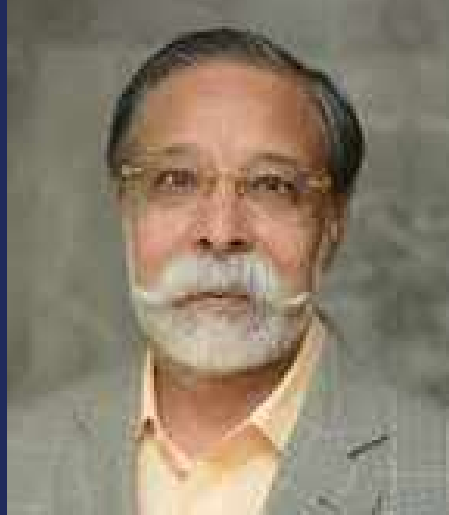


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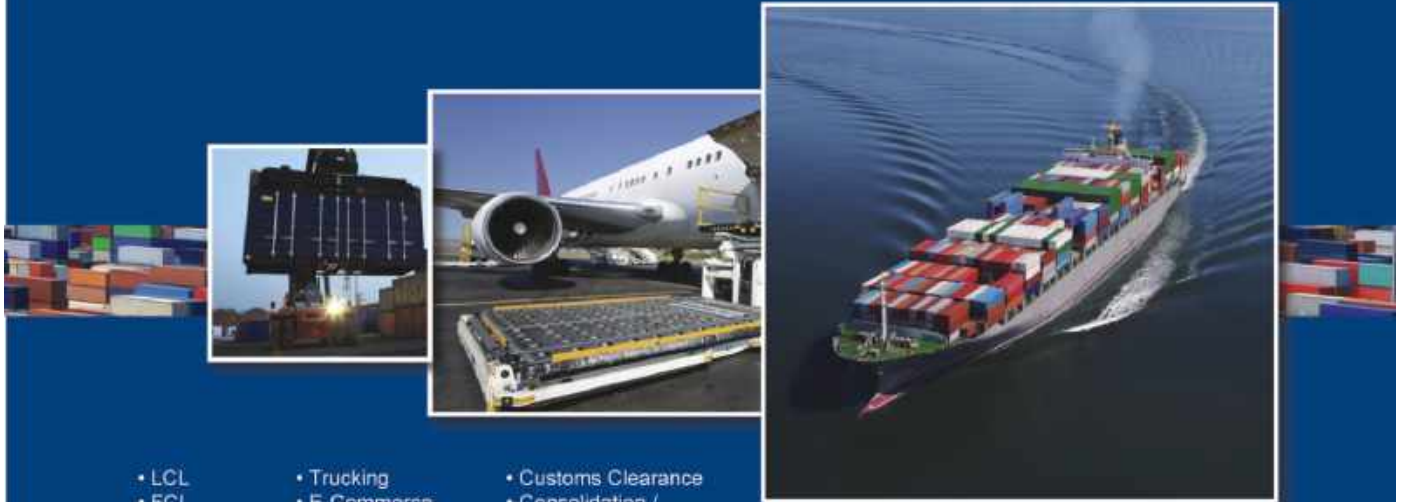
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## Serene Air Private Limited welcomes Airbus A330 to its fleet

SereneAir is elated to announce the inclusion of a A330-200 aircraft to its existing fleet of 4 Boeing 737-800 NG. The arrival of new aircraft marks a historic milestone for the airline as the airline joins the Airbus operators' family. Also, SereneAir attains the singular honour of being the only private airline to operate a wide body two class configuration aircraft equipped with latest facilities.

- The new addition comes powered with technological advancements and offers more comfort to the passengers. The aircraft with a total capacity of 299 passengers is configured in two cabins, i.e. 24 club class seats and 275 economy class seats. The club class would be named as Serene Plus. All the seats are fitted with back seat 12" screen for in-flight entertainment system. With its inclusion the company aims to redefine its mission of providing a cost effective and affordable luxury air travel to its passengers.
- The CEO, SereneAir Muhammad Safdar Khan, talking on this auspicious occasion said, "This is a momentous day for the SereneAir family as we welcome this Big Bird. The induction is not only an embodiment of our zealous value, but is also a front runner to a promising future. With this addition, we are poised to become stronger and thrive in the intensively competitive air line industry. He further said that this is the start of fleet enhancement as SereneAir would be adding two more A330 to its fleet in the next three to four months.
- He also added that he is fully cognizant of the setbacks to aviation industry due to Covid-19. Enhancing the fleet during these most unfavourable and uncertain times is a difficult and critical decision but he was confident that passionate and professional members of Serene family would transform his expansion plans into reality and success insha'Allah.

- Unveiling the future plans, he added that SereneAir plans to commence operations in the very near future to Jeddah and Riyadh in KSA, Sharjah and Dubai in UAE. Besides, all spade work for expanding wings over China and UK has also been completed and SereneAir signature would soon appear on the International radar. He expressed his resolve to make SereneAir an airline second to none by providing best services at the most competitive fares and better options of travel.
- He also revealed that SereneAir played a notable role in bringing back the stranded overseas Pakistani from UAE in 53 chartered flights at

competitive and reduced rates. These flights have provided SereneAir with a unique experience and enhanced our resolve to undertake any kind of relief mission and UN mission from/to any required destination.

- In the end, he recalled that SereneAir began its journey three and a half years back. Within this period, SereneAir has established itself as the first choice and most preferred Domestic carrier. It has set unparalleled record of 98.2% On-Time Performance and 99% regularity and has carried over 2.6 million passengers. SereneAir product, Alhamdolillah has now established a new quality bench mark in the private sector.



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## CAA clears pilots working for Vietnamese airlines

**E**leven Pakistani pilots associated with Vietnamese airlines have been cleared and the authorities have declared that all of them have valid and legitimate flying licences as the verification process moves ahead.

We had received a request for 11 Pakistani pilots working in Vietnam for verification of their licences and all of them were cleared after scrutiny,' a senior aviation official told media recently.

News agency Reuters also ran a report with Hanoi dateline quoting the Vietnamese government as saying that all the Pakistani pilots working for Vietnamese airlines have valid and legitimate licences and none has been involved in a flight incident or safety threat.

Vietnam last month grounded all Pakistani pilots working for the local airline amid concern from global regulators that some pilots may have been using dubious licences.

All licences administered by the Pakistani aviation regulator are legitimate and valid. There are no fake licences, as mentioned by the media,' a Vietnamese government statement said, citing a note from the Pakistani Embassy to the Vietnamese government.

Vietnam had licensed a total of 27 Pakistani pilots and 12 of them were still active. The other 15 pilots' contracts have expired or they were inactive due to the corona virus pandemic, according to Vietnam's Civil Aviation Authority.

Spokesman for Pakistan's Aviation Division Abdul Sattar Khokhar, said Pakistan had received requests from 10 countries -Vietnam, Turkey, the UA E, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Ethiopia and Bahrain -for validation of credentials of 176 Pakistani pilots working in those countries.

Out of these 176 Pakistani pilots, he said, 166 had been verified by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as none of them was having any anomaly.

He said the process of verification of the remaining 10 licences was under way and it would be concluded by next week. He said the information regarding verification of 166 Pakistani pilots had been communicated to respective countries, including the Vietnam Civil

Aviation Authority.

The controversy over the pilots' licences issue surfaced when presenting the preliminary investigation report on the May 22 plane crash in Karachi on the floor of the National Assembly on June 24, Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said there were 860 active pilots in the country, and 262 of them had appeared in examinations through proxies.

He had said 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 European Union and UK authorities stopped PIA from flying to Europe for six months.

Since then, the government and the minister have been facing severe criticism from the opposition parties which allege that the minister has brought humiliation to the country at the international level by making such a disclosure on the floor of the parliament.

The minister, however, while responding to the opposition's criticism in the National Assembly, downplayed the suspension of the PIA operations, 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 safety measures.

He said they were in contact with the concerned authorities in Europe, adding that the other countries would be satisfied when they would 'clean' the institutions of corruption.

About 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 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.

The opposition, however, called for the resignation of the minister when the CAA declared that all licences issued by it to the pilots 'are genuine'.

During a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Aviation on Thursday, the minister not only defended

his remarks, he almost repeated his speech which he had delivered on the floor of the National Assembly while presenting the inquiry report of the PIA plane crash. He, however, made one clarification and claimed that in his speech in the assembly he had declared the licences of the pilots 'dubious' and not 'fake'.

He said it might look as damaging for the country in short term but for the future it was important to show the world through actions that 'we are improving our systems'.

## ACAAP demands to bring down air freight charges

**T**he Chairman ACAAP Mr. Mohsin A. Dharsi and Chairman PLGMEA Mr.

Nadeem Abbas had a joint meeting, and on behalf of Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan and Pakistan Leather and Garments Manufacturer and Exporters Association PLGMEA welcomed and appreciated all Airlines operating in Pakistan for restarting their operations in Pakistan, which is a sign of relief for Export Industry.

At the same time, keeping in view the highly raised Air Freight charges for export cargo, it was observed that the Airlines have restarted Passenger/Cargo operations but still not brought down air freight charges due to which the cost of business has increased tremendously and are creating hindrance in the smooth running of the business while meeting demands of the buyers as well as prompt delivery of consignments at destinations resulting tough competition in the international market.

They jointly urged, all Airlines operating from Pakistan to reduce the Air Freight Charges, in order to normalize the cost of export cargo as it were during in pre COVID-19 period.

In order to support the fraternity of Air Cargo Industry at this stage of pandemic. They appealed all Airlines operating in Pakistan to help and support the export industry in Pakistan.



## All airports allowed to handle domestic flight operations

The Aviation Division has announced that the domestic flight operation, already under way from some of the airports for some time, will be resorted from all airports in the country from August 6 midnight.

A spokesman for the Aviation Division's senior joint secretary, Abdul Sattar Khokhar, said the government had earlier allowed all airports, except Turbat, Pangjur, Dalbandin, Zhob, Pasni, Moenjo Daro, Nawabshah and Bahawalpur airports, to resume domestic flight operations.

In this connection, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) issued a formal notice which said that the previous notice banning domestic flights has now been cancelled.

Mr Khokhar said all operators would be required to implement the established guidelines, SOPs, and that they would seek prior schedule approval from the competent authority.

Moreover, he said, cargo, special flights and private aircraft operations would also be available for all airports subject to compliance with relevant SOPs. Pakistan had suspended all international flights on March 21 and domestic flight operations on March 26 due to the spread of corona virus.

The domestic flight operation is being restored after suspension of more than four months.

Initially, some airlines across the world cancelled flights to hotspots, but later all airlines suspended their international flights due to the corona virus pandemic.

Like Pakistan, airlines of some other countries have also partially resumed their operations.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) announces its

Jashne Azadi discounted fare and baggage offer to its customers.

According to a PIA spokesman, in order to celebrate the 73rd Independence Day the national flag carrier is offering 14 per cent discount on

flights operating on its primary domestic routes between Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore.

An unprecedented 73kg free baggage allowance per passenger is also being offered to commemorate the occasion. This is a unique offer and one of its kind, the spokesman said.

Simultaneously, PIA will recommence its flights from Multan, Sukkur and Gwadar to show solidarity with the nation and reaffirm its resolve to returning the aviation industry back to normalcy.

## Pakistan reopens international flights to and from all airports

Pakistan has announced that it will allow the full resumption of all types of international flights to and from the country's airports.

The announcement comes weeks after Pakistan partially reopened its airports for domestic and international commercial flights.

Earlier the authorities allowed to resumption of domestic flights from all of the country's airports.

A complete ban on domestic and international commercial flights was imposed in March when Pakistan enforced a nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

Later, the restrictions were gradually eased and Pakistan witnessed a peak in virus deaths and infections in June.



## Court restrains CAA from taking action against pilot

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) recently stopped the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) from proceeding against a pilot whose licence was recently revoked by the authority for being 'dubious'.

The CAA had revoked the Airline Transport Licence of petitioner Syed Saglain Akhtar, calling it dubious. The federal government is directed to submit written comments within 10 days,' the court order said.

After preliminary arguments, the court also sought explanation from the federal government as to 'why the post of the director general of Civil Aviation Authority has not been filled on a permanent basis for the last two years'.

IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah noted that the post of the director general was one of the most important positions and giving additional charge of it to the secretary of CAA or any other person did not appear to be in consonance with the principles of good governance.

The counsel for the petitioner contended that the post of the CAA's director general had not been filled on a permanent basis for the last two years.

The counsel referred to para 3 of the impugned order, dated July 14, 2020, relating to revoking Mr Akhtar's licence which was supposed to be dealt with by the director general of CAA, but as there was no permanent DG of CAA, the matter had to be disposed of by the secretary of Aviation Division. The counsel further contended that the petitioner was never confronted with any material relating to the alleged use of unfair means to clear the Airline Transport Pilot Licence (ATPL) theoretical knowledge examination.

The lawyer argued that the posts of secretary of the Aviation Division and CAA's director general had been held by the same person and, therefore, the impugned order, dated July 14, was not sustainable.

He said the order had been passed in haste and that too in violation of the principles of procedural fairness.

The court issued notices to the secretary of Aviation, CAA and the federal government and adjourned the hearing till Aug 12.

The court ordered the respondents that authorities be 'restrained from initiating criminal proceedings against the petitioner till the date fixed'.

## **Pakistan International Airlines announces resumption of England flights and Hi Fly lease**



Hi Fly takes delivery of CS-TKY, which will now operate for Pakistan International Airlines (Photo: Hi Fly)

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) announced that they would be operating a leased Airbus A330-900neo aircraft in order to operate flights to England. The airline will lease the aircraft and crews from Hi Fly on a wet-lease agreement. The Karachi-based carrier normally operates Boeing 777 family aircraft on flights to England.

The carrier, which is currently banned from the European Union, will utilize the aircraft to resume services to London's Heathrow Airport, Manchester and Birmingham, England. Prior to the ban, all three cities were served from Pakistan International Airlines' main international hub in Islamabad.

The airline has been banned from entering European airspace since July 1, following findings stemming from the crash of Pakistan International Airlines Flight 8303. During the investigation of the A320 crash on May 22, 2020, a fraudulent pilot license scandal was brought to light by Pakistan's aviation minister. The airline will not be allowed to operate in European airspace until at least the end of the year, according to the European Aviation Agency (EASA).

While this was not the first time Pakistan had scandals regarding illegal and fraudulent licenses, it was the first to have a major effect on PIA. The airline had 141 pilots grounded due to the scandal as of July 1.

### **Hi Fly Airbus A330-900neo**

Hi Fly and Hi Fly Malta, a subsidiary, currently operate a total of three A330-900neo aircraft along with numerous

other narrow- and wide-body Airbus aircraft, including an A380. Two of Hi Fly's A330neo aircraft are currently operating for Air Senegal.

PIA will be using CS-TKY, which has a 371-seat configuration. The aircraft features 18 business class seats and 353 economy seats. The business cabin is set-up in a 2-2-2 configuration with 75-inch seat pitch. The economy cabin is in a 3-3-3 layout with seat pitch between 30 and 32 inches. All seats are equipped with in-seat IFE screens in both cabins.

### **Restarted Flight Schedule**

The airline has not announced an official schedule, besides stating that flights will resume on August 14. However, according to an airline

spokesperson, the schedule was due to be announced shortly after the conclusion of the decision.

Pakistan's numerous flights to other European Union destinations, such as Barcelona and Milan's Malpensa Airport, are currently suspended due to the ban, and there are no current plans for resumption.

The plan to resume flying using leased aircraft comes as a response to British Airways, who announced they would be restarting flights to Islamabad. The London-based carrier will operate three weekly flights from their London-Heathrow hub with the first departing on Aug. 13. Flights will be operated.

## **Turkish Airlines welcomes PIA's Istanbul operations plan**

Turkish Airlines has welcomed a plan of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to start its operations to Turkey from next month. In response to a letter of PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik to Turkish authorities in which he informed them of the plan, the Turkish Airlines' CEO said he was pleased to hear that PIA planned to start Istanbul operations.

Turkish Airlines has agreed to revise the Special Prorate Agreement (SPA) and proposed to upgrade Code share from unilateral to bilateral agreement once the performance of SPA reaches a satisfactory level and also appointed a commercial team to make arrangements for the agreement.

Air Marshal Malik has said that PIA planned to start operations to Turkey from the first week of August provided the Aeronautical Authorities of Turkey granted it relevant authorizations to operate the flights.

In reply, the Turkish Airlines' CEO said as the threat from Covid-19 persisted, partnerships would gain importance. Airlines would need to support each other.

Therefore, we deeply appreciate your offer to enhance our existing cooperation for both airlines' mutual benefit,' he added.

He further said 'you may also be aware that we have been in long-lasting interlining cooperation within the scope of our ongoing Code share and Special Prorate Agreement. However, considering the networks of both airlines, we see that the volume and utilisation of our agreements have been lower than our expectations.

I believe that our cooperation could be developed to reach a more satisfying level with the addition of your proposed Birmingham, London, Milan, Barcelona, Copenhagen and Oslo points on our

Codeshare, subject to related Civil Aviation Authorities' beyond codeshare approvals.

Moreover, we would like to inform you that we are ready to revise our SPA cooperation as a bilateral basis by including PK's IST flights to our existing Special Prorate Agreement for the first stage,' he said.

The Turkish Airlines' CEO proposed to upgrade code share from unilateral to a bilateral arrangement once the performance of the airlines' SPA reached a satisfactory level.

We can obtain the necessary exceptions from Star Alliance due to governance rules & regulations. In this regard, our SVP International Relations & Alliances Ms Ozlem Sallhoglu (oozturk@thy.com) and Manager International Relations and Agreements Mr Nazif Tikenbatar (ntikenbatar@thy.com) will be coordinating a meeting with their counterparts to exchange views on enhancement of cooperation and to define the road map in line with the applicable regulations.

Thereafter, our teams may report to us the outcome of their discussions so that we can arrange a face to face meeting with your side according to your convenience to sign the enhanced SPA or Codeshare agreements, accordingly.

He added in his letter: 'I would like to reiterate my sincere wish for the development of our cooperation and hope to meet you soon once our commercial teams make the agreements ready for signature through our mutual efforts.

In a letter to Pakistan Ambassador to Turkey Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, PIA CEO Arshad Malik had said that PIA had planned to start operations to Turkey from the first week of August provided the Aeronautical Authorities of Turkey granted relevant authorisations to operate flights.



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## The Air India Express Boeing 737 touched down 1,000 metres from beginning of runway



The Air India Express plane, carrying 190 people from Dubai, on Friday 7th August touched down near a taxiway that is around 1,000 metres from the beginning of the runway at the Kozhikode airport before breaking up into two pieces, according to AAI.

The pilot of the ill-fated flight #IX1344 could not sight the runway in the first landing attempt due to heavy rains.

About 50 people, including two pilots, have died in the crash.



An AAI spokesperson said that runway 28 was in use and in the first landing attempt, the pilot could not sight the runway and requested for runway 10.

Citing information from the Air Traffic Controller (ATC), the spokesperson said the aircraft touched down near taxiway 'C', which is approximately 1,000 metres from the beginning of runway 10. The total length of the runway is 2,700 metres.

The spokesperson also said that it was raining over the airfield and reported visibility at the time of landing was 2,000 metres.

The Boeing 737-800 aircraft while landing overshot the runway and went down 35 feet into a slope before breaking up into two pieces.

### The pilots killed



Captain Deepak Vasant Sathe and First Officer Akhilesh Kumar were both killed in the crash of Air India Express flight #IX1344.

Captain Sathe was a decorated air force officer who, according to a family member, had survived a military plane crash in the 1990s.

First Officer Kumar leaves behind a pregnant wife who is expecting in the coming weeks.

### All Four Cabin Crew Survived

All four flight attendants onboard an Air India Express flight that crashed while attempting to land at Karipur airport in Kerala, India on Friday 7 August night survived the crash but are being treated for injuries sustained after the aircraft broke into two, a statement from the airline confirmed. The current death toll from the accident rose to about 50, including both the Captain and First Officer.

Air India Express flight IX1344 from Dubai to Calicut crashed shortly after 7.30 pm on Friday during heavy rains. It was the second attempt at landing after an initial go-around prompted by the inclement weather. Many of the 190 passengers onboard the "ill-fated" flight were injured after the Boeing 737 overshot the runway and fell 35-feet into a valley at the end of the landing strip.

Captain Deepak Sathe is credited with turning off the engines shortly before the plane broke into two in a move that may have helped save lives. He, along with First Officer Akhilesh Kumar died in the tragic accident after repatriating Indian citizens who had been stuck in Dubai because of the COVID-19

pandemic. It was the worst aviation accident in India since 2010 when another Air India Express plane skidded off the end of a tabletop runway in Mangalore.

In the last few hours, Air India Express said it would provide immediate compensation to the value of approximately \$13,000 to the next of kin of any of the passengers killed in the accident who were aged over 12-years old. Critically injured passengers will receive \$26,000 and less seriously injured passengers will initially get \$666.

## Army downs Indian spy quadcopter

The Pakistan Army on Sunday 26 July shot down an Indian spying quadcopter in Pandu sector along the restive Line of Control (LoC), according to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The director general of the military's media affairs wing said in a tweet: `#Pakistan Army troops shot down an Indian spying #quadcopter in Pandu Sector along LOC.

The quadcopter had intruded 200 metres on Pakistan's side of the LoC, he said, adding this is the 10th Indian quadcopter shot down by the Pakistan Army this year.

The ninth such incident occurred on June 28 when an Indian spying quadcopter was shot down in Hot Spring sector along the LoC after it intruded 850 metres on the Pakistan's side.

Also in June, the Pakistan Army had shot down an Indian quadcopter in Khanjar sector along the LoC.

According to ISPR, that quadcopter had intruded 500 metres on Pakistan's side of the LoC.

After the first Indian spying quadcopter was shot down by the Pakistan Army, IPSR director general Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar had warned that any military adventurism by India will be met with `uncontrollable and unintended consequences`. He had cautioned the neighbouring nation to `not play with fire`.

Many times, their [India's] quadcopters have intruded on our side of the LOCJ and in the past we have downed some of them, and it has been covered in the media.

## India uses arrival of new fighter jets to warn China

The first five Rafale fighter jets bought from France in a multi-billion-dollar deal landed in India on Wednesday 29 July and the defence minister used their arrival to launch a warning to adversaries over territorial tensions.

Indian and Chinese soldiers are locked in a tense stand-off along their disputed border in Ladakh region, while Indian troops regularly clash with Pakistani soldiers along the Line of Control in Kashmir.

A water-cannon guard of honour greeted the five jets when they landed at the Ambala airbase in Haryana state. An intense nationwide spotlight on the combat jets has been sharpened by a deadly border standoff with China.

India has bought 36 Rafale fighters from France in a deal estimated to be worth \$9.4 billion. All are scheduled to be delivered by the end of 2021.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the combat jets' arrival marked 'the beginning of a new era in our military history'.

The jets will make the Indian Air Force 'much stronger to deter any threat that may be posed on our country', he added in a series of tweets.

If it is anyone who should be worried about or critical about this new capability of the Indian Air Force, it should be those who want to threaten our territorial integrity,' Singh declared.

Indian and Chinese forces have been in a six-week-long standoff on their Himalayan border since a hand-to-hand battle in which 20 Indian troops were killed. China also suffered casualties in the showdown but has not given figures.

The two sides blame each other for the clash in the Ladakh region and have since moved thousands of troops there while pursuing talks that they say aim to ease the tensions.

India acknowledges it lags behind China and other key nations in military firepower, and the purchase of the Rafale jets is one of many made in a bid to bolster its 1.4 million-strong army.

New Delhi has also been eager to update its ageing fighter-jet force amid tensions with nuclear-armed neighbours China and Pakistan.

Sameer Patil, an international security studies expert at the Gateway House think-tank, said the jets were a 'much-needed capacity booster'.

It will help India to deal with the heightened nature of the Chinese threat,

as it becomes clear that the current territorial stand-off in Ladakh will stretch into the winter months.

The purchase of the French jets marked a significant shift in India's traditional preference for Russian defence equipment.

India's main opposition Congress party had alleged corruption in the deal but the government strongly denied any misconduct and a top court said there was no evidence for an investigation.

French firm Dassault is in competition to sell more of the jets to India, which has said it will need more than 150 more combat aircraft for its navy and air force.

## Dnata donates 160,000 uneaten meals to charity



Dnata has revealed it has donated more than 160,000 excess meals destined for in-flight service to charity since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in March.

The catering and ground handling business estimates it has now given away 500,000 food items, weighing 50,000 kilograms, to organisations such as Sydney Children's Hospital, Anglicare Emergency Food Relief Shelters Victoria and food rescue charity OzHarvest.

The generous gesture reflects the scale of devastation COVID-19 has caused, with movement restrictions, border closures and low confidence seeing airport passenger numbers down 97 per cent.

The chief executive of the business' catering division, Hiranjan Aloysius, said, 'Unfortunately, we had to make the difficult decision to stand down a portion of our employees and as an organisation we are very conscious of the impact the recent situation can have on families across Australia.'

## Emirates to resume its Airbus A380 service to Toronto



Emirates has released this statement. The iconic Emirates Airbus A380 will begin serving travelers on flights to Toronto starting 16 August. The airline has so far resumed A380 operations to Amsterdam, Cairo, Paris, London Heathrow and Guangzhou (8 August) taking its A380 network to six cities. The Emirates A380 experience remains a favourite amongst travellers for its spacious and comfortable cabins and the airline will continue to gradually expand its deployment in line with market demand and operational approvals.

Customers can fly the Emirates A380 from Dubai to Toronto five times a week. Emirates flight EK 241 will depart Dubai at 9:10 and arrive in Toronto at 15:05 local time. The return flight, EK 242 will depart Toronto at 21:45 and arrive in Dubai at 18:30 local time, the following day.

With safety as a priority, Emirates is gradually expanding its passenger services to 70 cities in August, returning to over 50% of its pre-pandemic destination network. Passengers travelling between the Americas, Europe, Africa, Middle East, and Asia Pacific can enjoy safe and convenient connections via Dubai. Customers from Emirates' network can stop over or travel to Dubai as the city has re-opened for international business and leisure visitors.

COVID-19 PCR tests are mandatory for all inbound and transit passengers arriving to Dubai (and the UAE), including UAE citizens, residents and tourists, irrespective of the country they are coming from.



# Glimpses of resumption of British Airways flight to Pakistan





# British Airways resumes flight operations for Pakistan

After Islamabad granted permission to the British Airways, the company has resumed its UK-Pakistan flight operation, on 14th of August.

The airline has started direct flights three times a week to and from London's Heathrow Airport and Islamabad airport. The first flight landed in Islamabad on Aug 14. Extra precautionary measures were taken for the safety of its crew and passengers.

The announcement, it said, was another important step in reconnecting trade ties and people-to-people contact between the UK and Pakistan.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, passengers will be required to wear masks and they will have access to hand sanitizers during the flight. Crew members will wear masks during the flight. There are also extra measures in place at airports to ensure travellers stay safe.

British High Commissioner Dr Christian Turner CMG has termed the resumption of the British Airways' flight operation to Pakistan an important moment for links between the UK and Pakistan.

The resumption of British Airways direct flights is a big boost for the hundreds of thousands of travellers who travel regularly between our two great nations, many who have had their travel plans disrupted by the pandemic. I'd like to thank the Government of Pakistan, British Airways and my team in Pakistan who have worked hard to deliver this welcome news.

Moran Birger, head of sales, Asia Pacific and the Middle East at British Airways, said: 'We are pleased to once again provide a service between Pakistan and the UK. We know many of our customers in both countries have been waiting to be reunited with friends and family. We look forward to welcoming them back onboard.'

British Airways direct flights restarted in June 2019 after a break of 10 years. The carrier first flew to Islamabad in 1976.

From London's Heathrow Airport the flights will be operated on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday, departing at 20:30 and arriving in Islamabad at 04:20. From Islamabad flights will be operated on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, departing at 06:15 and arriving in London at 15:00.

The British Airways sought permission from the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) to resume flights from Islamabad in August as the

flights had been suspended due to the corona virus outbreak.

According to sources, two sessions had taken place between officials of British Airways and the PCAA in Dubai and London over the issue of resumption of flights for Islamabad.

The airline sought a considerable relief in the PCAA's landing and passenger charges.

'Yes, the British Airways had requested for resuming flights for Islamabad, which was granted with some relief on landing and passenger charges, said a senior official of PCAA.

Hired plane In a related development, the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) announced it was partially resuming flight operation to the UK with a hired plane.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said that the PIA had decided to partially resume its flight operation to the UK from

Aug 14.

He said PIA passengers would be able to travel to London, Manchester and Birmingham from Pakistan via an alternate source.

PIA has hired a plane and crew from a European company to operate flights with PIA call sign and our slots,' he said, adding that there was a demand from the market for PIA to resume its flights.

