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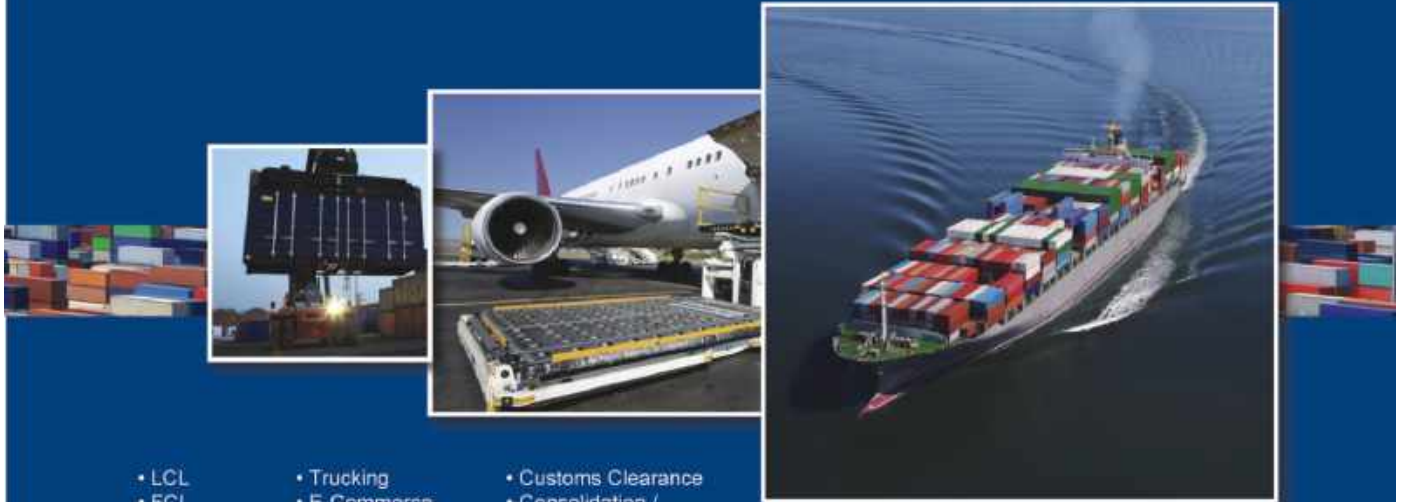
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PIA resumes regular flights to UAE

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed regular flight operations to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from Thursday July 9 but the passengers are required to get their Covid-19 tests carried out 48 hours prior to the travel date.

In a related development, Pakistan held bilateral consultations with Spain as part of its efforts to get PIA's flights to Europe restored.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said in a press release on Wednesday that PIA would resume its regular flight operations to the UAE from Thursday July 9 and tickets are already up for grabs.

He said now PIA passengers would be able to travel to Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Al Ain from Pakistan through the airline's regular flights.

He added that previously PIA was operating one-way relief flights to the UAE to repatriate Pakistanis stranded in the country, but now after obtaining permissions the PIA would operate regular flights for the convenience of passengers.

The PIA said the passengers could book and purchase their tickets through PIA offices, corporate website and its travel agents. However, the passengers would be required to get their Covid-19 tests done within 48 hours prior to flight departure and a negative test report would have to be presented at the time of check-in.

In addition to submitting their Covid-19 test results, the passengers would be required to fill health declaration form available online.

However, the PIA has not authorised any health centre for Covid-19 tests for passengers.

Earlier, the UAE-based airline Emirates resumed passenger services to Pakistan's four main cities Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot and Islamabad after a temporary suspension, but with a condition that passengers would be required to carry with them a fresh negative Covid-19 report from a specified laboratory.

"The health and safety of our crew, customers and communities remain our top priority. Emirates has put in place a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the customer journey on the ground and in the air, to minimise the risk of infection spread," the airline said.

The Emirates spokesperson said passengers travelling from Pakistan to Dubai and beyond must present a negative Covid-19 PCR test result certificate at the

time of check-in.

The PCR test must be taken up to four days prior to the travel date (96 hrs maximum) and must be conducted at the Emirates authorised health centre at the passenger's expense, the Emirates said.

Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood held a video conference with Spanish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Cristina Gallach.

The foreign secretary highlighted Pakistan's concern on temporary suspension of PIA's flights to Europe as a follow-up to a recent decision of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and called for its review. He underlined that all necessary steps were being taken by the government to ensure the highest level of flight safety in PIA operations. The PIA remains committed to maintaining the highest standards and quality in its operations, he said.

The exchange of views covered a broad range of subjects, including response to Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral relations, close cooperation in multilateral fora, and regional situation.

The two sides also discussed bilateral trade and economic ties. The foreign secretary conveyed appreciation for Spain's support for GSP Plus for Pakistan and also underlined the hope that concerted efforts would be made to safeguard Pakistan-Spain bilateral trade against the challenges posed by Covid-19 in the shortest possible time.



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Emirates adds Sialkot and 9 other cities for travellers

DUBAI: Emirates has announced it will offer scheduled flights for travellers in 10 more cities: Colombo (from June 20), Sialkot (June 24), Istanbul (from June 25); Auckland, Beirut, Brussels, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City (all from July 1); and Barcelona and Washington DC (all from July 15).

Emirates' flights from Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Pakistan, will only carry outbound passengers to the UAE and onward destinations.

This will take the total number of Emirates destinations on offer for travellers to 40, providing more options for customers who wish to return home or those travelling for essential purposes.

Adnan Kazim, Emirates' Chief Commercial Officer, said: "Thanks to the UAE authorities' support and partnership, Emirates has been able to provide smooth and safe journeys for those who need to travel, and we look forward adding flights to more destinations in the coming weeks. The UAE government's recent announcement to ease travel for UAE citizens and residents show the thorough approach that our country is taking with regards to resuming economic activities, and as we gradually return to regular services, Emirates' number one priority will always be the health and safety of our customers, our crew and our communities."

In addition, Emirates will add flights to the following cities in July: London Heathrow, Manchester, Frankfurt, Paris, Zurich, Madrid, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Dublin, New York JFK, Toronto, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Hong Kong.

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

Emirates resumes service to Pakistan

Emirates resumed passenger service to Pakistan's four main cities Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Sialkot after a temporary suspension, but with a condition that passengers will be required to carry with them a fresh negative Covid-19 report from a specified laboratory.

A spokesperson for the United Arab Emirates (UAE) airline said: "Following the receipt of relevant government approvals, Emirates has resumed passenger services to Pakistan. Customers can travel to Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad and Sialkot if they meet the requirements of their destination."

Emirates said: "The health and safety of our crew, customers and communities remain our top priority. Emirates have put in place a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the customer journey on the ground and in the air, to minimise the risk of infection spread."

The Emirates spokesperson said passengers travelling from Pakistan to Dubai and beyond must present a negative Covid-19 PCR test result certificate at the time of check-in.

"The PCR test must be taken up to four days prior to the travel date (96 hrs maximum) and must be conducted at the Emirates authorised Health Centre Chughtai Labs at the passenger's expense."

According to the spokesperson, children under the age of 12 years are exempted from the test if they are travelling with their parents who have tested negative and are fit to travel.

A senior official of the Aviation Division told media that the issue of the Covid-19 test report required by Emirates came under discussion at the meeting of the National Command Operation Centre (NCOC).

"Emirates have designated a laboratory for the Covid-19 test for passengers travelling by the airliner from Pakistan, but it has not been made mandatory by other countries so far," the senior official said.

He said: "The requirement of the Covid-19 test report is an issue between passengers and the airline as the aviation authorities in Pakistan have been taking all precautionary measures to ensure the

safety and health of people travelling from here."

On June 24, 2020, Emirates had temporarily suspended passenger services from Pakistan till July 3 after about 30 Pakistanis who arrived in Hong Kong on board an Emirates flight tested positive for Covid-19. Of the 30 male and female passengers, some had symptoms of fever, cough and sore throat while others were asymptomatic.

As part of safety measures, members of the Emirates team wearing full personal protective equipment (PPA) welcomed the passenger on the flight. Passengers are boarded the aircraft in smaller groups from the last row to the first and the boarding gates areas are deep cleaned once everyone is on the flight.

Emirates said: "You will need to keep your mask on at all times in the airport, during boarding and on board."

Dubious qualifications

According to Reuters news agency, Malaysia's aviation regulator has temporarily suspended pilots employed by domestic airlines who hold Pakistani licences, after the government of the South Asian nation revealed that many pilots had dubious qualifications.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) said in a statement that the decision came after an evaluation of all foreign pilots in Malaysia. The regulator told Reuters that there are less than 20 Pakistani pilots in the country.

Pakistan last week grounded almost a third of its pilots after discovering they may have falsified their qualifications. Pakistan has a total of 860 pilots, 107 of whom work for foreign airlines.

Global concern has mounted since the announcement, with countries grounding Pakistani pilots and seeking to verify their credentials.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency has also suspended Pakistan International Airlines' authorisation to fly to the bloc for six months.

CAAM said it is making efforts with its Pakistani counterpart to verify the authenticity of the licence holders.

"Licence holders that are verified as valid by (the Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority) will be reinstated immediately," it said.

National carrier Malaysia Airlines said it does not have any Pakistani pilot.

All licences issued to pilots are genuine: CAA

Regulator's confirmation contradicts aviation minister's claim about 'fake licences'; Palpa terms development an endorsement.

In what appears to be a direct contradiction to the aviation minister's allegation that almost 40 per cent of Pakistani pilots possessed 'fake licences', the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has said that all commercial/airline transport pilots licences (CPL/ATPL) it issued "are genuine and validly issued".

"It is important to clarify that all CPL/ATPL pilot licences issued by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority are genuine and validly issued. None of the pilot licences are fake, rather the matter has been misconstrued and incorrectly highlighted in the media/social media," wrote CAA Director General Hassan Nasir Jamy in a letter dated July 13 to a high-ranking aviation official of Oman.

The letter, a copy of which is provided to media, was addressed to Mubarak Saleh Al Gheilani, the acting DG of Civil Aviation Regulation, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, in response to his July 2 letter and July 9 email with regard to safety concerns over licences of Pakistani pilots working with his country's airline.

Mr Jamy, who is also the secretary of aviation division, told the Omani official that the CAA had already verified/cleared "96 Pakistani pilots out of 104 names received from various civil aviation authorities/foreign airlines (UAE/GACA, Vietnam Airlines, Bahrain Air, Civil Aviation Malaysia, Hong Kong Civil Aviation Department and Turkish Airlines)".

Last month, while furnishing before the National Assembly a preliminary report on the May 22 Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crash in Karachi, Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan had claimed that 40 per cent of the country's pilots held "fake licences".

He later said that 262 airlines' pilots had falsified their credentials and of them 141 belonged to the PIA, nine from Air Blue and 10 from Serene Air. The remaining pilots were affiliated with flying clubs, chartered plane services or foreign airlines, he said.

The CAA suspended the licences of only 34 pilots of the PIA and issued them a show-cause notice to explain as to how they performed flying duty and appeared in a written exam on a same date.

However, Mr Jamy tried to downplay

the damning statement of the aviation minister when he stated in his letter that "some concerns" were raised about the validity of the licences of "some pilots". "The federal government immediately took notice and embarked upon the process of verifying the credentials of all licensed pilots through a forensic scrutiny," he stated.

"During this process, it occurred that there were discrepancies pertaining to the computer-based examination, which is one of the steps in the licensing process. Immediately upon completion of the process, the pilots falling in this category were treated as 'suspects' till clearance. They were taken off from flying duties, if any, and were grounded pending formal process, after providing them opportunity to explain their position," he explained.

"Pakistan has always maintained a strong regulatory oversight mechanism for safety of skies all over. It has been ensured that only those pilots and aircrew with valid qualification, credentials and unblemished record shall be allowed to fly. I hope this letter is convincing evidence of Pakistan's continued commitment towards aviation safety. It is highlighted that as a responsible regulator we have voluntarily raised the subject matter," Mr Jamy added.

A CAA official said that several similar letters were written to civil aviation authorities and airlines of different countries to control the damage the aviation minister's statement had caused.

Palpa stance vindicated

The Pakistan Airlines Pilots Association (Palpa) said that the CAA's letter in which it admitted that the ATPL licence of any pilot in Pakistan was neither dubious nor fake was an endorsement of their stance.

"The whole episode has caused damage to the reputation of the nation, its airline and its pilots worldwide," Palpa secretary Imran Narejo said in a statement.

He said the issue of licences had been mishandled by the aviation minister, PIA management and CAA, which proved very damaging for the pilots of the national airline as well as others working at the international level.

The issue of 'fake' licences drew world attention after the aviation minister's statement last month and the European Union Air Safety Agency suspended PIA authorisation to operate to the EU member states for six months,

while the International Air Transport Association (IATA) also shared its concern over the serious lapse in the licensing and safety oversight by the aviation regulator.

The US Department of Transportation had also revoked permission for the PIA to conduct charter flights to the United States.

According to Reuters, the US Federal Aviation Administration also downgraded Pakistan's air safety rating after the agency raised concerns about pilot certifications.

Arshad Malik to continue as PIA chief after retirement from PAF



Cabinet approves Air Marshal Arshad Malik's appointment for a period of three years on a deputation basis.

The federal cabinet on Tuesday July 7 approved continuation of service of Chief Executive Officer of the Pakistan International Airlines Air Marshal Arshad Malik even after his retirement from the Pakistan Air Force on July 12.

The cabinet approved the appointment of Mr Malik as the PIA CEO for a period of three years on a deputation basis and he has completed two years of his service as head of the national flag carrier. Since Mr Malik is retiring from the PAF, he will now serve as the PIA head on a contractual basis.

When contacted by media, a cabinet member confirmed that Mr Malik would continue to serve as PIA's chief executive after his retirement from PAF. "Earlier he was serving on deputation but now his service will continue on secondment basis," he added.

Etihad Airways resumes flight operations to Pakistan

The Etihad Airways that had suspended its services last month for outbound passengers from Pakistan will resume its flight operations from July 16th with a flight to Abu Dhabi.

The passengers desirous of flying to the United Arab Emirates aboard the airline's aircraft would have to prove that they are not suffering from Covid-19, said the carrier.

The airline had suspended flights to and from Pakistan apparently after some passengers who had travelled to Hong Kong by another airliner were tested positive for the potentially deadly disease.

The Etihad Airways would now operate 12 flights a week from Pakistan, seven of them from Lahore, two from Islamabad and three from Karachi, said the airline.

Each passenger travelling from Pakistan must have a copy of a PCR test before travelling that (s)he should be able to produce before boarding, said the airline.

The result of the Covid-19 medical test should have been issued no more than 96 hours prior to arriving in Abu Dhabi. However, children of up to 12 years don't need to complete the PCR test if they travel with their parents.

The airline had initially suspended its flights to and from Pakistan on March 21 to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. It resumed its two weekly flights from Karachi and Lahore on June 13 but then came the suspension late last month.

Etihad Airways was the third airline of the UAE to have suspended its flight operations for outbound passengers. The General Civil Aviation Authority of the United Arab Emirates had initially authorised only one laboratory in Pakistan for the Covid-19 tests for passengers. However, due to the passengers' rush, the authority later approved four labs for the tests the Chughtai Labs, Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust, Aga Khan University Hospital and Islamabad Diagnostic Centre.

The travelers will also be required to submit health declaration forms, available at www.piac.com.pk.

flydubai celebrates 10th anniversary in Pakistan

Marked a significant milestone in the history of flydubai as we celebrate 10th anniversary of our operation to Pakistan with 1st flight landing in Karachi 10 years ago on this auspicious day. Our journey has been exciting, with many twists and turns but always with the same end goal in mind to provide the best possible service and support to our travel trade partners and to our customers. Our dedication to service and support has propelled us from a very humble beginning to what we have become now the airline that's "Gets Going" providing value for money together with excellent service standards.

I would like to look back at some of our key achievements and acknowledge the hard work and efforts of our extremely committed and reliable flydubai team in Pakistan without whom the growth and success wouldn't have been possible.

Since the launch of our 1st flight to Karachi with 3 weekly flights, we have expanded to Multan, Faisalabad, Sialkot and Quetta having 74 weekly frequencies before pandemic Covid-19 affecting the aviation business. During the last 10 years, we have carried over a million passengers to various destinations across our network being religious, business, workers, VFR and tourism to/via our hub in Dubai. On tourism, we were the main carrier to develop tourism to Azerbaijan from Pakistan which is very popular destination now amongst Pakistanis besides few other destinations in Eastern Europe and Middle-East.

To all our trade partners, I would like to say "Thank You"! It's your close business partnership over the years that has contributed towards the success of flydubai from Pakistan. I've known many of our trade partners having met you at various events especially in Dubai at yearly Arabian Travel Mart, Annual Gala Award presentation event and also during familiarization trips. Clearly flydubai success and longevity would not have been possible without our business partner's patronage and support. We are grateful for the opportunity to be your business partners and hopefully we have also contributed to the success of your business.

To all flydubai team in Pakistan, I would like to say "Thank You"! The cornerstone of every successful organization is the dedication and commitment of its people. Pakistan team is blessed with a strong team of highly

motivated and talented individuals few of them having spent over the last 10 years with flydubai since we commence operation to Karachi. Our success is their achievement for which I'm grateful.



Although much has changed over the last few months due to Covid-19, something remains the same and will never change. That is working closely with our trade partners. For flydubai we will soon be re-opening the skies "flight by flight" to Pakistan and that is essential for all of us. It's evident aviation business plays a vital role in facilitating economic growth, particularly in developing countries like Pakistan and we need to work very closely over the next few months and years. The demand for air travel will be low initially as many countries, if not all, will impose their own restrictions like limiting travel purposes, requiring pre-and post-travel Covid-19 tests, restricting places to visit and needing constant reporting of traveler whereabouts. This will be the new norm and most difficult period which we all have to work together to overcome to build-up aviation business again and its crucial for our survival.

At flydubai, we are genuinely concerned for the well-being of all our customers, employees and also our business partners. We have over the last few months have taken all necessary steps reviewing all safety measures to comply to industry standards including best practice recommended from IATA, WHO and General Civil Aviation Authority of UAE. This includes an extensive disinfection programme across all touchpoints throughout the customer journey. We would like to reassure all our trade partners, passengers that their hygiene on board will be safe as the airline has comprehensive programme in place.

We look forward to continue our relationships with all our trade partners in Pakistan and remain committed to providing you with excellent service and support as we look forward to returning to the skies.

Thank you again for all your support.
Sudhir Sreedharan
Senior Vice President, flydubai.



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Relatives of plane crash victims reject preliminary report issued by AAIB

The grieving relatives of passengers who lost their lives in the May 22 PK-8303 tragedy held a press conference at the Karachi Press Club on Monday June 29 to reject the findings of the preliminary crash report issued by the Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB).

There was the father, who lost his three children and wife, there were the sisters who lost their only brother, a 27-year-old with dreams of a bright future in his eyes, there was the son of the only American on the flight who was made to run from pillar to post to find his father's real remains, there was the widower who still seeks to know what actually happened even after 10 years of losing his wife in the Airblue Flight 202 crash.

And together they rejected the preliminary report, calling it a mere narration of various recordings of the cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder. They demanded that the data be further analysed and the proper crash report be issued in light of the Aircraft Accident and Incident Investigation procedure issued by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Asif Iqbal Faruqi, who lost his wife and three children in the crash, asked people to imagine his plight and the plight of others like him who were not even being given the remains of their loved ones, and instead being called liars and being thrown out of offices. He pointed out that DNA, and not dental records, is the only way to determine the identity of bodies that are completely charred, which was the case with the victims of the ill-fated PK-8303.

He also said that it is not just an airline but an entire system, which in this case was the Pakistan International Airlines, the pilots, the Civil Aviation Authority and the worker unions that are responsible for checking each part of a plane before putting it in the air. All these need a major restructuring, he said.

Kanwal Arsalan, who lost her only brother in the crash, questioned the airline's standard operating procedures.

If the air traffic control [ATC] staff was on a prayer break when the flight was supposed to land, where were their substitutes? It is, after all, not a single person's responsibility. Why didn't air traffic control notice that the plane's engines were on fire when the pilot was taking it up again? Why wasn't there any foam on the runway for the plane? Why didn't they take any emergency action on learning that the plane was in distress? Only Allah knows what must have those poor passengers gone through in those 17



RELATIVES of the plane crash victims speak at the press conference at the Karachi Press Club.

minutes of failed landings before the eventual crash.

Think also what we the relatives of the ones who lost their lives must be going through now,' she said. She also asked how come the buildings around the airport happened to be three or four-storey high? 'Why did the Sindh Building Control Authority allow it?' Yaseen Elaayi said his father, who perished in the crash, used to tell him that Pakistan was a majestic country with honourable, hospitable and humble people who weren't aware themselves how they are tricked and fooled by those in power. 'I have found the people here going out of their way to remove the roadblocks in my way.

But I have also encountered here those who have put the blocks in my way and thrown me out of their offices,' he said, adding that he arrived in Pakistan 10 days after the crash on June 2 for which he thanked the Pakistan embassy in the US for issuing him a visa.

At the time when I reached here, there were still 10 bodies that were awaiting identification. I was taken by PIA to the Edhi morgue and shown each of those bodies for identification,' he said, adding that when he couldn't identify the charred bodies, he was taken to Karachi University for a DNA test, the results of which were taking time. He had to be tested thrice actually with repeat DNA tests done by the forensics lab in Punjab too. Then when he was found to be a perfect match with a Chhipa body with a particular number and was ready to bury his father with a Lebanese and American flag in his hand, he was informed that they couldn't find that body he was said to be a match with. Finally, he was helped by other people to find his father and where he had already been buried.

While sharing their personal experiences, all the relatives said that they reject the preliminary report and are throwing it in the dustbin, where it really belongs. 'We are here as a direct result of this report, which besides being full of typos, is also full of factual errors. It lacks substance, and with its numerous inconsistencies, raises many questions while putting the full blame on the pilot and air traffic controller. It is easy to blame a poor employee and a dead man,' said Elaayi.

Junaid Hamid, an affectee of the Airblue crash of 2010, and who has now formed the Airblue Crash Affectees Association, said that in Pakistan, no detailed reports have ever been produced for the previous crashes, too, after the presenting of a preliminary report that has also been issued due to public pressure or on court orders.

Compensation issue the press conference also took up the issue of compensation to the victims' families, saying that an initial amount of Rs1 million has been given by the federal government. 'But Rs5 million is the first tier liability, Mr Hamid said.

He also said that insurance/compensation after the apportionment of the blame is going to be determined on the basis of different factors based on personal profiles of the victim, such as their age, education, professional experience, social status, number of dependants, future growth possibilities, etc.

He said that currently PIA's representative lawyer has been contacting families to sign a release document, which they should not sign as the Peshawar High Court has categorically barred families from signing such a document.

IATA: Get the aviation industry moving again

Airports Council International (ACI) World and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) have urged that costs related to public health measures aimed at mitigating the spread of communicable diseases should be borne by governments.

IATA's Director General and CEO Alexandre de Juniac said: "The aviation industry wants to get the world moving again.

The COVID-19 pandemic's effect on the industry and broader economy has halted aviation at global level, leading to multi-billion losses in revenue and traffic.

As the industry begins to restart and plan for a long-term, sustained recovery, the health and safety of passengers and staff remains the foremost priority for airports and airlines. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), through the Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), has resolved to partner with its Member States, international and regional organizations, and industry to address the challenges and to provide global guidance for a safe, secure and sustainable restart and recovery of the aviation sector. ICAO's TakeOff guidance outlines a number of new measures for safeguarding public health, which are already being introduced by airports and airlines around the world.

To ensure their efficacy, these measures - which include health checks, sanitization and social distancing - will require implementation by the appropriate national authorities. ACI and IATA believe that existing roles and responsibilities of governments, airlines, airports and other operational stakeholders should be respected in implementing the response to the COVID-19 outbreak. Airlines and airport operators should be included in national discussions to assess the practicalities of implementing the solutions proposed by ICAO aimed at harmonization across jurisdictions.

There is a recognition that a patchwork of different frameworks risks confusing travelers, introducing



inefficiencies and unnecessary additional compliance costs on passengers, airports and airlines. Indeed, the World Health Organization's International Health Regulations require governments to pay the costs of health measures.

"As airport and airline operations begin to slowly recover, the health and safety of passengers and staff is paramount and many new health measures are being considered by governments for implantation at airports," ACI World Director General Luis Felipe de Oliveira said. "As the industry navigates the complexities of restarting operations, ACI believes the cost of any health measures that are required should be borne by governments. ACI and IATA are aligned on this issue, as set out in the Safely Restarting Aviation ACI and IATA Joint Approach which was our input to ICAO's TakeOff guidance. This laid out that public funding of health measures should be ensured, including but not limited to infrastructure or operational changes needed for their implementation."

IATA's Director General and CEO Alexandre de Juniac said: "The aviation industry wants to get the world moving again. We have successfully worked with ICAO and many governments worldwide to put in place standardized protocols that safeguard public health and give travelers the confidence to return to the skies. But the industry is still on the edge of a financial precipice. The extra costs of health measures mandated by governments must be borne by governments. That will enable the industry to focus scarce resources on reconnecting the world and boosting economic recovery."

Malaysia Airlines launches new safety awareness campaign



Malaysia Airlines will provide passengers with a complimentary onboard hygiene kit, which includes a face mask and hand sanitiser.

The carrier said it was a further example of the extensive measures that have been put in place to keep customers and staff safe throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

It coincides with the launch of the "Fly Confidently" campaign, which provides a clear overview of what passengers can expect from a flight with the national carrier.

This includes a detailed step-by-step walkthrough of the customer experience, from checking-in safely online at home through to the enhanced safety measures they can look forward to onboard. The procedures highlighted in the video comply to the guidelines set by international and local regulatory bodies, including the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the World Health Organisation (WHO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), and the Ministry of Health of Malaysia (MOH).

These include educating passengers on the latest requirements, imposing social and physical distancing rules wherever possible and requiring passengers to wear face coverings or masks at all times.

Daniel Bainbridge, Malaysia Airlines regional manager for UK & Europe, said: "The safety and wellbeing of our passengers and employees is of paramount importance to Malaysia Airlines.

"We hope that the Fly Confidently campaign will inform our customers and others travelling at this time of the extensive health and safety measures that have been put in place including the provision of complimentary hygiene kits - and how they can best follow guidance to guarantee that every flight with Malaysia Airlines is safe and comfortable for all onboard."



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Airbus cuts 15,000 jobs to face 'gravest crisis aviation industry has ever experienced'

European aircraft maker Airbus said recently it is planning to cut around 15,000 jobs worldwide, 11 per cent of its total workforce, in response to the "gravest crisis" the industry has ever seen caused by the coronavirus.

The cuts are to be implemented by the summer of 2021, Airbus said in a statement, and follow a drop of nearly 40pc of the commercial aviation business in recent months.

"With air traffic not expected to recover to pre-Covid levels before 2023 and potentially as late as 2025, Airbus now needs to take additional measures to reflect the post Covid-19 industry outlook," it said in a statement.

The company said 5,000 positions would be cut France, 5,100 in Germany, 900 in Spain, 1,700 positions in Britain and 1,300 positions at Airbus' other worldwide sites.

Airbus warned that "compulsory actions cannot be ruled out at this stage", in an indication that some employees could be made redundant.

It said the plan would now be discussed with unions and Airbus would seek to use different measures to bring about the reductions, including voluntary departures, early retirement, and long-term partial unemployment schemes.

'Brutal, lasting shock'

In a sign of the controversy that may be ahead, the French economy ministry said the number of job cuts was "excessive" and urged Airbus to do everything to limit the number of forced departures.

"The aviation sector is facing a massive, brutal and lasting shock. It is highly likely that the recovery will be gradual," said the ministry. But it added: "However, the figure of job cuts announced by Airbus is excessive."

The French government on earlier this month pledged 15 billion euros (\$17bn) for the country's aviation industry in a bid to preserve jobs.

The sector has been hammered by the travel restrictions imposed to contain the outbreak, with firms worldwide still uncertain when they will be able to get grounded planes back into the air.

Its main rival Boeing said in April it plans reduce its workforce by 10pc through voluntary and involuntary layoffs



The cuts are to be implemented by the summer of 2021, Airbus said in a statement.

to face the new situation.

"Airbus is facing the gravest crisis this industry has ever experienced," said Airbus chief executive Guillaume Faury. The company had already in April said it was cutting production of its planes by around a third.

"These measures allowed us to weather the early stages of the economic shock," Faury added in a video message. But "given the scale of the crisis and the share of our business that has disappeared for the foreseeable future, there is still a need for adaptation."

"It is our duty to face the reality," he said, while expressing confidence that Airbus would "recover".

Air France to cut jobs

Airbus's announcement came as union sources told AFP that French flag carrier Air France would cut 7,500 jobs by the end of 2022 as part of a cost-cutting drive that has gained new urgency in the wake of the pandemic.

Most of the job cuts will come from non-replacement of retiring workers or voluntary departures, though layoffs have not been excluded, the union sources said ahead of a works council meeting with management.

Air France has been offered seven billion euros in emergency loans from the French state or backed by it.

The group joins a long list of airlines that have announced job cuts in recent weeks. Lufthansa is to slash 22,000 jobs, British Airways 12,000, Delta Air Lines 10,000 and Qantas 6,000.

Last month, Emirates Airlines started the process of firing thousands of workers majorly cabin-crew members and a minority of engineers in a bid to preserve cash amid financial crunch due to the pandemic, according to a media.

The airline, could over time, lay off 30,000 workers, almost a third of its total, the report added.

