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Why does Allama Iqbal International Airport need urgent expansion?

Allama Iqbal International Airport is the largest airport in the most populated province of Pakistan. It is located 15km east of the city of Lahore and serves as the busiest airport in this province. Being the third biggest airport in the state, this airport accommodates a massive number of domestic and international flights. In order to cater to the progressively growing air traffic demand, the airport was intended to expand back in 2017. After the expected expansion, Allama Iqbal International Airport will be able to serve more than a 25million passengers annually.

What Expansion could bring to Allama Iqbal International Airport?

Allama Iqbal International Airport operates a significant number of domestic and international flights. Currently, it hosts almost 4.5 million national and international passengers while providing the required services. It has three terminals named as Allama Iqbal terminal, the Hajj Terminal, and the Cargo Terminal. Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority had approved the project of expansion and renovation of the airport in 2016 with the purpose to declare it the largest airport in the country.

This expansion process did not only involve the enlargement of passenger's accommodation areas but also consider the growth of the cargo terminals. It also included the extensive development of airside to promote and facilitate maximum international flights with upgraded amenities. Moreover, the extension had involved remote parking areas for relieving the ground transportation to access the airport easily.

Current Status of Allama Iqbal International Airport

It is hard to swallow that despite being the biggest air travel hub of the region, it is a 2-star rated airport by

Skytrax. Due to lack of cleanliness, maintenance, food and beverages, and other related facilities, this airport is unable to deliver what it should be. In order to make it a pleasant and accommodative air travel hub, the government of Pakistan had planned for its expansion.

However, due to uncertain reasons, the expansion project has failed to gain its objectives. The airport is currently unable to welcome the growing traffic of this region. That's the reason most of the international carriers do not operate from here due to the lack of their required demands.

Similarly, it is unable to make sure of the availability of space for both the



passengers and the vehicles. The discomfort faced by these basic yet insufficient needs leads to customer dissatisfaction. Therefore, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority should consider saving the asset of the state by expanding it to the required level. In this way, Allama Iqbal International Airport will become capable of sharing the traffic load of the major hubs around the globe.





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Domestic flights' passengers to be provided iftar meal boxes



The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority has allowed providing iftar meal boxes to passengers' onboard domestic flights during Ramadan.

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority has allowed providing iftar meal boxes to passengers' onboard domestic flights during Ramadan.

The authority has issued a directive to all scheduled and chartered airline operators (domestic) in this regard.

Serving meals and beverages onboard domestic flight operations within Pakistan was forbidden by the PCAA in light of the surge in Covid-19 cases in Pakistan. Standard operating procedures (SOPs) including wearing of face masks throughout the duration of flights within Pakistan and to limit interaction between passengers and crew have been in place. However, in order to facilitate air travel during Ramadan, the National Command and Control Centre (NCOC) has allowed provision of iftar meal boxes to passengers during domestic flights. The boxes will only be handed over to passengers at check-in counters, PCAA stated. Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), in a safety alert, has advised its cockpit and cabin crew not to fast during flights. The airline administration has issued a safety alert in this regard.

"Although, while it is perceived that flying with fasting is a possibility, in such a case the element of risk is considerable and margin of safety minimal. In an emergency with multiple complexities, wrong and delayed actions may result in serious consequences due to impaired judgment and incapacitation.

"While fasting, one has to go for a change in normal routine. Therefore, fasting and flying may not be confined to religious reasons as there are defined relaxations on fasting while travelling," the safety alert stated, adding fasting is known to cause dehydration, slowing of reflexes, deterioration of judgment and lowering of stamina. After considering all facts objectively, it's clear that flying an aircraft while fasting is not only risking your own life but that of others too, in the aircraft and on the ground.

PIA should modernize its fleet

Being the national airline of Pakistan, PIA Pakistan International Airlines is operating under the flagship of the country's governmental support. From its service during the last 73 years, it has broken unrivaled records by not only its services but also through its reliable repute.

However, the airline is in drastic condition for a long time due to lack of transparency, old fleet, conventional marketing, lack of professionalism, and other associated parameters. This article's key focus is to consider the current fleet of PIA and analyze the impact of its replacement with the most suitable fleet.

Current Fleet of PIA

PIA is currently operating on different domestic routes of Pakistan by considering LHE-KHI-ISB sectors as its hubs. Internationally, it is serving different states of the Middle East and the United Kingdom. In this way, it operates all varieties of short, medium, and long-haul flights. PIA serves on all these sectors with a fleet of a few Boeing B777 (200-300ER/LR), Airbus A320, and ATRs. All of these aircraft are not only old but are also deprived of their accessories for traveling.

Most of them are not equipped with proper In-Flight Entertainment systems, which ultimately leaves the passengers with boredom while traveling. Moreover, due to their extensive usage, passenger cabins have now turned into a miserable state. Owe to their widespread utilization, these aircraft produce more than ample noise to be born. These features of the fleet of national flag carriers demand to replace modern and efficient feet from its operators.



Ideal Fleet for PIA

With the advancements in technology, the protocols of traveling by air have also been modified. The travelers of the recent era do not only demand their transportation from one point to the other.

Rather they seek more comfort, easiness, and luxury while opting for the airline for their journey. That's the reason

PIA should introduce modish, fuel-efficient, luxurious, and reliable aircraft to capture the load taken by the Gulf Carriers.

Aircraft from Airbus Family

For short and medium-haul flights, PIA could opt Airbus A320-A321 neo. These are narrow-bodied aircraft with advanced features of wide cabins. New engine installation in A320/A321 neo makes them more fuel-efficient by allotting them greater range. Hence, they stand among the best aircraft as they could cater to all the region's domestic routes with better experiences of flying.



Aircraft from Boeing Family

During this unending wave of crises, PIA could opt for wide-bodied aircraft of the Boeing family. For long-haul flights, both Dreamliner 787. The Dreamliners 787 of Boeing are pretty known for their amazing onboard services provision with lower cabin altitude. Dreamliners provide unsoiled air, finest humidity, smoothest ride, and standardized quality of sound.

Moreover, Dreamliners are among those aircraft that ensure efficient fuel consumption. PIA might not have to spend a lot for dream liners induction. Engineers are already trained by Qatar Airways for their transit engineering checks for their 787s. Basic Infrastructure is there. However, the base maintenance setup would require a hefty investment. But this investment would open a world of opportunities for a complete 787 lineup and future variants.



Airblue and its strong organization culture



Airblue started as a startup airline in 2003 when the airline business was privately highly attractive. We saw quite a few private airlines in Pakistan operated between the 1990s and 2020. Airblue technically was the 4th private airline. It was then started by an initial investment made by ex-Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and an American Pakistani, Mr. Tariq Chaudhry. Airblue started operations in Mid 2004 with 3 Airbus A320s.

Expansion followed by growing sales with fascinating 90% load factors on domestic routes, Airblue emerged as a direct competition to airlines of that time. In 2005, airblue went international with the first flight to Dubai from Karachi. Airblue throughout history always operated the Airbus fleet. In 2012 Airblue became the first Pakistani private airline to fly direct flights to Manchester. With professionalism and enthusiasm due to strong organizational culture, Airblue holds a strong position in Pakistan's Commercial Aviation.

Steady Growth of Airblue

18 years since in Business Airblue has adopted the policy of steady growth rather, rapid expansion after learning from its mistakes. Airblue believes in keeping its stronghold in its current position. The current network of airblue has shrunk from what it was 10 years ago. Today airblue has its stronghold and market share in the domestic market and only flies to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. Airblue connects Pakistan's largest cities to both of these countries. Since 2012 airblue slowly closed most of its routes in the middle east and also closed Istanbul and Manchester.

Previously, however, Airblue had a few Airbus A320 family aircraft only but the network was strong. Since 2014 airblue, started inducted Airbus A320s, and in 2017 Airblue inducted 5 more A321s, Airblue also operated a fleet of wet-leased Airbus A321s from Windrose Airlines and an Airbus A330-200 which was solely dedicated to the Lahore-

Jeddah route during peak Umrah and Hajj season. By then airline realized not to expand but to grow in available resources. The airline shrunk its international network from 11 destinations to only 5.



Is it a reawakening of Airblue?

Team Airblue from the higher management to the flight crew, or the ground staff, are trained professionals. After the unfortunate crash of flight ED202, in margalla hills back in 2010, Airblue took some intense decisions on CRM (Crew Resource Management). Improvising and learning from its mistakes, enable the airline to ensure extreme professionalism in all departments. Today, we see the safety standards and protocols are a top priority for airblue.

The concept of leniency does not exist anymore. Examples were set by the termination of violating staff. There were incidents of breach of SOPs and even experienced Captains were laid off from their duties and no compromises made by the management. This might not be something unusual for some segments, but in Pakistan, the culture that has developed in Pakistan Aviation has damaged the industry on all grounds.



Adhering to Professionalism

AirSial's marketing strategy awakes other airlines

It's about four months when AirSial started its operations. The entry of an airline amid COVID-19 was a bold initiative for a new entrant. Despite travel restrictions, AirSial made hard efforts to make it worthwhile. The marketing team did a great job in positioning their brand before the launch. The excitement was evident. It appeared that the people were waiting for a fresh entrant into the market. Though Serene Air has been doing pretty well in the Pakistan Aviation Industry, AirSial has become a tough competitor for all airlines. It did grab some market share from Airblue and Serene Air.

Amid all these happenings, Airblue was a silent player. Serene Air has already given tough times to Airblue and PIA. AirSial's marketing team knew that the airline was entering at a difficult time. The competition was fierce due to Serene Air and Airblue. Regular posts on digital media made a strong position of the airline among the customers. Airblue realized that Serene Air was already ahead of their airline. The top management of the airline took a wise decision. The airline changed its marketing strategy and started to create its presence on digital platforms.

Operational losses brought down to Rs680m in 2020: PIA

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced its financial results for 2020 as it submitted audited accounts with the Stock Exchange of Pakistan, claiming that it had reduced its operational losses from Rs6.130 billion in 2019 to less than Rs680 million in 2020. A PIA spokesman said in a press release that what had been termed one of the worst year in decades for the global aviation industry whereby even largest players in the market had obtained huge bailout packages from their respective governments to stay afloat, PIA had come up with a noteworthy performance, nearly breaking even on operational losses and reducing its overall losses by 33.7pc. According to the airlines' audited financial results for the year 2020, PIA reduced its operational losses from Rs6.130 billion in 2019 to less than Rs680 million in 2020, which would have been easily covered if revenue streams had not also fallen by nearly 35.7pc. PIA achieved a revenue of Rs94.989 billion, down from Rs147 billion achieved in 2019, the main reason for which was Covid-19 restrictions affecting all of PIA routes, reducing the overall operations by nearly half.

The pandemic which hit the industry in March 2020 saw nearly halting all the operations, domestic and international for months, which only started to resume partially from July onwards. However, July also saw the EASA ban imposed on PIA which hit one of the biggest routes of the UK and Europe. He said the bread winning operations of Umrh and Haj flights also impacted the revenues of PIA. The national flag carrier responded by focusing on special charter flights, repatriation and relief flights which helped it retain its foothold in the market and generate valuable revenue from alternative sources, which made the COVID and han related bite on revenues much milder, than initially predicted. The press release said the special charters for NDMA and Pakistan army helped retain valuable foreign exchange within the country. During the year 2020, PIA oversaw a number of reforms such as cutting down the loss making units such as Speedex and curtailing on loss making routes and cost reductions without compromising on service reliability and standards. PIA thus is strictly adhering to the path of recovery it devised for itself which saw 2019 tackling the governance issues and plugging revenues leakages, 2020 as consolidation and planned operational break (even for the year 2021). The airline management also renegotiated with financial institutions for

rescheduling of loans and also renegotiated the lease payments of high lease aircraft that were acquired in the past. PIA also undertook a voluntary separation scheme accepted by nearly 2,000 employees which will have considerable impact on the expense in 2021. PIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Air Marshal Arshad expressed his satisfaction on the financial results and acknowledged the team effort put forth by PIA and the support extended to it by all the stakeholders, including the government of Pakistan. He said PIA is making all efforts to face and cope up with Covid-19

scenario and though the outlook remains challenging in 2021 as well, it is hoped that with the support of the government, Pakistani customers and dedication of PIA employees, we will emerge 4/12/2021 Dawn-ePaper | Apr 12, 2021 | Operational losses brought down to Rs680m in 2020: PIA https://epaper.dawn.com/DetailImage.php?StoryImage=12_04_2021_004_002_3/3 stronger than before. The testing times shall soon be over and the strength acquired by PIA with the reforms, restructuring and financial discipline will bear fruit in the near future.

Brazilian pilot survives 38 days in Amazon after crash

Antonio Sena was flying a single-prop Cessna 210 over the Brazilian Amazon when the engine suddenly stopped, leaving him minutes to find a spot in the jungle to crash-land.

He survived with no injuries, but was stranded in the middle of the world's largest rainforest the start of a 38-day trek he says taught him one of the biggest lessons of his life.

Sena, 36, was hired to fly a cargo run from the northern town of Alenquer to an illegal gold mine in the rainforest, known as the "California". Flying at an altitude of about 3,000 feet, he knew when the engine stopped halfway he did not have much time.

He managed to bring the plane over a valley, and landed as best he could.

Covered in gasoline, he grabbed whatever seemed useful a backpack, three bottles of water, four soft drinks, a sack of bread, some rope, an emergency kit, a lantern and two lighters and got out of the plane as fast as possible.

It exploded not long after. That was January 28.

The first five days, he said in an interview at his home in Brasilia, he heard rescue flights overhead, searching for him. But the vegetation was so dense the rescuers didn't see him.

After that, he heard no more engines, and assumed they had given him up for dead. "I was devastated. I thought I would never make it out, that I was going to die," he said.

He used what battery he had on his cell phone to find where he was with GPS,

and decided to walk east, where he had spotted two air strips.

He followed the morning sun to stay on course, and dredged up what he remembered of a survival course he had once taken.

"There was water, but no food. And I was vulnerable exposed to predators" like jaguars, crocodiles and anacondas, he said.

He ate the same fruits he saw the monkeys eating, and managed to snag three precious blue tinamou bird eggs the only protein of his entire ordeal.

"I had never seen such untouched, virgin rainforest," he said. "I discovered the Amazon isn't one rainforest, it's like four or five forests in one." The thought of seeing his parents and siblings again kept him going, he said.

Sena was born in Santarem, a small city at the junction of the Amazon and Tapajos rivers.

He calls himself a native "Amazonian" and lover of the rainforest. But he says the coronavirus pandemic left him with little choice but to take a job working for one of the thousands of illegal gold mines scarring the forest and polluting its rivers with mercury.

A trained pilot with 2,400 hours of flight time, he had opened a restaurant in his hometown several years ago in a change of pace. But Covid-19 restrictions forced him to close it.

"I had to make money somehow," said Sena. "I never wanted to (work for an illegal mine), but that was the option I had if I wanted to put food on the table."

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Cargo clearance via Green Channel reaches 50pc



Clearance of goods containers under the Green Channel has reached 50 per cent of total cargo, leading to reduced dwell time for containers at ports and facilitating trade.

Clearance of goods containers under the Green Channel has reached 50 per cent of total cargo, leading to reduced dwell time for containers at ports and facilitating trade.

The target is to enhance container clearance via the Green Channel to 60 pc, a senior Customs official told media recently.

Containers under the Green Channel usually take 15 minutes to clear the port. Around 40pc of the total container traffic is cleared via this channel whereas the rest is done under the Yellow Channel (marked for assessment) or the Red Channel (marked for examination).

The number of Green Channel clearances is affected by the conditionality imposed under the import policy as the Risk Management System (RMS) only clears containers which comply with the import policy.

The Customs official said continuous improvement in the RMS Pakistan Customs have been able to achieve the level of Green Channel clearances up to 50pc of total containerised cargo. "This has impacted the swift clearances from ports, reducing the port congestion and dwell time, and have curtailed cost of doing business," the official said.

In July 2020, clearance via the Green Channel was up to the extent of 32pc of Good Declarations (GDs) wise and 40pc container wise. The improvements brought through the Risk Management Policy and reform programme by the Pakistan Customs, the clearances at ports through Green Channel have reached to 45pc GD wise and 50pc of total containerised cargo.

From July 2020 up to March 24, 2021, as many as 24, 686 containers have availed the facility of Green Channel at imports.

On the exports side, 74pc of total containers, which are 28,755 containers have been cleared through Green Channel. Other upcoming reforms like Virtual Assessment by computers will bring more trade facilitation removing human intervention and booting exports and economy of Pakistan, the official said.

Pakistan Customs in February 2019 revamped the Web Based One Customs system (WeBOC) by developing and designing an upgraded user-friendly software version 'WeBOC-Glo' which was supported by a robust RMS.

CAA extends restrictions on incoming flights

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Sunday 4 April revised and extended the entry restrictions, temporary ban and the coronavirus standard operating procedures (SOPs) for all inbound travelers, chartered and private aircraft flights till April 20.

A notification issued by the CAA containing a list of countries was shared by the regulator with 20 countries placed in category A. It also increased the number of countries in category C from 12 to 22 due to the spread of the new variant of Covid-19.

The CAA said the revised country list will be effective at 1am on April 6 till April 20.

According to the previous notification effective from March 23 to April 5, there was a complete ban on inbound travel for category C countries.

The CAA said the temporary measure was being introduced in continuation to the measures being taken to curb the spread of Covid-19.

The counties included in category C were South Africa, Botswana, China, Kenya, Comoros, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Chile, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Seychelles, Somalia, Suriname, Uruguay and Venezuela.

From the 20 countries in category A,

international travelers do not require Covid-19 test before entry into Pakistan.

These countries are Australia, Bhutan, China, Fiji, Japan, Kazakhstan, Laos, Mongolia, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago and Vietnam.

International travelers from countries not specified in category A required Covid-19 PCR test (max 72 hours old) before commencement of travel to Pakistan.

EASA extends travel restrictions

The European Union Aviation Safety Authority (EASA) does not fully mitigate all concerns regarding oversight capabilities of the authority.

"However, in view of the ICAO audit of Pakistan, scheduled in safety Agency (EASA) has extended travel restrictions imposed on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) for an indefinite period and has directed the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) to get its safety audit done by International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) scheduled in July.

The EASA had suspended PIA from operating flights to European Union member countries for six months in July 2020 due to safety concerns; the agency decided to extend this suspension until March 31, 2021 for an additional three-month period.

However, in its its fresh intimation to Pakistani authorities, the EASA has stated that the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) made public a significant safety concern for Pakistan, which was an indication of a serious degradation of PCAA certification and oversight capabilities. Such information shall be taken into consideration by EASA when lifting the suspension, the agency stated.

Responding to the PCAA and PIA's request to lift the ban on flights, the EASA maintained that their offer to use services of flight crew and engineers that do not hold Pakistani licences, summer 2021, the ongoing technical consultations with the PCAA and due to exceptional circumstances arising from the current Covid-19 crisis and the consequent travel restrictions, EASA opted not to revoke TCO Authorisation but to further extend the suspension period until all necessary information is available to decide on the way forward," a letter from the EASA stated.

Flight lands at Saidu Sharif airport after 17 years



Dignitaries alight from the PIA aircraft after it landed at

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan on Friday 26 March said that resumption of flights to Saidu Sharif after 17 years was an achievement of the government as it was a longstanding desire of the people of Swat valley.

He was addressing the elders of Swat after the inaugural flight landed at Saidu Sharif Airport in Swat. Federal Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan, Minister for Communications Murad Saeed, PIA's chief executive officer Arshad Malik, MNA Saleemur Rehman and MPAs from Swat were present on the occasion.

In 1994, the airport was briefly seized by the Tehreek Nifaz Shariat-i-Muhammadi, but security forces took control of it after a clash with the banned outfit. The airport was closed temporarily in 2002 when Pakistan International Airlines suspended its flights. Moreover, due to insurgency in Swat from 2006 to 2009 the airport could not be made functional.

Following the public demand, the federal government decided to reopen the airport in 2014; however, after a test flight the same year the airport could not be made operational due to unknown reasons.

KP chief minister says resumption of flights a longstanding desire of people of Swat

The chief minister said the opening of the airport would boost tourism in the entire Malakand division and create unlimited opportunities of jobs, trade and investment for the people of the division. "Promotion of tourism is one of the top priorities of the PTI government and vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan."

He said it was a historic day for the people of Malakand division, especially for Swat district which was badly affected by terrorism, floods and earthquake. It is another promise fulfilled by the PTI government," he said, adding that the government was opening new spots in Swat and other districts of Malakand division to promote tourism.

The chief minister said the runway of Saidu Sharif Airport would soon be extended to provide more facilities at the airport. "An Austrian investor has selected Swat to establish a skiing village of hundreds of houses that will promote tourism and international skiing sports here."

He said the completion of the first phase of Swat Motorway had already had positive impact on tourism, while its second phase, from Chakdarra to Fatehpur Madayn, would open up the entire Swat valley for tourism and trade. He said Prime Minister Khan would be invited to the groundbreaking ceremony of Swat Motorway Phase-II.

"A mega project of a cable car will be initiated which will help tourists enjoy the dazzling beauty of Kalam in Swat, Kumrat in Dir Upper and Matakhaist in Chitral," he said, adding that completion of an expressway from Chakdarra to Chitral and Shandor would boost tourism in the region and make Dir Lower, Dir Upper and Chitral districts a hub of tourism, trade and

investment.

CM Khan said a project worth Rs14 billion for lifting of water from River Swat to Mingora city would be completed with the assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to address the issue of clean drinking water in the area. He said work on several mega projects was under way while many others were in the pipeline, including a 300MW hydropower project in Balakot.

The chief minister also planted a tree to formally inaugurate a spring tree plantation campaign under a 10-billion trees project in Swat.

Federal ministers Ghulam Sarwar and Murad Saeed and PIA CEO Arshad Malik also addressed the gathering.

Flight to South Africa

For the first time, PIA operated a direct flight to South African city of Johannesburg with the Pakistan cricket team aboard.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said the Pakistan cricket team and other officials onboard the PIA flight departed for Johannesburg. The flight PK-6721 will reach its destination after 11 hours of journey.

The spokesman said it would be the first PIA flight which would touch down on South African's soil.

First PIA flight from Lahore lands at Skardu Airport



The PIA flight receives a water salute at Skardu Airport on Wednesday 7 April.

The Pakistan International Airline's first-ever direct flight from Lahore landed at the Skardu Airport here on Wednesday 7 April.

The PK-8453 flight took off from the Allama Iqbal International Airport on Wednesday 7 April morning with 153 passengers onboard and landed at the Skardu Airport after one hour and 15 minutes.

The PIA officials received and presented bouquets of flowers to the passengers at the airport.

Later, a cake cutting ceremony was also held to celebrate the occasion.

Gilgit-Baltistan tourism minister Raja Nasir Ali Khan said the first PIA flight coming directly from Lahore also received a water cannon welcome upon landing at the Skardu Airport.

He said there would be two weekly flights on the Lahore-Skardu route, which would go a long way in boosting tourism in the region.

He thanked federal aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan and Pakistan International Airlines for the landmark achievement.

"I promise to take the tourism sector of Gilgit-Baltistan to new heights during my tenure as tourism minister," he promised.

The tourism minister said flights between Lahore and Skardu would open a new travel corridor for domestic and international tourists.

He said he was looking forward to the flight's sustainable operation as this would not only promote tourism but also add up to the revenue of the national flag carrier.

PIA CEO Arshad Malik said that the new flight operations would promote tourism in the country.

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Travelport+ launches next-generation platform for a new era of travel

Global travel retail platform, Travelport, has launched its next-generation platform, Travelport+.

Travelport+ is the centre-piece of Travelport's new global strategy and is designed to accelerate industry innovation in multi-source content distribution, travel retailing and value generation.

Travelport+ is an extensive, next-generation platform that creates a simplified, capability-rich, marketplace for travel retailing. As travel distribution has evolved, retrofitting new types of distribution into existing platforms has led to increased complexity across the industry, slowing progress. Travelport+ is a true multi-source platform offering more dynamic, differentiated, retail-ready content, delivering better choices

for retailers and consumers, in a faster, frictionless way.

"It's a monumental moment in our history and in the development of our industry", said Greg Webb, chief executive officer at Travelport. "Travel hasn't kept up with the evolution of modern digital retail and today, the buying and selling of travel is more complex than it needs to be. As Travelport is the only dedicated, global, travel distribution platform, we have made a multi-year investment to accelerate industry innovation in travel retailing. Bringing together the best of Travelport's existing capabilities and tools and driving innovation to deliver the unmet needs of our industry, Travelport+ truly changes the game in the speed of delivery of modern travel retail and offers a fundamental upgrade to travel

technology."

Built as a single, next generation environment, including: a modern, lightweight, highly functional lightweight microservices API, complete with NDC content; enhanced airline ticket exchange tools; a trip container to manage all aspects of the trip; and a sophisticated point of sale solution to address the needs of the professional travel agent, Travelport+ sets a new standard in the management of global travel content.

"Travelport+ offers better retailing and merchandising capabilities which in turn leads to higher value trips. Through better efficiency, supported by Travelport's leading data and insights, Travelport+ will unlock the potential for better offers and more content for all parts of the travel industry," said Webb

Pakistan International versus other airlines

Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Founder of Pakistan, ordered Mr. M.A. Ispahani, a leading industrialist, to set up a national airline on a priority basis in June 1946, when the country was still in its fight for independence. A new airline was founded on October 23, 1946. Orient Airways Ltd. was established in Calcutta as a pilot project, with Mr. M.A. Ispahani as Chairman and Air Vice Marshal O.K. Carter as General Manager. The new carrier's headquarters remained in Calcutta, and it was granted an operating license in May 1947. Orient Airways was a small, privately-held enterprise with limited resources and capital. It could not be permitted to expand and develop on its own. The Pakistani government then decided to create a state-owned airline and asked Orient Airways to join it. The merger resulted in the formation of a new airline on January 10, 1955, due to the PIAC Ordinance 1955. This is how PIA was formed.

Many years after the national carrier's flight operations, Serene Air came into being as a private Pakistani airline. Serene Air was awarded a license by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority in March 2016, allowing it to operate. In November 2016, the company received its first aircraft, a Boeing 737-800. A week after receiving its air operator's



certificate, the airline began operations on January 29, 2017. On January 29, 2017, the first flight left Islamabad for Karachi. PIA is the nation's leading carrier, and the only thing common is the nationality of the airlines. From history to its present-day operations, it is only unfair to consider the two as competitors.

Present-day fleet and operations

PIA is a full-service legacy carrier whereas Serene Air is a mid-range regional carrier. Serene Air has five aircraft, including four Boeing 737-800s and one Airbus A330-200. PIA has 26 aircraft, including 12 Boeing 777s, 10 Airbus A-320s, and 4 ATRs. In the financial year of 2018-2019, The national flag carrier, PIA, received the most passengers with 1,795,877, followed by Serene Air with 875,536. In terms of corporate management, Pakistan International Airlines Corporate Limited is owned by the government, with only

14% of shares owned by private shareholders. Serene Air is an entirely private company.

PIA shifted most of its affairs to Islamabad except for the finance, engineering, and situation room located in Karachi. Similarly, Serene Air has based all its affairs in Islamabad. In Serene Air, catering units, ground handling, and engineering are operated by independent companies as in they are outsourced to respective service providers. In the late 90s, there were plans to privatize the airline, and outsourcing basic units such as catering and ground handling was considered, but no agreement was reached. Therefore, to this day, PIA has not outsourced these operations, and the organization carries them out.

In 16 countries across Asia and the Middle East, PIA serves 19 domestic and 24 foreign destinations. The airline has flights from Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Multan, Sialkot, and Faisalabad to Jeddah, Medina, Riyadh, Dammam, Dubai, Tokyo, Kuala Lumpur, Barcelona, and Milan. The fleet also included Europe and North America, but the flights were suspended. Serene Air operates domestic flights from Pakistan's main cities: Islamabad, Karachi, Quetta, Lahore, Peshawar, and Faisalabad. The private airline decided to start international operations from Islamabad to Sharjah and Lahore to Dubai on 16th March and 2nd April.

Etihad Airways first scheduled flight from Abu Dhabi lands in Israel



Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), on April 6 launched its regular flight service between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv. Additionally, on Monday, Israel was added to Abu Dhabi's 'green list', giving quarantine-free travel for visitors arriving in Abu Dhabi.

The launch of scheduled operations comes as the next historic step in developing diplomatic, trade and tourism ties between Israel and the UAE, which were inked as part of the Abraham Accords in September 2020.

Abu Dhabi's Etihad Airways EY598, the first scheduled flight from Abu Dhabi International Airport to Ben Gurion International Airport, took to the skies this morning at 10:05 (UAE time). On board the flight was a diplomatic and economic delegation representing the UAE. The delegation includes H.E. Mohamed Al-Khaja, UAE's first Ambassador to Israel, Eitan Nae'eh, Israel's Head of Mission to the UAE, and Tony Douglas, Etihad's Group CEO.