He said after suspension of flight operations to the UK, other airlines had increased their fares and the PIA was expecting that after its flight operation for the UK started, fares of other airlines would become normal.

Meanwhile, the PCAA has launched an awareness campaign on 'bird hazard' control at all major airports of the country.

Aviation Division spokesman Abdul Sattar Khokhar said in a press release that the campaign aimed at keeping surrounding areas of airports clean from garbage, refuse and waste.

He said various initiatives were being taken to reinforce the message pertaining to the serious issue of bird strike on the aircraft and its consequences.



## Looking forward to welcoming you back

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Islamabad International	5M.WTF.	11:15-16:00

From **01OCT** the service will increase to a 7x weekly operation.

Origin	Days	Timing
London Heathrow	daily	21:30-09:20+1
Islamabad International	daily	11:15-16:00

From **26OCT** the service will remain a 7x weekly operation, but flight timings will change to facilitate even better connections to North American destinations including Toronto.

Origin	Days	Timing
London Heathrow	daily	17:55-06:40+1
Islamabad International	daily	08:55-12:55

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## Cargo helped Etihad through the worst of the crisis

**S**OARING demand for vital personal protective equipment (PPE), together with sky-high airfreight prices, helped boost Etihad's second quarter cargo revenues to US\$0.49bn a 37 per cent rise in comparison with 2019.

The freight and logistics arm of the Etihad Aviation Group carried 254,345 tonnes of cargo in the period. "This was driven by an increase in demand and a spike in cargo prices," a company statement points out.

Nevertheless, the airline saw a significant decrease in its overall operating revenues in the second quarter following the Coronavirus global travel bans which resulted in 70 per cent of its fleet being grounded.

In the period, Etihad registered a 99 per cent drop in passenger numbers and a 95 per cent fall in available seat kilometres (ASKs) in comparison with 2019.

The flag carrier describes its overall performance in the first six months of this year as 'strong' despite the impact the virus had on the air transport sector, which saw it carry 3.5 million passengers, a reduction of 58 per cent in comparison to the first six months of 2019.

Etihad's core operating loss for this period increased by \$172 million to US\$758 million after a 38 per cent drop in revenues, which reached US\$ 1.7 billion. This was partially off-set by a 27 per cent reduction in direct operating costs to US\$ 1.9 billion and a 21 per cent reduction in general and administrative expenses to \$0.40 billion driven by management cost-saving initiatives and reduced operations, outlines the statement.

During the pandemic Etihad was forced to make redundancies across several divisions of its business to 'ensure future continuity' and introduce temporary company-wide salary 'sacrifices' of 25 to 50 per cent.

Tony Douglas, group chief executive of Etihad Aviation Group, explains: "Etihad, like all major airlines, has had no choice but to embrace the ambiguity of the situation it has been thrown into and, with much sadness, we have had to make some extremely difficult decisions to reduce the size of the workforce by several thousand. Those who have departed Etihad have done so with incredible dignity and their contribution has been immeasurable.

"Etihad flew into the COVID-19 era with uncertainty, but is re-emerging



resilient, if a little battle-scarred, with a renewed focus on its core values."

The carrier operated up to 40 of its fleet of 97 passenger aircraft in the second quarter, including Boeing 787 Dreamliners, B777-300ERs and its A320-family aircraft as belly-hold cargo freighters to complement Etihad Cargo's operational a l10-cargo fleet of six B777-200 freighters.

Between 25 March and 15 June, more than 640 special passenger flights were carried out to 45 online and offline destinations, using the passenger cabins of these aircraft to fly foreign nationals out of the United Arab Emirates and also to bring UAE nationals back home.

Etihad and Etihad Cargo also conducted special humanitarian missions to 60 cities, 40 of which are not currently served by the airline's passenger or cargo network of flights. These destinations included Addis Ababa, Bishkek, Bogota, Conakry, Dushanbe, Erbil, Freetown, Kish Island, Lucknow, Makhachkala, Nouakchott, Podgorica, Sofia, Tirana, Wuhan, Yerevan and Zagreb.

Following the easing of travel restrictions by the UAE regulatory authorities on outbound and inbound travel, the carrier is now in the process of gradually resuming services to more destinations across its global network. All travel remains subject to the entry and health regulations established by the UAE authorities, and those at the end destination.

Throughout this month and September subject to the lifting of international restrictions and the re-opening of individual markets the airline intends to fly to 61 global destinations from its Abu Dhabi hub, operating

approximately 50 per cent of its pre-COVID-19 capacity.

Douglas admits: "Etihad faced a set of enormous and unpredictable challenges in the first six months of the year. We started 2020 strong, and recorded encouraging results as part of our continuing transformation programme.

"This left us in a relatively robust position when COVID-19 hit, allowing us to act with agility, and to mobilise all available resources as the crisis deepened, taking major steps to reduce costs through a wide-reaching series of measures.

"While we have revised our outlook for the rest of 2020 based on current realities, we remain optimistic that as international borders re-open, we will increase our flying and carry more guests securely and with greater peace of mind. By September, we aim to increase our worldwide flights to half our pre-COVID-19 capacity."

Adam Boukadida, chief financial officer at Etihad Aviation Group, points out the carrier was one of a small number of airlines to maintain its pre-COVID-19 credit rating.

"This year started strong, riding on the positive momentum gained in 2019 and, by the end of the first quarter, the airline was on track to achieve earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EBITDA) of \$900 million.

"Etihad managed to maintain a satisfactory level of liquidity despite a major drop in revenues, while continuing to raise new liquidity facilities supported by local and international financial institutions. This was supported by maintaining an 'a with a stable outlook' Fitch rating in April, at the height of the pandemic," he adds.



## Aviation will rise again, but are you ready to rise with it?



**T**he Aviation Industry is facing its darkest time. I first traveled by air in 2015. It was one of the most fascinating experiences of my life. There and then, something clicked in my head. "I have to be close to airplanes for the rest of my life". In 2017, I made it a career choice. Stepping into the world of aviation maintenance as the industry was booming. Prominent organizations and companies like Airbus and Boeing forecasted the demand of pilots and technicians in the hundreds of thousands. Air travel was increasing day by day. New airlines took flight, the older ones grew bigger. Forecasts showed that air traffic would only grow in the coming years, so much, that the infrastructure in place was not enough to support all of it. And then, 2020 happened.

The aviation industry was The Titanic, and the iceberg was COVID-19.

2020 was the year I had in mind that I would be done with my studies and will have already stepped into the industry, working my way up towards my goals and dreams. But, 8 months into 2020, and things are looking very bleak. Airlines going bankrupt left and right. Others filing for bankruptcy protection. The ones that aren't bankrupt are firing thousands of employees. Getting hired in this industry now is a far cry. The most optimistic forecasts suggest that it will take up to three years for air travel to get back on track.

What now? Well, if you're still reading this, there are high chances you are an aviation student. By that, I mean, a student pilot, or a trainee aircraft mechanic, or a student of aviation management, or any other aviation domain. Like me, you face the same question. What now? Or maybe you're one

of those unfortunate people that have lost their jobs. What now?

The aviation Student's predicament.

It's an expensive domain. You have probably spent a lot of money on your studies, training, and exams. But in this situation, when airlines and cargo companies are

struggling for survival themselves, what do you do? The aviation student's biggest predicament is, we possess a very specific set of skills that don't really apply anywhere else. Outside aviation, we're like fish outside water. Take me for example, I have almost completed my modular course in aircraft maintenance engineering. With my certificates, I am only employable in one industry; aviation. I can't transfer my skills to the automobile industry. That is our predicament. So what do we do in this case? I have given it some thought, and, bear with me, here are some things that I want to discuss.

Keeping that flame lit.

In an article I wrote about a year ago, I said that there are people that are passionate about aviation and love it. It's not just 'work' for them. And if you don't have a passion for it, at some point you're gonna have to find it. Because without passion, working in the aviation industry can get hard. In the current situation, when things are at a low point in history, you and I as aviation students or aviation professionals need to keep our passion alive. And that is easier said than done.

It's easy to get excited about the industry when all good news is around. New airplanes, new airlines, and all the accompanied glamor. But, even the most passionate can become dull, when the coronavirus sweeps away everything in a matter of months. What's very important for you and me right now is keeping that passion alive. Keeping that flame lit should be our top priority. Sure, aviation is at a low point, but it's still pretty cool. An airplane taking off with 400 people is still pretty cool.

But here's the thing, most of us have the wrong idea of passion. Passion isn't

simply being excited at the sight of an airplane. Passion starts as an interest and is developed and nurtured through prolonged, intense engagement. Simple excitement is not passion, it's called obsession. To be passionate about something means, deliberately being involved. So get involved! Make sure your wallpapers remind you of aviation. Make sure you keep current on all the latest developments. Talk about it, read about it. Watch youtube videos about it. But keep the flame lit. Stay involved.

Get more certificates!

This part is an extension of the above. To stay involved, the best way is to continue studying and training. This will expand your horizons, and keep you involved. There are tonnes of online courses as well. You can be any type of aviation professional or student and there's always more courses that you can squeeze in. Not only will this achieve the goal of staying passionate, but it will actually increase your prospects as a professional.

Take those opportunities, no matter how small.

You don't get to pick and choose when others are literally being kicked out of their jobs. When you see an opportunity, jump at it. If it increases your experience and helps you in learning, jump at it. See I am an aspiring aircraft maintenance engineer and I'd love to be in Emirates or Qatar Airways, but right now, if a small flying club gives me an opportunity to work, I'd take it. It's always better than sitting idle. The idea is, stay mobile.

From the ashes, we will rise!

There is no doubt, aviation is one resilient industry. It will rise again. And it will continue to soar into the future. But this whole article was about you being ready to soar with it. To summarize all of the above in a few sentences, keep that passion alive for aviation, remember why you started. Continue learning and educating yourself in your domain. And lastly, take any opportunity that is given to you in these times, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem.

If you take this advice, and this advice is for me first and foremost, then I sincerely believe that when the time is right, you will be one of the most employable candidates out there. While others sat still and complained, you grew and expanded your horizons. I'll see you on that bright side!





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## THAI Operates Two Special Flights from Japan

This month, Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) will operate two special flights from Japan to boost Thai and Japanese economies by operating flights for Japanese executives. Mr. Chansin Treenuchagron, Acting THAI President, said the COVID-19 outbreak has affected every economic sector and international trade, as executives could not travel conveniently. As the situation eased, travel restrictions were loosen. Therefore, THAI collaborated with The Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and the Royal Thai Embassy in Tokyo to arrange flights for over 340 Japanese executives to Thailand on special flights TG643 Tokyo-Bangkok on 13 and 27 August 2020. THAI will also deliver cargo, such as agricultural products from both countries on roundtrip flights to support Thai farmers and both countries' export markets. THAI is ready to operate special flights to serve the travel needs of Japanese executives and to boost the Thai and Japanese economies.

### Thai flies to UAE

THAI Flies Thais Stranded in United Arab Emirates Home Sqn. Ldr. Anirute Sangrit, Vice President, Flight Operations Department, Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI), and Head of THAI Operations Control Center (TOCC), said THAI operated repatriation flight for Thais stranded in United Arab Emirates and neighboring countries who registered for repatriation flights with the Royal Thai Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the Royal Thai Consulate in Dubai. THAI collaborated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to operate flight TG518 to fly 170 Thais from Dubai, United Arab Emirates, at 21.00 hours (local time) on 28 July 2020 and arrived in Bangkok at 06.35 hours on 29 July 2020. In addition, THAI delivered



cargo on roundtrip flights. THAI is always prepared to operate special flights to fly Thais home during this difficult time even

during its temporary suspension of operations..

## Asia air travel 98% down in June

June 2020 traffic figures released by the Association of Asia-Pacific Airlines (AAPA) showed that travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic almost completely ended international air travel in the region during Q2.

Asian airlines carried just 724,000 international passengers in June, a 98% decline compared to the 31.8 million recorded the same time last year.

Air cargo demand, in freight tonne kilometre (FTK) terms, was 20.3 percent lower year-on-year.

Offered freight capacity fell by 27.2% as most passenger aircraft were grounded, resulting in a 5.6% point increase in the average international freight load factor to 64.9% for the month.

"Overall, Asia-Pacific airlines carried a total of 61 million international passengers during the first half of 2020, representing a 68 percent fall compared to the same period last year," said Subhas Menon, AAPA's director general.

"International travel demand evaporated in the second quarter. Most flights were only operating to repatriate people to their home countries.

Meanwhile, air cargo demand declined by 16% during the first half of the year, reflecting the general deterioration in consumer and business confidence. The industry is in a perilous condition. International flights continue to be grounded by border closures and onerous quarantine requirements, even when domestic lockdowns are being eased.

## BA retires entire Boeing 747 fleet

British Airways retired its Boeing 747 jumbo jets on Friday 17 July, has tening its withdrawal of the aging plane after the coronavirus pandemic crushed demand for air travel and carriers began switching to greener jets. The BA's parent group, IAG, which had already decided to phase out the iconic aircraft by 2024, said in a statement that the endreneed `with immediate effect` owing to `the downturn in travel caused by the Covid19 global pandemic`.

The airline will operate more flights on modern fuel-efficient aircraft such as Airbus A350s and Boeing 787s, as it seeks to both slash costs and achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The carrier has 31 Boeing jumbos, more than any other airline, while the dwindling number of airlines continuing

to fly the 747 include Air India, Korean Air and Lufthansa.

In Australia, Qantas carried out a farewell flight for its last remaining 747.

Heart-breaking decision `This is not how we wanted or expected to have to say goodbye to our incredible fleet of 747 aircraft. It is a heart-breaking decision to have to make,` said BA Chief Executive Alex Cruz.

We have committed to making our fleet more environmentally friendly as we look to reduce the size of our business to reflect the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on aviation. As painful as it is, this is the most logical thing for us to propose.

US aerospace titan Boeing launched the 747 in 1970, with the 400-seater jet dominating international air travel and cargo over the following decades.







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## SIAL appoints new Chief Executive Officer

Mr. Babar Iqbal a prominent business man in the surgical industry of Sialkot, Pakistan has been appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of Sialkot International Airport Limited. He has taken this post, in an extraordinary meeting of the SIAL Board of Directors chaired by Chairman SIAL Mian Naem Javed to fill the vacancy immediately after the expiration of the two-year tenure of Maj. Gen. (R) Muhammad Abid Nazir. It was decided to appoint Mr. Babar Iqbal as the Chief Executive Officer of SIAL. It is worth to mention that Mr. Babar Iqbal served as the Chairman of SIAL from



April 4, 2005 to February 26, 2008. Mr. Babar Iqbal was also the president of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry during the year 2002-3. Mr. Babar Iqbal is also currently serving as the chairman of the board of directors of National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC).

He has also been the Chairman of the

Board of Directors of Gujranwala Pioneer Electric Company (GPEC).

The meeting was also attended by Vice Chairman Choudhry M. Afzal Shaheen, Founder Chairman Mian Muhammed Riaz Former Chairmen SIAL, Naeem Akhter, Ashfaq Choudhry, Engineer Khawar Anwar Khawaja, Nadeem Anwar Qureshi, Former Vice Chairman Ch. Raza Munir, Director Haseeb Ahmed Bhatti, Hassan Ali Bhatti, Sarfraz Ahmed Bhatti, Faraz Akram Awan, Naeem Ahsan, Mian Muhammad Ilyas and Sheikh Aqeel-ur-Rehman and others.



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## A third of all A380 might disappear from airline fleets

The global aircraft fleet is changing dramatically. Airlines are retiring large aircraft earlier than planned, not renewing leases, selling unused jets and storing hundreds of jets for the long term. Around 800 aircraft are disappearing from the world's airports, estimates the aviation consulting firm IBA.

Lufthansa, for example, has decided to retire six Airbus A380, five Boeing 747-400 and seven A340-600 early. The group is also parking dozens of its 763 planes in Teruel, Spain, and Tarbes, France. It expects that 200 of its aircraft will still have to remain on the ground in 2022. Other airlines are doing the same. British Airways, Qantas and Virgin Atlantic have taken their Boeing 747 out of service, Air France the Airbus A380.

Unprecedented dynamics

«At the beginning of next year the fleets of airlines around the world will look very different as they concentrate on using fewer, smaller, younger, and more efficient aircraft», says IBA Director Phil Seymour. The dynamics of the aircraft market are changing like never before.

Older, fuel-guzzling models are being phased out. According to the IBA analysis, 98 percent of all McDonnell Douglas DC-9 still flying will disappear from the scene, 90 percent of the MD-88 or 41 percent of the Boeing 717. But the much younger A380 are also being hit hard. As IBA forecasts, 28 percent of all superjumbos will be floated out, returned to leasing companies or stored for the long term.



## Pakistan to appeal against EU air safety agency restrictions

Federal Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar has announced that Pakistan will appeal against the restrictions of European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA).

We will solve the safety issues raised by EASA and we had two months to appeal against the restrictions.

PIA planes will fly in the European countries soon, said the minister while talking to journalists at the PTI regional public secretariat on Saturday 8 August.

The EASA had temporarily suspended PIA's authorisation to operate to the EU member states for a period of six months, effective from July 1, with the right to appeal against the decision, after the aviation minister declared in the National Assembly that the licences of 150 PIA pilots were dubious.

Mr Sarwar told the presser that the government was arranging charter planes for overseas Pakistanis in European countries. Despite the restrictions, PIA flights are being operated for Canada, he added.

In reply to a question regarding his claim about the dubious credentials of the pilots, the minister said 28 pilots had been sacked, while a total of 219 pilots had been grounded and 191 suspended so far. He said those pilots were not recruited by the PTI government, which was making efforts to clean the mess created by previous governments. He vowed to restore the glory of the national flag carrier as the world's best airline soon.

Amid the pandemic, not just the domestic air operations had been restored but also many concessions had been announced for the passengers with an increase in the luggage limit from 50kg to 73kg per passenger.

As part of Independence Day celebrations, the minister said, PIA announced 14 per cent discount for all travellers.

Talking about the ill-fated A-320 PIA aircraft crash in Karachi, the minister said the insurance amount for each passenger was Rs5 million but the government managed to get it increased while Rs1 million had already been paid to the heirs of each passenger.

## Aviation division seeks FIA help to trace employees involved in pilots' dubious exam

The Aviation Division has referred the cases against five of officials of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), who had been suspended for their alleged involvement in issuing dubious pilot licences, to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to identify the information technology experts involved in the examination scam.

According to sources, the Aviation Division has written to the FIA director general, seeking the latter's help to identify the CAA's licencing branch officials and IT experts allegedly involved in helping some pilots appear in exam through proxies.

They said the FIA had also been asked to identify IT experts and other people related to networking, if they had been involved in pilots' dubious exam so that criminal proceedings could be initiated against them.

An aviation division's team is likely to have a session with the FIA experts to review the cases of the CAA officials, who had already been suspended and served show-cause notices over their alleged involvement in issuing dubious licences to the pilots.

The move by the aviation division came after the Supreme Court ordered CAA Director General Hassan Nasir Jamy, who is also the aviation division secretary, to take departmental action against the CAA officials on the issue of dubious licences.

Following the Supreme Court's orders, the CAA has decided to opt for zero tolerance policy against anyone who was found involved in the pilots' exam scandal.

Even those who had appeared in the exam on pilots' rest day or hacked the examination system will not be spared, said a CAA official, adding that those who had been on flying duty and had appeared in the exam on the same day would also be brought to book.

The Supreme Court had also directed the CAA director general to show results by clearing the mess within 15 days. 'Spare no one and remove all delinquents even if the CAA chief has to build the organisation afresh,' it said.

On the other hand, a five-member committee was constituted by the aviation division to investigate the cases of pilots who had been suspended in connection with the dubious licences scandal.



## CAA to address members' concerns before bifurcation

The Civil Aviation Authority's board has decided to review the functional separation of the authority after incorporating all the concerns the members had expressed during a meeting held recently.

An informed source told media that the idea for functional separation of the authority was presented before the CAA board after the cabinet committee overseeing the federal government's plans for organisational separation of the CAA met the same day, July 29, before the board meeting.

The plans envisage creation of a 'Pakistan civil aviation regulatory authority' (PCARA) and a 'Pakistan airports authority' (PAA).

Under Section 7 of the Civil Aviation Authority Ordinance of 1982, the CAA board has the powers to run the authority's affairs, but it has no power to take any decision regarding splitting the organisation.

The board meeting was presided over by Aviation Secretary and CAA chairman Hassan Nasir Jamy. Among others who attended the meeting were Air Marshal Ahmed Shehzad and Planning and Development Division Secretary Mathar Niaz Rana.

The meeting of the cabinet committee was presided over by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Razak Dawood. Federal Aviation Minister Chaudhry Sarwar Khan also attended the meeting.

In March last year, the government had developed the National Aviation Policy to make the role of CAA as a regulator completely independent of service providers, along with financial and administrative autonomy within two years.

The decision also requires achieving organisational change of the regulator with minimal adverse collateral disadvantage.

Subsequently, the federal cabinet approved in principle a proposal for segregation of the CAA's regulatory and service provider functions and in its meeting on May 19 this year, the federal cabinet constituted a six-member cabinet committee under Razak Dawood. The

aviation minister was one of its members.

Dr Ishrat Hussain, the convener of the Institutional Reforms Committee, had also participated in the proceedings.

The source said the cabinet committee was expected to submit its recommendations to the federal cabinet.

There is every likelihood that the cabinet committee may not meet again and instead, finalise its recommendations for the cabinet.

Two bills ready to draft legislative bills are ready one aimed at replacing the existing CAA Ordinance of 1960 while strengthening the scope of the regulatory body in accordance with the international commitment.

The second bill proposes amendments to the CAA Ordinance of 1982 for ensuring establishment of an airport company under Companies Act of 2017 and enabling the companies to own the title and assets of airports ordered by the federal government.

The law, however, allows the government to transfer shares of the company to the private sector, besides allowing the transfer of employees from the CAA to the company on the same terms and conditions.

Originally, the source said, the plan to outsource airports was envisaged during the previous government of PML-N, but the scheme was shelved during its last days.

When the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf came to power, it decided to go ahead with the plan.

Now the CAA board has asked the Change Management Committee to go through the functional separation within the CAA and bring back the plan for consideration of the board by incorporating all the concerns expressed during the meeting, including security issues.

The segregation plan of the government includes outsourcing different airports in two phases corporatisation of airports in the first phase for attracting private investors, while the second phase suggests completion of this transaction after co-opting the Privatization Commission by appointing financial advisers and investment banking firms.

## Breathalyser test now a must for PIA cabin crew

The management of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has made it compulsory for its cabin crew to take a breathalyser test to know how much alcohol they have in their blood before they are permitted to board the flight.

In a directive issued by the PIA's medical division, which has come into effect immediately, all the cabin crew must undergo medical check-up before boarding the flights.

The notification issued by the medical division said the test would be carried out in the cabin crew briefing rooms by flight surgeon/medical officer or the ground staff supervised by the flight surgeon.

It said all the operating cabin crews are required to undergo the test before operating flights on a 'must basis'.

The move came after the Civil Aviation Authority took notice of smoking in the cockpit and the cabin and issued directives to ensure enforcement of SOPs about smoking in the aircraft.

Earlier, the Civil Aviation Authority used to conduct tests of pilots and cockpit crew only, and now the PIA would make it mandatory to test its air hosts as well.

Meanwhile, the PIA has made arrangements to repatriate Pakistanis stranded in France.

As part of the plan, the PIA will now operate chartered flights from Paris to Pakistan from Aug 15 to repatriate Pakistanis stranded in France.

The decision to operate chartered flights was taken in the wake of European Safety Agency's ban on PIA flights. Now the passengers will be able to directly travel to Pakistan from France by chartered flights.

The PIA said the first special flight will be operated from Paris to Islamabad on Aug 15, while another flight for Paris will take off from Islamabad on Aug 16.

According to the flight schedule, a flight will depart for Islamabad from Paris on Aug 29 and another flight will take off for Paris from Islamabad on Aug 30.

The Islamabad airport management has taken all precautionary measures, including social distancing, to the prevent spread of coronavirus and safety of passengers.

## PIA not being privatised, Senate told



The Senate was informed on recently that the national flag carrier was not on the privatisation list.

Winding up a discussion on a calling-attention notice on suspension of PIA flights in European Union countries, Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said the restructuring of the Pakistan International Airlines was on the cards.

He rejected the allegation that his statement on dubious licences of pilots was an effort to bring the state-owned airline to the verge of collapse to pave way for its privatisation.

He said the European Aviation Safety Agency's (EASA) ban on PIA flights in EU countries and three cities of the UK had been imposed neither due to the PIA plane crash in Karachi nor because of his statement that some of PIA pilots possessed fake degrees. 'This is an old issue as the PIA has been facing questions on safety standards since 2007.

The minister said this was not the first time that the EASA had suspended PIA operations in EU countries. The operations of some of the PIA planes had remained banned from 2007 to 2009 on safety issues and after this, the airline was under surveillance due to safety hazards.

The EASA had in 2019 given its six observations on the PIA to comply with till June 30, 2020. 'Five of its observations have been addressed and the sixth one on safety standards has yet to be complied with,' he added.

The minister said the ban would remain in force for two months till the end of August, but the government was going into appeal by the end of July.

He said the issue of fake licences of PIA pilots was old before the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) came to power and the Supreme Court had taken suo motu notice of alleged fake degrees possessed by employees of the airline in 2018. These people were recruited before 2018. He said the degrees of 17 pilots and many from technical staff, ground handlers and cabin crew had turned out to be fake during a verification exercise carried out on the directives of the apex court and over 600 employees were sacked.

The minister agreed that the examination process to issue licences to the pilots was changed from manual to computerised in 2012 and this led to use of unfair means through illegally accessing passwords. He said an inquiry board formed in 2019 had put a question mark on the credentials of 262 pilots and said their licences were dubious. He said criminal cases would be lodged against those who

issued these licences as money was involved in the matter. The minister said the reports that US President Donald Trump was interested in purchasing PIA's Roosevelt Hotel in New York were wrong. He said this was also wrong to say that the government wanted to induct PAF or Shaheen Airways pilots into the PIA after sacking its pilots.

'We will not privatise PIA rather bring reforms in it and restructure it,' he said, adding that the government wanted to bring the airline back to its days of glory.

## Emirates offers free global cover for virus-related costs

Emirates has offered free global cover (medical bills for travellers) for coronavirus-related costs, saying it will cover medical and quarantine costs of its customers regardless of their class of travel or destination.

This cover is immediately effective for customers flying on Emirates until Oct 31, 2020 (first flight to be completed on or before Oct 31). It is valid for 31 days from the moment they fly the first sector of their journey.

Emirates said in a press release on Friday July 24 that it is the first airline in the world to offer free global cover for Covid-19-related costs.

Emirates customers can travel with confidence, as the airline will cover medical expenses of up to EUR 150,000 and quarantine costs of EUR 100 per day for 14 days, should they be diagnosed with Covid-19 during their travel, while they are away from home.

Emirates Group Chairman and Chief Executive Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, said: "Under the directive of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, Emirates is proud to lead the way in boosting confidence for international travel.

Unique facility becomes effective immediately

"We know people are yearning to fly as borders around the world as it gradually reopens, but they are seeking flexibility and assurances should something unforeseen happen during their travel."

He added: "Emirates has worked hard to put in place measures at every step of the customer journey to mitigate risk of infection, and we have also revamped our booking policies to offer flexibility.

"We are now taking it to the next level, by being the first in the industry to offer our customers free global cover for Covid-19 medical expenses and quarantine costs should they incur these costs during their travel.

"It is an investment on our part, but

we are putting our customers first, and we believe they will welcome this initiative."

This cover for Covid-19-related medical expenses and quarantine costs is offered by Emirates free of cost to its customers regardless of class of travel or destination.

This cover is immediately effective for customers flying on Emirates until Oct 31 (first flight to be completed on or before Oct 31). It is valid for 31 days from the moment they fly the first sector of their journey.

This means Emirates customers can continue to benefit from the added assurance of this cover, even if they travel onwards to another city after arriving at their Emirates destination.

Customers do not need to register or fill in any forms before they travel, and they are not obligated to utilise this cover provided by Emirates.

Any impacted customer who has been diagnosed with Covid-19 during their travel simply has to contact a dedicated hotline to avail of assistance and cover.

The hotline number, and details of what Covid-19-related expenses are covered, is available on [www.emirates.com/ COVID19](http://www.emirates.com/COVID19) assistance.

Emirates has implemented a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the customer journey to ensure the safety of its customers and employees on the ground and in the air, including distribution of complimentary hygiene kits containing masks, gloves, hand sanitiser and antibacterial wipes to all customers. For more information on these measures and the services available on each flight.

Earlier, Emirates had 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.



## Keep running: Aligning technology with business continuity

Small and medium businesses (SMBs) form a major part of Asia's economy more than 90 percent of businesses here are from this sector, and they account for over half of the workforce, contributing significantly to both GDP and exports, according to Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

They are also one of the sectors hardest hit by the current situation. Already faced with skills shortages and difficulties in accessing capital funding, many do not have the technology in place to help them cut costs, automate processes and successfully adapt to supporting both employees and customers from a distance.

Fortunately, many have already started on a digital transformation journey. At the end of 2019, International Data Corporation (IDC) found that two-fifths of Asia's smaller businesses were already executing strategic plans of action in this area, with a similar number planning to start. To help with this, many governments worldwide are pushing policies aimed to help SMBs weather the current business climate.

While we do not know how the situation will evolve, IDC advises 'Future SMBs' to be data-driven, customer-centric, highly automated and take the initiative to continually experiment, learn and iterate.

What can SMBs do to stay afloat in the future?

Data is king

With digital taking precedence over physical footprints as friendly, face-to-face interactions are kept to a minimum, data insight becomes the main way businesses can build customer trust, brand loyalty and maintain business. Every text, email, transaction or contact has the potential to speak volumes, especially if it can be real-time.

Providing SMBs an entry into this area are cloud technologies that are making previously enterprise-only capabilities accessible to the masses by their nature of being quickly and easily available and being highly affordable.

For instance, access to reliable, elastic and secure cloud infrastructure has allowed Vitarich, a feed mill company in Philippines, to modernise its business operations and gain real-time and secure access to its data. As well as being a cost-effective technology, Vitarich is able to cut reliance on third-party consultants and reskill its in-house developers. They now can produce insightful reports quickly to give management data-driven insight into

feed and livestock operations, competitors' activity and fluctuating poultry prices. The platform also provides a base for Vitarich to be able to continue business as usual with employees conveniently working from home on Oracle Cloud.

Innovate (on the cloud) to live another day

While survival, rather than growth, is the priority for businesses in 2020, according to research from Gartner, innovation should stay in mind. In fact, periods of disruption are often the times to embrace opportunity as well as tackle challenges.

SMBs should make use of their well-known agility, steadfastness and innovative heart to harness new tools for their business, where possible. Cloud can provide a viable test bed for businesses to develop, test and deploy new initiatives, such as an online ordering site. Through the right cloud infrastructure, organizations can speed up their dev/test and deploy cycles.

In times when businesses may be struggling with changing regulations, Artificial Intelligence (AI)-powered digital assistants is a way to provide a form of business continuity to customers and responding to questions with the likes of standard operating procedures or frequently asked questions. Human customer service agents can then prioritize answering feedback that the chatbots cannot answer.

Security risks aplenty

Security is another key area and one that challenges even the biggest organizations. No wonder, according to

the third annual Oracle and KPMG Cloud Threat Report, 92 percent of IT professionals say that they do not trust their organization's data centers are well prepared as compared to public cloud services. And with activities that were once fully secured behind corporate firewalls and security monitoring services moving behind consumer routers, the challenges and risks have only grown.

The example of IMEX Pan Pacific Group (IPPG), a retail business in Vietnam, is perhaps one to look to on how cloud can help. Using a complete and unified suite of cloud technologies, the company has gained an integrated suite that allows it to manage huge volumes of data from the inventory and warehousing of its retail business efficiently and securely. This includes financial data across its many IPPG subsidiaries, run on Oracle Fusion Cloud Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), providing the company with a single, accurate and real-time view.

Technology certainly does not solve all problems but can help 'Future SMBs' to be more adaptable both now and for our rapidly changing future. Cloud and other emerging technologies help give you ways to automate processes, and allow you to keep your business open, communicate clearly, engagingly and transparently with customers, employees and stakeholders. And as technology is helping you keep the lights on you may now have more time to innovate (exploring other channels to do business for instance) to ensure that any digital transformation is far from lip service and will be essential to your business continuity.





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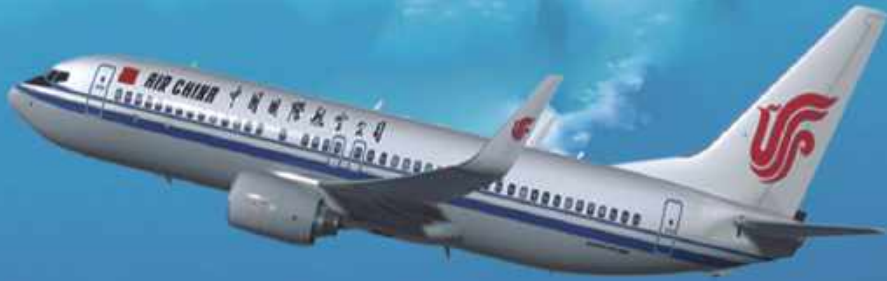
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CA946	伊斯兰堡-卡拉奇-北京 Islamabad-Karachi-Beijing	20:30-00:05-09:10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	A330-200



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# Startling -- Developments

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

China and Iran have drafted a comprehensive military and trade partnership. The deal will make way for about \$400 billion worth of Chinese investment into Iran's key sectors i.e. energy and military developments, for the next 25 years.



This agreement would lead to closer military relations between Beijing and Tehran, including joint military exercises, weapons developments and intelligence sharing. It would also increase Chinese investments in Iranian banking, telecommunications and transportation. The reported agreement also includes that China would help in building infrastructure for 5G tele-communication network in Iran. It is reported that the deal had been first proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his 2016 visit to Tehran, and the proposed draft was approved by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif over the last couple of weeks. The Iranian officials have publically acknowledged that there is a 'pending agreement with China' which hopefully will be approved by their Parliament because of its high utility and bilateral enhancement of trade relations. Beijing is also still to disclose its terms; Iranian government has meanwhile approved the draft of 25-year deal with China on economic and political cooperation; the deal being of more importance for the whole region. Iran's foreign ministry spokesman, Abbas Mousavi, said it was a proud moment for the Iranian diplomatic history.

Tehran has not revealed yet, the full details of the agreement, but a previous report by the Petroleum Economists suggest that Iran is set to grant huge concessions to China, including significant discounts on oil and gas, and the ability to delay payments for up to two years. It has also allowed China to pay in soft currencies. China's more pronounced interest in Iran should alert the US to review its past approach to Tehran. The deal comes at a time when the Iranian economy has been completely damaged by US sanctions, which reproached that any country in the world that deals with Iran would be cut off from global financial system. Presumably this stance will change soon, owing to the Iran-Chinese joint ventures.

The estrangement between China and America owing to COVID-19 had peaked, as Trump named this COVID-19 as 'Chinese Virus'. There are also irritants in the south Chinese sea between China and America and highly objectionable sanctions imposed on Iran thereafter, quite arrogantly. Clashes between China and India due to their Ladakh dispute have disrupted peace in the region. Nascent tensions have engulfed Iran and India too, because of the Chabahar port and railway track to develop from Chabahar to Zahidan, as was agreed between them. The project was started by both India and Iran, to extend trade opportunities to Afghanistan, Central Asia and Europe. But Modi's recent enchantment with US and his anti-Islamic Hindutva- (Hindu nationalist) based foreign policy isolating

Iran to create an alternative-trade-corridor to Afghanistan and CARs states, thus bypassing Pakistan. However the cover of Chabahar Port was also exploited to establish its spy and terrorism network against Pakistan. Kulbhushan Yadav, a serving Indian Navy Commander, was settled in Chabahar as the spymaster to organize terrorist activities in Baluchistan to target CPEC-BRI and Karachi, to threaten Pakistan's economy like it had helped MQM based in London. Yadav was picked up by Pakistani intelligence on one of his forays into Baluchistan. The Indians are also sponsoring dissident elements like BLS, BRA to carry out terrorist activities. Their operations are controlled from New Delhi and are RAW engineered and sponsored with voluminous money.

Prime Minister Khan's regime has



it in the world, has lost a project which was more beneficial for India itself. Iran will now complete its Chabahar project with the help coming from China. China has provided 400 billion dollars for this project, as the relations between China and Iran are fast growing in the form of trade and financial policies and India owing to its fallacious policies with every country of the region, has lost its metal. Both Iran and China have expelled India, in a way strategically. This happens to go in favour of Pakistan which is consistently pursuing a balanced foreign policy and is better placed due to its CPEC-BRI collaboration and the US's need of Pakistan to help resolve its Afghanistan imbroglio.

In its efforts to destabilize Pakistan and divert its attention from Kashmir and the LOC, India has activated Pakistan's western front, in order to engage it militarily. India had ostensibly invested in Chabahar Port too and other projects in

initiated the Diamer Bhasa Dam construction. India has come up with the tactical assumption to sabotage this move by Pakistan. A report disseminated on Indian media that the dam would induce the ecological catastrophe in the region and intensify the number of earthquakes by 300 in one month. On the contrary, Pakistan dismissed the inadequate report as it was based on fallacious features. Pakistan is constructing the dam with the help of China and India does not appreciate this. Beyond that, India also feels alone on the global stage as Iran expelled it in the Chabahar Port project which will now be construed by China. India had committed another folly and that was its intrusion in the Eastern Ladakh which brought embarrassment to India with heavy casualties and loss of its strategically important territory besides a bashing-humiliation in the eyes of the world. Trump has now realized that he had betted on a wrong horse.



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PM Modi is on record having stated earlier that CPEC does not suit India. Obviously he meant by his last month's military action taken, to obstruct the CPEC route via Gilgit-Baltistan. Modi is known for his abrupt and unwise steps like his mentor Trump, because of which his army men in Ladakh got a bashing and a humiliation by having been beaten by Chinese soldier's military boot-kicks, the scene which went viral throughout the world. Modi had attacked eastern Ladakh, on the directions of his masters, to engage China in the mountains and then attack Gilgit - Baltistan to cut off the CPEC route; a thinking much larger than his physical and mental size and capability. He had to change the plan soon after receiving an unforgettable thrashing of his soldiers on the Chinese border and sensing the great unity between China and Pakistan that he could face both China and Pakistan's armies on its triangular borders; he has immediately receded to his *auqat* (worth) and preferred to continue shelling the civilian houses in the Azad Kashmir border villages; a timid Hindu specific approach.

According to the 'Pakistan Economic Survey 2019-20' the installed electricity generation capacity reached 37,402 MW in 2020, whereas the total demand of Pakistan is 25,000 MW. This huge surplus is due to CPEC's 17 energy projects which have been installed in various cities in Pakistan and 13,000 MW energy added in the national grid stations. So the question is this: if Pakistan's maximum energy demand is 25,000 MW and the installed capacity is 37,000 MW, so is there really an energy crisis or is it just an incompetency on the part of the government institutions? Another part of the Economic Survey 2019-20 says that the transmission and distribution capacity is stalled at approximately 22,000 MW. Some simple math will help understand this anomaly.

So, we have the capacity to meet our demand, but the problem lies in the part of transmission. Every new government installs new power plants and increases the installed capacity, but no government has focused on improving the transmission and distribution capacity. Pakistan's energy problem can easily be solved if experts are given the authority and distribution capacity, and efficiently so, if the government (any government) is serious enough in addressing and handling this issue faithfully, rather than focusing on building more power plants. It is important to work on transmission. Once Pakistan gets uninterrupted light, its economy will boost and attract more foreign investors.

## Pacific airlines enters strategic partnership with Sabre to power industry recovery and growth

Low cost carrier Pacific Airlines and Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), the leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, recently announced a strategic new agreement in a deal which further cements Sabre's strength in the Vietnamese aviation market as well as its long-standing and valued relationship with Vietnam Airlines Group.

Under the new deal, Pacific Airlines will adopt the Sabre Passenger Service System (PSS) as it moves forward with ambitious plans to play a key role, along with national carrier parent company Vietnam Airlines Group, in the recovery and future growth of APAC's travel and tourism industry post Covid-19. Vietnam Airlines has been a Sabre PSS user for more than a decade and, with this new agreement, both airlines will benefit from a single, integrated passenger platform to enable improved operational efficiencies and a frictionless experience for travellers, as Pacific Airlines prepares to resume regular scheduled services with Sabre's PSS. Combined teams expect to complete the transition quickly from the legacy third party system to the Sabre PSS.

Sabre PSS is designed to automate sales and reservations as well as to help airlines to maximize revenue opportunities, enhance partnerships and create the most efficient airport experiences possible for travellers. The Sabre

PSS comprehensive system has already allowed Sabre's valued partners to realize increased revenue through merchandising, codeshare agreements and alliance partners, plus cost savings from better managed inventory and schedules, and shopping and reservations capabilities. Airlines are also able to gain an improved understanding of market trends through the use of real-time data which finds problems and creates solutions to maximize the value of every seat sold.

"Vietnam Airlines Group is delighted to build on our existing agreement with Sabre, our trusted and long-term technology partner," said Trinh Hong Quang, Vietnam Airlines Executive Vice President and Pacific Airlines Chairman. "It is especially important right now to have the most robust, agile and advanced technology solutions possible to propel our business into the future. While everyone in the travel industry is experiencing an unprecedented situation, we are very much focused on moving forward with our PSS Transformation program to place us in the best position for

recovery, growth and future expansion."

This latest agreement follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Sabre and Vietnam Airlines Group, which was signed last year by Dave Shirk, President, Travel Solutions and Duong Tri Thanh, Vietnam Airlines President & CEO, at a high-profile signing ceremony at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi; attended by US President Donald Trump and President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong. The MOU described Vietnam Airlines' intent to significantly expand its strategic relationship with Sabre that included innovative technology from the Sabre Air Vision and Air Centre portfolio to complement the Sabre PSS platform, as well as having a long-term content distribution arrangement through the Sabre Global Distribution System (GDS). The latest agreement enhances this relationship even further to include the group's LCC division.

"The MOU signing was one of many proud moments in the shared history of Vietnam Airlines and Sabre," said Mr Quang. "As the national flag carrier of Vietnam, we have also been very proud to be part of recent repatriation efforts to help passengers return to their homeland. Now, moving forward, we are excited to be leveraging Sabre's agile technology to play an important part in the recovery of Vietnam's tourism industry, which is already showing strong signs of resilience."

"We're thrilled to be able to further expand our already valued and historic relationship with Vietnam Airlines," said Dave Shirk, President, Travel Solutions, Sabre. "Vietnam has made great progress in recovery from the pandemic and Vietnam Airlines is at the forefront of this recovery. This new agreement is of strategic importance to both Sabre and Pacific Airlines as we move forward together to come through Covid-19 and beyond in a position of strength. Sabre has already clearly set out initiatives to accelerate growth in our own business and that of our partners, including unlocking LCC market potential by supporting fast-growing low-cost carriers such as Pacific Airlines. Today's announcement demonstrates the forward-looking approach of Sabre, Pacific Airlines and Vietnam Airlines Group and our deep commitment to supporting the aviation industry in Vietnam and the wider APAC region. We're very excited that Pacific Airlines will take to the skies once more, under the Sabre PSS."

