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Pakistan International Airlines expansion plans 2021



Despite the on-going pandemic, Pakistan International Airlines has revealed its plans to resume some domestic and international destinations. Most of these routes had been closed for more than a decade. The national flag carrier of Pakistan is optimistic about reopening these routes. Since the phasing out of Boeing 747s and Airbus A310s, many routes were forced to shut for either loss-making balance sheets or unavailability of suitable equipment.

Resumption of flights to Central Asia

PIA has announced the resumption of flights to Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, Baku in Azerbaijan, and Tashkent in Uzbekistan. All of these routes were previously served by the Boeing 737 fleet a couple of decades ago. The resumption of flights to central Asian countries will contribute to boosting the revenue as a whole for the airline. Still, it will also help in strengthening the bilateral relations between Pakistan and Central Asian countries. This also unlocks the exports' opportunity to reserve their cargo slots for the exports to central Asian countries. The resumption of flights to these destinations will enhance the tourism opportunities by connecting central Asian cities with Pakistan. The central Asian flights are being resumed from Lahore station currently. It is expected that there will at least 2 weekly flights to each destination in above mentioned.

Resumption of flights to Istanbul

PIA also has announced the resumption of flights to Istanbul. Previously this route was served as a transit hub to some European countries until it was closed for operations. The Federal Minister for Aviation has recently met with the Turkish Ambassador to

Pakistan, Mr. Ihsan Mustafa Yardakul. The meeting was held to strengthen the bilateral ties between the friendly countries. PIA shall be operating a week frequency thrice to Istanbul from Islamabad and Lahore. The schedule has not yet been announced. However, we are also not sure on which airport the flights will resume in Istanbul as two airports are serving the Turkish Capital, i.e., Sabiha Gökçen and Istanbul Grand International Airport. The flights are expecting to resume in May 2021.

Resumption Domestic Flights

As a part of expansion plans, PIA also has announced its operations from Rahim Yar Khan, Chitral, and Saidu Sharif in Swat. These routes are a part of Socio-Economic zones, which are supposed to be connected with metropolis cities to enable commute opportunities. PIA will be operating them on the ATR42 fleet as the ATR72 fleet is expected to leave the fleet very soon. PIA used to operate these routes previously with Fokker F-27 aircraft. No other private carrier has ever flown any prop aircraft to these airports.



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AirSial creates competition for other Pakistani airlines



Air Sial is Pakistan's newly emerged private airline based in Sialkot, the city that the only private airport owns in the country, i.e., Sialkot International Airport Ltd (SIAL). It entered the airline industry with a vision to become the pride of Pakistan by becoming the region's leading airline. Its mission is to provide a safe, operation-efficient, customer-based, technology-oriented airline that nurtures innovation and modernism. With this aim, the airline started its operations on 25th December 2020. The fleet of AirSial consists of modern A320s aircraft, which are carrying passengers, mails, and cargo to and from one point to another. Initially, the airline is serving the domestic market by operating scheduled flight between major hubs, AirSial, presently operates to four routes in Pakistan with round 74 flights a week e.i Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore and Sialkot.

However, from its satisfactory services and reliable reputation so far, it is believed that AirSial will soon enter the international market.

Serene Air

Serene Air is Pakistan's second-largest private airline with its approvals to go across the borders on international routes. From starting back in 2017, this low-cost carrier now stands among the travelers' utmost choice to fly with. Formerly, it possessed the fleet of narrow-bodied B737, while recently, it has inducted a wide-body A330 to cater to its growing and expanding network. Based in Islamabad, Serene Air operates almost 16 daily flights to and from seven origins and Pakistan destinations.