CAA warns pilots against smoking in aircraft

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) has expressed concern over smoking in aircraft, especially in the cockpit and cabin by crewmembers, and directed all operators to follow rules and regulations and ensure compliance.

The PCAA's director of flight standards noted that despite numerous instructions on prohibition of smoking in the aircraft, smoking was still continuing, which is not only a gross violation of regulations but an open denial of the rules which restrict all kinds of smoking when on board Pakistan-registered aircraft. Violations are liable to penal action under the ordinance.

The PCAA directed the operators that cockpit crew, including captain / first officer, were not allowed to smoke in the cockpit neither any third person was to be allowed to smoke therein.

If a captain smokes, it is to be reported by the first officer and vice versa. In case the violation is not reported by either of them, a very strict disciplinary action would be taken against both. This might initially be ground/imposing financial penalties followed by endorsement on licence and its suspension if the observation was repeated.

The CAA further warned that any incident of smoking during flight or on ground was to be reported by any crewmember (cockpit and cabin) or any ground staff whoever observed the violation. In case the matter was not reported a severe disciplinary action would be taken against the individuals.

No disciplinary or retaliatory action would be taken against an individual who reported the above mentioned violation.

The CAA said all operators were once again reminded and directed to ensure compliance. Smoking in the cockpit was an unhealthy trend and needed to be curbed vigorously at all levels of management, it added.

"All operators are requested to enforce the culture of "no smoking in cockpit" and also to ensure full protection to the person reporting the incident," the CAA said.

Qatar Airways to send the bill to blockading countries

Following the latest court ruling in the “Qatar versus blockaders” quarrel, Qatar Airways is planning to send the bill to the four countries that have locked the airline out of their airspaces since 2017.

Qatar Airways would pursue legal action and demand full compensation for financial damages it incurred due to the airspace blockade, the airline outlined in a statement on July 15, 2020. The bill would be sent to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt, that have forbade Qatari-registered aircraft from entering their airspaces in June 2017.

“The arbitrary and abusive measures that these four States have taken against us have devastated our carefully planned decades-long program for investment and growth in those countries; they have arbitrarily prevented us from serving hundreds of thousands of passengers, and transporting tens of thousands of tons of cargo to and from each of these countries annually,” Qatar Airways’ statement reads.

The International Court of Justice, the highest court of the United Nations, ruled in favor of Qatar in a quarrel opposing the country to Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt. The neighboring countries that imposed a full blockade on Qatar since 2017 will now be judged by the International Civil Aviation Authority Council.

The airline's statement came in response to the ruling by the International Court of Justice, which affirmed that the ICAO Council had the jurisdiction to hear the disagreement relating to full blockade on Qatar. The decision is seen as favorable to Qatar's interests. Following the ruling, both Qatar and blockading countries will now be able to defend their case before the ICAO Council.

Now that the jurisdiction of the ICAO has been established and that the complaints of Qatar have been taken into account, both parties will be able to defend their case. The United Arab Emirates already commented on the news, saying they would “now present their legal action to ICAO to defend their right to close their airspace to Qatari planes.”

British Airways confirms plans to immediately retire its Boeing 747 'Queen of the Skies'



British Airways has confirmed plans to immediately retire its iconic fleet of Boeing 747-400 aircraft in an internal memo sent to staffers. The Heathrow-based airline had already intended to phase out the ageing aircraft by 2024 but the Jumbo Jet's fate has been hastened because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the fleet has been grounded since late March and will likely never fly commercially ever again.

“With much regret, we are proposing, subject to consultation, the immediate retirement of our Queen of the Skies, the 747-400,” the leaked memo reads. “The proposal to retire the entire fleet of these iconic aircraft is nothing short of heartbreaking for those of us that grew up watching them fly all over the world,” the note, signed by BA's management committee continues.

There has been a great deal of speculation over what might happen to British Airways' 747 in light of the Corona crisis. More than three weeks ago, early retirement for the fleet looked inevitable after BA cancelled all pilot training for the aircraft type.

End of 747 jumbo as Boeing placed final part orders

Boeing Co and suppliers set the final number of parts it would need for the 747 jumbo jet programme at least a year ago, signaling the end for a plane that democratized global air travel in the 1970s but fell behind modern twin-engine aircraft, industry sources said recently.

Boeing's “Queen of the Skies”, the world's most easily recognised jetliner with its humped fuselage and four engines, marked its 50-year flying anniversary in February 2019, clinging to life thanks to a cargo market boom fueled by online shopping.

But the end for the programme has been hanging in the air for years amid falling orders and pricing pressure. The coronavirus pandemic has also crushed passenger travel and demand for new jets.

The last order for a passenger version came in 2017, when the US government asked Boeing to repurpose two 747-8 jetliners for use as Air Force One by the US president. Boeing declined to confirm that it was pulling the plug on the 747 programme, first reported by Bloomberg News.

“At a build rate of 0.5 airplanes per month, the 747-8 programme has more than two years of production ahead of it in order to fulfill our current customer commitments,” a Boeing spokesman said.

“We will continue to make the right decisions to keep the production line healthy and meet customer needs,” he added. The end of the 747 would follow Airbus SE's phasing out of its A380 jumbo jet. In June, the last convoy of outsize parts for the world's largest airliner crawled towards an assembly plant in southwest France.

China Airlines to resume New York service in late-July 2020

China Airlines from late-July 2020 plans to resume Taipei Taoyuan New York JFK route, initially operating once weekly with Boeing 777-300ER. First flight is scheduled to depart Taipei on 26JUL20 (Sunday), New York JFK on 28JUL20 (Tuesday). In August, service departs Taipei on Thursdays.

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Emirates A380's Back in the skies



The world's largest Airbus A380 operator "Emirates" kept its promise as it finally starts flying its Superjumbos. The airline will fly its A380's to London Heathrow (LHR) and Paris (CDG) after the temporary suspension of flights due to the COVID-19.

With a fleet of 115 Airbus A380 currently, Emirates is the largest operator of the SuperJumbo with 8 more on order.

The airline is increasing its route network to more destinations and it is currently operating to around 55 destinations worldwide. Emirates also revealed its A380 destinations last month which will be operational at a later stage.

Flights to London Heathrow & Paris:

The A380 will finally start flying to Europe with flights to London Heathrow (LHR) and Paris (CDG) starting 15th July. The route was previously operated with Boeing 777's.

This will be a daily flight from DXB to LHR as EK1 and return flight as EK2. The flight to Paris (CDG) will operate with a flight number EK73 and return flight EK74.

EK1 will depart at 07:45 Local time (0345 UTC) whereas, return flight EK2 to DXB will depart at 14:20 Local time.

Flight to Paris CDG will depart at 08:20 Local time (04:20 UTC) whereas, the return scheduled flight will depart CDG at 15:35 Local time.

EK1/2 was operated last with an Airbus A380 on 24th March and EK73/74 was operated on 22nd March.

Future EK A380 Flights:

The airline might start more flights to London Heathrow and Paris CDG with A380 in the coming months. On the other hand, the airline also announced that it will be resuming two-daily flights to New York JFK Airport starting August.

Other destinations announced by the Airline include Amsterdam Schipol, Manchester, Los Angeles, Manchester and many others.

Emirates SkyCargo expands cargo connectivity



Emirates SkyCargo to expand to 100 destinations.

Emirates SkyCargo will be operating scheduled cargo flights to 100 destinations across six continents during the month of July 2020.

Some of the new cities added to the air cargo carrier's network include Accra, Algiers, Athens, Fort Lauderdale, Glasgow, Larnaca, Los Angeles, Male, Moscow (SVO), Phnom Penh, Rome, Santiago, Sialkot and Tunis.

Emirates SkyCargo's network expansion is in response to the growing economic activity and demand for air cargo capacity from markets across the world along with Emirates' increased passenger flight operations. By offering multiple daily or weekly cargo flight frequencies to major production and consumer markets, the carrier is helping facilitate supplies of goods required for combatting the current pandemic as well as machinery and equipment required for manufacturing and several key economic sectors across global trade lanes.

In addition to scheduled services, Emirates SkyCargo also operates a number of special charter flights every week to transport a range of commodities from Personal Protective Supplies (PPE) and pharmaceuticals to food and outsized machinery and components.

PIA increases number of domestic flights

In response to improved travel needs, the Pakistan International Airlines has decided to increase the number of its domestic flights.

According to a spokesperson for the PIA, flights will be increased for Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta. He said the two PIA flights will be operated between Karachi and Islamabad and one flight will be operated between Lahore and Karachi daily.

The spokesperson said the special flights of PIA for Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Central Asian States are continuing while flights to and from the United Arab Emirates are expected to be resumed soon.

PIA to charge less on domestic travel

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has cut fare for domestic flights without baggage seven days after it announced a reduction of Rs12,000 for one-way ticket, inclusive of all taxes.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said the national flag carrier had reduced the minimum one-way fare for domestic flights from Rs12,000 to Rs9,572 without baggage.

He said passengers could carry up to 7kg of hand-baggage on domestic flights with the reduced fare of Rs9,572. The new incentive will be for travel to Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

On June 29, the PIA had announced a reduction of Rs12,000 for one-way tickets inclusive of all taxes for different destinations including Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi and other cities.

The spokesman said new fare would come into effect immediately.

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95pc licences of pilots serving in seven countries cleared

The Aviation Division has cleared 95 per cent licences of Pakistani pilots serving in different airlines in seven countries, while the process of verification of the remaining will be completed next days.

The issue of 'dubious' licences drew world attention after Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan revealed in the National Assembly that there were 860 active pilots in the country and 260 pilots had not sat their exams themselves and almost 30 per cent of the pilots had fake or improper licence and did not have flying experience.

Shortly afterwards, the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) grounded 107 pilots suspected of having fake licences and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) started verification of their licences.

The aviation minister also announced that five senior officials of the CAA had been sacked over the scandal and they could be prosecuted.

The 'dubious' licences issue also caught the attention of other countries and airlines where Pakistani pilots were employed. The countries which grounded the Pakistani pilots and asked the Aviation Division to verify their credentials included the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Vietnam, Turkey and Bahrain. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia also asked the Pakistan government to verify the licences of Pakistani pilots serving there.

The Director General of UAE's General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), Saif Mohammad Al Suwaidi, had asked CAA Director General Hassan Nasir Jamy to verify the credentials of Pakistani aircraft maintenance engineers and flight operation officers who converted their respective licences issued by the CAA.

The UAE GCAA had also asked the Pakistani authorities to clarify the difference between "fake" and "suspect" cases, if any, so that they could take immediate and appropriate action in the interest of safety of flight operations.

The European Union Air Safety Agency has also announced suspension of PIA authorisation for six months.

According to official sources, Vietnam stopped Pakistani pilots from flying and asked the CAA for verification of 11 Pakistani pilots associated with

different airlines. Of the 11 Pakistani pilots, the licences and credentials of 10 had been verified and sent back to the authorities concerned, while the verification of the remaining one would be completed, the sources said.

On July 2, the Civil Aviation Authority of Malaysia (CAAM) had announced temporary suspension of Pakistani licence holders employed in Malaysia. The CAAM sent a list of 14 Pakistani pilots for verification of their licences. The Pakistan CAA verified the credentials of all the pilots and informed the Malaysian authorities accordingly.

In the UAE, 54 Pakistani pilots have been employed in different airlines, including Fly Dubai. The verification of licences of 48 pilots has been completed and the remaining six will be verified next days. The CAA informed its UAE counterpart about the verification of 48 pilots.

According to the sources, three airlines of Turkey also sought verification of licences of 19 Pakistani pilots. The verification of 18 pilots has been done, while that of one is under process.

Likewise, the Bahrain Aviation Authority asked the Pakistan CAA to verify the credentials of three Pakistani pilots. Of the three verifications, two had been completed and sent back, while the remaining one is under process.

Similarly, the Hong Kong Civil Aviation Authority sought verification of licences of three Pakistani pilots. Two of the three licences of Pakistani pilots have been cleared by the CAA, while the remaining one will be completed next days.

PIA chief meets PM

PIA Chief Executive Officer Air Marshal Arshad Malik met the prime minister and briefed the latter on ongoing negotiations with European Union Aviation Safety Agency to ensure PIA flight operations for Europe. He also briefed the premier on restructuring of the PIA so as to make it a profitable and leading airline.

The prime minister directed the PIA chief to expedite the restructuring plan in consultation with Adviser to the PM on Institutional Reforms Dr Ishrat Hussain and present a framework in a week's time. "Our government has adopted across-the-board reforms agenda to make institutions efficient and service oriented," he added.

Army shoots down Indian spy drone along LoC



The Indian drone shot down by Pakistan Army troops on Sunday June 28.

MUZZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Army troops shot down an Indian spy drone along the heavily militarised Line of Control (LoC) in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Sunday, in what was the ninth such shooting in the current year, the military's media affairs wing said.

"Pakistan army troops shot down an Indian spying quadcopter in Hot Spring sector along LoC. The quadcopter had intruded 850 metres on Pakistani side of the LoC," said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) chief Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar in a tweet.

"This is ninth Indian quadcopter shot down by Pakistan army troops this year," he added.

Hot Spring sector is locally known as Tatta Pani sector and is part of Kotli district.

According to officials, Indian troops are frequently sending spy drones for aerial photography of Pakistan Army posts and civilian areas as part of their intelligence gathering operations and target selection before carrying out cross LoC shelling.

In the last such shooting, Pakistan Army troops had downed an Indian reconnaissance drone in Khanjar sector in tehsil Samahni of Bhimber district on June 5. Meanwhile, Indian troops continued ceasefire violations across the restive LoC, which left one woman injured in Samahni tehsil of Bhimber district.

According to Mir Mohammad Abid, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Bhimber, splinters of a mortar shell hit the 36-year-old victim, Nargis Bibi, wife of Amin, in the chest in Bandala area at about 4:30pm.

After being provided first aid by local army personnel she was evacuated to District Headquarters Hospital in Bhimber, he said.

SIAL news in pictures



The Board of Directors meeting of SIAL (Sialkot International Airport) recently held, picture shows newly elected chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed, outgoing chairman SIAL Mr. Nadeem Anwar Qureshi, Ch. M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman, Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir CEO SIAL, the founder chairman Mr. Mian Riaz, former chairmen Mr. Babar Iqbal, Ghulam Mustifa Choudhry, Touheed Akhter, Mr. Muhammad Hanif Khan, Mr. Ashfaq Choudhry, Directors of SIAL, Mr. Fazal Jilani, Haseeb Ahmed Bhatti, Mr. Muhammad Tahir Butt, Mr. Zulfiqar Ahsan Bhatti, Sheikh Sohail Barlas and Agha Bilal Haider addressing on the occasion.



Photo shows Mian Naeem Javed newly elected Chairman SIAL and Mr. Choudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman SIAL are being garlanded and congratulated by the former Chairmen and Directors of SIAL.



The representatives of the foreign airlines operating from Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) present bouquet to Mr. Mian Naeem Javed new Chairman SIAL, Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir CEO SIAL also present on the occasion.

SIAL to become a cargo hub



Sialkot International Airport (SIAL) organized a meeting held at the airport office with international airlines representatives in Pakistan to discuss and highlight the potential of cargo at SIAL. Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed said on the occasion “SIAL is fully equipped to be a best cargo hub in South Asia”. He told, that SIAL management had started to contact to the airlines all over the world to operate their cargo flights also.

Mr. Naeem Javed further said “SIAL is a unique experience in the private aviation sector which is very successful and moving forward even in this situation of Coved-19. We have started to find out new ways to cope with the situation and generate new business. We have decided to give new incentives and special packages for starting new cargo flights. The airlines should take this advantage and start their cargo flights as Sialkot is a

manufacturers and exporter’s city which has a huge cargo potential”.

The meeting was also attended by the Vice Chairman Ch. M. Afzal Shaheen, Maj. Gen (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir CEO SIAL Mr. Raza Munir Director, Mr. Aamer Yaqub BDM, Airport Manager Tousif Anjum, Mr. Sohail Ahmed Cargo Manager Emirates, Cargo Manager Fly Dubai, Cargo Manager British Airways, Mr. Saeed Furqan and others.



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EASA asks 32 member countries not to schedule pilots holding 'fake' licences

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) on Monday July 6 wrote a letter to its 32 member countries regarding alleged "fraud related to pilot licences issued in Pakistan" and recommended not to "schedule such pilots" for flight operations.

The EASA said: "You may be aware of the information available in the public domain indicating that a sizable portion (approximately 40%) of airline pilot licences issued by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) are either falsified and or otherwise not ICAO compliant."

The letter added: "It is a grave concern. As operators could fly to Europe, under a TCO authorisation issued by EASA with pilots holding validated Pakistani licences, we would like to share with you the measures taken by EASA in relation to alleged irregularities on pilot licences issued by Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA)."

The EASA recommended to aviation authorities of the 32 member states to consider the suspension of validations issued against Pakistani licences and notified the recommendation of PCAA.

"Should your organisation currently employ pilots holding valid Pakistani licences, we would appreciate it if you could share with us any measures taken or planned in this regard be informed to the EASA," the agency said in the letter to its member countries.

The agency's air operations oversight section recommended to its 32 member countries "not to schedule such pilots for operations performed under your Third Country Operators (TCO) authorisation".

Meanwhile, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) suspended commercial flying licences of 34 PIA pilots after inquiries against them were completed regarding 'dubious' licences.

A letter issued by the CAA additional director licensing informed the PIA's director flight operations and others concerned that the commercial pilot licences of 34 pilots, including a female pilot, had been suspended.

The credibility of the CAA and PIA has been on stake after the International

Air Transport Association expressed concern over the "serious lapse in the licensing and safety oversight by the aviation regulator".

Amid the crisis, the PIA management grounded its 150 (one-third of its) pilots and started relieving them from flight rosters for allegedly possessing 'dubious licences', while asking the CAA to urgently provide the list of all those PIA pilots who allegedly had fake/suspicious commercial pilot licences.

The controversy drew world attention after federal Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan said in the National Assembly that 150 pilots of the national flag carrier had fake licences.

The aviation minister had also revealed that show-cause notices had been served on 30 pilots and they would also be suspended after completion of an inquiry while their dismissal will be decided by the federal cabinet.

US too places ban on PIA flights

In a tough body blow to the national flag carrier, the US authorities on Thursday July 9 stopped the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) from operating special flights from the United States, official sources in Washington and Islamabad said.

The sources in the US confirmed the decision was based on an official Pakistani statement saying a number of PIA pilots could be possessing dubious licences/credentials.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency has already withdrawn the authorisation granted to the PIA to operate flights to and from its member countries. And several countries, including Malaysia and Vietnam, have started investigations into the credentials of Pakistani pilots and other aviation personnel working in their jurisdictions.

The US Department of Transportation (DOT) expressed concern over flight safety and revoked the special

permission granted to PIA to operate special flights to and from the United States.

"This revocation is effective immediately," an email sent to the Pakistani authorities said. Not only had the PIA's authority to operate charter flights been rescinded but its engaging in non-revenue operations involving a US point had also been barred, the message added.

The action followed "recent events identified by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority that are of serious concern to aviation safety," the DOT notification said.

A PIA spokesperson acknowledged the US decision and described it as a "setback to the carrier".

He said PIA had been granted permission to operate 12 special flights from the US within one year to repatriate Pakistanis stranded there. The airline has so far operated only seven.

However, an official at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington said that American officials had not yet informed them of any such decision.

The official claimed that PIA would continue to operate flights, if and when needed.

Turkish Airlines allowed to operate flights from Pakistan

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has allowed Turkish Airlines to operate seven flights a week from Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad.

A CAA official told media on Wednesday 1st July that Turkish Airlines had been allowed to operate special flights from July 2 (Thursday). Turkish Airlines had stopped flights to Pakistan after the host country closed its airspace to prevent the spread of the corona virus pandemic. The Pakistan government has made it mandatory for all passengers to follow standard operating procedures and have Covid-19 testing.

The CAA also allowed Air Arabia to operate limited number of flights between Sharjah and Karachi.

Minister under fire in NA over pilots' disclosure

PALPA terms issuance of notices to pilots illegal

The National Assembly on the opening day of its first post-budget session on Wednesday July 8 witnessed a heated exchange of arguments between the opposition members and Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan over the issue of the 'dubious licences' of the Pakistani pilots after the latter was blamed for bringing humiliation to the country at the international level by making such a disclosure.

The minister, on the other hand, alleged that the governments of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had recruited 658 employees, including pilots and engineers, having fake academic degrees and dubious licences between 2008 and 2018.

The house also witnessed rumpus when the opposition members protested over the minister's remarks that former prime minister Nawaz Sharif was "among the top 10 most corrupt" rulers of the world who was even supplied food through PIA planes.

The legislators also debated the issues of minorities' rights with respect to ongoing campaign against them on social media and the construction of a Hindu temple in Islamabad and the frequent power outages in Karachi due to alleged high-handedness of the K-Electric.

Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari assured the house that her ministry would take action against those involved in the social media campaign against the minorities.

She introduced the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2020, seeking "to establish an effective system of protection, relief and rehabilitation of women, children, elders and any vulnerable person against domestic violence".

The issue of the pilots' licences came under discussion when the house took up a calling attention notice of the PML-N members on "the suspension of authorisation for the PIA by the European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA) and UK's authorities to operate in Europe for six months".

Presenting the preliminary investigation report of the May 22 plane crash in Karachi on the floor of the assembly on June 24, the aviation minister had disclosed that there were 860 active pilots in the country, and 262 of them had appeared in exams through proxies. He had stated that almost 30 per cent of the

pilots had fake or improper licenses and did not have flying experience either.

The minister's statement alerted the international aviation agency and a number of foreign airlines grounded Pakistani-origin pilots. And on July 1, the EUASA and UK's authorities stopped PIA from flying to Europe for six months.

Responding to the calling attention notice, the minister downplayed the suspension of the PIA operation, terming it "temporary" and saying it was not for the first time that such a ban had been imposed on the national airline. He recalled that in the past on a number of occasions, the PIA had faced suspensions for not adhering to the safety measures.

He said they were in contact with the concerned authorities in Europe and would be having a video conference on the issue on Friday as well. Asking the opposition not to make hue and cry, he said the other countries would be satisfied when they would 'clean' the institutions from corruption. He alleged that jobs were put on sale during the previous governments of PML-N and PPP.

Mr Khan dispelled the impression that they had started verifying degrees and licences of the pilots after the May 22 plane crash, saying the process had been initiated in February last year in the light of the Supreme Court's order.

He said they had so far detected 658 PIA employees, including 28 pilots and 96 engineers, who possessed fake degrees. One of the engineers, he alleged, was only matric as his FSc and BSc certificates were found to be fake.

Mr Khan said action had already been taken against 54 pilots and "suspension letters" were being issued to another 34 pilots.

Responding to the problems being faced by Pakistani pilots working in other airlines, he said the government was in contact with the authorities and the foreign airlines had sent them the lists of the pilots for verification. He said the UAE had sent a list of 54 pilots and they had already cleared 48 of them. Similarly, he said, nine out of 11 pilots working in Vietnam Airlines had also been cleared. He said the process of verification of the lists provided by Malaysian Air and Turkish Airlines were under scrutiny.

Murtaza Javed Abbasi of the PML-N alleged that the minister had made the statement about the pilots' licences in haste and thus brought about a bad name for the country.

A day after the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) suspended licences of 34 of the 262 pilots for holding what the aviation division had claimed 'fake licences', the national pilots' body while terming the process illegal said that they were accused of flying and appearing in a written exam on the same day.

"The 34 pilots, who had been given show-cause notices, are not accused of cheating or passing by illegal means but performing flying duty and appearing in exam only on same date," said a spokesperson for the Pakistan Airline Pilots Association (Palpa) on Wednesday. "They [34 pilots] were given show-cause notices without following set procedures as they were suspended first and then issued show-cause notices," he added.

The issue of pilots allegedly holding fake licences had surfaced last month when Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan, while furnishing a preliminary report on the May 22 Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plane crash in Karachi before the National Assembly, claimed that 40 per cent of the country's pilots held "fake licences".

Later, he said that 262 airlines' pilots had falsified their credentials and of them 141 belonged to the PIA, nine from Air Blue and 10 from Serene Air. The remaining pilots were affiliated with flying clubs, chartered plane services or foreign airlines, he said.

Recently CAA Additional Director Khalid Mehmood issued a notification suspending the commercial licences of 34 pilots belonging to the PIA.

"Out of the total 262 accused pilots, these 34 pilots are the first to be sent show-cause notices, which itself is illegal and against the procedure," Palpa said.

Commenting on the CAA's action, the Palpa spokesperson said the show-cause notices had established the fact that all the 34 pilots at least appeared in written exams and had no issue what the aviation minister stated on the floor of the house.

"Now these 34 pilots have been asked to prove how they did two duties appearing in written exams and doing flight duty the same day. This is a ridiculous accusation in aviation as the test lasts only a few hours while one can fly the rest of the day, which is absolutely legal," he said, adding that appearing in exam was not considered a legal duty; hence no rules of CAA were violated.

Case registered against defunct Shaheen Air

The Federal Investigation Agency has finally registered a case against Shaheen Air International. This was on a complaint of the Civil Aviation Authority for causing a loss of over Rs 1 billion to the national exchequer.

The case was registered in Karachi at FIA's Corporate Crime Circle. An inquiry found that Shaheen had to pay "flight operation charges" to CAA. However the company's management defaulted in paying CAA's charges and levies from March 2018 till date.

Shaheen Air Shutdown

Shaheen Air International was once Pakistan's largest private airline with a fleet of Airbus A320s and Airbus A330s. The airline operated both domestic and international flights. However things turned sideways when they suspended all operations in October 2018. This was allegedly due to political interference from the CAA and an unfavourable environment for private airlines to grow in.

The inquiry by the CAA has alleged that Shaheen Air illegally held an amount of more Rs 1.4 billion, and has caused a loss to the national exchequer. The details revealed the accused in the case: Shaheen



Air International Chairman Kashif Sehbai; CEO Ehsan Khalid Sehbai; and other management members.

FIA Investigation

The FIA has initiated an investigation into the case against the nine accused named, Javed Karim Sehbai, Janat Sehbai, Yawar Mahmood Sehbai, Rashida Yaseen, and Hoshang Sadwa have been included in the case. Two suspects are believed to be Canadian nationals. Thus the FIA has reached out to the Canadian authorities.

The FIA director revealed that the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) intercepted two accused persons. They were in possession of 500,000 Canadian dollars. The police held the cash.

One of the accused listed in the case, Yawar Mahmood Sehbai, has been arrested. He is under F.I.A's investigation.

It is interesting to also note the role of CAA in this entire matter. CAA should have stopped the airline from operating when the amount defaulted exceeded the limit. However the airline continued operating and the amount kept on piling up. Thus finally it came into the billions and the airline owners fled the country.

Saudia Cargo operates a record 1,500 cargo flights in 100 days

SAUDIA CARGO has operated more than 1,500 'freighter' flights since the COVID-19 restrictions came into effect in March, the flag carrier of Saudi Arabia reveals.

Cargo-only passenger aircraft were utilised for about 500 of the record number of services.

Between March and June, Saudia transported some 75,000 tonnes of vital shipments to the Kingdom, which included medical items and personal protective equipment (PPE), to support the Saudi health authorities' efforts to prevent the spread of the virus in the region, says a company statement.

Omar Hariri, chief executive of Saudia Cargo, points out: "The company has mobilised its vast logistics resources to ensure the smooth delivery of medical shipments to the Kingdom and has established an integrated cargo 'air bridge' specifically for this purpose."

The company operated a combined fleet of freighter and passenger aircraft in the campaign "and enhanced all of those operations specifically related to the air transportation of medical equipment and medicines to the Kingdom in order to mitigate the economic and health impact of COVID-19," Hariri notes.

In coordination with the Saudi Arabian Airlines Corporation, employing passenger aircraft on cargo-only flights, which included carrying freight shipments in the cabins, positively aided the airline's ability to create a cargo 'air bridge' for

transporting essential supplies and commodities to ensure the Kingdom's markets and supply chain demands were consistently met, outlines the statement.

Whilst safeguarding the health and safety of its staff, Saudia has now increased the number of flights it operates to global destinations and key airfreight markets in the Middle East, Europe, Africa, Asia and the United States regions, it adds.

Cargolux welcomes retro-branded aircraft



One of Cargolux's 747-400ERF freighters, LX-NCL, has been welcomed home to Luxembourg sporting a brand-new retro livery. Its unique design celebrates the airline's 50 years of existence; combining a vintage visual with the iconic lines of the jumbo jet. This duality perfectly depicts Cargolux; rooted in its pioneering history while remaining resolutely geared towards the future.

LX-NCL's retro livery is inspired by the design that Cargolux's first airplanes bore in the 1970s. The airline's initial fleet comprised Canadair CL-44 swing-tail freighters; unique models that were quickly complemented by the Douglas DC-8 as the company moved into the jet age. Fifty years after its inception, Cargolux decided to revive the retro design as a tribute to its evolution throughout the past half-century.

Now in its jubilee year, Cargolux had planned to celebrate this remarkable milestone with several events, including the inauguration of its brand-new headquarters in Luxembourg. In light of the current COVID-19 situation, however, the company has taken the decision to cancel these gatherings.

Cargolux is extremely proud to have served as an air bridge especially with China, Asia and the rest of the world in bringing vital medical supplies not only for the country but also for the rest of Europe and other impacted parts of the globe.

Human errors led to Ukrainian airliner's downing, says Iran report

Iran said that the misalignment of an air defence unit's radar system was the key "human error" that led to the accidental downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane in January.

"A failure occurred due to a human error in following the procedure" for aligning the radar, causing a "107-degree error" in the system, the Iranian Civil Aviation Organisation (CAO) said in a report late recently.

This error "initiated a hazard chain" that saw further mistakes committed in the minutes before the plane was shot down, said the CAO document, presented as a "factual report" and not as the final report on the accident investigation.

Flight 752, a Ukraine International Airlines jetliner, was struck by two missiles and crashed shortly after taking off from Tehran's main airport on January 8, at a time of heightened US-Iranian tensions.

The Islamic republic admitted several days later that its forces accidentally shot down the Kiev-bound plane, killing all 176 people on board.

The majority of the passengers on the Boeing 737 were Iranians, with Canadians, Ukrainians, Afghans, Britons and Swedes also aboard.

The CAO said that, despite the erroneous information available to the radar system operator on the aircraft's trajectory, he could have identified it as an airliner, but instead there was a "wrong identification".

The report also noted that the first of the two missiles launched at the aircraft was fired by a defence unit operator who had acted "without receiving any response from the Coordination Centre" on which he depended.

The second missile was fired 30 seconds later, "by observing the continuity of (the) trajectory of the detected target", the report added.

The CAO said there was a defect in the transmission to the defence units' coordination centre of the data identified by the radar.

An Iranian general had said in January that many communications had been jammed that night.

Tehran's air defences had been on high alert at the time the jet was shot down



Security officers and Red Crescent workers are seen at the site where the Ukraine International Airlines plane crashed after take-off from Iran's Imam Khomeini airport, on the outskirts of Tehran, Iran on January 8, 2020

Netherlands takes Russia to European court over MH17 downing

The Netherlands said on Friday July 10 it would take Russia to the European Court of Human Rights for its role in bringing down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over Ukraine, killing nearly 300 people.

The Dutch government's move is designed to support cases brought by the relatives of dozens of victims to the Strasbourg-based court, Foreign Minister Stef Blok said.

The Boeing 777 travelling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was blown out of the sky by a surface-to-air missile fired from rebel-held eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014.

"Achieving justice for the 298 victims of the downing of flight MH17 is and will remain the government's highest priority," Blok said in a statement.

"By taking this step today, bringing a case before the ECHR and thus supporting the applications by the next of kin as much as we can, we are moving closer to this goal." Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said at his weekly press conference that Blok had informed Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov of the move. There was no immediate reaction from Moscow.

The lawsuit is a rare example of one state taking another to the European Court of Human Rights, with just 24 such cases since 1953. Ten of those so-called "inter-state" cases involve Russia.

Most cases are brought by individuals or groups, such as the one lodged by the relatives of at least 65 Dutch MH17 victims in 2018.

Their complaint demanded that Russia take responsibility for the incident.

Both the Netherlands and Australia have previously said they hold Russia

in case the US retaliated against Iranian strikes hours earlier on American troops stationed in Iraq.

Those strikes were carried out in response to the killing of a top Iranian general, Qassem Soleimani, in a US drone attack near Baghdad airport.

The aircraft tragedy sparked fierce criticism in Iran, especially after it took three days for the armed forces to admit having shot down the plane "by accident" after a missile operator mistook it for an enemy projectile.

Ottawa and Kiev have demanded for months that Iran, which does not have the technical means to decode the black boxes, send them abroad so their contents could be analysed.

responsible for shooting down the plane.

The Netherlands would share all "available and relevant information about the downing of flight MH17" with the court, Blok said, adding the complaint would represent "all 298 victims, of 17 different nationalities".

The Dutch will also inform the UN Security Council about the move, he said.

Friday's announcement adds to legal pressure on Moscow after the Dutch criminal trial in absentia of four suspects opened just outside Schiphol airport from where the ill-fated flight took off.

Rutte however denied the timing of the move was designed to pressurise Russia, saying "we simply decided it now was the best moment to get involved and to give the next-of-kin the maximum support." "This is not aimed at Russia and stands entirely separate from the criminal case," Rutte said at his weekly post-cabinet news conference.

Prosecutors have charged four people Russians Igor Girkin, Sergei Dubinskiy and Oleg Pulatov, and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko with murder.

They said the men were responsible for bringing a BUK surface-to-air missile into an area in eastern Ukraine controlled by pro-Moscow rebels, from where it was fired at the passenger jet.

Russia has denied involvement and has before proposed alternative theories including that MH17 may have been downed by a Ukrainian fighter plane or a Ukrainian BUK missile.

Moscow meanwhile responded to the relatives' claims before the ECHR earlier this year in which it again denied responsibility for the disaster, saying there was no proof of its involvement.



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航班号 Flight number	出发地-目的地 Origin-Destination	起飞时间-到达时间 Departure time-Arrival time	班期 Frequency	机型 Aircraft
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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Sabre announces leadership updates to drive its transformation

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), the leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, has recently announced important updates to its executive leadership, taking the next critical step toward completing the company's transformation. These leadership appointments are part of the company's previously announced strategic realignment of its Travel Solutions business to fully combine Sabre's airline and agency-focused businesses and provide a stronger, more seamless experience for its customers.

"I am excited about what lays ahead for Sabre and our new leadership team," said Sean Menke, Sabre's president and chief executive officer. "We began this journey over two years ago with the unveiling of our SabreNext strategy and the creation of our Travel Solutions organization under the leadership of Dave Shirk. Since then, we have been taking difficult steps to transform this company and build a solid foundation for long-term, profitable growth which culminated in the announcement of Sabre's strategic initiatives earlier this year and the organizational realignment that we announced last month. We are sharing additional details about the recently appointed executives who will be leading that organization and ultimately responsible for delivering the next generation of retailing, distribution and fulfillment for new and existing customers."

The company announced the following leadership appointments.

Dave Shirk will continue in his role of president of Sabre's newly, realigned Travel Solutions business reporting to CEO Sean Menke. Shirk will oversee all aspects of the company's agency and airline-focused business segments including product management, global product development, sales and account management, delivery and professional services, as well as strategy. As previously announced, the realignment of its business segments will enable Sabre to more quickly deliver on its promise to retail, distribute and fulfill travel by serving its airline and agency customers through a collective lens.

Reporting to Shirk are the following executives within the Travel Solutions organization:

Wade Jones has been appointed executive vice president, chief product officer and will oversee a centralized product management and marketing organization that will help customers maximize the value of their content by delivering a brand-consistent customer experience across all channels. The new product organization is designed to

optimize a collective view of Sabre's customers, product innovation and roadmap management and end-to-end go-to-market efforts with a laser focus on enabling next-generation retailing, distribution and fulfillment.

Dave Moore has been named executive vice president, chief technology officer, overseeing Sabre's global product development team. Moore's team is charged with building world class software products for customers, embracing a unified approach to all product development efforts, as well as driving Sabre's technology transformation, including support for its Google Cloud partnership. This team structure is designed to unlock efficiencies in delivering global products and services while increasing speed to market by leveraging best practices, driving consistency and bolstering global alignment.

Roshan Mendis was appointed executive vice president, chief commercial officer and will oversee all agency and airline-focused sales and account management teams. This centralized organization was created to implement a cohesive sales approach and discipline across all airline and agency customers, providing a more seamless experience, benefitting our team members, customers and the travel industry.

Cem Tanyel has been named executive vice president, chief services officer, of a newly formed professional services, consulting and support organization that brings together the company's delivery and care teams together under his leadership. Tanyel's centralized organization is not only designed to generate efficiencies and improve productivity in the care and

delivery of Sabre's products but is also critical to the company's success with responsibility to deliver world-class service professional services alongside its products.

Blair Austin has been named vice president, global business operations for the organization. This streamlined business operations organization will work cross-functionally to enable each business function to focus on maximizing value creation for the company.

"While we remain focused on managing our business through this challenging business climate, we are equally committed to taking this opportunity to make bold, strategic moves toward achieving our vision to create a new market for personalized travel. Now is the time to accelerate the organizational changes we began in 2018 to address the changing travel landscape," said Shirk. "This is an incredibly experienced and driven leadership team and the realignment of the organization will make us more agile in accomplishing our strategic priorities, leveraging the hard work that has already been done over the last several years."

The company also announced that Kristin Hays has been named senior vice president, global communications with responsibility for all aspects of Sabre's corporate messaging, executive and team member communications, public and media relations and external affairs. Hays will continue reporting to CEO Sean Menke.

Sabre noted that neither the company's previously-announced strategic realignment, nor the leadership appointments announced, will change the organizational structure or mission of its hospitality business.

Bodhisattva images to feature in Japan's schoolbooks

Images of a standing Bodhisattva from the Peshawar Museum would be featured in the high school art books in Japan.

A statement issued here on Wednesday 1st July said a recent communique from the publisher of the high school textbooks in Japan had contacted the Pakistan embassy in Tokyo seeking permission for publication of images of Bodhisattva' standing statues for the purpose of publication in the country's curriculum of art books.

The statement said the foreign aid section of the planning and development department had provided the requisite

images, which were highly appreciated by the authorities in Tokyo.

"It is, and will remain, a matter of pride for all of us that the history of our area will be represented in such a positive light in Japan," said the deputy chief of mission in Tokyo while thanking the KP government. "This will add to Pakistan's soft image as well," he added.

The statement said the Colossal Buddha from Peshawar Museum was sent to Rietberg museum in Zurich, Switzerland from Dec 12, 2018 to March 31, 2019, for display in the "Next Stop Nirvana" exhibition, where some 35,000 visitors had the opportunity to admire the Buddha.



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CPEC will be a game changer



A part of CPEC, 700.7-megawatt Azad Pattan will not involve fuel import. The agreement for \$1.5bn hydropower Project signed.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will be a 'game changer' for the motherland, bringing unprecedented prosperity and progress to the country.

"It (CPEC) is a project that will take Pakistan to new heights [of prosperity]," the prime minister said after witnessing the signing of agreement with China Gezhouba for Azad Pattan hydropower project at a ceremony held at PM Office on Monday July 6.

"Pakistan can learn with the progress made by emerging economic power, China, during the last 30 years," Mr Khan said. He said he was glad that the hydropower project was being commissioned under the CPEC. "Earlier, the CPEC was confined to road connectivity, but now other aspects of the corridor are being unfolded," he added.

A part of CPEC, with an investment of \$1.5 billion, 700.7-megawatt Azad Pattan will not involve fuel import, thus enabling the country to move towards cheaper and greener power while generating local job opportunities.

The project is located at River Jhelum and is expected to be completed in 2026.

"Time would prove the long-term benefits of CPEC, which is based on the economic cooperation between Pakistan and China," the prime minister said, adding that Pakistan could learn a lot from the emerging world economic power, China. He expressed the optimism that the two countries would continue to benefit from the time-tested cooperation in diverse fields.

Referring to the signing of the agreement for Azad Pattan hydropower project, PM Khan said it was part of the investment to complete the power project based on clean energy. "Unlike the past,

the project will not burden the people. The previous governments launched costly projects, which were made functional with imported fuel, thus increasing the cost of energy manifolds and stressing the local currency," he added.

Mr Khan said that power projects based on imported fuel cost the country dearly, with the result that the industry could not compete with those in the neighbouring countries which were using low-cost energy. "This also caused burden on domestic consumers," he added.

The prime minister said the hydropower generation was considered as a major source of clean energy, which was also in line with his government's policy of 'Clean and Green Pakistan' and regarded as environment friendly. "It will also diminish the impacts of the global warming," he added.

Mr Khan appreciated the energy ministry, CPEC Authority, the governments of Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab for the agreement regarding the power project.

Speaking on the occasion, CPEC Authority Chairman retired Lt-Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa said the project would be completed by utilising the indigenous resources. "Work on CPEC projects continued with full force despite Covid-19 pandemic, generating job opportunities," he added.

He said during the last 10 days, they had signed agreements for bringing in \$4 billion investment and for generation of 1,800MW low-cost power. The projects would also provide jobs to about 8,000 locals, he added.

Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing, Chinese company authorities, ministers and senior officials also witnessed the signing of the agreement.

CPEC to be completed at all costs, says PM

Prime Minister Imran Khan vowed on July 5 that the government would complete the ambitious China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project at any cost and pass its benefits to the nation.

"The corridor is a manifestation of Pakistan-China friendship and the government will complete it at any cost and bring its fruit to every Pakistani," the prime minister said at a meeting held to review progress on the CPEC projects.

Terming the CPEC an excellent project for the country's socio-economic development, Mr Khan said the gigantic multi-faceted initiative would guarantee a bright future for the nation.

Lauding the performance of CPEC Authority, the prime minister said measures must be taken to improve its working as well as capacity.

The prime minister was briefed about the status of ongoing projects under the giant initiative.

Federal Ministers Asad Umar, Makhdoom Khushro Bakhtiar and Omar Ayub, Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood, CPEC Authority Chairman retired Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa and senior officers of the organisations concerned attended the meeting.

CPEC is a collection of infrastructure and other projects under construction throughout Pakistan since 2013. Originally valued at \$46 billion, the CPEC projects were worth \$62bn as of 2017.

The vast initiative is intended to rapidly upgrade Pakistan's required infrastructure and strengthen its economy by the construction of modern transportation networks, numerous energy projects and special economic zones.

In November of 2016, CPEC became partly operational when Chinese cargo was transported overland to Gwadar port for onward maritime shipment to Africa and West Asia, while some major power projects were commissioned by late 2017.

The potential impact of the massive initiative on Pakistan has been compared to that of the Marshall Plan undertaken by the United States in post-war Europe. The initiative has entered a new phase after the coming into power of the government led by Mr Khan.

Japan allows import of mangoes from Pakistan

The Japanese government on Monday July 6 temporarily allowed import of mangoes from Pakistan.

According to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, exporters despatched three shipments of local mango varieties 'Sindhri' and 'Chaunsa' to Japan as per agreed procedures between the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) and the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

Normally, the Japanese government sends its inspectors to Pakistan and other mango exporting countries for quality check and clearance before allowing imports into Japan.

However, this year, the Japanese government could not send inspectors due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2019, mango exports to Japan rose to a record high of 120 tonnes and were favourably received in the Japanese market.

A press release of the Japanese embassy said that Japan will continue to support Pakistan in the agricultural field such as taking measures against locust control, expanding export of agricultural products, and investment in the food processing sector.

The MAFF has granted market access to fresh Pakistani mangoes but its import in Japan is subject to offshore disinfection treatment and sterilisation using saturated steam at vapour heat treatment facility duly approved by the DPP and MAFF and pre-clearance programme by Japanese inspectors.

Japan's Ambassador to Pakistan Matsuda Kuninori held a meeting with Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhr Imam and admired the quality of Pakistani mangoes.

Imam also showed interest in increasing export of Pakistani basmati rice to Japan.

Minister Imam appreciated the MAFF for facilitating mango exports from Pakistan by exempting pre-clearance in the wake of Covid-19 outbreak instead of restricting it due to difficulty in implementation.

Imam asked Japanese envoy for market access to Pakistani citrus in light of the country's historical trade of citrus fruit with China, Russia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Iran. He said the cold treatment of the citrus fruit prescribed by the US government is acceptable to various citrus exporting countries.

There has been no report of non-



The mango export target for this season has been reduced by 40 per cent to 80,000 tonnes due to low production and impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

compliance ever from citrus importing countries since it works well to eliminate

Pakistan set to implement single window system for trade

The government is all set to comply with the World Trade Organisation provisions to implement Pakistan Single Window (PSW) to streamline cross-border movement of goods and regulatory bottlenecks.

The government has set a deadline of 2022 to put in place the whole system which will be implemented at a cost of \$67 million. This will not only improve the ease of doing business but also enhance controls through integrated risk management.

A senior customs officer told media on Tuesday July 14 that the first phase of the PSW will be ready by the end of the current year, which will cover 80 per cent volume of various licenses, permits, certificates and other documents currently issued to regulate trade.

The PSW programme includes phased establishment of an ICT-based platform involving simplification, harmonisation, and automation of regulatory process related to cross-border trade. It also includes implementation of a port community system to facilitate related logistics.

The World Bank estimates in ease of doing business report that economic operators incurred \$500 million more costs in Pakistan than their counterparts in South Asia to comply with the government's regulations on imports, exports and transit trade in 2020.

The dwell time to clear cargo lasts for days as compared to hours in other countries.

The government has already introduced the PSW Bill 2020 in the

all fruit flies from Pakistani kinnow, he said.

The Japanese government is assisting Pakistan in fighting the desert locust with 58,502 litres of insecticide to be sprayed in the affected regions.

It also provided assistance to Pakistan for agricultural development, scholarships for higher studies, on-job training courses and supported agricultural research system through the provision of equipment.

The Plant Genetic Resources Research Institute at the National Agricultural Research Centre was setup with assistance from Japan. The Japanese government has also provided funds to UN Industrial Development Organisation at the request of Pakistan to launch the 'Agri-Business and Agro-Industry Development' project at a cost of \$3.02 million.

parliament on June 8. Its operation will commence soon after the approval of the bill, which according to the customs officer was developed with consensus of all stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the Federal Board of Revenue is also completing the process of converting the eight-digit Pakistan Customs Tariff to 12 digits. The need for NSW was felt in the wake of the realisation that the country lacks effective regulatory controls at borders and ports in line with international standards

With several dozens of regulatory authorities working in silos and in a paper-based environment, management of external trade is inefficient and opaque.

Pakistan under its obligation to the WTO's Agreement on Trade Facilitation decided to implement NSW in October 2017.

According to customs, the PSW will establish, maintain and expand ICT-based NSW platform, Port Community System, Trade Information Portal, Integrated Risk Management and Unified Registration, etc. None of these currently exist.

The PSW Company has been incorporated under Companies Act, 2017 with seed money provided by Customs from its GD fee fund. Unlike Pakistan Revenue Automation Ltd, the PSWC will work on a cost-recovery model without burdening the government while being accountable for the product rollout. A high-level steering committee chaired by a finance minister with relevant federal secretaries and president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry is empowered to review every decision before implementation.

Britain pledges \$890m to prepare post-Brexit borders



The talks are moving slowly, sparking alarm among businesses that almost half a century of economic integration with the EU will end abruptly in a few months' time.

Britain on July 14 pledged 705 million (\$890 million, 788 million euros) to prepare its borders for cutting ties with the European Union on December 31, amid concern within government that it is not ready.

The money will fund new border posts, IT systems and 500 new staff to both ensure security and handle new customs controls after Britain leaves the EU's single market and customs union, the government said in a statement.

Britain ended its EU membership on January 31, almost four years after the historic Brexit vote, but agreed a standstill transition period until the end of the year while it tries to negotiate a new trade deal with Brussels.

The talks are moving slowly, sparking alarm among businesses that almost half a century of economic integration with the EU will end abruptly in a few months' time.

Citing the disruption caused by the coronavirus outbreak, London has already said it will not immediately introduce checks on EU imports, instead delaying them until July.

But in a letter to her cabinet colleague Michael Gove, leaked to the media this week, international trade minister Liz Truss expressed concern that border infrastructure would not be ready even by then.

She warned the delay in imposing checks could spark a legal challenge at the World Trade Organisation (WTO), adding: "I would like assurances that we are able to deliver full controls at these ports by July 2021." Gove, the minister in charge of preparing for Brexit, said the government had been consulting on the issue for months and insisted the borders would be ready.

"That's the basis of the announcement more than 700 million in order to provide infrastructure at ports, to invest in technology and also to make sure we have the personnel to keep ourselves

safe," he told the BBC.

The new funds only cover the border between mainland Britain and the EU, with plans for the frontier between the province of Northern Ireland which will have a special trade status after Brexit and the Republic of Ireland due in the coming

weeks.

The main opposition Labour party said Truss' letter showed a "growing sense of chaos and confusion" within the cabinet about Brexit preparations.

The government is also planning a new public information campaign to prepare businesses and individuals for the end of the transition, dubbed "The UK's new start: let's get going".

It will include detailed guidance for everyone from traders to holidaymakers on what might change, Gove said.

Textile exports decline 6pc to \$12.5bn

Pakistan's textile and clothing exports posted a negative growth of over six per cent year-on-year to \$12.526 billion in the fiscal year 201920 compared to \$13.327bn in the corresponding period last year, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Stadsucs showed on July 16.

The pace of fall in textile exports slowed down in the last two months owing to a recovery in the international orders. Compared to 36.5pc decline in May, exports in June declined by 5.43pc over the last year.

The easing of lockdown in the North American and European countries top export destinations for Pakistani textile goods are expected to help revive the sinking exports. The Covid-19 has collapsed the demand for the country's exports during the last five months.

Piled up containers at ports since March 22 were mostly cleared in the month of June. Moreover, the government also reopened exports through the land route to Iran and Afghanistan in June.

A report produced by the customs authorities who compile export data from good declaration forms showed that cargo handling at Karachi ports posted a growth of 7.23pc in June as 49,953 export containers were shipped this year as against 46,583 of last year. It clearly shows that exports picked up in the month of June from a year ago.

It was only in February when the textile and clothing exports jumped nearly 17pc on a year-on-year basis growth witnessed after a long time as the past, few years had been marred by single digit increases.

Details showed ready-made garments exports dipped 3.81pc in value and drifted much lower in quantity by 10.07pc during July-June FY20, while those of knitwear

dropped 3.64pc in value and 10.11pc in quantity, bed wear posted negative growth of 4.91pc in value and 2.31pc in quantity.

Towel exports fell 6.52pc in value and 6.39pc in quantity, whereas those of cotton cloth dipped by 12.94pc in value and 17.66pc in quantity.

However, exports are expected to revive in July as exporters have resumed production to honor their international orders.

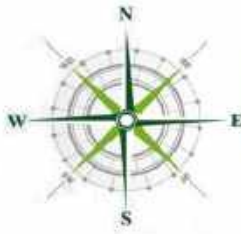
Among primary commodities, cotton yarn exports dipped by 12.49pc while yarn other than cotton by 23.81pc, madeup articles excluding towels by 13.16pc, and raw cotton 16.64pc. Exports of tents, canvas and tarpaulin increased by a massive 5.95pc during the months under review.

On a monthly basis, exports of textile and clothing posted a negative growth of 5.43pc to \$959.130 million in June as against \$1.014bn over the corresponding month of last year.

Exporters are already receiving inquiries about personal protective equipment from foreign buyers as the 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.



Owing to a recovery in the international orders, the sector's exports dipped by just 5.43pc in June compared to 36.5pc fall in May.



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World's first e-pilgrimage held at Lourdes shrine in France

France's Lourdes Roman Catholic shrine, which usually attracts millions of pilgrims every year, organised the first-ever e-pilgrimage on Thursday July 16 designed to gather people from all over the world, but virtually.

Lourdes is usually thronged in summer with pilgrims who travel, sometimes across the world, to light a candle in the sanctuary where Catholics believe the Virgin Mary appeared.

But with flights grounded, many international borders still closed and social distancing rules in place due to the coronavirus pandemic, Lourdes had to find another way.

The sanctuary in southwest France broadcast mass and prayers all day in five different languages on television and social media for the e-pilgrimage, dubbed "Lourdes United".

A live two-hour celebration took place during the afternoon from the Grotto, to mark what the faithful believe is the eighteenth and last apparition of Mary to young girl Bernadette Soubirous in 1858.

The Grotto, a cave, is where Soubirous is said to have seen the mother of Jesus.

The site also boasts a spring with reputed healing powers, from which pilgrims drink.

Even virtually, "there is a real communion between pilgrims," said Olivier Ribadeau-Dumas, rector of the Sanctuary of Lourdes.

The anniversary is the "opportunity for all those who are far to get together, even if it will never replace coming on a pilgrimage," he added.

A team of chaplains will also be in charge of responding in different languages on social media to priests who answer prayer intentions, "but also to questions relating to the possibilities of pilgrimages to Lourdes or questions regarding faith," said Mathias Terrier, head of communications for Lourdes.

Gurdwara Darbar Sahib reopens



The Sikhs perform their rituals at Gurdawara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur.

Pakistan has formally reopened the Kartarpur Corridor after three-and-a-half months long closure due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The reopening marks the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

India had already declined to allow Sikhs from its side to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib due to the virus threat.

Sikhs from Nankana Sahib, Sialkot, Lahore and some other cities attended the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh under SOPs issued by the government.

The Kartarpur Corridor was inaugurated on Nov 9, 2019 by Prime Minister Imran Khan on the eve of the 550th birth anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, which fulfilled the long-awaited desire of Sikhs across the world. It was temporarily closed on March 16 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

India said such decisions had to be taken in consultation with the health authorities and other stakeholders as cross-border travel had been suspended to contain the virus.

"India accused Pakistan of being less than sincere in making the offer as Islamabad aired the proposal at a short notice of two days. On the other hand, the bilateral agreement provides for information to be shared by India with the Pakistan side at least seven days before the date of travel. This would need India to open up the registration process well in advance," Indian media quoted a senior official as having said.

It further said Pakistan had not built the bridge on their side across the flood plains of Ravi river despite having committed to it in the agreement. With the advent of monsoon, it would need to be evaluated whether safe pilgrim movement was possible through the corridor.

Saudi Arabia announces Haj health measures

Saudi Arabia announced health protocols to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus during the 2020 Haj season, banning gatherings and meetings between pilgrims, the state news agency said on Monday July 6.

In June, Saudi Arabia decided to limit the number of domestic pilgrims attending Haj to around 1,000 to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, after barring Muslims abroad from the rite for the first year in modern times.

Touching the Kaaba will be banned during Haj this year, and a social distancing space of a metre and a half between each pilgrim during the rituals including mass prayers and while in the Kaaba circling area will be imposed, a statement by the Centre for Disease Prevention and Control elaborated.

Also, access to Haj sites at Mina, Muzdalifah and Arafat will be limited to those with Haj permits starting on July 19 till Aug 2, and wearing masks all the time will be mandatory for both pilgrims and organisers.-Reuters Kalbe Ali in Islamabad adds: In Pakistan, banks have started returning the amount deposited by intending pilgrims following restrictions announced by Saudi Arabia.

All the amount was remitted back to relevant banks at the end of June and the banks have started to call the applicants from July 2,' said Mohammad Imran, a spokesman for the ministry of religious affairs.

In reply to a question, the official admitted that the process of returning the money is slow due to severe weather conditions in many parts of the country and limited working hours due to the Covid-19.

Pakistan against a quota of 179,210 pilgrims had allocated 107,526 seats under the government scheme and 71,684 under the private scheme.

However, due to the global lockdown only 150,000 applications were received for the government scheme. There was no application received under the private scheme.

Dubai reopens doors to tourists after long shutdown

With a “welcome” passport sticker and coronavirus tests on arrival, Dubai reopened its doors to international visitors on Tuesday July 7 in the hope of reviving its tourism industry after a nearly four-month closure.

But businesses are mainly betting on those already living in the gleaming desert city to energise its ailing economy and serve as a test run before wary foreign holidaymakers return.

“A warm welcome to your second home,” says the sticker applied to passports at Dubai airport, where employees wear hazmat suits and vending machines offer personal protective equipment.

The reopening comes even as the number of Covid-19 cases in the United Arab Emirates climbs to 52,068 including 324 deaths, with millions of foreign workers living in cramped accommodation particularly hard hit.

Incoming tourists are required to present a negative test result taken within four days of the flight. If not, they can take the test on arrival, but must self-isolate until they receive the all-clear.

Tourism has long been the lifeline of the glitzy Gulf emirate, one of the seven sheikhdoms that make up the United Arab Emirates.

High season starts in October when the scorching heat of the Gulf summer starts to dissipate.

Dubai welcomed more than 16.7 million visitors last year, and before the pandemic crippled global travel, the aim had been to reach 20 million arrivals in 2020.

“We are ready to receive tourists while we take all necessary precautions,” said Talal Al-Shanqiti of Dubai's General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in a video message tweeted.

With scant oil resources compared to its neighbours, Dubai has built the most diversified economy in the Gulf, boasting a reputation as a financial, commercial and tourism hub despite an economic downturn in recent years.

The city-state is known for its mega malls, high-end restaurants and five-star hotels and resorts. But all have taken a severe hit during the coronavirus outbreak, and Dubai's GDP in the first quarter of 2020 was down by 3.5 per cent year-on-year.

Dubai-based airline Emirates, the largest in the Middle East, has been forced to slash its sprawling network and is believed to have laid off thousands of staff



Tourists sunbathe by the pool of a hotel here on Tuesday July 17. The Burj al-Arab hotel can be seen in the background.

members.

Before reopening to international tourists, authorities launched social media campaigns and deployed hundreds of social media “influencers” to tout Dubai's attractions.

But as the hospitality business works out how to create an environment that follows strict hygiene rules but is still worth the hassle for potential foreign clients, hotels are offering Dubai residents “staycation” and “daycation” deals to offset the slump.

Restarting hospitality by “primarily targeting the domestic market is an important first step in our phased approach towards restoring normalcy in the tourism industry”, said Issam Kazim, CEO of the Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing.

Italy to support auto, tourism industries

Italy is considering fiscal measures to spur investments in the auto and tourism industries, two of the sectors that have been hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic, Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said on Saturday July 4.

Speaking at a conference organised by the UIL trade union, Conte said the government needed to ‘redefine’ tax incentives in favour of green, digital investments of the future, adding ‘we must support the worst affected industries such as automotive and tourism’.

The government would start working on a comprehensive tax reform from next week, he said, but did not elaborate.

The automotive industry accounts for 6.2pc of Italy's gross domestic product, according to data provided by Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV (FCA).

On Friday the Italian Parliament gave the green light to a package of incentives to encourage sales of state-of-the-art combustion engine cars as well as electric and hybrid vehicles, two lawmakers told Reuters.

Egypt reopens pyramids to tourists after virus closure



Women pose in front of the Sphinx at the Great Pyramids of Giza after its reopening for tourists following the easing of coronavirus restrictions.

Egypt reopened its famed Giza pyramids to the public on Wednesday 1st July after a three-month closure, seeking to restart a vital tourism industry battered by the novel coronavirus.

Dozens of excited tourists snapped selfies as they wandered around Egypt's most iconic ancient site.

The pyramids were the country's first tourist attraction to reopen, along with the Egyptian Museum next to Cairo's Tahrir Square, ground zero of the 2011 revolution.

Authorities are hoping holidaymakers will brave flying and head to Egypt after international flights resumed under loosening travel restrictions.

“We came to the Pyramids today because they opened up after they were closed for a long time,” Ashiana Love, an Australian tourist at the site, said.

“The energy is really special.” The most populous Arab country enforced a three-month night-time curfew after its first recorded Covid-19 infection on February 14.

It closed museums and archaeological sites along with shops, cafes and restaurants in order to stem the outbreak.

It has recorded more than 68,000 cases and nearly 3,000 deaths.

But tour guide Fatma Bayoumy said she was reassured by reinforced safety measures at the site.

“There are many protective procedures taken... before entering the Pyramids. They disinfect everything, the visitors and the bags it is safe,” she said on a scorching Cairo morning.



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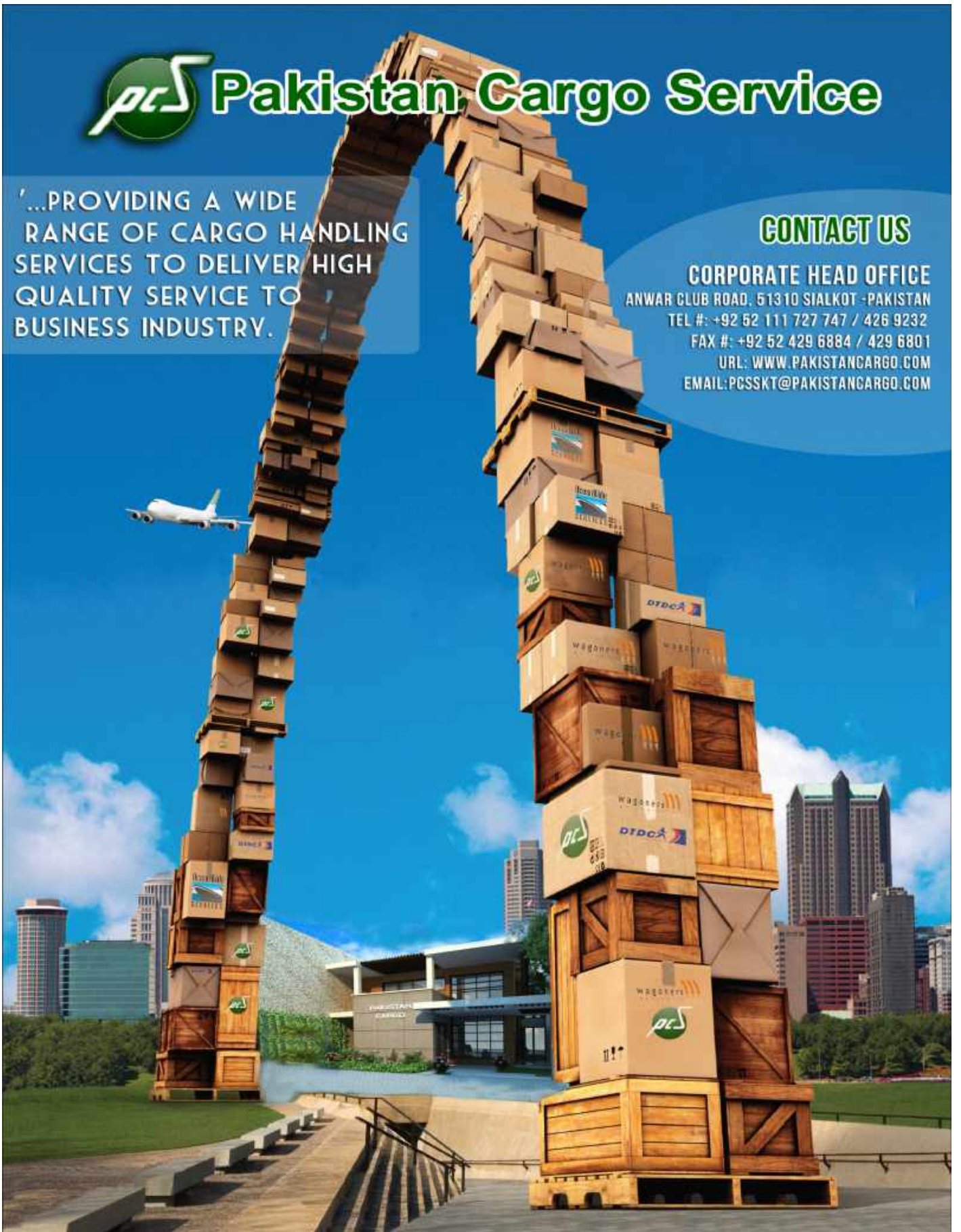
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Can this be an ancient Christian cross?

IT was a rough rock face down whose rugged back side stood like a small rock pointing to heaven. University of Baltistan made a historic discovery when its three-member expedition team headed by Vice Chancellor Mohammad Naeem Khan and comprising Dr Zakir Hussain Zakir and Dr Ishtiaq Hussain unearthed a huge marble cross in the mountain range of Kavardo in the Skardu area of Baltistan division. The news of this important cultural discovery was announced on 14 June and made ripple effects among archaeologists and historians around the globe.

How does the cross look like?

According to Naeem Khan, "The cross is made of marble rock material, most probably from nearby mountains, since the marble used for the cross is found on surrounding mountains." It weighs three to four tons measuring vertically six feet and seven inches while horizontally six feet four inches. The front side is finely finished while the back side is rough. It looks as if this cross is still unfinished from behind. It is possible that it is half done.

The down part of the cross is broken. How much is broken and where the broken piece is, is not yet known. Then is it a Latin cross or a Nestorian cross? These questions need thorough answers, based on scientific methods.

The antiquity of the cross is not yet clear until date of its origin is established by radiocarbon dating method.

Geography of the find

It is very interesting to note location of this important discovery. This location is not very far from Old Silk Road, a network of roads which joined China, Central Asia and Subcontinent with Persian Empire in the East and Byzantine Empire in Western Asia. By the year 600 Persian Empire in the East included part of Afghanistan and a slice of present day western part of Balochistan. The location of the discovery of the cross was not part of the then Persian Empire, although Old Silk Road made a linkage between Baltistan and the Persian Empire.

My observations

Christianity flexed its missionary muscles in Persian Empire in fourth century. But the media of the fourth century brought persecution to Eastern Christians while peace to Western Christians. King Shapur II (309-379) of Persian Empire started persecution of Christians in his empire in 340s. There is a possibility that some of Christians and



missionaries living on the eastern border of the Persian Empire fled to escape persecution and took abode among the peace loving Buddhists of Himalayan and Karakoram valleys, including Kavardo, which later may have become a centre of Christian settlement and evangelisation.

Was there a monastery in Kavardo valley? Is this cross from that monastery looking down Kavardo village? The existence of a monastery can be a possibility since there was a network of missionary monasteries in Persian Empire and Arabian Peninsula. By the fifth century more than 30 per cent population of Persian Empire was Christian, Ctesiphon-Seleucia, the imperial city of the Empire being the Vatican of Eastern Christianity. Herat in present day Afghanistan was raised to metropolitan diocese in or before 585. One cannot rule out the existence of a monastery in Kavardo and this discovery may belong to it.

As Christianity was slowly dying out in southern Mesopotamia, Persia and Armenia, the Church of the East from Merv made some spectacular gains in the 11th century in Central Asia and Mongolia. The king of Turko-Mongol Kerait tribe, converted to Christianity in 1009. Kerait tribe for next 200 years was known as a Christian tribe. The Kerait's capital was Karakoram in Mongolia. There is a possibility that the find belongs to Kerait tribe which passed through the area or brought the people of Kavardo valley to Christianity.

On the same line another reason of Christian presence in these valleys may be explored. When in the seventh century Arab Muslims invaded Persian Empire, it is possible that a number of Christians fled to Himalayan and Karakoram valleys. Their dispersion may have proved divine providence and became instrument of Christian evangelisation on and around the Silk Road.

As Arab military expansion marched into Persia, a Christian missionary from Persia, Alopen had already entered China in 635 during the reign of T'ai-tsung. But

Alopen may not be the first to enter China. Sassanid Empire had opened trade connections with China in the fifth century and Persian Christians were numerous in the merchant class of those times. The trade route was Old Silk Road on which these merchants walked. There is a possibility of the arrival of Christianity in Kavardo valley during the seventh century through trade.

Were there left remnants of St. Thomas Christians who escaped onslaught of Huns? Was there a church built on the mountain and this discovery belongs to it? Was there a Christian cemetery and this cross belongs to it? Are there Christian inscriptions on rock walls or in caves around? A serious associated excavation and research will answer these questions. Christianity walked on and around Silk Road. The discovery of the cross in Baltistan may open new avenues of academic collaboration and cooperation between researchers of Pakistan and the Western world.

Father Gulshan Barkat is a Catholic priest from Pakistan. He holds a degree in Church History from Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome and has done extensive research in the British Library in London. Presently he is lecturing in Church History at National Catholic Institute of Theology, Karachi.

Astro Turf laid on Kartarpur Sahib floor

AstroTurf has been laid on the floor of Gurudawara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur for the convenience of Sikh pilgrims.

The government took the decision to lay 16,000 feeturf in the courtyard of the Gurudawara due to scorching heat.

At the time of expansion of Gurudawara Darbar Sahib last year, marble was laid on its floor.

Since the pilgrims moved on it bare-footed out of respect for the founder of their religion, it became difficult for them to do so on extremely hot surface.

When it rained, the floor became slippery and some of the visitors did sustain injuries.

Imported astro turf has been laid from Darshan Dauri to main Gurudawara.

Pakistan Sikh Gurudawara Parbandhak Committee member Sardar Inderjeet Singh welcomed the move and said Sikhs from across the globe appreciated the efforts of the Pakistan government.

The charm of Sabiha Khanum

The last few weeks have seen the passing away of three prominent showbiz personalities of Pakistan, all who reached the pinnacle of their celebrity in the second half of the preceding century. First there was the funster Athar Shah Khan Uncle Jaidi, the third was the renowned quiz maestro of PTV, Tariq Aziz. In between we heard about the death of the inimitable Sabiha Khanum on June 3, in the US. The lady whose career had been studded with successes, died just three months short of her 85th birthday.

Born on October 16, 1935 in what was then a small town Gujrat in Punjab she was the daughter of Mohammad Ali aka Maahia and Iqbal Begum alias Baalo, who were both stage performers. In 1948, Mukhtar Begum, as she had been named at birth, appeared on stage for the first time, in a play directed by Nafees Khaleeli in Lahore. She won deafening applause from the audience. This inspired Khaleeli to recommend her to Masood Pervaiz, who signed her for his maiden movie venture, *Beli* (released in 1950).

It was Khaleeli who also suggested that she should adopt the name Sabiha Khanum to avoid confusion with a well-known ghazal singer Mukhtar Begum Fareeda Khanum's elder sister. In those days there were quite a few female actors Ragni, Asha Posley, Swaranlata and Shimmi (who later married film star Sudhir and led an unhappy life). Noor Jehan was then a singer-cum-heroine, so there was no clash of interest between the two.

Beli featured Sabiha's husband-to-be, a handsome young actor known as Santosh Kumar (in reality Syed Musa Abbas Raza). But it was with Sudhir that she shared the marquee in Eveready Pictures' *Sassi* (1954), which turned out to be the country's first silver jubilee film. In those days a movie had to run continuously in one cinema for 25 weeks to qualify for the title.

Sabiha was neither a vamp nor an ingénue but had a girl-next-door charm about her that seemed to resonate with audiences.

Sabiha shared stellar honours with both actors and emerged as a better performer until 1958, when she tied the nuptial knot with the already-married Santosh Kumar. His first wife, Jameela, and Sabiha had a cordial relationship till early 2020, when Jameela passed away. Their husband, Santosh had passed away way back in 1982, awarding widowhood to the two wives for many years 38 to be

precise.

Years ago, when this writer asked the superstar of yesteryear Waheed Murad, who had acted with both Sabiha and Santosh in *Daman* and *Devar Bhabhi*, what he thought of Sabiha and Santosh Kumar as performers, his answer was straight forward. "He is an

adequate actor," he had replied, "but she is a superb actress." In those days, the term 'actor' was reserved only for the gender to which Murad belonged. By the way, Sabiha went on to win the government's Pride of Performance Award in 1984, on top of several other awards, including six coveted Nigar awards.

All in all, Sabiha acted in about 130 movies and emerged successfully in each one of them, whether they were in Urdu or Punjabi. In an obituary of this length it would be impossible to enlist her remarkable performances in the movies that she did as the leading lady, be it in *Sassi* (1954), *Saat Lakh* (1956), *Ishq-i-Laila* (1957), her own production *Naaji* (1959), and *Mauseeqaar* (1962), or when she played, what are called, character roles in films such as *Kaneez* (1965) and *Anjuman* (1970), to name a few.

In this context, one cannot agree more with the veteran actor Qavi, who told this writer on the phone from Lahore that Sabiha got into the skin of every character she enacted. "Sometime in the 1980s, I produced and directed a movie called *Roshni*," recalls Qavi Khan. "Sabiha played the central character of the first lady of the mohalla [neighbourhood] with aplomb. Popular among young and old, [in the film] she is surrounded by kids who sing 'Barri khala ko salaam', much to the amusement of the audience both on and off the screen."

This writer, who edited Pakistan's most widely circulated English language film monthly *Eastern Film*, seldom went to Lahore. It was only much later into their careers, when Sabiha and Santosh came down to Karachi for the shooting of Saeed Haroon's *Ladla* that I met them for the first time. This too was not on the sets but at the



Sabiha Khanum and Santosh Kumar in Hasrat (1956)

hotel they were staying at.

Santosh monopolised the conversation, while Sabiha, who looked graceful in a pink dress, acted as the consummate hostess, making sure I filled my plate with a wide variety of sandwiches that she had ordered. She didn't have to make any effort to prove that she was a charmer.

Thanks to Satish Anand, I also got in touch with Panna, who was married to Syed Suleman, the younger brother of Santosh Kumar and Darpan. She was also all praise for her 'Sabiha bhabhi' for the roles that she played both on and off the screen. "She appeared as a cigarette-smoking, Anglo-Pakistani, middle aged 'madam' and played the character to the hilt in *Eik Gunah Aur Sahi*," enthused Panna, "which was difficult considering that she was a typical, bashful Pakistani middle-class woman in her real life." She adds that Sabiha never spoke ill of anybody in her day-to-day life.