## CPEC is becoming more and more comprehensive

Speakers shed light on the salient features of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor at a webinar titled 'CPEC and its impact on the region.

The event was organised by the Karachi Council on Foreign Relations (KCFR).

CPEC Authority chairman retired Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa said the subject was very dear to the heart of every Pakistan. 'CPEC is a transformational project, a game changer for Pakistan.

The environment in the region is improving by the day, Pakistan is becoming the centre of all the development, and peace and prosperity is becoming visible in our lifetime. We have to take advantage of this.

He said CPEC was planned in three phases. The first was meant to fill the gaps in our infrastructure in communication and energy.

Giving example of the roads, the eastern route from Peshawar to Karachi, he said: 'We've just completed the Multan to Sukkur motorway. Now one section of that road is left, which is Sukkur to Hyderabad. Similarly, hard work on the western route is going on. The western route mostly passes through remote areas which can uplift the economy of those areas and it will be great in order to mobilise all logistics from China to Pakistan.

Mentioning the priority areas in the second phase, he said the focus was on mass industrialisation through special economic zones.

There are a total of nine zones to be built and they're working on three prioritised zones Rashakai, Faisalabad and Dhabeji adding one more in Balochistan.

On agriculture, he said the focus was on three things: enhancing the yield of our agriculture, induction of technology and water conservation and farm management. Then there is the area of science and technology for which they're working with the ministry of science and technology.

Mr Bajwa said: 'We are taking CPEC into the tourism sector. It is one area we have a lot [of] potential but suffering because of a lack of system and infrastructure.

China praises Pakistan's cooperation Ambassador of People's Republic of China to Pakistan Yao Jing said the Chinese government and its people appreciated the solidarity, support and



CPEC Authority chairman Asim Saleem Bajwa speaks at the event.

assistance from the Pakistani government and its people when China was suffering from the coronavirus outbreak.

Just in the morning, he had discussed with the president of Pakistan the next stage of collaboration in fighting the pandemic. In the wake of the virus, several changes have come about, first of which is its effect on global economy.

China is working hard to revive its economy. The Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan and his government are also doing a lot to revive the economy. With CPEC they're trying to adapt [to the change]. Several projects, especially in the area of construction, have started. The prime minister of Pakistan made it clear that the construction sector is the key to the revival of the economy.

Mr Yao said they're going to shift more resources to meet challenges of the prevention and control of the coronavirus cases, doing more for the medical sector.

Then there is cooperation between the two countries in the industrial sector, in science and technology, tourism and water resources management.

We are in close collaboration with various departments and ministries of the Pakistani government,' he said, adding that the fundamental of the economy was based on manufacturing and production, so they're going to help increase manufacturing and production capacities of Pakistani exporters.

The ambassador said internationally, a lot of developments happened during the pandemic, but the basic concept of CPEC was cooperation. 'It's a platform first between China and Pakistan.

There are regional opportunities to offer for the regional countries as well.

The task for China and Pakistan is that we do our best in regional and international cooperation platforms. CPEC is becoming more and more comprehensive, moving from economic to social sectors, from

government cooperation to people-to-people cooperation.

As far as the Chinese government is concerned, we are devoted to this project, he assured the hosts.

\$62bn CPEC project keeps on expanding President Arif Alvi in his plenary address said in the [history of] the world, peace was always related to

the fact that there were trade routes.

China and Pakistan had a great Silk Road which was reestablished. As long as there's movement of goods, there's prosperity and trade between regions. One country more prosperous is able to import goods to less prosperous regions. Therefore, the BRI initiative of China is very important.

He said he's glad that CPEC had made a lot of progress. It's a \$62 billion project which keeps on expanding as the need for communication through rail, fibre, energy, etc, and such routes become more popularised.

We will have to keep increasing that infrastructure, he insisted.

As peace returns to Afghanistan, the president pointed out, it's very important that trade takes place from Gwadar.

With peace progressing in Afghanistan, the contribution of China and Pakistan to rebuilding Afghanistan and CPEC will play an important part. 'In the CPEC corridor 19 projects have been completed, about 28 are in the phase of implementation and 41 in the pipeline.

And this will keep getting bigger and bigger.

President Alvi said Gwadar is the crown jewel of the CPEC corridor because it links us to the Chinese northwestern region as well as to Central Asia. As Gwadar expands and industries are set up, we need desalination plants. So a desalination plant is also in the process'.

He then went on to highlight the cooperation between China and Pakistan in other areas, particularly those from where Pakistan has learnt from China.

KCFR chairman Ikram Sehgal thanked the guests for their participation in the webinar, which was moderated by Aleena Agha.



## Pakistan can add \$12bn to its export proceeds by 2024`

**P**akistan can increase its exports by up to \$12 billion by 2024 even after taking into account disruptions due to Covid-19, according to the International Trade Centre's latest export potential assessment for the country.

More than half of the country's exporters struggle with domestic and foreign regulatory barriers, says Invisible Barriers to Trade Pakistan 2020: Business Perspectives. The report was prepared in collaboration with the World Bank Group's country office here.

Market frictions such as regulatory obstacles and lack of information transparency put up to \$7bn of this untapped export potential at risk especially for small businesses looking to trade more across borders, says ITC's acting Executive Director Dorothy Tembo.

There is great scope for the government of Pakistan to streamline processes, improve quality management and work with exporters to provide consistent, transparent and timely information,' she said.

The report, based on a survey of 1,152 importers and exporters, identifies the toughest trade hurdles facing Pakistani businesses.

Almost half of these hurdles are homegrown, which means the government can fix many of the problems holding back exporters. The report suggests ways for the government and the private sector to crank up competitiveness by addressing issues such as export inspections, tax refunds, and certification.

It identifies the most challenging non-tariff measures that Pakistani businesses face which include: complying with technical requirements, lack of trade-related information and inadequate domestic infrastructure.

Women entrepreneurs also face social constraints and a general lack of support in government agencies and other institutions.

The NTM Business Survey in Pakistan finds that 49 per cent of small enterprises and 57pc of medium-sized firms have trouble with non-tariff measures, while 54pc of large companies consider them to be burdensome.

Almost half of the challenges these



*Domestic regulations are creating hindrances to boost exports.*

firms reported stem from Pakistani rules on matters such as export inspections, tax refunds, and export certification. These invisible barriers to trade affect exporters and importers differently, and their impact varies across sectors.

The publication finds that regulations and the procedures to comply with them are difficult for 51pc of Pakistani exporters and 46pc of importers. Most agricultural exporters (60pc) especially those dealing with fresh and processed foods experience difficulties with these measures, as most countries have stringent regulations in place to protect human health and the environment.

In comparison, 47pc of the Pakistani companies that export manufactured goods face problems. Conformity assessment is the top challenge with requirements like testing and product certification are a bigger concern (41pc) than rules related to quality standards, safety, and production processes (4pc).

Pakistani exporters say complying with European rules is difficult and the accompanying conformity assessment procedures are too strict. The neighbouring SAARC countries account for only 5pc of the problems that local exporters experience with foreign regulations.

At the individual partner country level, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom are responsible for the most reported regulations, each accounting for 8pc. German measures account for 6pc, while Oman and the United States for 5pc each.

Domestic regulations create obstacles. Meanwhile, local regulations account for about 45pc of the troublesome measures that exporters face.

Most of these involve export inspections (31pc), tax refunds (27pc), and export certification (10pc).

Pakistani policies cause 55pc of the problems reported by exporters of manufactured goods, and one-third of agriculture. Large firms (52pc) face more problems with domestic export regulations than small and medium-sized businesses (45pc).

Exporters say the regulations are overly strict or compliance is difficult in just 12pc of the cases. In contrast, the procedures are the problem in 70pc of the cases and most of these occur in Pakistan itself. The remaining 18pc are difficult due to both the regulation and related procedures, of which more than two-thirds occur in the country.

The most important ones are slow processes on the necessary paperwork and high fees and charges to obtain required certification or testing.

Informal payments and inadequate facilities for testing and certification in Pakistan were also frequently reported.

As a way forward, the survey identifies numerous challenges, especially regarding export-quality management and infrastructure in the country. For instance, Pakistan should increase the capacity of local laboratories to carry out required testing and certification.

Efforts need to be made to strengthen the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises to comply with international market access requirements. The absence of a proper warehouse and cold storage facilities at major border points is a serious problem that must be fixed. Trade procedures need to be streamlined and paperwork at government and customs offices be automated to reduce the administrative burdens and costs shouldered by Pakistani exporters.

Traders need a proper portal that can provide reliable export and import-related information which should also guide on trade regulations and procedures, provide facts about relevant agencies, port authorities, and customs.

Finally, Pakistani trade regulations and processes must be streamlined to facilitate exports. A policy rethink is needed on advance payment restrictions on raw material imports and processes involving the duty drawback scheme. Export inspection processes at the customs also should be improved.



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## Increase in meat exports comes at a price

**P**AKISTAN'S exports of meat and meat products that declined in 2017-18 owing to the delays in payment by foreign buyers bounced back in the next two years and crossed the \$300 million mark for the first time in 2019-20. In another first, export volumes surpassed 80,000 tonnes.

In the post-Covid-19 world, Pakistan has the potential to increase its food exports. Their demand remains strong unlike the demand for non-essential items. In this context, the rise of meat exports to \$300m is a healthy development. Since the increase has come owing to larger shipments instead of the increase in the per-unit price, the government and exporters must find ways to boost the export price.

Earning higher export earnings on the back of larger volumes of a particular food item is unwise because it creates a shortage of that item in domestic markets and escalates its local prices. The increase in the local prices of beef and mutton in the past two years is as much attributable to expanded export volumes as to the other factors like higher inflation and rising cost of production.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the national average price of beef with bones rose from Rs367 per kilogram in June 2018 to Rs412 in June 2019 and Rs451 in June 2020. The per-kg price of mutton also went up from Rs773 in June 2018 to Rs860 in June 2019 and then Rs945 in June 2020.

The PBS makes it clear that these national average prices apply to the 'average quality' of beef with bones and mutton. It does not collect the prices of higher quality meat and also remains silent on the prices of veal or calf meat. It also does not collect or report the prices of beef (meat of old cows and bulls) without bones. In most retail markets of Karachi, beef without bones is currently selling at Rs550-600 per kg and calf meat at Rs650-Rs700 per kg. Mutton is selling at Rs1,100-Rs1,200 per kg.

Regardless of the vast difference in the national average prices reported by the PBS and the prevailing prices in Karachi markets, the fact remains that beef and mutton prices have risen sharply in the past two years. Since meat exports have risen substantially during these two years,

it seems advisable for policy makers to examine how higher export volumes of meat or any other food item for that matter affect local prices.

But any study launched for this purpose must not rely on the so-called lists that are issued from the commissioners offices. Those price lists now serve to entertain only netizens. For a study aimed at finding a link between export volumes and domestic prices of meat or any other food item for that matter it must be carried out by honest and capable professionals. Survey groups of reputable universities like LUMS or IBA can be used for this purpose. And, to ascertain the extent to which larger export volumes actually tend to push up local prices of food items like beef and mutton, help can be sought from reputable economic think tanks and the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

Undertaking such an exercise has become all the more necessary for lots of reasons, but some of them are very conspicuous. First, Pakistan is facing serious issues in its food security regime and food security is not just about the availability of food items it is equally about availability at affordable prices.

Second, in the post-pandemic world, countries are trying to trim non-essential imports but demand for food imports remains intact. This means our food exporters will be tempted to tap this demand.

If they try to take advantage of this strong demand only through larger export volumes without switching over to more value-added food products to fetch a higher per-unit export price, it will be devastating from our own food security point of view.

Third, Pakistan is in need of boosting its overall export earnings and, as such, unscrupulous elements in the government of the day will likely be tempted to let food exports grow even at the cost of complicating food security issues and letting food inflation rise further.

Severe wheat and sugar crises in the past two years are examples of how difficult it is to ensure the availability of even the most essential food items at affordable prices. It becomes all the more difficult due to the politicised handling of such crises. The politicised handling of complex crises does several serious damages, but the most obvious of them is

that less-than-professional media coverage fuels inflationary expectations causing a steeper rise in the prices of the same commodities.

Keeping these things in view, it is important to approach the issue of the balancing of food exports and food security in a purely professional manner free from political point-scoring and focused on obtaining the findings that can help economic managers run the economy more effectively.

## Export of fruit, greens jumps



*Reduced air freight charges facilitated mango exports in Fy20*

**F**ruit and vegetable exports grew 12.5 per cent to \$730 million in FY20 despite global pandemic and lockdown.

However, in terms of quantity the overall fruits and vegetable exports dropped by 7.6pc to 1.643 million tonnes in 2019-20.

All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed said exporters adopted realistic strategies while the federal government extended all help and took timely decisions by removing barriers to boost exports especially to Iran and Afghanistan.

He said when the Covid19 was spreading fast, the entire world was in desperate need of fruits and vegetables containing vitamins to minimize ill-effects of this pandemic. 'Pakistan grabbed this opportunity and managed to export kinno, potato and onion despite transportation and logistics issues, he added.

Cut in freight charges by PIA also facilitated mango exports to many countries.

Also a ban by Indian government on onion provided an opportunity thus leading to an increase in its exports.

## Ministry asked to explore new markets for date exports

A parliamentary panel on Friday 24 July asked Ministry of Commerce to evolve a strategy within a month to diversify export of dates to other markets following the suspension of trade ties with India.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce, led by MNA Naveed Qamar, directed the ministry to explore new markets and engage the trade and investment officers posted in Pakistani missions abroad for matchmaking efforts for date exports.

He also directed Commerce Secretary Mohammad Sualeh Ahmad Faruqi to prepare a comprehensive plan in consultation with stakeholders and present a plan before the committee in 30 days.

Pakistan is the world's fifth-largest producer of dates and exports have plummeted ever since Pakistan cut off trade ties with India last year.

According to the Ministry of Food Security data, annual date production in the country is estimated at 550,000 tonnes. Moreover, 50 per cent of this is produced in Sindh alone. The rest of it is contributed by: Punjab, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

There are around 160 varieties of date palm in the country. However, Aseel of Khairpur, Dhakki of D. L Khan and Begum Jangi of Mekran are in popular demand owing to their exotic taste. Statistics show that India, before the end of trade ties, was importing around 90pc of the country's total dry dates. The bulk of locally-produced dates are exported dry as the country lacks requisite facilities for processing and branding.

The standing committee discussed in detail the ban on trade with India, especially on dates.

Commerce Secretary Faruqi informed the committee that after the withdrawal of most-favored nation status from Pakistan, India has imposed 200pc duty on all goods originating in or exported from the country.

The increase in duties is in violation of Article 7 of the South Asian Free Trade Association's Trade Liberalisation Program. Therefore, Pakistan has formally suspended trade with India, secretary informed the committee members.

He further said that Pakistan exports \$107.4 million worth of fresh or dried

dates to the world. The exports have been affected since India imposed 200pc duty on goods originating from Pakistan. Earlier, duty on date imports from Pakistan was at 25pc.



*An elderly man loads a tractor trolley with dates in Khairpur. Pakistan is world's fifth largest producer of this fruit.*

To minimise the impact, Faruqi said the commerce ministry had taken several steps, including exploration of new markets to divert exports in order to reduce the losses incurred as a result of trade suspension between the two neighbours.

## Exports to Qatar, Saudi Arabia rise despite Covid-19

The Ministry of Commerce informed the National Assembly that exports have seen an upsurge in few countries despite the global economic slowdown since March.

The ministry shared details with the lower house in response to a series of questions demanding explanations on government-led measures towards promoting exports.

In the post-Covid-19 period, exports have seen a sizable increase in two major destinations: Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Despite Covid-19, Saudi Arabia has emerged as one of the top export destinations for Pakistani goods in the Middle East as exports to the peninsula increased by 34 per cent in June.

The volume of bilateral trade between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia increased to \$2.181 billion in FY20. Exports to Saudi Arabia have seen a consistent increase from \$336.9 million in FY17 to \$342.08m in FY19 and \$446.18m FY20. However, the imports from Saudi Arabia have declined from \$3.213bn FY18 to \$1.735bn in FY20.

Meanwhile, in the March-June period, exports to Qatar also increased to \$50.13m compared to \$39.33m in March-

He said that Pakistan exported dates worth \$14.20m in 2019-20 to Nepal, compared to meager \$0.03m in 2018-19, registering a hefty increase in a year's time.

Pakistan also exported dry dates worth \$1.2m in 2019-20 to Singapore and \$1.13m to Thailand for the first time in 2019-20. He said other vital export destinations where date exports witnessed an increasing trend include UAE, Kuwait, Oman, Bangladesh, Turkey, etc.

He assured the committee that the commerce ministry would organise meetings for dates exporters' delegations in Germany, Australia and Netherlands.

Date growers have asked for government support to modernise production technologies in order to increase yields on date production. They also demanded easy loans on low markups.

Meanwhile, in other business, the committee passed the Marine Insurance (Amendment) Bill, 2019 moved by MNA Riaz Fatyana. However, the committee deferred the Safeguard Measures (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in absence of MNA Muhammad Sanaullah Khan Masti Khal who moved the bill.

June FY19.

Over the last few years, Pakistan's trade with Qatar has increased. In FY20, exports to the country jumped 36pc.

Despite the pandemic, Pakistan's exports to Qatar have seen an upward trend throughout Feb-June. Exports in June alone increased by 40pc.

Qatar has also allowed import of Pakistani origin rice after several years of ban after low quality rice consignments were sent to the country back in 2012. So far, Pakistan has exported 4,000 tonnes of basmati rice to Qatar.

Bilateral trade between Pakistan and Singapore was recorded at \$679m in FY20 with the trade balance heavily in favor of the latter. Pakistan's exports to Singapore stood at \$52m while imports were recorded at \$632m FY20

Pakistan is also exploring the possibility of setting up an institutional mechanism such as the Joint Trade Committee with Singapore.

Such an institutional arrangement will play a key role in deepening trade ties as well as economic diplomacy between the two countries.

Trade between Norway and Pakistan is showing gradual increase with the



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balance in favor of Pakistan. Pak-Norway bilateral trade has increased from \$69.06m in 2013-14 to \$81.47m in 2018-19. Pakistan's exports to the country have increased from \$55.16m in 2013-14 to \$57.46m in 2018-19.

To promote trade relations and gain access to the Norwegian market, the government has initiated negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) states, namely Norway, Switzerland, Iceland, and Liechtenstein. Collectively, these countries offer a import market of around \$360bn. The government is actively engaging with the EFTA states for concluding an FTA between the two in areas including trade in goods, services, and investment.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's exports to Denmark increased from \$102.13m in FY14 to \$184.91m in FY19 whereas imports decreased from \$176.31m in FY14 to \$90.46m in FY19.

On the other hand, Pakistan's exports to Bangladesh dropped from \$752.67m in FY19 to \$654.79m in FY20. Even though the trade remained in surplus this year, the overall volume, including exports and imports, decreased in the wake of Covid-19.

The government has included Bangladesh in the List 'A' countries since October 2019 facilitating travel of businessmen to Pakistan.

However, the Bangladesh government is yet to reciprocate the offer.

Pakistan's exports to Kyrgyzstan stood at \$1.75m in FY20 against \$1.81m in the previous year, while imports stood at \$0.114m during the year under review. Pakistan's major exports to Kyrgyzstan are medicament mixtures, razors and razor blades, instruments, and appliances used in medical, surgical, dental, fruit and vegetable juices unfermented.

Pakistan's major imports from Kyrgyzstan include dried vegetables and live animals.

Draft memorandum of understanding to establish a Joint Working Group to enhance trade cooperation has been shared with the Kyrgyz Republic. However, Kyrgyz side is yet to respond.

The National Assembly was also informed about several measures to promote trade with Japan.

## Shortage of hot water plants hurting mango exports to Iran

The delay in the approval of six additional hot water treatment plants (HWTPs) by the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) has hit the enormous export potential of Pakistani mangoes to Iran, the All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) said on Monday 20 July.

In a letter addressed to the Minister for National Food Security & Research Syed Fakhr Imam, PVFA Chairman Abdul Malik said that deliberate delays and biased approach of the DPP favouring some HWTPs was hurting mango exports.

Iran is a promising international market for the export of Pakistani mangoes. In 2019, Pakistan earned foreign exchange of \$21 million by sending 30,000 metric tonnes of mangoes to Iran. By reducing the cost of production, Pakistan could increase the volume of export by at least thirty per cent, the letter said.

All mangoes exported to Iran have to pass through the hot water treatment process to meet phytosanitary requirements.

The PVFA alleged that DPP which falls under the Ministry of National Food Security and Research is favouring 'approved' HWTPs in Sindh which are taking full 'financial advantage' of the situation, while keeping the six proposed facilities inoperative.

The association is making efforts to increase the number of approved HWTPs to bring down the cost of treatment.

Much before the start of the mango season, on the insistence of the PVFA, PPD invited an Iranian quarantine team to visit Pakistan and inspect additional HWTPs so that consignments could cross the Iranian border without delays and cost of treatment could be reduced to half.

The Iranian team visited Pakistan in September and October last year and inspected 19 HWTP in various cities. However, the DPP did not share results of the inspection even six months after the visit. After repeated reminders, the department informed

that the Iranian team approved only five facilities.

Following the serious concern expressed by the association, the Iranian quarantine department asked DPP to carry out re-inspection of the additional six disapproved plants on their behalf in view of Covid-19 situation so that minor deficiencies could be removed.

Without intimating the association of this development, the DPP carried out a 'technical audit' of three HWTPs. Moreover, the review of previous inspection report was carried out in such a short notice that the owners of HWTP had to spend about Rs600,000 to make the plant ready for re-inspection in short notice, the PVFA letter said.

Mr Malik, in his letter, alleged that DPP used planned and deliberate tactics so that mango season in Sindh comes to an end and leaves no space for these plants to get approved and begin operations. This was 'purposely done' to ensure that a few 'favourite approved HWTPs' can maintain their monopoly and gain huge financial benefits.

The letter added that SOPs were being violated as mango consignments from Punjab, which should have been processed by HWTPs in the province, instead have phytocertificates issued by facilities located in Sindh.

The association urged the minister to carry out a forensic audit of DPP for the past five years which would reveal more wrongdoings on the part of the department. DPP lacks manpower to cope with a wide range of tasks related to imports and exports and also needs major reforms to improve its efficiency, the PVFA suggested.



Mangoes are undergoing hot water treatment at a plant.



## Hagia Sophia restored as mosque



*Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recites from the Holy Quran*

**T**urkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday 24 July led the first prayers attended by thousands in Hagia Sophia since the iconic Istanbul cathedral was converted back into a mosque.

The Unesco World Heritage site in Istanbul was first built as a cathedral in the Christian Byzantine Empire but was converted into a mosque after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453.

The Council of State, the highest administrative court, on July 10 unanimously cancelled a 1934 decision by modern Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk to turn it into a museum, saying it was registered as a mosque in its property deeds.

Erdogan then swiftly ordered the building to reopen for Muslim worship, deeply angering the Christian community and further straining relations with Nato ally Greece.

He recited a verse from the Holy Quran on Friday 24 July while wearing an Islamic skullcap after earlier recitations from the holy book in the morning inside Hagia Sophia.

The sounds of the call to prayer from its four minarets reverberated around the area and on Turkish television screens.

Erdogan said 350,000 people had taken part in the prayer in and around Hagia Sophia, but it was not possible to independently verify the figure.

The head of the state religious affairs agency, Ali Erbas, later delivered the Friday sermon inside Hagia Sophia, holding a sword as a symbol of conquest.

"The reopening of Hagia Sophia... is the return of a sacred place, which had embraced believers for five centuries, to its original function," Erbas told the congregation.

Despite the coronavirus pandemic,

tight crowds formed on Friday morning around the landmark. Several people had spent the night in the area.

The prayer was also attended by Erdogan's ally and the leader of the ultranationalist MHP, Devlet Bahçeli, but none of the leaders of the opposition parties

participated.

The two men also visited the tomb of Sultan Mehmet II who conquered the city in 1453.

One of those attending Friday's prayer came especially from the Aegean region of Izmir.

"We see this as the second conquest of Istanbul," Selahattin Pamukcu, 33, told media.

Experts say Erdogan's move to reconvert Hagia Sophia is an attempt to galvanise his conservative and nationalist base amid economic uncertainty exacerbated by the virus outbreak.

Erdogan's decision has also undone part of the secular legacy of Ataturk, who wanted Hagia Sophia as a museum so as to "offer it to humanity".

The timing of the first prayer is significant. Friday is the 97th anniversary of the Treaty of Lausanne, which set modern Turkey's borders after years of conflict with Greece and Western powers.

Erdogan, who professes nostalgia for the Ottoman empire, has called for the treaty's revision in recent years.

For many Muslims, the reconversion was a landmark event.

"This is the moment when Turkey breaks its chains. Now it can do whatever



*Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accompanied by his wife, Emine, waves to supporters inside the Hagia Sophia, 2018*

it wants, without having to submit to the West," Selahattin Aydas, from Germany, said.

But the Friday prayer is set against a backdrop of tense relations between Nato allies Ankara and Athens, particularly related to Turkish hydrocarbon exploration in the eastern Mediterranean.

Greece has strongly denounced the conversion of Hagia Sophia back into a mosque, seeing it as a provocation to the "entire civilised world".

"What is happening in (Istanbul) this day is not a show of force, but proof of weakness," Greek premier Kyriakos Mitsotakis said in a statement.

"Especially to us Orthodox Christians, Hagia Sophia today is in our hearts more than ever. It is where our heart beats."

**Preservation concerns**

Church bells around Greece pealed at midday on Friday with their flags at half-mast to protest what the head of the Church of Greece, Archbishop Ieronymos, has called an "unholy act of defiling" the former cathedral.

Ankara rejects international criticism in the name of "sovereignty" and insists tourists will still be able to visit the mosque and see the mosaics.

Around 3.8 million tourists visited Hagia Sophia last year.

But not everyone was happy. Israfil, who sells carpets in a shop near Hagia Sophia, was critical of the "sensational manner" in which the reconversion took place.

"All this show is for political, electoral reasons," said Israfil who did not wish to give his full name, adding: "This same crowd won't be here next week." Some experts are concerned about the speed of the conversion as turquoise carpet was laid for the faithful to pray.

The Byzantine mosaics, plastered over for centuries when the building served as a mosque, will be hidden by curtains during prayer times since Islam bans figurative representations.



*Muslims pray outside the Hagia Sophia on Eidul Azha*

## A league for Pakistan Football

With a population of 220 million, most of them cricket crazy, football was always going to play second fiddle as a sport in Pakistan. But no one could have imagined that, one day, Pakistan would be the only nation among the 47 members of the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) without a single win in the FIFA World Cup qualifiers.

By comparison, even Bhutan with just 700,000 inhabitants has progressed to the second round of the FIFA World Cup qualification system. But why has Pakistan, a country which averaged two million viewers per game in the 2014 FIFA World Cup, and which is ranked in the top 20 countries for its number of footballers, underperformed in such a fashion? The reasons range from chronic political disputes to a severe lack of funding. But take a deeper look and you realise the missing piece is a top-tier professional football league, which acts as a hub for the entire football ecosystem.

Player development, infrastructure, funding, grassroots and clubs are the pillars on which countries have built footballing dynasties, but Pakistan has missed out badly here.

The Pakistan Premier League (PPL) was revamped in 2003 upon Faisal Saleh Heat's election as president of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF), but it hasn't changed much in the last 17 years. The league takes its roots from the National Championship that started in 1947 and, apart from a short revamping stint that saw Lifebuoy become the title sponsor under Hafiz Salman Butt (1990-93), it remains practically unchanged for the last 73 years.

Departments rule the roost and teams include the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda), the Khan Research Laboratories (KRL), the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC), the Karachi Port Trust (KPT), the Pakistan Air Force (PAF), the Pakistan Army and other government entities, which use investment in sports as evidence of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), with little desire to develop talent or professionalise their set-ups.

The few clubs that are present are primarily from Balochistan, where the fierce Chaman derby between Afghan FC and Muslim FC commands crowds in the thousands. Most of the league, though, is played silently, without any fanfare.

The entire system reeks of the Soviet Union era, where sports were essentially represented by various government entities competing against each other and offering jobs to athletes.

The world moved on. Even state departments such as CSKA (Russian Army) and Lokomotiv (Railways) Moscow have become huge brands in their own right. But Pakistan has stayed put.

In 2007, a breath of fresh air arrived in the shape of the Geo Super League, with teams based on cities and live broadcast of all the games. It gave live coverage to domestic footballers for the first time and merited a second attempt in partnership with K-Electric in 2010. But the league did not continue because the organisers and sponsors reportedly did not want to work with the PFF again.

Subsequently, the Pakistan Premier



Large crowds during a PPL match in Nushki.

League (PPL) has never bagged a regular sponsor (a five-year-deal with KASB fell through after a single season in 2009), runs on an ad-hoc basis for four to five months, and has never been broadcast on television.

You needn't look far for inspiration.

Bangladesh, after their independence in 1971, has managed to professionalise legacy football clubs and mould them into the Bangladesh Premier League, where historical names such as Dhaka Mohammedan, Sheikh Russell and Sheikh Jamal are at home with new comers such as Bashundhara Kings, who earned their first title in 2019.

A corporate-owned team by a real estate group, the Bashundhara team has now turned their attention to the Bashundhara Sports Complex, which will be one of the first private sports infrastructure projects in the country, and

can go a long way in developing grassroots talent and building up a sports eco-system.

Such success stories were made possible because the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) has consistently managed to rope in sponsors such as TVS and Grameenphone, while the games are shown live across multiple channels, with the latest being Bangla TV. On the other hand, our feisty rival, India, isn't even our competition in terms of local progress. They are so far ahead in terms of their league development that the distance could be measured in decades. The Indian Super League (ISL), since its inception in 2014, has managed to capture the imagination of the public, bring hefty sponsorships into the game and produce a quality football broadcast that hasn't been seen before in South Asia.

But it too has had its fair share of

problems.

The ISL was thrust to the top of the Indian football pyramid just when the I-League (the old top tier in India) had started a revamping process with new, privately owned clubs.

This led to massive differences with legacy institutions such as Mohun Bagan and East Bengal (the Kolkata derby between the two still attracts over 120,000 spectators), while others such as Pune FC and Minerva Punjab disbanded due to the ongoing tussle.

This brings us to the key question: what should Pakistan's league look like? Should it be a franchise-based model like the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in cricket, or should it take a route similar to Bangladesh's? The answer is strategic and is based on the fact that Pakistan, unlike Bangladesh and India, does not have a





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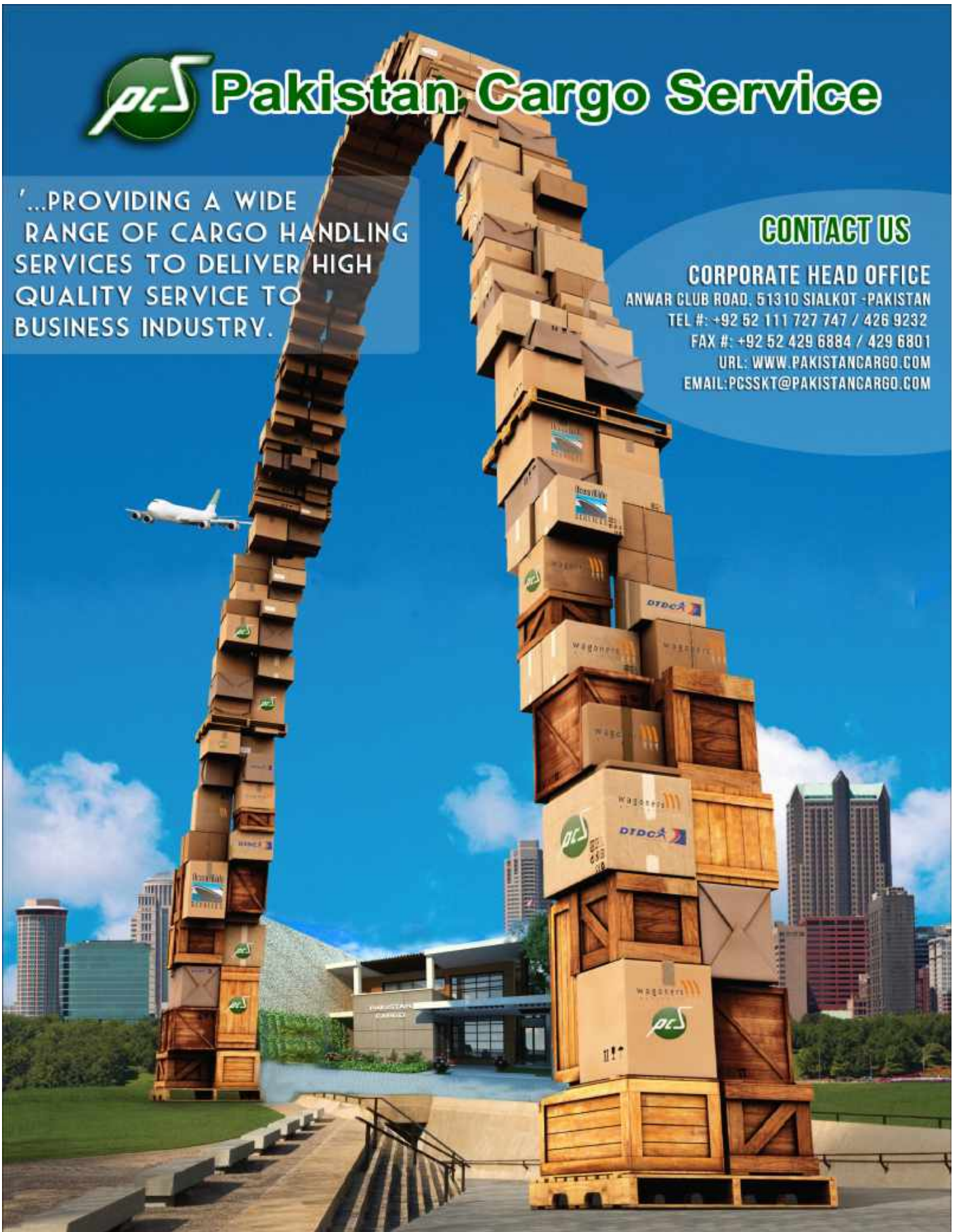
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strong football culture or legacy clubs even the best players from historic hotspots Chaman and Lyari plied their trade in Kolkata and Dhaka before independence. This means that club culture needs to be created from scratch. However, a PSL-like franchise system will not do.

Since a PSL team is extremely expensive (\$6.2 million per year for Multan Sultans, for example) and while football will be cheaper, it is crucial that the money be spent on football and infrastructure development rather than paying team costs. An alternative route is revamping the PPL with an immediate phasing out of departmental teams and their replacement with city-based teams that can be acquired through one-off payments or low franchise fees with long-term installment plans.

Most of the club identities would be freshly created in this scenario, but existing clubs including the two Chaman favourites, Baloch FC Nushki and even the well-run Karachi United can be used as vehicles for investment, and be given a chance to organically expand their fan-base.

This approach allows for the marketing and hype associated with a franchise model but also prevents a completely new league from being at odds with the football pyramid. As a result, the entire system, including a second tier league and below, can be remodeled to ensure promotion and relegation, a fundamental principle of global football that the franchise model ignores.

Even more important is ensuring that a league is indeed a league. What the ISL in India faced was its existence as a mere tournament in the books of FIFA and AFC, and thus it had to endure a long battle to attain top tier status as competition to the I-League. A revamped PPL will have no such problems, and allow it to qualify for the AFC Cup League criteria where Pakistan currently receives the lowest possible allowance.

Pakistan has to start from the lowest level in that, a pre-playoff place in Asia's second tier continental competition.

Meeting requirements for the AFC Cup will require organic growth from clubs and the league, but the long-term aim should be qualification for the AFC Champions League (Asia's equivalent of the UEFA Champions League). This requires a host of features, including 14-15 teams in a league, 27 minimum games for each side and a maximum of two teams sharing a single stadium. The list is extensive, covering everything from ticket pricing to club administration. It's a lofty dream, but one which can be

achieved with the right vision and strategic planning.

A football league is a certainty in Pakistan in the next few years and the PFF recently made it clear that they hold the rights to such a venture, not any third party.

However, for Pakistan to truly realise its potential, what's needed is harmony between the private sector and the federation. Most importantly, it needs to have a league model, where the priority is football.

## Pilgrims perform last major rites of Haj

Pilgrims cast sanitised pebbles as they symbolically 'stoned the devil' in one of the last major rites of Haj, which the Saudi king acknowledged had been tough to organise amid the corona virus pandemic.

Massive crowds in previous years at times triggered deadly stampedes during the ritual, but this year only up to 10,000 Muslims are taking part after millions of international pilgrims were barred due to the health crisis.

In the scorching heat, worshippers made their way across Mina Valley near Makkah under the watchful eyes of security forces, to 'humiliate' the devil. Masked pilgrims, clad in white and spaced apart on marked spots to observe social distancing, threw seven stones each at a wall symbolizing the Satan. Instead of gathering the pebbles themselves as in past years, they were handed them bagged and sterilised by the Haj authorities, to protect against the novel corona virus. Folding the ritual in the shadow of the pandemic required 'double efforts' by Saudi authorities, King Salman said, a day after being discharged from hospital following surgery to remove his gall bladder.

The Haj this year was restricted to a very limited number of people from multiple nationalities, ensuring the ritual was completed despite the difficult circumstances,' said the kingdom's 84-year-old ruler.

His speech was read out on state television by the acting media minister.

Last year, King Salman made the trip to Mina and was seen on state-run television observing worshippers from the window of a highrise.

Haj typically costs thousands of dollars for pilgrims, who of ten save for years as well as endure long waiting lists for a chance to attend.

But this year, the Saudi government is covering the expenses of all pilgrims, providing them with meals, hotel accommodation and health care, worshippers said. Haj is usually one of the world's largest religious gatherings. But local media said up to 10,000 people already residing in the kingdom are participating this year, compared to 2019's gathering of some 2.5 million from around the world.

I am so happy to be chosen among millions for Haj this year, Saudi pilgrim Wedyan Alwah said.

My lifetime dream has come true. After the stoning ritual, pilgrims returned to the Grand Mosque in Makkah to perform a final tawaf, or circling of the Kaaba.

The pilgrims, who have all been tested for the virus and are subject to regular temperature checks, are also required to be quarantined after Haj, authorities said.

Six hospitals, 51 held clinics and 200 ambulances catered to the faithful, health ministry spokesman Mohammad al Abd Al Aly said. Some 8,000 health care professionals were also deployed, he added.



*This picture provided by the Saudi Press Agency shows the faithful throwing pebbles at a pillar in the symbolic stoning of the Satan.*





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## A case of marriage spree

Every one cannot and should not aspire for every thing that is in the world. Yet, certain deprivations do put man into an inferior mental condition. In London, a woman had two children from her previous marriage and one from the latest one. One Sunday, as all the children were getting ready to leave with their father for the amusement park, the youngest, Jim, rushed in on the verge of tears.

"What is the matter, dear?" her mother asked.

"This is not fair Mom," the four-year old cried. "My brothers have two fathers to play with; I have only one!"

In Western society, extremism prevails in paternal relations. Some children have several fathers while some have none at all. The second category belongs to children born to unmarried couples. They have only 'ad-hoc' fathers (not recognised by law) until the couple enters into matrimony.

Sense of deprivation occurs in number of wives also - but mostly negatively. A man advised his wife to prepare his breakfast early the following morning as he had to participate in the funeral of his friend's wife. The dutiful wife followed his advice. However, after eating the breakfast, the man sat reading newspaper in a relaxed mood. The lady reminded him to make haste otherwise he might miss the funeral.

"I have given up the idea of going over there," he told her gruffly.

"But why?" she yelled.

"I am indeed ashamed."

"Why are you ashamed to attend a funeral?" she wanted to know.

"I'm ashamed because this is the third time my friend has invited me to attend the funeral of his wife. I have not even once extended this courtesy to him."

Ordinarily, one wife is enough to torn a house into hell. Those who can afford polygamy deserve to be sympathized and patted on their backs. We, Muslims, can take a maximum of four at a time (subject to toughest conditions). The craze of a Bosnian man with regard to number of wives has crossed all boundaries of sensibility. He has desired to have as many as 262 wives. Why he chose the figure of 262 has not been made public.



According to a report carried by a local daily, this fellow has already contracted 161 marriages. He wants to make another century to take the final tally to 262.

It is strange that Bosnian women have made a beeline to be the wife of this sex-maniac. Is it because a large portion of the male Bosnian population has been consumed in the Bosnian in-fight spanning several years? If so, why has the burden been shifted to one man alone? Or the man has offered his services voluntarily?

I read the news to my wife. According to her not the man, but women are volunteering their services to her.

"How come?" I was puzzled. "Don't they see that the man is jilting them all? Why do they get trapped?"

"Of course, every one of them sees the fate of the dead or divorced," she asserted, "but still gives him an umpteenth chance in the hope that she herself would be the last. I think there is no Asma Jehangir or Hina Jeelani in that country to take note of this "gang matrimony\*"

Apparently, the Bosnian man has embarked on the marrying spree to get his name entered into the Guinness World Records (formerly Guinness Book of World Records) but, to me, it is a case fit for intervention by the Amnesty International. The man is guilty of repeated human rights violations. Western world treats more than one wife taken by Muslims as a threat to human rights but it has turned a blind eye to this Bosnian who

has taken 161 wives and wishes to have 100 more.

For some, polygamy is the greatest testimony to man's willingness to take chances. In the words of Elbert Hubbard, it is "an endeavour to get more out of a life than there is in it." Polygamy is now operated on installment plan in America as well.

"Engaged to four girls at once!" exclaimed the horrified uncle of a New Yorker. "How do you account for such a conduct?"

"I don't know," said the graceless nephew. "Cupid must have shot me with a machine gun."

Western women are known for changing husbands on one pretext or the other; often just for change. The Bosnian man has set the first concrete example of changing wives. A maid and a cook were chatting in the kitchen of a house in London. The maid said, "Our mistress has a new husband."

The cook asked, "Do you think he'll stay?"

In Toronto, one Mr. Smith's wife died. She willed that her hat should remain hanging on the hat-rack just as she left it. After a year had elapsed, Mrs. Smith No.2 was ushered in. As she passed by the hat-rack, Mr. Smith requested that the hat must not be dislocated.

A few years later, Mr. Smith was bringing his third wife to his home. He passed before the hat-rack where the two hats hung. He repeated his request. "I will not disturb those hats," she promised, "but the next hat that hangs there will be a main's."

And it was!

Then, there are those who repent their first mistake as long as they live. It was close to 8:15 p.m. and the gallery was crowded. "Two single seats," announced the theatre employee facing the crowd."

"But you wouldn't separate a daughter from her mother, would you?" politely asked the older of the two women who were close to the aisle.

"You're quite right, madam; I wouldn't," replied the employee, "I did that once, and I've been regretting it ever since."



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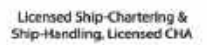
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