While comparing both of these private airlines, it is found that both of these airlines have their unique and specific business models. However, AirSial has given Serene Air a tough time. Rather it has affected the load carried by all other airlines of the region. AirSial enjoys extra perks and leverages. Since Sialkot city plays an important role in supporting the economy of the country. Hence the establishment of its own airline is

grooming its worth. AirSial has taken most of the other scheduled carriers from its establishment till now, including Serene Air. For any airline, transporting cargo is what makes it generate profit, and AirSial is

currently dominating in carrying the transportable goods. Similarly, due to its customer-centric and hospitable approach, AirSial is dwelling in its customers' hearts. Furthermore, AirSial introduced quite affording fares, which



compelled other airlines to bring down their fares. Air Sial is doing praiseworthy marketing by collaborating with well-known brands to attract more audiences towards it.

Airblue and its amazing branding strategies



Marketing tactics are those tools that assist any business in achieving its strategic objectives. Airlines worldwide rely on creative and innovative marketing techniques to create a permanent niche in their consumers' minds. While

AirSial starts flights from Sialkot to Karachi

AirSial has started its flight operations from Sialkot to Karachi with effect from 26 Feb. 2021. The airlines has initially started with two flights a week on every Monday and Fridays.

AirSial had launched its flight operations on 25th December last year in Pakistan with daily two flights from Karachi to Islamabad and two from Karachi to Lahore, later the airlines increased its frequency from two flight to three flights a day to Islamabad after some time.

The airlines provides international standard service to its passengers with rationalized fares. It has created healthy competition among other airlines in Pakistan. AirSial presently operates to four routes in Pakistan with round 74 flights a week e.i. Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Sialkot. The airlines also has plan to operate flights from Karachi to Peshawar and other cities in Pakistan.

The career Pakistan's fourth domestic operator currently has a fleet of three A-320 aircrafts.

considering Pakistan's aviation industry, it is apparent that Airblue knows the worth of effective marketing practices. That's the reason it has always come up with exceptional branding methodologies.



Astounding Branding Assists in Owning the Skies

Airblue had started its domestic operations back in 2004, and within a span of one year, it expanded its wings to international horizons. This quick expansion shows that this operator became popular among the public to such an extent that it allowed it to fly across the borders. Among several other professional attributes, airblue displayed the best marketing and branding practices in the region to achieve its benchmark of owning the sky. Then, airblue moved towards advanced customers' satisfaction approaches to survive and sustain its image in a highly competitive environment. Additionally, its blue miles loyalty reward service enables it to grow at an exponential level.

The foremost branding strategy of airblue includes introducing the concept of E-ticketing in Pakistan. Currently, airblue is focusing on Product Quality Leadership to acquire new customers. To meet the standardized quality of its services, this marketing program requires to charge a bit higher than its competitors. However, it delivers its promises in the form of providing the best tangible and intangible services. These services include quality food, comfortable seats, utmost safety, and good word of mouth.

Product Quality Leadership Dominates the Services

The fare of airblue is almost equal to that of PIA, yet it ensures the provision of what it advertises through its product quality leadership program. Among ground services, it includes an E-ticketing system to ease the customers. Airblue has significant contracts with travel agents who bring it, customers to its doorstep. It often offers discounts on early bookings and provides refunds and exchanges on tickets. It has flexible payment methods

while it provides premium lounges for business customers at its hub. On getting on-board, it facilitates the economy class travelers through 32 leg pitch with normal seats. While for business class, it bestows leather seats with 38 leg pitch and individual LCD screen. For catering services, it has contracted with GATE GOURMET to supply the best onboard meal. Additionally, it provides hustle-free e-cargo facilities for the transportation of goods.

Serene Air to launch international flights



Pakistan's second-largest private carrier i.e. Serene Air has revealed its plans of expanding its operations to serve international routes. Owing to this expansion strategy, Serene Air will formally begin its international flights between Islamabad to Sharjah and Lahore to Dubai.

Expected Schedule for International Flights

Serene Air is all prepared to introduce its new routes between Islamabad and Sharjah on 16th March 2021. While the airline is expected to operate between Lahore and Dubai from 2nd April 2021. At the initial stages, three weekly flights will operate for both of the newly added international destinations. The airline may increase this frequency



Broadening Horizon Depicts Broad Vision of Serene Air

operations in UAE and Saudia. Therefore, it also aims to outspread its Saudi operations in the near time.