The flight landed at Ben Gurion Airport at 12:30 (Israel time) and was received with the traditional water cannon salute. A welcome reception followed, with speeches given by the UAE's Ambassador to Israel, Etihad's Group CEO, and Shmuel Zakay, CEO, Ben Gurion International Airport.

The route will be operated by one of Etihad's flagship aircraft, the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner. With 290 seats 28 Business studios and 262 Economy smart seats, the Dreamliner features Etihad's renowned e-box entertainment system and inflight wi-fi connectivity network.

Etihad will initially offer two weekly flights between Abu Dhabi and Tel Aviv. The return flight, EY599 will connect

passengers from Tel Aviv into Abu Dhabi, who will no longer be required to quarantine on arrival, now that Israel has been added to the Abu Dhabi 'green list'. As well as connecting with the UAE, passengers traveling from Tel Aviv can take advantage of onward connecting flights to 35 destinations worldwide, including major cities across Asia, the Indian sub-continent and Australia.

There is significant travel demand anticipated between Israel and the UAE and beyond, for both business and leisure travel purposes. This is bolstered by the



fact that Israel and the UAE boast two of the highest vaccination rates in the world, giving potential for a vaccine corridor to further ease travel between the two destinations.

Etihad and the national carrier of Israel, EL AL, are continuing preparations for wide-ranging cooperation on the route, and beyond. The partners signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2020 covering codeshare on



each other's operations, a frequent flyer tie-up and cooperation in cargo, training and maintenance services.

Etihad has established a reputation as one of the leading airlines in response to the pandemic. In February 2021, Etihad was the first airline in the world to announce it is operating with 100% of its crew on board vaccinated.

The airline introduced Etihad Wellness, an industry-leading programme to ensure wellbeing at every stage of the customer journey and provide greater peace of mind

when traveling. Etihad Wellness is championed by specially-trained Wellness Ambassadors who are available 24/7 to provide essential travel health information and care pre-flight through a live chat function on etihad.com, at the airport, and on board.

To reinforce the effectiveness of Etihad Wellness, the airline provides global Covid insurance with every ticket, so passengers are covered when they are away from home.

As a further commitment to safety, Etihad was the first airline in the world to require 100% of passengers to show a negative PCR test result before departure and retesting on arrival in Abu Dhabi.

Oman Air celebrates 28th anniversary of its first ever flight



Oman Air has celebrated the 28th anniversary of its first ever flight, which took place between Muscat and Salalah in March 1993. The inaugural flight, operated by Boeing 737-300, saw the beginning of the airline's regional footprint in Oman, and launched four months ahead of its first international flight to Dubai in July the same year.

"Oman Air has come a long way since our beginnings as a regional carrier," remarked Abdulaziz Al Raisi, CEO of Oman Air. "From connecting local communities here at home, we've since expanded our reach to connect Oman to the rest of the world, uniting families and loved ones for 28 years. It's a milestone that we're proud to celebrate, and we look forward to continuing our remarkable journey in the years ahead."

Etihad flight schedule (AUH-TLV):

Flight no.	Departure Airport	Departure Time	Arrival Airport	Arrv Time	Freq	Aircraft
EY 0598	AUH	10:05	TLV	12:30	Wed / Sun	787-9
EY 0599	TLV	15:15	AUH	19:35	Wed / Sun	787-9

Gulf Air opens new route to Singapore



As the summer arrives, many airlines are beginning to operate new routes to improve this year's operation. One of them is Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain. Earlier this week, the Middle Eastern airline operated its first flight between its base in Bahrain International Airport and Singapore Changi Airport.

The flight, operating as GF165, landed in Singapore at 12:25 on April 4. It was operated with a Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner (registration A9C-FG) with 26 Falcon Gold seats and 256 economy class seats. From now onwards, it will connect both countries with one weekly frequency operated on the weekends.

Gulf Air's Acting Chief Executive Officer Captain, Waleed Al Alawi, said: "We're happy to land in Singapore and expand our network with direct flights connecting Bahrain and the Far East. This is a great opportunity for everyone to try our state-of-the-art Dreamliner and explore our latest boutique and premium leisure destination"

It has been a busy week for the airline, as it was also one of the main players of the Formula 1 Grand Prix celebrated in Bahrain. As part of the weekend, they performed several low emission flyovers over the Sakhir circuit with their Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner using sustainable aviation fuel provided by Neste MY Sustainable Aviation Fuel, which reduces carbon emissions by 80%.

"Each year, Gulf Air takes great pride in being the title sponsor of the Formula 1 race at the Bahrain International Circuit. This year, we mark the beginning of the race with a truly special low commission flypast highlighting our future strategy to explore the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel in our aircraft and standing by our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint," said Al Alawi

IATA Asks for Re-Start Plans in the Middle East

Last week, IATA asked Gulf countries to develop recovery plans for the coming months. According to data published in February, traffic in the region in January 2021 was 82.3% less than the same month in 2019. Moreover, Middle Eastern airlines posted combined losses

of \$7.1 billion while receiving \$4.8 billion in government aid.

As a result, Kamil Al Awadhi, IATA regional vice president for Africa and the Middle East, said, "Re-establishing air

connectivity will energize the economic recovery from Covid-19. With millions of jobs at risk from the prolonged shutdown, not a day should be lost once the epidemiological situation enables a re-opening. Restarting safely after a year or more in lockdown will need careful preparations."

Emirates Sky Cargo becomes first air cargo carrier to deliver 50 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 50 destinations



Emirates has made this announcement:

In the run up to World Health Day (7 April), Emirates SkyCargo has become the first airline cargo carrier in the world to have transported more than 50 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines on its flights. The carrier has also transported more than 100 tonnes of syringes across the world to support the delivery of vaccines.

Since the start of international distribution late last year, Emirates SkyCargo has transported over 220 tonnes of COVID-19 vaccines, equivalent to more than 50 million doses, on more than 150 flights from manufacturing locations to 50 destinations on its network through Dubai. Overall, the carrier has transported six different kinds of COVID-19 vaccines.

Emirates SkyCargo has remained agile and dynamic throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, responding quickly to maintain international connectivity for essential goods across the world. The carrier was one of the first in the world to deploy passenger aircraft for cargo only flights in order to transport PPE, medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and food. Over one year, Emirates SkyCargo had operated more than 27,800 flights and

transported over 100,000 tonnes of essential commodities.

As early as October 2020, Emirates SkyCargo set up an EU GDP certified dedicated airside hub for distribution of COVID-19 vaccines at its hub in Dubai. With its sophisticated infrastructure and extensive storage capacity, Emirates SkyCargo positioned itself to fly in large quantities of COVID-19 vaccines from



manufacturing locations, store the vaccines in Dubai and then regularly replenish vaccine supplies to developing nations with limited cold chain infrastructure through its cargo flights.

In January 2021, Emirates SkyCargo joined hands with leading Dubai-based entities, DP World, International Humanitarian City, and Dubai Airports to form the Dubai Vaccine Logistics Alliance to harness the strategic strengths of Dubai as a major global distribution hub for COVID-19 vaccines. In February 2021, Emirates SkyCargo signed an MoU with UNICEF to prioritize transportation of COVID-19 vaccines in support of the COVAX facility which is aimed at equitable global distribution of vaccines.

With its fleet of modern and efficient all wide-body aircraft and a network that currently spans more than 130 destinations across six continents, combined with the strategic geographic location of its state-of-the-art GDP certified Dubai hub, Emirates SkyCargo is a key global player in the secure and rapid global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.





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Fly Dubai 737 MAX to Sialkot

Fly Dubai will be operating its first flight of Boeing 737 MAX after its recertification on April 8th. The first flight will be operating to Sialkot, Pakistan, from its hub in Dubai. The aircraft to be operated on the flight is a two-class configured aircraft with Economy Class and Business Class layout. The aircraft has 10 flat-bed seats in Business class and 156 Economy Class seats with High definition inflight entertainment screens.

Passengers flying on the flight will be notified before departure about the return of the 737MAX. However, passengers will be given the liberty to change their flights if they are willing to do so. The 737MAX will regain its trust among the passengers and other stakeholders with time.

Pakistan CAA's take on 737MAX

Civil Aviation Authority of Pakistan has not released any official statement on the return of the Boeing 737MAX. However, we will be witnessing the return of Boeing 737MAX for the region's one of the biggest low-cost carriers, with their return to service from a Pakistani route. The Airport in Sialkot is Pakistan's only private airport, capable of handling all aircraft types of wide-bodies and narrow bodies except the Airbus A380.

Baby born on EgyptAir flight

An Egypt Air flight from N'Djamena to Cairo had to make an emergency landing at Aswan Airport to check on the safety of a Chadian passenger and her new born baby boy, after giving birth safely on



board, with the help of a medical student.

In a statement the airline said: "According to the chief pilot's instructions and with the help of cabin crew, all procedures for the passenger's safety were followed and dealt with quickly to assist the passenger in the mid-flight delivery."

DB Schenker and Lufthansa Cargo launch regular CO2-neutral freighter flights

Air freight can now be transported with zero carbon dioxide tailpipe emissions: DB Schenker and Lufthansa Cargo launched the first regular carbon neutral cargo flight connection in history recently.

With the take-off of a Boeing 777F at 9.14 a.m. local time, the companies kicked off weekly flights between Frankfurt and Shanghai Pudong, where the fuel requirements are covered entirely by Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). This will save around 174 metric tonnes of conventional kerosene each week.

Jochen Thewes, CEO of DB Schenker: "As of now, carbon neutral supply chains are also feasible with air freight. Our weekly flights between Frankfurt and Shanghai are the kick-off of a new era. We are proud to have already convinced so many customers of this future-orientated product. Next, business and politics have to take charge to create more capacity for regenerative fuels and clean aviation."

Dorothea von Boxberg, CEO of Lufthansa Cargo: "With the world's first sustainable cargo flight with DB Schenker at the end of 2020, we demonstrated that flying without fossil emissions is already possible. Today, we jointly launched the world's first regular sustainable cargo flight connection. This paves the way for many more connections of this kind. We are counting on the determination of our industry and the

dedication of consumers to get this off the ground together."

SAF is produced mainly from biomass waste, such as used vegetable and cooking oils. Thus, when burned in the engine, the same amount of carbon dioxide is released which was previously removed from the atmosphere during the original growth of the plants.

In addition, greenhouse gases produced during the manufacture and transport of the fuel are fully offset by sustainable compensation projects. This ensures that flights are completely greenhouse gas neutral.

The weekly volume of SAF procured by DB Schenker and Lufthansa Cargo corresponds to 174 metric tonnes of kerosene, which is about the amount needed for the connection to Shanghai and back. However, for technical and legal reasons, it is currently not possible to fuel an aircraft with SAF only. Therefore, the SAF is blended with conventional kerosene via the airport's refuelling system and consumed proportionally by all subsequently refuelled aircraft.

In total, greenhouse gas neutrality of 20,250 metric tonnes will be ensured during Lufthansa Cargo's summer flight schedule. Of this, around 16,200 metric tonnes will be avoided from direct combustion in the engine. The participating customers, including Mercedes-Benz, ZF and Merck, can credit their reduced carbon footprint on a pro rata basis.

Currently, SAF is about three times more expensive than fossil kerosene and the quantity available on the market is limited. With the launch of the sustainable freight flight connection, DB Schenker and Lufthansa Cargo are reiterating their call to other companies in the logistics industry as well as politicians to jointly expand production and infrastructure for Sustainable Aviation Fuel and thus drive forward decarbonisation in logistics.





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LHE-KMG	XMN	Daily
LHE-KMG	TAO	Daily
LHE-KMG	PEK	Daily

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If you require any other Destination price, please feel free to contact us any time.

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Cell: 0302-8283192

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KHI-KMG	CAN	Daily
KHI-KMG	XMN	Daily
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New Zealand, Australia launch 'travel bubble' to boost tourism



New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announces conditions for quarantine-free travel between her country and Australia on Tuesday 6 April.

New Zealanders and Australians rushed to book flights on Tuesday 6 April as the beleaguered tourism industry welcomed the "lifeline" of a travel bubble between the largely coronavirus-free neighbours.

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced the two-way, quarantine-free travel corridor would open from 11:59pm on April 18.

Jim Boulton, the mayor of New Zealand's Queenstown, called the move a "saviour for businesses".

"This is the lifeline we needed; this is what we've been asking for," he said.

Air New Zealand and Qantas announced they were ramping up flights as thousands of tickets were sold immediately after Ardern's announcement.

A spokesman for Australian flag carrier Qantas said tickets to New Zealand were "selling like hot cakes" with a strong "load" to Queenstown, which is billed as the country's "Adventure capital".

Air New Zealand boss Greg Foran said his staff were "rushed off our feet".

The travel bubble comes more than a year after New Zealand closed its doors in response to the pandemic and six months after Australia allowed Kiwis to fly into selected states without the need to quarantine.

Before Covid-19 brought New Zealand's tourism industry to its knees, it was the country's biggest export industry, with Australians accounting for about 40 per cent of the international visitors and contributing more than NZ\$2 billion (US\$1.4 billion) to the economy.

Tourism New Zealand boss Rene de Monchy estimated the opening of a travel bubble could recoup more than NZ\$1.0 billion this year.

The trans-Tasman route is also Australia's busiest international aviation

market with travellers from New Zealand accounting for 18 per cent of all air arrivals and spending A\$1.6 billion (US\$1.2 billion) annually on travel and tourism.

Ardern described the travel bubble as a world-leading move between New Zealand, with just 26 Covid-19 deaths in a population of five million, and Australia with fewer than 1,000 deaths in a population of 25 million.

"I cannot see or point to any countries in the world that are maintaining a strategy of keeping their countries Covid-free whilst opening up international travel between each other," she said.

"That means in a way we are world leading." Australia Prime Minister Scott Morrison said he appreciates the arrangement. "We welcome them back as indeed Kiwis will be welcoming Aussies," he said.

Last week, the tiny Pacific island nation of Palau, one of the few countries never to have had a Covid-19 case, opened a travel bubble with virus-free Taiwan.

Sabre's new airline storefront launches to help travel agents and airlines



I hope you are well.

Sabre would like to invite you to a special media briefing on March 31st, the day we launch our latest capability new airline storefront.

For travel agents, trying to compare airline offers has previously been like comparing apples with oranges (as the old saying goes). However, new airline storefront solves this problem by cutting through complexity and confusion so agents can now compare apples with apples - looking at offers in a like-for-like way.

We would love you to join Sabre's airline storefront lead Kathy Morgan, Vice President, Offer Sourcing, Sabre Travel Solutions for a media briefing when:

- We will outline how new airline storefront is helping agents and airlines to ramp up for industry recovery.

- Show how airline storefront will mean more relevant offers for travellers who no longer see "value" as simply the cheapest price.

- And, give you a quick

demonstration of how our latest solution actually works.

If you can RSVP either way for yourself (or a colleague) that would be much appreciated. Then, I will send out the meeting invite before the event so you can join, attend and ask any questions you have.

IATA: Aviation sector continues to deteriorate

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has found that passenger traffic fell in February, both compared to pre-Covid-19 levels in February 2019, and to the immediate month prior, January this year.

Because comparisons between 2021 and 2020 monthly results are distorted by the extraordinary impact of Covid-19, unless otherwise noted all comparisons are to February 2019, which followed a normal demand pattern.

Total demand for air travel in February 2021 (measured in revenue passenger kilometres or RPKs) was down 75 per cent compared to February 2019.

That was worse than the 72 per cent decline recorded in January this year versus two years ago.

International passenger demand in February was 89 per cent below February 2019, a further drop from the 86 per cent year-to-year decline recorded in January and the worst growth outcome since July 2020. Performance in all regions worsened compared to January 2021.

Total domestic demand was down 51 per cent versus pre-crisis (February 2019) levels. In January it was down 48 per cent on the 2019 period.

This largely was owing to weakness in China travel, driven by government requests that citizens stay at home during the Lunar New Year travel period.

"February showed no indication of a recovery in demand for international air travel.

"In fact, most indicators went in the wrong direction as travel restrictions tightened in the face of continuing concerns over new coronavirus variants.

"An important exception was the Australian domestic market.

"A relaxation of restrictions on domestic flying resulted in significantly more travel.

"This tells us that people have not lost their desire travel.

"They will fly, provided they can do so without facing quarantine measures," said Willie Walsh, IATA director general.

When will PIA be allowed to fly to Europe and the US?



The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) placed a ban on PIA in July 2020. This step was also followed by the UK Civil Aviation Authority and Federal Aviation Administration US. This was a severe hit, especially after when the pandemic situation hit the global aviation industry. Pakistan International Airlines operated flights to Italy, Norway, France, Denmark, and Spain, prior to the ban.

Why was PIA banned?

PIA flight 8303 crashed in Karachi due to reasons that are still to be found on 22nd May 2020. It was commonly thought of as a pilot error. 97 souls on board lost their lives, including 8 injured on the ground, and one of them passed away later due to severe injuries. This accident raised a serious question on the competency of the pilots in the national carrier.

Ghulam Sarwar, the aviation minister of Pakistan, claimed that 260 out of 860 active were holding fake licenses or had obtained them through unfair means. He made these claims a few days after the crash incident of 8303. These claims garnered global attention. The aviation industry of Pakistan was blown away by the comments made by the minister. International aviation bodies started questioning the competency of Pakistani pilots working in other airlines as well. In response to the situation, EASA banned flight operations of PIA, and British and American aviation authorities followed this decision. The ban was imposed for six months, effective from 1st June 2020.

What does PIA need to do for the ban to be uplifted?

PIA will have to upgrade its safety standards by enforcing new exam systems, auditing all pilots, and extensive makeover of its crew management resources. The European agency had given PIA two months to appeal its judgment. Still, the airline's management, led by Air Marshal Arshad Malik, opted not to do so due to a team's

Association's (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) to review the airline's operational management and control systems. In September 2020, an IOSA team visited the country, focusing on PIA's flight operations, passenger service, engineering, and other aspects. However, PIA received a disappointing response from the team, which led to a further extension of the ban to three more months. The national carrier requested EASA for provisional permission to operate flights in the EU. However still, EASA is not yet convinced about the up-gradation and has ensured that it will not be lifted until safety audits are carried out as per EASA rules. The European Commission and ICAO's inquiry into the loss of confidence in the Pakistani CAA's registration and supervision operations was the second cause that contributed to the suspension of Third Country Operator Authorization. EASA told PIA that it looked into the matter of "fake" pilot licenses and that the ban would be reviewed after an investigation. Its officials were unable to visit Pakistan due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Causes that contributed to the suspension of Third Country Operator Authorization To travel to, from, or within the EU, commercial and charter operators from outside the EU must now receive a Third Country Operator (TCO) permit. The TCO software ensures that commercial aircraft operating in the area are consistent with ICAO safety requirements. Operators must demonstrate compliance with ICAO standards.

ACAS 7.1 (for all aircraft above 12,500 pounds). Implementation of a Safety Management System (SMS). EASA generally recognizes International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO) certification as demonstrating compliance with TCO's SMS mandate, but these standards are tightening; Approved TCOs cannot demonstrate level 3 SMS by December 2017 will have their authorizations suspended.

PIA lacked compliance in all three aspects, and the rigidity displayed by CAA over fake license matter has stretched this ban for longer than expected

EASA Satisfied with Improved Standards of PIA

In the latest update reported by Express Tribune, on 17th March 2021, The latest meeting of CAA officials and EASA officials via video link were a success. The representatives of EU member states from Denmark, and Italy participated as well. The Deputy Director General for

Regulatory Affairs Nadir Shafi Dar briefed the participants on the steps taken by Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority. The queries of EASA officials were timely responded and they expressed their satisfaction on the improvements. However, the ban is still not lifted but this could lead to resumption PIA flights to European destinations.

PIA asked to speed up compensation payment

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail recently asked the Pakistan International Airlines to speed up the process of compensation payment to families of the May 22, 2020 plane crash victims and those who suffered losses on the ground.

The directives came during a meeting at Governor House in which matters regarding compensation to the legal heirs/family members of the PIA 8303 crash victims and other related issues were discussed, said a statement.

The PIA COO gave a detailed briefing on the compensation given to the families of victims so far and assured the participants that all outstanding compensation amounts would be given to the remaining families as soon as the legal requirements were completed.

He said that as an insurance company was involved in paying the compensation, the submission of succession certificate was necessary for the purpose.

He noted that the PIA had borne the expenses of burial of the victims of the air crash, and compensation had also been paid to people whose houses had been destroyed or damaged in the incident.

"Compensation had been paid to the owners of 18 homes damaged in the incident whereas payments had been due in the cases of only four homes whose reconstruction or repair was required owing to some legal formalities," he said.

The Sindh governor mentioned that the PM had issued clear directives that the matter of payment of compensation be expedited and the bereaved families should be provided with utmost support. "Precious lives have been lost. Considerable time has already passed. The PIA should remove the impediments and bottlenecks in order to ensure compensation process, without delaying the matter any further," he emphasised.

The governor vowed to get the issues resolved and reservations sorted out on priority basis to ensure immediate relief to aggrieved family members of the victims.

"A team of lawyers associated with PIA must be constituted immediately so that the succession certificates could be prepared for the remaining families," he added.

Should aircraft come equipped with flight deck Video Recorders?

When accidents happen with aircraft, investigators always strive to locate the virtually indestructible “black box” to understand what went wrong. These record flight data and audio from the cockpit and are usually enough for investigators to get a clear picture of the sequence of events. However, there is an ongoing debate on whether or not planes should also have flight deck image recorders installed.



Should cockpits be fitted with crash-resistant image recorders?

Independent US Federal agency, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), has renewed its insistence that commercial jetliners be equipped with crash-resistant flight deck video recorders. The agency says such visual data would help determine the cockpit crew's actions in crashes such as recent ones in Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Texas.

Recently in a statement, the agency once more called on regulators to,

“Require aircraft (...) to install a crash-resistant flight recorder system on all newly manufactured turbine-powered, nonexperimental, nonrestricted-category aircraft; and/or require the retrofit of existing aircraft with such equipment. The crash-resistant flight recorder system should record cockpit audio and images with a view of the cockpit environment.”

However, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) does not want to mandate that operators install such devices, citing problems with privacy, costs, and security, along with other issues. Meanwhile, the NTSB suggests that operators themselves install the technology, not waiting for an FAA mandate.

Concerns for privacy, costs, and security

The NTSB first introduced the idea of cockpit camera recorders in 2000. The agency then said they “would provide critical information to investigators about the actions inside the cockpit immediately



Pilots have raised concerns over privacy and issues with data security when it comes to potential flight-deck video surveillance. Photo: Airbus

before and during an accident.” Airlines were understandably not eager given the additional costs of installing new technology.

The argument against is that there would not be much more useful information gained from video than what could be gleaned by investigators from cockpit voice recorder (CVR) along with flight data recorder (FDR). Pilots also fear that flight-deck visual recordings would impact the way they perform their job.

Not only would they be constantly monitored by their employers, but just as has happened with voice data in the past, there is a risk of the recordings being leaked in other circumstances than for incident investigations. And where only transcripts of audio recordings are usually made available and edited for relevance video material would need to be viewed rather than read.



The proponents of the technology say that it could help solve accidents such as the mystery of MH370. Photo: Laurent ERRERA via Wikimedia Commons

Would it help increase public trust?

The propagators of cockpit cameras say that visual data would have been instrumental in cases such as the disappearance of Malaysia Airways Flight 370. If both pilots were potentially incapacitated, audio recordings would not have provided much help.

The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has been discussing

the potentiality of cockpit video recorders in its panels since 1995. As late as 2016, the UN body's technical commission released a working paper that said,

“...availability of video recordings of the situation in the cockpit possessed to investigators could accelerate efficiently the process of investigation, to determine explicitly causes of the crash and to increase public trust to conclusions of the investigation commission.”

At the time, many media outlets took it as a call from the ICAO for video recorders to be standard equipment in future commercial aircraft cockpits. However, the organization confirmed to Aviation Today that it was only requesting comments on a draft amendment to Annex 6.

Panel calls for early completion of Gwadar Airport

The Parliamentary Committee on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has urged the authorities concerned to complete the construction of New Gwadar International Airport as soon as possible as it has great importance for attracting investors.

A meeting of the committee presided over by its Chairman Sher Ali Arbab, MNA, in Gwadar received briefing on various infrastructure, energy and socio-economic development projects under the CPEC framework.

Members of the committee Aslam Bhootani, Sadaqat Ali Abbasi, Noor Alam Khan, Murtaza Javed Abbasi and Zahid Akram Durrani attended the meeting.

The Civil Aviation Division secretary briefed the committee on the progress of work on the airport.

The committee observed that timely operation of the airport would prove conducive for effective operationalisation of Gwadar deep seaport and recommended its expeditious completion and avoiding delay caused either by Pakistan or Chinese side. The institutional efforts should be made to take up the issue with the Chinese side to meet the timelines for completion of the project.

The Gwadar Port Authority chairman briefed the committee on Gwadar Port Free Zone, East Bay Expressway and Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute.

He informed the committee that the Gwadar Free Zone Policy had been approved which provided potential incentives for imports and exports and it would pave the way for triggering economic activities in Pakistan.

Qatar Airways operates the world's first fully COVID-19 vaccinated flight



Qatar Airways continues to lead the recovery of international travel, operating the world's first fully COVID-19 vaccinated flight on April 6. QR6421 departed Hamad International Airport at 11:00 AM carrying only vaccinated crew and passengers onboard, with passengers also to be served by fully vaccinated staff at check-in. The special flight, which returned to Doha at 14:00, showcased all the measures the airline has put in place to ensure the highest standards of safety and hygiene on board, including its latest innovation, the world's first 'Zero-Touch' in-flight entertainment technology. The special service will be operated by the airline's most technologically advanced and sustainable aircraft, the Airbus A350-1000, with the flight also fully carbon offset in line with the carrier's environmental responsibilities.

Passengers on board were able to livestream the historic experience thanks to Qatar Airways' industry leading Super WiFi onboard that combines the latest technology from Inmarsat, SITA for Aircraft and Thales.

To show its gratitude to those who have played key roles throughout the pandemic, Qatar Airways gave away 100,000 complimentary return tickets to healthcare workers and 21,000 to teachers around the world in 2020.

Qatar Airways has become the first global airline in the world to achieve the prestigious 5-Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating by international air transport rating organisation, Skytrax. This follows HIA's recent success as the first and only airport in the Middle East and Asia to be awarded a Skytrax 5-Star COVID-19 Airport Safety Rating. These recognitions provide assurance to passengers across the world that airline health and safety standards are subject to the highest possible standards of professional, independent scrutiny and assessment. Qatar Airways is the first airline in the Middle East to begin trials of the innovative new IATA Travel Pass

'Digital Passport' mobile app. IATA Travel Pass ensures passengers receive up-to-date information on COVID-19 health regulations at their destination country, as well as complying with strict global data privacy regulations to enable the sharing of COVID-19 test results with airlines to verify they are eligible to undertake their journey.

SAL & Emirates SkyCargo sign ground handling agreement

The Saudi Arabian Logistics company SAL has announced the signing of Cargo Ground Handling agreement with Emirates. This signing comes under the company's strategy to logistically partner with the most reputed airlines with strong presence in the international arena.

SAL's CEO, Omar Hariri commented: "This cooperation with the leading Emirates SkyCargo as a logistic partner will have a positive effect on the flow of cargo operations at all our main stations in the Kingdom. We take pride in this partnership which will boost the traffic of goods into the Kingdom and also cargo from our domestic airports loaded into Emirates' aircrafts where we have placed all logistic capabilities and resources including equipment and manpower to serve our mutual strategic objectives."

Hariri also highlighted the long track record of cooperation between Emirates SkyCargo and ground handling division at Saudia Cargo prior to the privatisation of the sector when SAL has taken over all ground handling duties at all main airports in the Saudi Arabia.

"Saudi Arabia is considered a market with high interest to Emirates SkyCargo and we have strong business relation with SAL. We look forward, through the extension of this ground handling agreement, to continue our partnership and offer a rich and value-adding logistic services to our clientele in this market. We are confident that our operations will run smoothly and seamlessly due to SAL's unique handling capabilities, which will consequently, bolster trade and cargo operations between the two countries," said Nabil Sultan, divisional senior vice president at Emirates.

SAL provides premium ground handling services for multiple airlines at Saudi Arabia's local airports and logistic support with cargo chain solutions. The company also connects all means of transportation with local airports to make a larger contribution to vision 2030 and transform the Kingdom into a global logistic hub.

Three Russian pilots killed by ejection during preflight checks



Three members of a Russian bomber's air crew died on Tuesday 23 March when their ejection seats accidentally activated during preflight checks, the military said.

Three members of a Russian bomber's air crew died on Tuesday 23 March when their ejection seats accidentally activated during preflight checks, the military said.

The Russian Defence Ministry said the incident happened at an airbase in the Kaluga region, about 145 kilometres (90 miles) southwest of Moscow.

It said the crew of a Tu-22M3 long-range bomber was preparing for a training mission when its ejection system malfunctioned and accidentally shot the crew out. The ministry said the altitude wasn't enough for the parachutes to open and three of the four crew members died of injuries.

Russian media reported that the victims included Col. Vadim Beloslyudtsev, the commander of the bomber unit stationed at the Shaikovka airbase near Kaluga.

Russian news reports said the fourth crew member survived the incident and was hospitalised.

An official investigation into the incident has been launched. The accidental activation of the rescue system is extremely rare, and some experts speculated that it could have been caused by an electrical malfunction or human error.

The Tu-22M3 is a supersonic twin-engine long-range bomber, which is capable of carrying nuclear weapons.

About 60 are estimated to remain in service with the Russian air force, and some have flown bombing missions to strike militants in Syria from their bases in Russia.



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SIAL vows to provide the best facilities to the Pilgrims

Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed has said that the tradition of providing best facilities to the pilgrims at Sialkot International Airport, saying goodbye to them warmly and welcoming them on their return would be maintained this year as well. He expressed these views while addressing a meeting of the SIAL Hajj Committee. The meeting was chaired by Convener SIAL Hajj Committee Muhammad Hanif Khan while Vice Chairman SIAL Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen, Chief Executive Officer SIAL Amjad Ali Toor, Company Secretary Muhammad Jahangir Khan, Business Development Manager Amir Yaqub and Public Relations Manager Abdul Shakoor Mirza were also present. Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed said that Hajj flights could not start even last year due to Corona pandemic. According to reports, this year only private Hajj will be allowed instead of the government scheme. It is learned that only 50,000 quota has been given to Pakistan for this purpose. Convener SIAL Hajj Committee Muhammad Hanif Khan said that we will try our best to make this year as many pilgrims as possible from Sialkot Airport under the private scheme. For this purpose, apart from Gujranwala region, we will request full cooperation from all private Hajj operators in Jhelum and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Convener SIAL Hajj Committee Muhammad Hanif Khan said that the process of giving gifts to all the pilgrims departing from Sialkot Airport for the holy pilgrims and giving them a warm welcome on their return would continue this year as well. Earlier, Business Development Manager Amir Yaqub gave a briefing on Hajj this year while several important decisions were also taken regarding Hajj.



Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed addressing the meeting of SIAL Hajj Committee while Convener SIAL Hajj Committee Muhammad Hanif Khan presides over the meeting. Vice Chairman SIAL Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen and Chief Executive Officer SIAL Amjad Ali Toor are also present.



DC Sialkot Mr. Tahir Farooq visits SIAL to inspect Corona SOPs.



SIAL held an emergency exercise demonstration to handle the situation: Photo shows, Chairman Mian Naeem Javed, Vice Chairman Ch. M. Afzal Shaheen, Founding Chairman Mian Riaz, CEO Mr. Amjad Ali Toor, SIAL, Security Officer ASF Mr. Tariq Butt and others look on on the occasion.

PPP criticises plan to auction PIA's Ispahani hangar

Pakistan People's Party (PPP) parliamentary leader in the Senate, Sherry Rehman recently criticised the federal government's decision to auction Pakistan International Airlines (PIA)'s Ispahani hangar in Karachi.

Ms Rehman said in a press release that the hangar was established in the 70s but the government has now planned to quietly auction it. The hangar not only caters to PIA aircraft but also provides facilities to foreign airlines to generate revenues.

"Does the government not realise that due to this decision, now the airlines would have to pay crores for the maintenance and repair of their aircraft? First, it was the Roosevelt Hotel and now Ispahani hangar, this government is on an asset stripping mission," she added.

She questioned: "Is there anyone who can take responsibility for what's being done to our institutions? From Islamabad to Karachi, our state institutions are being sold and privatised.

This is only being done to award cronies." "So much for promising to create jobs and opportunities, the only thing this government has done is to take away opportunities. Instead of giving relief in the pandemic, they are making things difficult for people," she said. "This government is responsible for the downfall of our national flag carrier. From the pilots' controversy to sacking employees, PIA is being grounded on purpose. The decision to auction this hangar will not only affect PIA but also the labour working there."

Ms Rehman added: "Ispahani Hangar has been functional for more than three decades and is the backbone of our airlines. We reject the government's decision and will not let this loot sale take place."

Responding to Ms Rehman's statement, PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said in all commercial entities, assets are assessed in terms of audits and accounts every now and then.

He said that PIA had been estimating all assets for its balance sheet restructuring.

He said Ispahani Hangar is one of the major assets of PIA which will be entered in the balance sheet after accurate estimates.

"PIA is not auctioning off any of its assets. Operational, administrative and financial reforms are being introduced within the PIA," the spokesman said.



PIA purser honoured

The spokesman said a senior purser of the PIA, Tawheed Daudpota, has been honoured by the United Nations after a picture of him entertaining an infant during a flight went viral on social media.

He said Tawheed Daudpota has been awarded the 'Humanitarian Sympathy and Equality Award' by the UN Women Agency.

Delta Airlines cancelled 100 flights due to pilot shortage



News Delta Airlines cancelled about 100 flights on Sunday because of pilot shortages. Delta also opened middle seats on Sunday and Monday to increase passenger capacity.

Some of the employees were reportedly having adverse side effects from the COVID-19 vaccinations. In a statement on Sunday, the airline said:

"We apologize to our customers for the inconvenience, and the majority have been rebooked for the same travel day," the airline said in a statement.

"Delta teams have been working through various factors, including staffing, large numbers of employee vaccinations and pilots returning to active status."

The airline said that it had over a million passengers during the past few days. However, the airline announced the middle seats were opened just for Sunday and Monday.

Emirates Sky Cargo and Rickenbacker celebrate milestone passenger freighter flight



Emirates SkyCargo has operated the 500th passenger freighter flight serviced by Rickenbacker Airport (LCK), Ohio on April 1 2021. The 501st passenger flight to the airport was also operated by Emirates, EK 9909, arrived just two hours later at LCK airport. Both flights, operated by Emirates' Boeing 777-300ER mini-freighters, were transporting PPE and other essential cargo.

Emirates SkyCargo was the first air cargo carrier to operate a passenger freighter, a passenger aircraft operating a cargo only flight, on May 28 2020, to Rickenbacker Airport. Over the last 10 months, the carrier has operated more than 200 passenger freighter cargo flights to the airport.

"Emirates would like to extend its heartiest congratulations to Rickenbacker Airport on its passenger freighter milestone and we are delighted to have operated both the first and the 500th passenger freighter flights to the airport. The COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of air cargo connectivity in delivering essential goods such as PPE rapidly to communities and Rickenbacker Airport has been a strategic partner for Emirates SkyCargo in North America. We are grateful to the entire team at LCK who have been extremely responsive and supportive of our requests over the last year," said HiranPerera, Emirates senior vice president, cargo planning & freighters.

"This significant milestone would not be possible without our strong partnership with Emirates SkyCargo, which has served the greatest number of these flights into Rickenbacker Airport," said Joseph Nardone, president & CEO of the Columbus Regional Airport Authority.

"We are grateful for their faith in what we call the Rickenbacker Advantage-our ability to move airfreight faster than other global gateways."



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Pakistan, China mull bilateral framework under CPEC



Pakistan and China are expected to sign a bilateral framework agreement on industrial cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Pakistan and China are expected to sign a bilateral framework agreement on industrial cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) even though Islamabad has declined negotiated divestment of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) to Chinese firms.

Informed sources said a Chinese delegation has been engaging with Pakistan authorities for a government-to-government (G2G) deal on the country's largest industrial complex which shutdown operations in June 2015.

In this regard, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Industries and Production Muhammad Hammad Azhar presided over a meeting on economic and industrial cooperation under CPEC to address outstanding issues. The sale of PSM to Chinese state-run firms under the G2G arrangement also came up for discussions.

The sources told media that during the meeting, also attended by privatisation minister and secretaries of finance and privatisation, authorities explained to the Chinese side that G2G arrangement on PSM was not possible under the country's privatisation law and the entity was now on top of the divestment list and at an advance stage.

Beijing aiming for G2G deal on Pakistan Steel Mills

Sources said the Framework Agreement on Industrial Cooperation was earlier expected to be signed during the Joint Cooperation Committee of the meeting tentatively scheduled in the last week of March.

An official statement said Federal Minister for Privatisation Muhammad Soomro, CPEC Authority Chairman Lt Gen Retd Asim Saleem Bajwa, Chinese Ambassador in Islamabad Nong Rong and Federal

Secretaries for Finance and Privatisation Commission attended the meeting.

Mr Hammad said that CPEC was of "utmost importance for Pakistan" as it would enhance industrial production, upgrade energy and communication infrastructure and improve connectivity with the region. CPEC would generate abundant employment and investment opportunities in Pakistan and beyond, he added.

The Chinese ambassador, who led the delegation, also agreed that CPEC was "of immense importance for the Chinese companies" and will expand and strengthen economic cooperation for achieving common objectives and guarantee a prosperous future for both the nations.

The finance minister "stressed the need for the early completion of projects falling under the umbrella of CPEC" and noted that "time was of essence in meeting project deadlines so that the economic benefits could reach to the people of both the countries and contribute towards overall economic growth and development".

Potential profitable enterprise?

Last year, the government had decided to sack 100 per cent of about 9,350 employees to facilitate the privatisation of PSM. According to an old summary of the Ministry of Industries and Production, the "failure of the country's mother industry was an unending story of unchecked corruption, inefficiency, and over-employment".

The Pak-China Investment Bank had declared in 2015 that with an initial investment of \$289m (about Rs29 billion), provision of uninterrupted electricity supply and a new management, Pakistan Steel had the potential of becoming a profitable enterprise given its ideal location, market and facilities.

The country's largest industrial complex could generate the funds required for expanding its production capacity to three million tonnes, the bank said. It further proposed a development and expansion plan with a capital investment of \$288.77m in the first phase, \$300.4m in the second and \$296.62m in the third phase. The total investment required was \$885.8m, or approximately Rs100bn.

On the basis of field surveys,

extensive data and in-depth discussions, the financial advisers had concluded that the PSM was a steel enterprise which had a high starting point, complete process chain and the advantages of resource acquisition and regional market.

The advisers were of the opinion that because it was located near a coastal city with over 20m population and close to the 50,000-tonne bulk cargo wharf relying on raw material and fuels import, the PSM owned rare logistic cost advantages. With the expansion of its production capacity in future, its harbour could also be used to ship products to the rest of the market.

Foreign shipping firms, airlines can open PLS accounts

Shipping companies and airlines having offices or operating their ships or planes in Pakistan can now open and operate profit and loss sharing (PLS) rupee accounts, said the revised Foreign Exchange Manual of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) partially issued on Monday 5 April.

The SBP has decided to delegate more powers to the banks for facilitation of the stakeholders aiming to promote ease of doing business by simplifying the existing instructions, removing the redundancies through revision of the foreign exchange manual related to commercial remittances.

The central bank has invited views for the revision of rules and regulations related to commercial remittances. However, it has already revised half of the manual.

"The agents of foreign shipping companies and airlines may retain freight or passage collections in PLS accounts held in their own names," said the SBP.

Considering the market dynamics and keeping pace with changing business environment, the SBP is in the process of revising the manual in consultation with relevant stakeholders in a phased manner. In this regard, 11 chapters (out of 22) of the Foreign Exchange Manual have already been revised.

"Cargo Consolidators or Forwarders who registered with regulating authorities may accept freight in rupees without the prior approval of the State Bank only in respect of Pakistani exports cargo on freight," said the SBP.

The freight and passage collected in Pakistan can be remitted abroad after adjustment of amount spent for local disbursements and taxes payable. Remittance of passage collections or use thereof for local disbursement is permissible only after the relative journeys have actually been undertaken, said the SBP.

Minister eyes Rs30bn from PR freight service

Railways Minister Azam Swati on Monday 22 March assigned the Pakistan Railways (PR) an annual earning target of Rs30 billion from its freight service and asked the officials concerned to submit within three months a blueprint to achieve the target.

Addressing a news conference, Mr Swati said the target is not only achievable but the department could potentially reach Rs40bn.

The PR has suffered a loss of Rs2.9bn over the past 10 months. The minister while explaining the loss disclosed that an attempt had been made for the collapse of railways. Distribution valves from 220 new freight wagons were stolen, he said, adding that each of the equipment cost Rs300,000 and the net loss was Rs800 million. Those found responsible would be taken to task, he said.

According to Mr Swati, the PR used to earn Rs50,000 per day from each of the grounded freight wagons, and the total loss worked out to be Rs2.9bn.

The railways minister blamed the



In this file photo, Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati speaks to the media in Lahore.

management of Pakistan State Oil (PSO) for not using the freight train service of railways for transportation of petroleum products. At present, 2,000 wagons are readily available to transport oil from Attock Oil up to Mardan, he said.

Mr Swati said as a result of his intervention, the PSO chairman has issued directives for using the railways freight service for transportation of oil. This measure would enable the PR to earn a profit of Rs3bn, he said. The PR has end-to-end terminal facilities and is fully equipped to provide service to PSO, he added.

Mr Swati said that reformation of the real estate of Pakistan Railways is being introduced to protect railways land. However, he said, what is the use of this land when the country could not pay off loans obtained by Pakistan from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

He said the Ministry of Railways has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), the military engineering organisation and one of the major science and technology commands of Pakistan Army, to undertake projects of the PR.

Any project under the federal government's Public Sector Development Programme, which can take five years to complete, could be completed in six months through FWO, he remarked. FWO may not have to take other projects as railways have enough projects. The positive element in giving projects to FWO is that there is no chance of corruption, and the prime minister himself wants there should be no corruption in any project.

China assures Murad of inclusion of KCR, Keti Bandar projects in CPEC

Chinese authorities have assured the Sindh government that they would pursue Karachi Circular Railway, Keti Bandar and other projects to officially include them in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)-related projects.

This emerged on Tuesday April 6 in a meeting between Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and a Chinese government delegation led by Beijing's Ambassador in Pakistan Nong Rong.

The other delegation members were Chinese Consul General Li Bijian, defence attaché Maj Gen Chen Wen Rong, consular Bao Zhong, deputy defence attaché Senior Col Ji Xinqi, Lt Col Di Weichao, first secretary Wang Xianfeng and third secretary Wu Linglin.

Financing request for KCR

The chief minister told the delegation that on the request of his government the KCR was included in CPEC on Dec 3, 2016. The project was approved and included in 6th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC). He added that the project was approved by Ecnec at a cost of \$1.97 billion in Oct 2017.

Mr Shah said that the KCR had been part of all JCC meetings and in all the meetings it was stated to be a feasible and viable project but there were major obstacles that needed to be removed.

He added that the obstacles included sharing of a framework agreement, sovereign guarantee by the finance

division, concessional finance request to Chinese government by the federal government, right of way for KCR at common corridor between ML-1 and KCR.

He said that he had been requesting the federal government to resolve the issues, but the issues were still unaddressed. "In the 9th JCC meeting the KCR was again discussed and it was resolved that the Pakistan side will submit the financing request to the Chinese side," he said and added it had not been submitted yet.

Talking about the current situation of the KCR, Mr Shah said that the federal government included two projects in the public sector development programme of FY 21, which were Rs1.85bn organisation of train on existing KCR alignment and revival of KCR Phase-II for Rs8.7bn.

He said that he had included three projects in the provincial ADP 2020-21, which include revival of KCR (CPEC framework) for Rs207.5bn, construction of a boundary fence along the KCR alignment for Rs2.3 million and construction of underpasses/flyovers on railway crossing along KCR route for Rs5bn. The visiting delegation assured the chief minister that they would take up the KCR projects in the CPEC-related meeting.

Keti Bandar

The chief minister said that Keti

Bandar was located about 107km from Thatta city and 150km from Karachi via Gharo and it was very promising in terms of future prospects.

He said that the Keti Bandar project was an important part of the Sindh government's strategy towards developing the energy sector.

Mr Shah said that 4,000 acres of land had been identified for the project and a feasibility study was completed for installation of a 1,320MW power plant along with a railway line, coal jetty and allied infrastructure.

"A financial viability assessment and bid management report has also been completed and the transaction advice report is being awaited," he added.

The CM said that the project was part of CPEC framework since 2017. Earlier, the project was referred to the Joint Working Group (JWG) for consideration. "After completion of the studies, the project is now ready to be taken up in the main framework," he said.

The other projects that came under discussion included Thar coal energy, infrastructure, special economic zone, Dhabeji, socio-economic development projects. The Chinese delegation said that their first CPEC project of 660MW Thar coal power plants was functioning successfully and on the same pattern all the CPEC-related projects would be completed on a fast-track basis.

Customs clears first consignment at Gwadar port under CPEC

Pakistan Customs has facilitated the clearance of the first import cum export consignment at Gwadar port under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

An official announcement said the cleared consignment by M/s HK Sun Corporation will be further processed in Gwadar Free Zone established under CPEC and later on items will be exported from Pakistan.

The first consignment consisting of metal scrap was processed and cleared by the Model Customs Collectorate, (A&F) West, Karachi and goods reached Gwadar Free Zone regulated by Model Customs Collectorate Gwadar.

More shipments of raw material of the same company are under way to Pakistan which will be further used in manufacturing of goods to be exported.

M/s HK Sun Corporation is the first enterprise which has started manufacturing and processing activity in the free zone followed by other investors to contribute to the development of first ever free zone of country established in Gwadar Baluchistan under CPEC.

According to the concession agreement signed between China Overseas Ports Holding Company (COPHC) and Gwadar Port Authority (GPA), the development and operation of Gwadar free zone is being performed by COPHC. The planned development period is from 2015 to 2030, which is divided into four phases.

With import of the current consignment, the Gwadar Free Zone has practically become operational leading to the development of other economic zones under CPEC in Pakistan.

The free zone will integrate and strengthen the linkage of industries between China and Pakistan.

The free zone is positioned as economic development engine of Gwadar aiming to transform international trade logistics hub under CPEC.

The project will create employment opportunities for local population; and will play a role of catalyst for economic growth and development of country.

Philippines urges China to remove vessels from disputed sea



Chinese fishing vessels move about in South China Sea.

The Philippine government said recently that more than 250 Chinese vessels it believes are operated by militia have been spotted near six Manila-claimed islands and reefs in the disputed South China Sea and demanded that China immediately remove them.

The gathering of the Chinese-flagged vessels, along with four Chinese navy ships at a Chinese-occupied manmade island base, is hazardous to navigation and safety of life at sea” and may damage coral reefs and threaten the Philippines' sovereign rights, a government body overseeing the disputed waters said.

China has ignored a Philippine government diplomatic protest and a call more than a week ago by Philippine Defence Secretary Delfin Lorenzana for about 200 Chinese vessels to leave Whitsun Reef, stating that the maritime territory belongs to it and the Chinese vessels were sheltering from rough seas.

After carrying out aerial and maritime patrol missions, Philippine officials said 44 Chinese maritime militia vessels were still moored at Whitsun Reef, which Manila calls Julian Felipe.

More than 200 other vessels from the Chinese flotilla have apparently dispersed to five other areas in the Spratly group of islands, including three Chinese-occupied artificial islands, they said.

At least four Chinese navy ships were at Chinese-occupied Mischief Reef, the Philippine officials said. China took control of the reef in 1995, drawing strong protests from the Philippines and other claimant states.

About 45 Chinese vessels were in the vicinity of the Philippine-occupied island of Thitu, which Manila calls Pagasa, the officials said.

The Philippines calls on China to immediately withdraw these vessels flying its flag, the National Task Force for the West Philippine Sea said in a statement.

Chinese envoy sees steady progress on CPEC projects

Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong has said that during the first six months since his posting to Islamabad he got convinced that there is a national consensus in Pakistan on the need to complete all CPEC-related development projects in time.

Interacting with journalists here, Ambassador Nong said that since his arrival in Pakistan in October, he has held several meetings with Prime Minister Imran Khan and the army chief and regularly exchanged views with political and business leaders.

The diplomat said the impression he got during these meetings was that they not only fully supported CPEC, they were very keen on having greater cooperation to ensure timely completion of all the projects.

Expressing satisfaction over “steady progress” on most CPEC projects and related activities like the creation of Rashakai Economic Zone and Gwadar Free Zone, Mr Nong said these developments were likely to attract Chinese investors. He disclosed that under CPEC several new projects were being discussed at the moment. However, he did not provide any details.

The ambassador denied an impression being created by some elements that CPEC was against any third country. In fact, he said, the kind of cooperation going on between China and Pakistan could benefit many other countries.

He said that both Beijing and Islamabad were constantly working at different levels as well as through their embassies to invite participation from other countries for the mutual benefit of all.

The Chinese envoy said people had high expectations from CPEC and was confident that they would not be disappointed.

Mr Nong praised Pakistan's efforts to interact with India.

The ambassador said more than 100 programmes and activities were being lined up to celebrate 70 years of close bond between Pakistan and China.



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Pakistan working to cut port charges

Pakistan has kick-started the process of cutting port charges to bring down the cost of imports and exports and to increase its footprints in facilitating regional and international trade transportation through sea.

“The port charges come somewhere between \$50,000 to \$100,000 per ship depending upon the size of the ship and the number of days it spends to download or upload cargo at a port in the country,” said Pakistan Ship’s Agents Association (PSAA) Chairman Mohammed Rajpar while talking to The Express Tribune.

He spoke after attending the very first meeting of the committee formed by the cabinet to rationalise port charges.

The committee has been tasked to reduce the cost of doing business and increase the country’s competitiveness in facilitating regional and international trade transportation through offering better price and quality services.

The major port charges include port dues, pilotage in, pilotage out, pilotage charges, ship berthing and storage, it was learnt.

“Our competition (in the region) is with ports of Colombo in Sri Lanka, Salalah in Oman and Jebel Ali in Dubai in transshipment,” said Rapar, who is also a member of the committee.

Local traders alone pay an estimated \$5-6 billion in freight charges, including port charges, for import and export in a year, it was learnt.

The port charges are targeted to be rationalised to create ease of doing business like the incumbent government has been doing in all sectors to reduce the cost of doing business in Pakistan, he said.

To recall, the cost of doing business has gone up in the country following increase in power tariff, passing on the increase in international oil prices to local consumers. Besides, the gas utility firms have once again requested the government to increase gas price as well.

The government is bound to increase prices under stringent conditions of the International Monetary Fund’s (IMF) loan programme worth \$6 billion.

Accordingly, the average inflation reading has remained high at over 8% on an average in the first eight months (Jul-Feb) of current fiscal year against the government target of 6.1% for the year.

The average reading may end up somewhere 9% for the full year.

“During the meeting, avenues were explored for rationalising port charges in



Around \$300 million will be required for the development of port infrastructure and CDC collection is not enough to take up the task.

comparison to regional ports. All the stakeholders may have to reduce charges for the realisation of ultimate port charges rationalisation. It would become possible only when the available circumstances are examined in both the ports and shipping sectors equally,” Karachi Port Trust (KPT) said in a press statement.

ECO train to resume operations in mid-April

Top authorities of the Pakistan Railways say the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) freight rail transport service, called ECO (Economic Cooperation Organisation) train, is most likely to resume its operation by the middle of next month.

Pakistan pledges to join hands with Turkey and Iran to resume operation of the ITI freight train within the shortest time as various preparatory works are underway these days.

“Our main focus is to make resumption of the ECO train operation a successful one since it couldn’t be continued on regular basis due to various issues. But we want that there should be no issue in running of the train frequently and this is why we are making excellent operational arrangements in this regard,” PR Chairman Dr Habibur Rehman Gilani said while talking to media after presiding over a meeting on resumption of the train here at the Railways Headquarters.

When asked about the condition of the railway track (from Taftan to Quetta) covered with heavy sand dunes these days, he said there would be no problem as the PR field teams would clear the track of sand dunes soon, making it operationally fit for the ECO as well as other trains.

It is pertinent to mention train was set to resume operations on March 4 after a period of nine years. However, mishandling, negligence and other administrative issues, allegedly on the part of various railway officers, caused the delay.

The meeting was chaired by KPT chairman who is head of the committee. Other committee members were including Port Qasim Authority (PQA) chairman, Pakistan National Shipping Corporation (PNSC) chairman and Pakistan International Container Terminal (PICT) CEO Khurram Aziz.

Rajpar said they would now gather the related data and information to make analysis as to how and from which heads the port charges may be rationalised.

He said the committee may meet two to three times over the next 30 days to prepare and second recommendations of the committee to the cabinet.

To recall, the international freight charges had gone up by around 500-700% since June 2020, including for traders in Pakistan. Rajpar, however, said this was a temporary phenomenon and freight charges have nothing to do with the port charges. They are two separate things.

Turkey and Iran, in two recent ECO’s coordination meetings held virtually on March 1 and 4 had also called upon Pakistan to review the tariff for train on the basis of actual weight and per kilometre instead of the fixed charges for the 1,990km journey from Iran’s city to Zahedan to Islamabad.

While giving his input, PR Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Nisar Ahmad Memon told this reporter the train would most likely resume operation by April 15.

“We have made our calculations related to per km freight charges for 1,990km Zahedan-Islamabad journey on the demand of Turkey and Iran. Soon this will be discussed in an upcoming meeting of the ECO working group that would virtually be held and hosted by Iran by end of this month. Pakistan and Turkey will participate through a video link,” he explained.

Earlier, the senior PR officials discussed various issues in the wake of the ECO train’s operations. The issues came under discussion included security/law and order, condition of the track and availability of the rolling stock and locomotives.

“These all issues must be resolved since we want operation of the train resumed within shortest time,” Mr Gilani said.

He directed the railways police and other law enforcement agencies to ensure foolproof security arrangements.

As FIFA suspends Pakistan, Ashfaq seeks dialogue to resolve issue

Pakistan Football Federation's inevitable suspension by FIFA was confirmed on Wednesday 7 April.

Yet, Ashfaq Hussain Shah whose move to take over the PFF headquarters led to the ban is still seeking dialogue with the world's football governing body to resolve the issue.

"We are open to a dialogue with FIFA," Ashfaq, who was elected president in a PFF election held by the Supreme Court in December 2018 which wasn't recognised by FIFA, told media. "We want them to listen to our grievances with the Normalisation Committee it appointed in Pakistan and find a way to resolve this matter."

FIFA suspended Pakistan after a group of officials led by Ashfaq took over the PFF headquarters from the Normalisation Committee led by Haroon Malik last month and refused to hand it back despite an ultimatum given by the global football body.

FIFA had appointed the Normalisation Committee to run PFF affairs in September 2019 following years of infighting among groups of football officials in the country.

It was initially led by Humza Khan, who resigned as chairman in December last year before being replaced by Haroon in January.

FIFA said in a statement that its decision to suspend the PFF was prompted by the "hostile takeover" which constituted a serious violation of its statutes.

"FIFA issued a letter warning that, should the illegitimate occupation of the PFF headquarters not be lifted and the office bearers recognised by FIFA not be permitted free access to the building to carry out their mandate, the matter would be immediately submitted to the Bureau of the Council for decision," FIFA said.

"As the situation remains unchanged, the Bureau of the Council has decided to suspend the PFF. PFF representative and club teams are therefore no longer entitled to take part in international competitions until the suspension is lifted.

"This suspension will only be lifted once FIFA has received confirmation from the Normalisation Committee of the PFF that the PFF's premises, accounts, administration and communication channels are again under its full control and it can continue to carry out its

mandate without further hindrance."

Ashfaq claimed that the issue was more about FIFA's "unwillingness to listen to the genuine stakeholders of Pakistan football".

"We have written to FIFA about eight times since we handed charge of the PFF headquarters to Normalisation Committee yet we haven't received a single reply," he claimed.

"FIFA should look at what the Normalisation Committee has done in the last 18 months and there should be accountability since there has been nothing done regarding the PFF elections, which is the main mandate of the Normalisation Committee."

Haroon, who had announced that the NC would give the election roadmap this month, was still hopeful that the ban would soon be lifted.

"I'm very hopeful and am working with FIFA to ensure that the suspension wouldn't last too long," he told media, although there wasn't immediate clarity on what the status of the NC would be during the suspension.

FIFA appointed the PFF NC almost four years after a controversial election of the PFF had thrown Pakistan football into turmoil. During that time, Pakistan was also suspended for a six-month period from October 2017 to March 2018 for a court-appointed administrator taking over the PFF headquarters from then president Faisal Saleh Hayat.

The suspension by FIFA adds to the long-running crisis that has afflicted Pakistan football since Hayat, who was PFF president since 2003, held a controversial election in 2015.

The PFF had split into two factions following those elections one led by Hayat and the other by senior vice-president Zahir Ali Shah and two years later, FIFA banned Pakistan when the Lahore High Court had appointed an administrator to run PFF affairs.

Even though Hayat was reinstated as president, the Supreme Court had ordered that fresh elections of the PFF were to be conducted after the election of the Punjab Football Association (PFA), which had been the cause of the split in the PFF.



A security guard stands at the main entrance of the headquarters of Pakistan Football Federation on Wednesday 7 April.

With his candidate Sardar Naveed Haider Khan winning the PFF poll conducted by the Supreme Court, Hayat had no issues over that result but there was fresh drama in the PFF elections.

In the lead-up to the election, Sardar deserted Hayat to join forces with Zahir and that saw Ashfaq elected as the PFF chief. Hayat, however, refused to accept the Supreme Court election, claiming it was interference in the affairs of the PFF.

It prompted FIFA to appoint the NC, after which Zahir and Ashfaq, backed by Sardar and Amir Dogar, also went their separate ways meaning there are now three groups vying for control of the PFF.

Hayat was present in the Executive Committee meeting of the Asian Football Confederation in Bahrain on Wednesday 7 April where FIFA president Gianni Infantino was also in attendance.

The AFC also took note of FIFA's decision to suspend the PFF and well-placed sources told media that "Hayat wasn't too pleased with the way the PFF issue was handled as he claimed that he wasn't consulted despite being a key stakeholder."

Pak-Iran tax-free trade resumes

Limited taxfree trade activities between Pakistan and Iran resumed on Wednesday 7 April after the Iranian authorities reopened the trade gate commonly known as Zero Point at the Taftan border in Chagai district. Taftan Assistant Commissioner Asmatullah Achakzai told media that the gate was closed in connection with the Nauroz holiday in the last week of March.

Prince Philip: the gruff figure at heart of Britain's monarchy

A blunt-speaking naval officer who as Queen Elizabeth's dutiful consort helped modernise the British monarchy, Prince Philip might be best remembered for his gruff public persona. (He died on 9 April 2021)

Outspoken and irascible, Philip lived in the shadow of the woman he married at Westminster Abbey in 1947 and always walked a step behind the queen at the thousands of ceremonial events they attended during her reign, the longest in British history.

Though he had no official role, Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, was one of the most influential figures in the royal family for more than 70 years.

While Philip was often criticised for his demeanour and sometimes brusque remarks, friends said that as Queen Elizabeth II's closest confidant he brought wit, impatient intelligence and unflagging energy to the monarchy.

"He has, quite simply, been my strength and stay all these years," Elizabeth said in a rare personal tribute to Philip during a speech to mark their 50th wedding anniversary in 1997.

"I, and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know."

If Philip harboured frustration at his life as consort, he never publicly showed it.

But in a tetchy interview with the BBC to mark his 90th birthday, he did reveal that in the early days he struggled to find a role for himself.

"There was no precedent. If I asked somebody 'what do you expect me to do?' they all looked blank _ they had no idea, nobody had much idea," he said.

Born in an age of deference to monarchy, Philip helped Elizabeth navigate the political and social upheaval of the 20th century to craft a monarchy fit for a different time.

Often facing a deeply traditional court, he reformed the palace and tried to harness the growing power of television to project royal influence.

He pushed for the queen's coronation in 1953 to be televised live and behind the scenes removed outdated behaviour in the palace he regarded as stuffy. He was the first royal to do a TV interview.



A File Photo taken on Nov 18, 2007 shows Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip during a dinner hosted by Prince Charles to mark the 60th wedding anniversary of the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. Those standing are Prince Andrew (left) Princes Anne (centre) and Prince Edward.

However, later in life Philip was criticised for impeding the monarchy's ability to adapt to the times, and detractors partly blamed his overbearing manner for his children's failure to produce happy families.

The couple had four children: Charles, Prince of Wales (born in 1948), Princess Anne (1950), Prince Andrew (1960) and Prince Edward (1964), three of whose marriages ended in divorce.

Strength and stay

For Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip was a supportive husband who courtiers said was the only person to treat the monarch as a human being.

Despite rumours about his infidelity, the couple stayed together and in old age they clearly enjoyed an affection and regard for each other. They celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in November 2017.

However Philip, the son of exiled Prince Andrew of Greece, a descendant of Elizabeth's great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria and his wife's third cousin, never quite won the hearts of all Britons.

Elizabeth was the sovereign, but in family matters it was Philip who was viewed as the head of the family.

As first Princess Anne, then Prince Andrew and then finally Prince Charles suffered a broken marriage, royal watchers pointed the finger at Philip as a doughty father, calling him domineering and cold, particularly with his sons.

When the popularity of the House of

Windsor plunged after the death of Charles's first wife Princess Diana in 1997, he was accused of helping stop the monarchy adapt to a new Britain.

A decade after Diana was killed in a Paris car crash at 36, Philip had to suffer the embarrassment of hearing Mohamed al Fayed, the former owner of London's luxury Harrods store whose son was the princess's lover, allege the prince had ordered her death.

A jury rejected the claims after hearing no evidence to back them up. But such accusations illustrated the country's mixed feelings about him.

Controversial figure

Philip was also the most controversial member of the royal family until the travails of his children and their spouses became regular tabloid fodder in the 1990s.

The duke was attacked for his views on everything from nuclear power to nature conservation. Critics called him a hypocrite for heading the World Wide Fund for Nature while taking part in blood sports such as pheasant shooting.

"I think that there's a difference between being concerned for the conservation of nature and being a bunny-hugger," he told the BBC.

It was such blunt comments that gained him the greatest attention. A remark about "slitty eyes" during a visit to China in the 1980s became symbolic of his often unguarded manner, which contrasted with the queen's restraint.

WWII codebreaker honoured on UK's new 50-pound note



Bank of England's Chief Cashier Sarah John shows the back of a new 50-pound note featuring the late mathematician Alan Turing.

The rainbow flag is flying proudly on Thursday 25 March above the Bank of England in the heart of London's financial district to commemorate World War II codebreaker Alan Turing, the new face of Britain's 50-pound note.

The design of the bank note was unveiled before it is set to be formally issued to the public on June 23, Turing's birthday. The 50-pound note is the most valuable denomination in circulation but is little used during everyday transactions, especially during the coronavirus pandemic as digital exchanges increasingly replaced the use of cash.

The new note, which is laden with high-level security features, completes the bank's rejig of its stable of paper currencies over the past few years. Turing's image joins that of Winston Churchill on the five-pound note, novelist Jane Austen on the 10-pound note and artist J. M. W. Turner on the 20-pound note. All the notes are made from polymer rather than paper, which means they should last longer and remain in better condition through their use.

The new note incorporates two windows and a two-colour foil that designers say will make it very difficult to counterfeit. There is also a hologram image which changes between the words Fifty and Pounds when the note is tilted from side to side, as well as an embedded microchip to pay tribute to Turing's role in the birth of computers.

Turing was selected as the new face of the 50-pound note in 2019 following a public nomination process, recognition of his pivotal role in breaking Nazi Germany's Enigma code during World War II.

Those who knew him said his reputation hid an urbane wit, devotion to his family, love of sport and a dedication to the business of being royal.

Descended himself from a royal family that had lost its throne, he knew that monarchies could come unstuck if they lost the respect of the people.

He once said during a Canadian trip: "If at any stage people feel that the monarchy has no further part to play, then for goodness sake let's end the thing on amicable terms."

Childhood on the move

Philippos Schleswig-Holstein Sonderburg-Glücksburg was born on the Greek island of Corfu on June 10, 1921, the fifth child and only son of Prince Andrew of Greece.

His parents went into exile when he was 18 months old. They sailed from Corfu with the little boy sleeping in a cot made hurriedly from orange boxes.

Philip had British and German blood through his mother, a great granddaughter of Queen Victoria. She was born Princess Alice of Battenberg and became a nun after drifting apart from her husband, who died virtually penniless in 1944.

Philip lived his early life on the move around Europe. It was a troubled childhood.

He was educated at Gordonstoun, where his son Prince Charles was later an unwilling pupil, and became a naturalised British citizen, looking and sounding every bit the English gentleman.

But to his detractors he remained "Phil the Greek".

Philip joined the Royal Naval College at Dartmouth as a cadet in 1939. He served in warships during World War Two, was mentioned in dispatches, took part in the Allied landings in Sicily and was in Tokyo Bay when Japan surrendered in 1945.

He and Elizabeth first met at the wedding of Philip's cousin in 1934. Five years later the dashing young sailor attracted the attention of his future wife when the then-princess was 13 and visited Dartmouth with her parents.

"The colour drained from her face and then she blushed. She stared at him and for the rest of the day followed him everywhere. She was in love from the beginning," the late Earl Mountbatten, Philip's uncle, recalled later.

They were married at Westminster Abbey on Nov. 20, 1947, in a ceremony

attended by statesmen and royalty from around the world.

He continued his naval career until 1951, then took leave and devoted himself full-time to public duties when Elizabeth became queen a year later.

"I suspect for Prince Philip it was quite difficult in the very early years of the reign because he had to sacrifice his naval career which is something he did mind about," royal historian Hugo Vickers said.

There was one place where he outshone his wife - on the Pacific island of Tanna in the Vanuatu group, where people believed he was a god with magical powers and was the fount of all goodness.

Marriage rifts

Rumours of extra-marital activities and a rift with the queen were firmly denied in the 1950s.

In his biography of the queen, Robert Hardman said that during a royal tour of Australia in 1954, a camera crew witnessed Philip running out of a chalet with a pair of tennis shoes and a racquet flying after him.

The crew destroyed the film and later the queen herself approached them. "I'm sorry for that little interlude but, as you know, it happens in every marriage," the queen told them, according to Hardman.

Decades later, their grandson Prince Harry said the queen had depended on Philip.

"Personally, I don't think that she could do it without him," he said. In later years, Philip eased up on royal duties as his health deteriorated.

He spent Christmas in 2011 in hospital after an operation to clear a blocked artery in his heart and he missed the end of celebrations to mark his wife's 60th year on the throne in 2012 after being hospitalised with a bladder infection.

In August 2017 he retired from active public life altogether.

In January 2019, he escaped unhurt when his Land Rover car flipped over after a collision with another car close to the royals' Sandringham residence in eastern England.

"I reckon I've done my bit," he told the BBC in 2011. "I want to enjoy myself for a bit now."

Asked whether he felt he had been a success in his role, he gave a typically phlegmatic response.

"I couldn't care less," he said. "Who cares what I think about it, I mean it's ridiculous."

Nauroz celebrated with zeal across GB



Elders dance to the tune of traditional music during an event organised to celebrate Nauroz at Damas village in Ghizer on Sunday 21 March.

The Nauroz festival was celebrated across Gilgit-Baltistan with traditional zeal on Sunday 21 March.

Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid Khan, cabinet and opposition parties' members, civil and military officials participated in the festivals in their respective areas of Gilgit, Hunza-Nagar, Ghizer, Astore, Skardu, Shigar, Kharmang and Ghancha districts.

The festival marks the beginning of new year in the Persian calendar.

A Jashn-i-Nauroz function was held at the Municipal Ground in Skardu, where Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid, Senior Minister Raja Zakirya, Tourism Minister Raja Nasir Ali Khan, the commissioner of Baltistan division and a large number of locals were in attendance.

On the occasion, famous Balti breaking of eggs competition was held, where every competitor brought an egg and tried to break it with another egg. Each time the egg was broken the winner was given an egg by the loser.

A function was held in the Galmit area of Hunza to celebrate the day, where Commander of the Frontier Corps Northern Areas Maj Gen Jawwad Ahmed Qazi, minister Ubaidullah Baig, Hunza Deputy Commissioner Fayyaz Ahmed and local residents were in attendance.

Traditional dances were performed on music.

On the occasion, a spring tree plantation drive was also launched.

Similarly, functions were held in Nagar district to celebrate Nauroz. Dry fruit, homemade traditional dishes and sweets were distributed among the participants.

With the start of the new year, people in some districts start ploughing their fields, planting trees and cleaning water channels.

To mark the day, men, women and youngsters wear new clothes and go to relatives and friends' houses to greet them. Households also prepare traditional dishes to serve the guests.

Only 'immunised' pilgrims will be allowed to perform Umrah in Ramazan

Saudi authorities said on Monday 4 April only people immunised against Covid-19 would be allowed to perform Umrah from the start of Ramazan.

The Haj and Umrah ministry said in a statement that three categories of people would be considered "immunised" -- those who have received two doses of the vaccine, those administered a single dose at least 14 days prior, and people who have recovered from the infection.

Only those people will be eligible for permits to perform Umrah, as well as to attend prayers at Makkah's Grand Mosque and Masjid-i-Nabawi, in Madina.

It was also not clear whether the policy, which comes amid an uptick in coronavirus infections in Saudi Arabia, would be extended to Haj.

Saudi Arabia has reported more than 393,000 coronavirus infections and 6,700 deaths from Covid-19.

The health ministry said it had administered more than five million coronavirus vaccines, in a country with a population of over 34 million.

Last month, King Salman replaced the Haj minister, months after the country hosted the smallest Haj in modern history due to the pandemic.

Mohammad Benteen was relieved from his post and replaced by Essam bin Saeed.

Only 10,000 residents of Saudi Arabia itself were allowed to take part, a far cry from the 2.5 million pilgrims from around the world who performed Haj in 2019.

It is unclear how many pilgrims will be allowed for Haj this year.

According to the pro-government Okaz newspaper, only vaccinated pilgrims will likely be permitted this year.

In a relaxation of coronavirus curbs last October, Saudi Arabia opened the Grand Mosque for prayers for the first time in seven months and partially resumed Umrah.

Authorities said the Umrah would be allowed to return to full capacity once the threat of the pandemic has abated.

Egypt unveils 3,000-year-old 'lost' city near Luxor



THE picture shows a view of the 3,000-year-old city.

Archaeologists recently showed off their finds at what they say is the "largest" ancient city ever found in Egypt, dating to a golden age of the pharaohs 3,000 years ago.

At the site near Luxor, home of the legendary Valley of the Kings, workers carefully carried ancient pots and showed human and animal remains dug up from the earth as members of the media toured around curved brick walls and rudimentary streets.

"This is a large city that was lost. It was connected with the god Aton and Amenhotep III," famed Egyptologist Zahi Hawass enthusiastically told reporters.

"We found three major districts: one for administration, one for workers to sleep in and another for industry," he said.

Spaces include workshops for drying meat, making clothes and sandals, and crafting amulets and small statues.

Mostafa Waziri, head of the country's Supreme Council of Antiquities said the site was not limited to buildings.

"We can see... economic activity, workshops and ovens," he said. Hawass had announced earlier this week the discovery of a "lost golden city", and the archaeological team said the find was "the largest" ancient city ever uncovered in Egypt.

"We found one portion of the city only," Hawass told media. "The city extends to the west and the north."

Jewellery, 'golden fish'

The team began excavations in September between the temples of Ramses III and Amenhotep III near Luxor, some 500 kilometres (300 miles) south of Cairo.

Amenhotep III inherited an empire that stretched from the Euphrates River in modern Iraq and Syria to Sudan and died

around 1354 BC, ancient historians say.

He ruled for nearly four decades, a reign known for its opulence and the grandeur of its monuments, including the Colossi of Memnon -- two massive stone statues near Luxor that represent him and his wife.

Betsy Bryan, professor of Egyptian art and archaeology at Johns Hopkins University, had said in a statement this week that the find was the "second most

important archaeological discovery since the tomb of Tutankhamun" nearly a century ago.

"The archaeological layers have laid untouched for thousands of years, left by the ancient residents as if it were yesterday," the team's statement said.

Archaeologists have unearthed items of jewellery, coloured pottery vessels, scarab beetle amulets and mud bricks bearing seals of Amenhotep III.

Hawass said "a large fish covered in gold" may have been venerated.

Jose Galan, head of a separate Spanish archaeological mission near the Valley of the Kings, told media that the site was "a fantastic discovery".

"We are used to discoveries related to temples and tombs so we know about religious life and funerary habits. But we don't know much about settlements," he said.

USOPC opposes Beijing Olympics boycott

The United States Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC) reiterated its opposition to a boycott of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics on Wednesday 7 April, saying athletes should not be used as "political pawns."

In remarks to reporters ahead of a US Olympic team media event, USOPC president Susanne Lyons repeated the organisation's stance that boycotts were ineffective.

"We at the USOPC oppose athlete boycotts because they've been shown to negatively impact athletes while not effectively addressing global issues," Lyons said. "For our athletes, their only dream is to represent the USA and what we stand for on the international field of play.

"We do not believe that Team USA's young athletes should be used as political pawns."

The Beijing Winter Games are scheduled to begin on Feb 4 next year, just six months after the summer Tokyo Olympics.

China is facing global scrutiny over a range of issues, notably the mass internment of Uighur Muslims in the western region of Xinjiang, which the US has said amounts to genocide.

It is also under pressure for its rights clampdown in the former British colony of Hong Kong.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price was asked if the US would consider a joint boycott with allies and said it was "something that we certainly wish to discuss."

But he later stressed that the United States does not "have any announcement regarding the Beijing Olympics," writing on Twitter that "we will continue to consult closely with allies and partners to define our common concerns and establish our shared approach."

China, which has rejected criticism of its human rights record, recently hit back at suggestions of a boycott, accusing the

US of "politicising sports".

USOPC chief president Lyons acknowledged the human rights issues in China, but said the issue was best dealt with on a government level.

"We certainly do not want to

minimise the serious human rights issues that are happening in China," Lyons said.

"But the US has many tools to constructively respond to these concerns which we believe should be handled by government officials."

Journalist, academic Prof Muteen-ur Rehman Murtaza passes away

Veteran journalist and former chairman of Karachi University's mass communication department Prof Syed Muteen-ur-Rehman Murtaza was laid to rest in the university's graveyard on Tuesday 16 March.



He passed away on Monday night following complications from a surgery. He was in his 80s.

His funeral prayers were offered after Zohr at Masjid-i-Ibrahim, which were attended by a large number of university teachers, his relatives and friends.

He is survived by a widow and three daughters.

An excellent Urdu prose writer, Prof Murtaza was best known for his rational, bold and analytical editorial writings, particularly for daily Jasarat and later weekly Takbeer during Ziaul Haq's regime.

Prof Murtaza had migrated from East Punjab to Pakistan. He recollected his childhood memories of migration during which he along with his younger brother got separated from the family in a booklet titled Me Ne Pakistan Bante Dekha. Its second edition is currently under publication.

His other book is Sir Syed Ka Nazaria-i-Sahafat Aur Doosre Mazameen.

He joined KU in 1972 and held the charge of chairperson of the mass communication department from 1988 to 1991. As a committed teacher and head of the department, he helped nurture numerous students into journalists that now serve various public and private media organisations.

One of his major contributions to journalism was Urdu translation of at least

15 English course books, currently part of the mass communication department's syllabus at different universities. In 1970, he joined Jasarat from Multan and later started working from Karachi. During this period, he remained extensively engaged in editorial writings.

"His forceful independent views earned the ire of the Bhutto government which closed down the paper quite a few times and jailed Salahuddin Shaheed, the paper's editor," recalls Prof Tahir Masood, former chairman of KU's mass communication department, adding that both Prof Murtaza and late Salahuddin were intellectually close to each other.

"This strong relationship came to the fore when Salahuddin Shaheed left his job when Prof Murtaza was sacked by the administration, arguing that as paper's editor he was responsible for what's published. They were one again under Takbeer, a widely read weekly in those days, launched on March 23, 1984."

After retiring from KU in 1999, he laid the foundation of the mass communication department at the Jinnah University for Women and then at Jamia-tur-Rasheed. The other newspapers he wrote for included Mashriq, Hurriyat and Islam.

He also represented Pakistan at the United Nations and acted as Nawaz Sharif's speech writer in his first tenure.

"Ethical and moral values were central to his life and he taught us to sacrifice everything for your conscience, beliefs and freedom of expression," said Prof Masood.

Dr Fauzia Naz, the current chairperson of KU's mass communication department, also Prof Murtaza's student, said: "He was both a great human being and teacher. He helped explore my hidden potential for which I would always remain grateful."

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The Birthday Dilemma

Written by Saba Farooq

Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday Dear Oldie, Happy Birthday to you. OR Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, you look like a monkey and you smell like one too...

Does it ring any bells in the back of your mind? Well, for some of us it does. These are the classic Birthday songs, which are more of an international Birthday Anthem which we have heard and sang from the minute we began hearing sounds. Birthdays don't just come with wishes, balloons, cakes, and gifts they also come with the societal pressure to act and behave a certain way after reaching a certain age. On your special day, let's say, hypothetically you turn 25, as soon as the clock hits 12, your cell phone is flooded with birthday wishes to congratulate you on your day, which makes you realize that you have grown old, hence, you expect to feel a certain way... older, mature, wiser etc. but, you don't not even a bit. Then you get confused, and you think to yourself, maybe there is something wrong with me. You drive yourself mad with thoughts like: What's wrong with me? Why am I not feeling my age? Do others feel that way as well? Or is it just me? What am I going to do now? Please, somebody make it stop. I am not ready for all of this... See, that's what I was talking about 'The Birthday Dilemma'. Unfortunately, we are all stuck in this vicious cycle. Birthdays are over-hyped if you ask me, because nothing changes within you. Everything stays the same, only the date on the calendar changes and there is nothing fundamentally different you feel about yourself. It's not like we have a say in on our birthdays. We get older every year whether we like it or not, it's a fact. We can do absolutely nothing about it. Sure, we can fix our appearances in the name of aging gracefully and looking younger, with the help of cosmetic surgeries, Botox, fillers and spend hundreds... no... thousands worth of money but, still we will be one year older on every birthday.

We humans are complex living beings. No number can truly ever define us in any way. No matter how old we turn on paper every year, on the inside we still remain more or less the same. Nobody actually feels or can feel 'x' at the age of 'x'. No birthday can make you all the things you are not magically, birthdays can't

transform you overnight. It doesn't work that way. The level of emotional and mental maturity of a person depends upon the number and type of experiences he/she has had throughout their life. It is life experiences that shape us, mold parts of us, help us grow, make us wiser, help us become responsible and disciplined not any particular birthday. That's why some people are mature for their age and some never grow up no matter what their birth certificate states. It is just a number anyway.

In my opinion, we are all the product of our birthdays. For instance, at the age of 25, there are still parts of a person who are 3,10,14, 22 years old, and so on. Basically, we are all the ages we have ever been. Inside you there is still a child who would cry their eyes out for not getting what they want, a pre-teen who is clueless about a lot of things and whose only dream is to grow up fast, because he/she seems to think that is when they will have the most fun. Then, there is a teenager part of you who thinks he/she is invincible and would want to try anything and everything just for the sake of trying new things and exploring and experiencing new things. Later on comes the adult age, you say goodbye to teen-years, it is hands-down one of the funniest stages of life. You are a grown up on paper, society wants you to act like an adult and expects you to get your act together and everything. People tend to assume you have everything figured out and you know what you are doing, little do they know, deep down you are still the cry baby you always have been. So you just pretend, pretend and pretend. Who on earth would like to be known as a cry baby after all? NO BODY. They say practice makes perfect. They are absolutely right. You have got to give them credit where it's due. At this stage we have pretty much mastered the art of acting. Though, only a few of us pursue acting as a profession. But, the acts we pull off during this adult stage are Oscar award worthy.

No matter our biological age, inside every single one of us there are parts that remain the same as we were toddlers, some parts of us stopped growing at the pre-teen stage, some parts of us got stuck at rebellious teenage stage and then, there is a big part of us which is the absolute clueless adult who only seems to survive in the day to day life because he/she

knows how to act as the know-it-all and has access to the internet. Thank heavens for that!

After the adult age comes the old life stage, which should be called the golden stage of life. This age is also known as "second childhood", and the reason why I am calling this age a golden stage because, at this stage you can pretty much get away with just about anything...literally. You could cry over petty things, throw tantrums, talk-back to others, even if you say all the offensive things that you have never uttered before in your adult life because you didn't want to be judged, so you held yourself back but, in old age my friends! You can embrace all the parts of yourself without any concern in the world. Because society gives you the green light that says on your behalf, he/she doesn't know what they are saying or doing. Little do they know...

You can't blame them, they have spent their whole lives like us thinking ...what will people say? Society owes them that.

In old age, people have a clear idea that they will not be here for a long period of time and will leave this planet soon. They are aware they have done their part. So, they don't need to impress anyone anymore. Hence, they don't bother to mold any parts of their personality to fit in like they used to. The constant fear that they carried

with them all their life like a plague, of what will people say is gone. What will people say if I did this, said that, etc don't live in their head anymore. They have realized that they don't need to entertain anyone so they stop pretending. They don't care anymore about other people's opinion, which is truly liberating. Whereas, people tend to assume he/she is acting a certain way because of old age, quite frankly, that's the age where people stop giving a damn about anyone else's opinion, they do whatever they want, without having to care about society and it's crazy Do's and Don'ts. At the end if we look at it, it's just a journey from childhood to childhood.

A while ago I came across a saying on the internet which summed up everything for me which is:

"None of us really grow up. All we ever do is learn how to behave in public."

-Keith Johnstone

Mind and Body Processed

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

A healthy body has a healthy mind and its sharp antonym would be that an un-healthy body has a sick mind. There is an eternal relationship between mind and body. Mind is found always in connection with the body or the processes of the mind are found to be connected with those of the body. Individual mind knows the existence of the external world and let's manifest itself or its existence to the rest of the world through the organs of the body. Hence the study of mind would be incomplete without a study of the organs of the body and their processes chiefly those of the brain, nerves, sense-organs and muscles which are most directly connected with mental processes and which form the basis of communication between the individual mind and the outside world. In other words, we have to study the nervous system foremost which will explain to us, how it is that we are able to think, to learn and to remember, how it is that our five senses of seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting inform us about the objects around us; how it is that we will to do a certain action and set about it, how it is that we experience love, hate, fear, joy, sorrow and so on at different

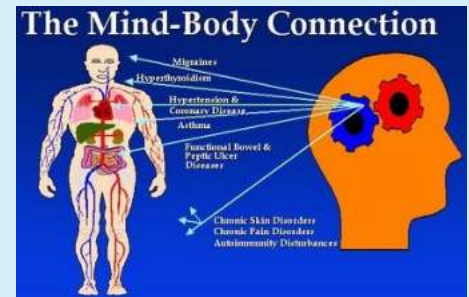


occasions given the relating circumstances.

The brain nerve-network consists of the brain, the spinal cord and the minute silver-looking fibres or threads, which constitute the nerves, which the brain and the spinal cord send off to all parts of the body. Through these nerves, messages are received by the brain that if for example, a hand gets burnt, the brain is informed through nerves and the brain instantly issues commands through another set of nerves to withdraw the hand, avoiding further burn and arranging for a cure. It is clear that the nerves merely serve as messenger and as a line of communication between the brain and various parts of the body. They simply carry the messages to and fro; themselves they can neither feel a sensation nor issue a command. In case these nerves are damaged due to any injury, then those parts of the body with which they were formerly connected become paralyzed or lose power of sensibility and voluntary movement to the extent the damaged is done, and which needs repair to regain full or partial recovery. The decision is made by the brain and carried out through other auxiliary nerves in the body. Again, if a person happens to pass by a heap of filth which gives an offensive smell, he will try to rush away from the scene as quickly as possible. It is because that certain nerves have conveyed the foul smell to the brain and the brain has immediately issued orders to the muscles of the legs to hurry away from the place.

We have said that certain nerves run up from the various parts of the body called sense-organs, to the head centre or brain and convey impressions or sensations to it. They are called sensory nerves. Others which run down from the

brain to the muscles and glands of the body and carry to them the orders of the brain are called outgoing nerves. It is quite clear that the nerves merely serve as lines of communication between the brain and different parts of the body. They simply carry the messages to and fro; they can neither feel a sensation nor issue a command. If however, both ends of a nerve are permanently injured, then all those parts of the body with which they



were formerly connected become paralyzed and lose all power of sensibility and voluntary movement. Those parts may then have a bruise-cut; get burnt or hurt without causing any pain. They are benumbed in that position. This happens to a certain degree, when a foot or hand "goes to sleep". What then occurs is that when some of the nerves are subjected to too much pressure, their nervous action is temporarily stopped; and when the pressure is removed, the nerves resume their normal work and the muscles of the "affected" limb regain their power of movement. The only parts of the body which do not contain nerves are the nails, hair and the epidermis, that is, the outermost part of the skin. We can cut our nails and our hair without causing pain; but this could not be done if these were supplied with nerves.

The nerves form the peripheral (or lower) Nervous System, while the brain and spinal cord form the central (or higher) nervous system. Brain is the great centre of the Nervous System. It is contained in the cavity of the skull which protects it. As a rule, a large brain is the sign for a great mind, while a small brain which is below a certain size is the sign of idiocy. Disease or injury to the brain may produce insanity. The brain consists of the Cerebrum, the Cerebellum and Medulla Oblongata... which need a detailed study.. (to be attempted at some later stage).



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