In the twilight years of her screen career, when the quality of movies had degenerated, Sabiha switched over to television and won laurels there as well. She also recorded a couple of songs for the mini screen. When her children moved to the US and settled down there, however, she said 'goodbye' to her country. She did appear on stage once when Moin Akhtar convinced her to give him company in her adopted country.

Sabiha pined for Pakistan but visited here only once. She regretted that the journey from the US was much too long and inconvenient for a repeat performance. And now she's gone on her longest journey.

The Bohra 'amawat' gets a makeover

SEVENTY-three-year-old Zarina Sadiq had never imagined that one day her secret recipe, of making amawat as the homemade dried mango candy squares are referred to in Gujarati would prove instrumental in creating a new business for her grandson and his four partners.

Due to the pandemic, my tourism business that I had been associated with for the last ten years, was at a standstill and then I hit upon this idea of Khas o Aam,' said Sadiq's grandson, 27-year-old Ali Asghar Adamjee, over phone from Rawalpindi, referring to the produce.

This over a century-old tradition of making amawat made from mango pulp mixed with concentrated sugar solution and sun dried, is peculiar to the women of Bohra community living in the garrison town of Punjab. 'The long spell of uninterrupted sunlight and the right amount of dryness in the atmosphere is only found in Rawalpindi, insisted Adamjee. Karachi where there are many Bohra caterers, have not succeeded in making the dehydrated mango candy because of the high humidity.

It was made in most homes, and because it is labour intensive, it was made in smaller quantities and usually consumed at home and some gifted to relatives and friends. 'Now that we have tried our hands, we have come to realize how much work is involved in this,' said Adamjee.

However, since some two decades now, the more enterprising and younger women, not more than a dozen, from this community have started taking orders.

Sarah Mustansir Valjee, one such person, whose amawat have been hugely popular, manages to sell all of the 40kgs she makes. She however, did not feel alarmed with the newcomers. 'There is a place for everyone here,' she said calmly.

According to Adamjee, most women can produce not more than 40kgs.

Opposed to that, he and his friends produced 600kgs in under a month. 'From 10 kilos of mangoes you only get 1.5 kilo amawat,' he said.

The six to seven day process goes something like this: starting from buying 200kgs of mangoes from the mandi, to washing, peeling, slicing, cleaning the pit off any fruit, before taking out bucket loads of pulp, adding sugar and then pouring it into 115 greased trays.

These trays are taken on the rooftop to dry and covered with netting to keep he flies and bees away. At sundown, all brought down and then taken up again the next day.



The half dried candy is flipped to sun-bake the other side. 'Our worst nightmare is if the weather suddenly turns cloudy after you have put the pulp to dry on the roof and you have to bring all the trays down, said Admajee. Two more days of drying, this time on cloth before cutting them into equal squares.

In addition, unlike the women who put their squares in ordinary plastic bags and staple it, these young men are packaging their produce in zip-loc(bags for a longer shelf life, and labelling the ingredients used as well as the expiry date.

Sadiq says there is a science to ensure that not only the taste is right, but the squares are firm and do not wilt or get rubbery. She had, over the years perfected it, through trial and error. For instance, she learnt good amawat cannot be made from just any mango as the water content differed in different species. She advised her grandson to only use langra aam as it was fibrous which helped in the drying of the pulp.

In addition, the sugar had to be adjusted based on how sweet the mango were. Too much or too little sugar will make your amawat chewy, pointed out Adamjee.

Today, with the change in the weather pattern, the amawat makers of Rawalpindi are getting fewer sunny days to produce this candy. 'My dadi said they got a good two and a half months to produce amawat; but with the changing pattern of rainfall, it's shortened considerably. We barely got a month this year; the mangoes arrived late and the monsoon rains started earlier,' he said adding: 'We may need to turn to modern technology like dehydrating machines to scale up our business and beat the inclement weather.

Hotels' association seeks involvement of private sector in rehabilitation of motels

With the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) motels in the northern areas closed, the Pakistan Hotels Association (PHA) has asked the government to involve the private sector in the rehabilitation and expansion of the motels.

PHA Chairman Zubair Bajewa said in a press statement that motels have closed due to financial losses and the coronavirus pandemic, but steps should be taken to make these establishments profitable and use them to promote tourism.

"Investors are always keen to establish lodging facilities in northern areas of Pakistan due to its special attraction for the tourists. The government should lease out these motels and land to the private sector, who could easily convert these properties into good quality hotels with international standards and brand to boost tourism. PTDC motels were ideally situated for tourists to rest and then wake up the next morning and continue their journey farther into the north," he said.

Mr Bajewa said this would help develop these areas for tourism and create employment opportunities as well. He added that investors would be capable of upgrading and converting standard hotels if given the chance.

He said 24 or 25 properties have been closed down in the north and other than six motels and restaurants were closed down by the PTDC in last March.

"Last year also, the PTDC had shut down its motels at Taxila in Punjab, Chattar Plain in KP, Astak in Gilgit-Baltistan and at Khuzdar in Balochistan, as well as Chakdara restaurant in KP and Daman-i-Koh restaurant in Islamabad," he said.

"On behalf of members of PHA, we extend our cooperation to work with government bodies to bring in improvement in hospitality sector. We will also extend cooperation to privatise these properties and investors be facilitated to develop and convert above properties to make them viable business ventures as it creates employment opportunities for the local community and earn foreign exchange for the exchequer," he said.

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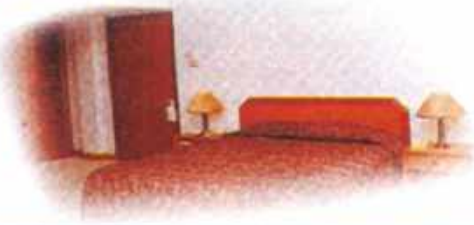


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Tourism policy

THE government's approach towards reviving tourism in Pakistan appears confused and riddled with contradictions. Barely a month after Prime Minister Imran Khan announced the reopening of the tourism sector — an inexplicable move given the rising numbers of Covid-19 cases in the country — PTDC motels in the north have been closed and employees sacked. Incidentally, Mr Khan had also pointed to potential joblessness in the tourism sector as being a factor in its reopening. According to the notification issued, the federal government and the PTDC board of directors were forced to take the step “due to continuous and irreparable financial losses” suffered by the organisation. Around 25 motels and 300 employees have been affected by this decision; six ‘sick’ PTDC motels and restaurants were shuttered in March last year.

A member of the National Tourism Corporation Board, under which the PTDC functions, has said that the government would focus exclusively on promoting travel to this country and the now closed properties will be privatised. While Pakistan's tourism industry can barely even be described as a fledgling one — at least from the international perspective — its wealth of scenic landscapes, particularly its stunning mountain vistas in the north, has increasingly been getting noticed. The British Backpacker Society ranked Pakistan as its top travel destination for 2018, and last year Forbes termed it “one of the coolest countries to visit”. Unfortunately, the government failed to build on that momentum and goodwill, even though the prime minister has often correctly cited the potential for tourism to become a major source of foreign exchange. Even as recently as December 2019, *Wanderlust*, the UK travel magazine, singled out Pakistan as its “hot list destination” for 2020. The pandemic, of course, has derailed tourism everywhere.

Nevertheless, many mountains need to be climbed before Pakistan can become a preferred international travel destination. Its image has long suffered on account of extremist violence within its borders. The murder of foreign climbers by militants in Gilgit-Baltistan in 2013 was the last nail in the coffin. Although militancy has been crushed and law and order restored, it will take sustained multidimensional efforts to attract international tourists to Pakistan's shores. According to the *Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2019*, the country is the least competitive in South Asia in

this sector. Reducing visa-processing times and easing restrictions on movement of foreign visitors are sensible measures, but the tourism infrastructure is far from robust and does not inspire the kind of

confidence that international travellers look for. In fact, the PTDC motels offered decent budget accommodation, but that too is now off the table. Hosting summits with an array of foreign travel influencers before getting the building blocks in place — such as a hassle-free method for visitors to travel within the country — is akin to putting the cart before the horse.

PTDC being restructured, not closed down: PM

SPECIAL Assistant to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development Zulfikar Bukhari said on Sunday July 5 that the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) had not been closed down, but was being restructured to turn it into an efficient organisation.

Do not misinterpret that the PTDC has been closed down. Following a cabinet decision of 2019, the government has evolved a mechanism for running the corporation, which is based on hiring young professionals from the tourism industry.

The PTDC will work with the provinces for marketing and branding Pakistan.

There is a well planned strategy to transform the corporation into an efficient organisation. You will see results in a year,' the PM's aide told a press briefing here.

While he explained that the government had engaged a top foreign firm to revive the PTDC, he also elaborated on the composition of the National Tourism Development Board which, according to him, comprised of qualified individuals.

He gave the example of the PTDC restaurant at Daman-i-Koh in Islamabad that was being managed well by a private party until the government decided to take it back (and run it itself, but finally closed it down. 'A little higher, Monal and La Montana are earning billions of rupees even though they are not as ideally situated as Daman-i-Koh, which also offers much better panoramic views,' he said.

Mr Bukhari clarified that the decision to terminate services of PTDC employees was not taken because of the coronavirus pandemic.

In a notification issued recently, the government had said that it had shut down PTDC motels in the northern areas and terminated the services of their

employees. The notification said that the corporation was forced to take this decision as it was continuously suffering losses.

I want to dispel the misconception that we laid the employees off due to Covid19 pandemic. This is not what happened,' said the PM's aide, drawing attention to the cabinet's 2019 decision.

He said that revival of the PTDC was more important than the jobs of its 360 employees, adding that the corporation had presented a good package when it offered golden handshake to its staff.

But it was sadly rejected by the employees.

He urged PTDC staff, who are now fighting their case in courts against their dismissal, to reconsider their decision and accept the package, which included 90 salaries, six-month house allowance, plus arrears, provident fund.

If the PTDC has to be turned around to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs, these difficult decisions will have to be taken. The results will come in a year when these PTDC properties in Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir are privatized,' he said.

He spoke about plans of transforming Flashman's in Rawalpindi into a fancy hotel along with a mall that would be built next to it.

Replying to a question, the SAPM said that the provinces would develop plans on how to run the motels.

In response to another question, he said that the government could not force the provinces to hire laid off staff.

To yet another question, Mr Bukhari said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was clear about Roosevelt Hotel in New York and was thinking out of the box to make it a profit generating property.

Despite being ideally located in Manhattan, returns from Roosevelt Hotel were on steady decline, he said. Last year, it gave a loss of \$1.5 million. 'One of the options being weighed is to rent it out, but we are not selling Roosevelt Hotel at any cost, he clarified.

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Corruption extends to machines

The toughest decision a purchasing official has to encounter is when he is about to buy a machine designed to replace him. Computer which is essentially a machine has made man a tool-using animal. It has, on the one hand, solved many problems, but has given rise to many, on the other. The automation technology, to which we cannot and should not shut our doors, has an abiding tendency of creating unemployment. Increasing use of computers in commerce and industry has facilitated managerial functions and enhanced productivity which has enabled us to keep ourselves attuned to the present day advancements. But, there is no denying the fact that computers can solve all kinds of problem, except the unemployment problem they create.

I arrived at this conclusion when, some time back, I saw a TV report that Japan has made a robot type computer which would work as guides for the tourists at various historical sites and places of interest. My belief to this effect was further strengthened when, the other day, I visited the silk factory of a friend of mine. The operational part of the building was neat, clean, cool and lighted. All mechanical operations were computerised as a consequence of which very few employees were seen here and there. The new name for "workers" was 'technicians.' About four decades ago, this same factory employed several hundred workers. The present calm and serene atmosphere in and around the factory reminded me of the hectic activity of the 70's. In any case, a Western scholar rightly contended, "One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of an extraordinary man."

Use of computers in public and private sector organizations is a welcome step. It replaces the outmoded manual system which is time-consuming, labour-consuming and money-consuming. There should be no doubt now that computer boosts up efficiency. However, the efficiency of computer itself depends on several factors among which correct feeding ('Garbage in, garbage out') and regular supply of power are of vital importance.

Computers come to a stand-still with power breakdown which, if continued abnormally, results in "nervous breakdown" too. Courtesy WAPDA and K. Electric, we receive recurring shocks of



both (power and nervous break-downs). However, hard-bitten as we are - we still survive.

PIA has entered the computer age much earlier and claims to have improved its ground performance as well. But you enter any reservation office and more often than not, you will find the staff twiddling their thumbs. You ask them about the problem and they would reply, "The system is down." The reply downs your own spirits also. I faced a similar situation in Lahore in July some time ago. I approached the PIA's reservation office to get my return ticket confirmed. I found that the office was only technically open and the staff was only physically present. Visitors were roaming about frantically and working counters were giving a deserted look. It was informed that due to power failure the work was suspended. In stifling heat, while the machines were resting, the men were panting. The unpleasant situation persisted for about an hour-and-a-half whereafter the work could be resumed. As the machines regained refulgence, human faces reflected radiance.

In the famous words of Marshall McLuhan, the new electronic independence recreates the world in the image of a global village. However, with rising dependence on electronics, the real change is not that computers will begin to think like men, but that men will begin to think like computers. The problem of the past was that men became slaves. The problem of the present is that men have become robots. Computer-operated robots have already replaced men for several unproductive manual tasks.

The Japanese have gone a step ahead. They have put some personality into the vending machines that have replaced the office tea lady and her trolley. A company has produced tea-vending machine that talks to the passers-by. "I'm a vending robot, a tea girl," it says, "Let's talk." Equipped with a micro computer, a laser disc, a TV monitor and a printer, it can dispense eight kinds of tea, show you a short programme about tea cultivation and processing, printout menus and play video games. And every time it takes you money, a smiling girl pops onto the screen to say, "Thank you very much." Men have thus become the tools of their tools.

games. And every time it takes your money, a smiling girl pops onto the screen to say, "Thank you very much." Men have thus become the tools of their tools.

Computers are taken as a symbol of accuracy. In America, a woman complained to her husband about their new computer-generated income tax programme. "Why won't the computer just accept what I enter?" she snarled. "Why does it demand justification and verification of every item? Why won't this fool machine believe me?"

"It's computer, honey," replied her husband. "Not a husband."

However, computers too commit horrible mistakes. Someone said, "To err is human, but to really foul things up requires a computer." In London some years ago, I became a target of this well-judged proposition when my freshly purchased ticket of the tube (underground train) was rejected by the slot of the electronic isolators as a used one. I had to be stranded for quite some time. A white-skinned official was adamant to charge me for the second time, but his boss, a black one, was considerate enough to allow me to pass from the side door. It was all the more intriguing that the same ticket was accepted by another machine when I caught a connecting train a few minutes later.

Surprisingly, computers get 'corrupted' as well. Only last time, when I complained to my publisher as to why the printouts of the text of my book bore new mistakes (after rectification of the previous ones), he apologized saying, "Due to virus, the computer has developed corruption." I had to cope up with the answer. Obviously, when computers are being required to perform human tasks, why should we expect them to be corruption-free?

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