Serene Air announces business class "Serene Plus" – Everything you need to know.

Broadening Horizon Depicts Broad Vision of Serene Air

Islamabad-based Serene Air had started its operation in Pakistan back in 2017. Since then, the airline has earned a good reputation in the local market through the provision of advertised amenities. Serene Air is currently facilitating domestic stations of Pakistan that include Faisalabad, Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Quetta, and Peshawar. It operates almost 84 flights a week with the help of its fleet of four Boeing 737-800 planes and a newly inducted Airbus A330-200 wide-body aircraft. Serene Air was striving hard to bring international destinations into its operating strategy for a long. However, the wake of the global pandemic affected its plans and compelled it to face this delay. Anyhow, due to the fast delivery of vaccines and getting ease in travel restrictions, Serene Air is finally going to experience new touchdowns at international airports.

ICAO to partner with IATA and CANSO on new runway safety

With the coming into effect this November of its new Global Reporting Format for Runway Surface Conditions (GRF), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has agreed to partner with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the Civil Air Navigation Services Organization (CANSO) on a new joint GRF training programme.

The new online course has been specifically designed for air traffic controllers and aeronautical information service staff, and will be available for enrolment in April of this year on the ICAO Global Aviation Training website. It complements existing courses developed in cooperation with Airports Council International (ACI) for airport operations staff, and with IATA for flight crew. Dr Fang Liu, ICAO Secretary General emphasized: "Runway safety continues to remain aviation's biggest safety challenge, representing more than half of all accidents reported to ICAO for commercial operations."

"We have been collaborating in recent years on numerous initiatives to reduce runway safety-related accidents and incidents worldwide, and the hard work undertaken to forge international consensus on the new GRF, in addition to this new collaborative training course supporting it, should help to deliver substantial runway safety performance improvements," Dr Liu added.

The ICAO GRF will be effective as of 4 November 2021, and establishes a new methodology for assessing and reporting runway surface conditions to improve take-off and landing performance.

Gulf Air to trial IATA Travel Pass



Gulf Air joins a growing number of carriers to participate in a trial of IATA Travel Pass to help pave the way for the re-establishment of global connectivity while managing the risks of COVID-19.

Gulf Air passengers will be able to create a 'digital passport' allowing them to match their travel itineraries with the COVID-19 health requirements of their destination country and validate compliance. During the trial, the service will be available to Gulf Air's customers travelling on select routes to and from Bahrain.

"Gulf Air is proud to partner with IATA to trial IATA Travel Pass to simplify and enhance compliance with COVID-19 health requirements and ensure passengers can fly with confidence. IATA Travel Pass acts as a 'digital passport' enabling travellers to securely and effortlessly navigate their travel plans, knowing that their verified travel credential is based on the latest COVID-19 information, strict data privacy regulations and entry rules for their destination," said Captain Waleed Abdulhameed Al Alawi, Gulf Air's Acting Chief Executive Officer.

"We are proud to work with Gulf Air to trial IATA Travel Pass. This is an important step in enabling international travel during the pandemic, giving people the confidence that they are meeting all COVID-19 entry requirements. IATA Travel Pass holds the key to the safe restart of the travel and tourism industry, which is an important contributor to the Kingdom of Bahrain's economy," said Nick Careen, IATA Senior Vice President for Airport, Passenger, Cargo and Security.

Federal Secretary, Religious Affairs lauds facilities at SIAL



Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed presenting shield to Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs Sardar Ijaz Ahmed Khan, Vice Chairman M. Shaheen Choudhry and CEO SIAL Mr. Amjad Ali Toor also present on the occasion.

Federal Secretary for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Sardar Ijaz Ahmed Khan Jaffer has said that the business community of Sialkot has set an example by setting up Sialkot International Airport with their own help. It is seen as a practical proof of presenting a positive image of the beloved homeland. He was addressing at a function hosted in his honour during his visit to SIAL.

Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed, