gilgit where original and replicas of the carvings could be preserved along with scientific documents about the geography, history, languages, music, wildlife and other aspects of the northern areas.

This center could be a rendezvous for scholars, writers, visitors and for future generation to discover the exciting history of the region.

This area is also famous for the amazing story of mysterious gold-digging ants.

The creatures piled up the dust and dirt while digging up the burrows where people would collect them to extract gold.

In 1854, Alexander Cunningham mentioned the fact that "the sands of the Indus have long been celebrated for the production of gold."

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## PTV legend Tariq Aziz passes away

**D**ekhti Ankhon aur Suintay Kanon ko Tariq Aziz ka Salam Pauhinchay the voice behind this memorable soundbite is gone. Tariq Aziz, the iconic television host, breathed his last in Lahore on Wednesday June 17 2020.



He was 84. According to Mr Aziz's driver, Liaqat who has been with him since the 1990s, he was not feeling well since the previous night. His condition deteriorated in the morning and he was rushed to a nearby hospital, but did not survive. Tariq Aziz was diabetic and had a heart condition as well.

His funeral was held near his residence in Lahore's Garden Town and he was laid to rest in Ali Block's graveyard.

Not many people from showbiz turned up at the funeral, but there were a good number of people, as well as DSNs, from the media.

Prominent figures from the entertainment industry were actor Qavi Khan, Nurul Hassan, Khalid Butt and Sohail Ahmed.

Many important personalities took to Twitter to offer condolences. Tariq Aziz was a man of many talents. Besides being an accomplished television host, he was a film actor, politician, writer and poet.

He was born in 1936. Tariq Aziz's family came from Jalandhar, in present-day India.

He received his early education in Jalandhar. He was a trendsetter and had the distinction of being the first man to be seen on Pakistan Television's first broadcast in 1964. Tariq Aziz and Kanwal Naseer were the face of PTV during its early days.

His booming, energetic voice still rings in the ears of generations of PTV viewers from the 70s to the 90s and even later.

"Dekhti Ankhon aur Suintay Kanon ko Tariq Aziz ka Salam Pauhinchay" served as the opening lines of his internationally acclaimed TV show, Neelam Ghar, which was first aired in 1974. It was later renamed as Tariq Aziz Show and after that as Bazm-i-Tariq.

Tariq Aziz was a political activist during his college days. He joined the Pakistan Peoples Party in 1970 and won recognition as a firebrand socialist.

He also served as a member of the National Assembly between 1997 and 1999.

In 1997, Aziz was elected to the National Assembly from Lahore on a

Pakistan Muslim League-N ticket and served as an MNA till October 1999.

After the takeover by retired Gen Pervez Musharraf, he joined his political party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Q.

During his early career in Lahore, he lived like a vagabond. As he had no place to live in the city, he used to sleep rough. Then he started living in a small room at Lower Mall, near Karbala Gamay Shah.

His film career spanned the late 1960s and the 1970s. One of his famous movies was Salgira (1969), which turned out to be a highly acclaimed musical and won two Nigar Awards.

Along with Waheed Murad and Zeba, Tariq Aziz starred in Insaniyat (1967) and in Har Gaya Insaan. He later appeared in several television programmes and morning shows.

Tariq Aziz was a literary figure too and had a passion for poetry. He wrote in both Urdu and Punjabi. His memory in this genre was prodigious and verses seemed to flow from his tongue at the touch of a button.

He was honoured with the Pride of Performance award in 1992.

A nostalgic friend Dr Mehdi Hassan, a childhood friend, said in his recollections that he knew Aziz since his school days. Mr Hassan said Tariq Aziz joined radio as an announcer in 1961. "I used to work with Progressive Papers Limited. My salary was Rs165 and Tariq Aziz used to draw Rs150. We used to live in a small room on Lower Mall near Karbala Gamay Shah and I used to pay the room rent.

"Since rented rooms didn't have fans, we had to brave the suffocating heat. But after some time the heat became unbearable. So I requested the Law College Principal to allow us to live in a room at the hostel during summer vacations. The principal obliged us and we were able to breathe freely."

Mehdi Hassan said that he spoke with Mr Aziz by phone on Tuesday night since one of his friends said he wanted to interview Tariq Aziz about Munir Niazi.

"Tariq told me since he was not well, I should ask my friend to call him after 10 minutes. That was the last time I heard his bewitching voice," Mehdi Hassan recalled, his voice choking with emotion. According to Mr Hassan, Tariq Aziz's father, Mian Aziz, used to bring out a fortnightly magazine from Sahiwal and was a member of the Majlis-i-Ahrar.

Ayub Khawar, a PTV producer, recalled that Tariq Aziz was among the pioneers of PTV, sharing the distinction with luminaries like Fazal Kamal, Agha Nasir and Fayaz-ul-Haq.

"His collection of Punjabi poetry,

Hamzad Da Dukh, is a thought-provoking offering."

Tariq Aziz had prompted sorts of revolution in literary circles. When the PTV reigned supreme, his was the programme which had several entertainment and infotainment segments. One of the segments was called Baet Baazi, or poetry competition. This rekindled love of Urdu poetry in the young generation.

Neelam Ghar inspired young singers, artists, debaters and poetry buffs to hone their skills.

He provided them a platform to pursue their passion and make a name in the world of entertainment. Renowned artist Samina Pirzada was among the artists who had first appeared in Neelam Ghar before climbing up the ladder of fame.

The book publishing industry also cashed in on the popularity of the programme. Numerous general knowledge and poetry books, particularly the ones titled Baet Baazi, arrived in the market like never before. Booksellers on footpaths also reaped their bit of profits.

Everywhere the various publications sold like proverbial hot cakes as it was a dream of most young people, particularly students, to take part in the programme and win prizes and fame in their local circles. And such books were vital for achieving their goal.

In politics too he made a name. He began his political career with Z.A. Bhutto in 1970. In 1997, he defeated Imran Khan in his first election contested on a PML-N ticket and became a member of the National Assembly. He polled 50,000 votes against Khan's 4,000 or so. During the Musharraf rule he joined the PML-Q. He had had good relations with both Gen Zia-ul-Haq and Gen Pervez Musharraf as well as the leaderships of the two Leagues. That seemed to be his attempt to bring about a marked change in the country's politics. In his interviews to TV channels he always denied any prior knowledge of the planned attack on the Supreme Court by activists of the Nawaz League, a case in which he too was convicted and incarcerated.

The rare qualities Tariq Aziz had a film actor, TV host, producer, newscaster, orator, poet, politician are hard to combine in a single person.

His love of and loyalty to the country was unmatched. Having no children, he is reported to have bequeathed all his assets to Pakistan.

The sentiment also manifested itself at the end of every show in his enthusiastic: Pakistan Zindabad!



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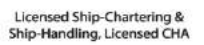
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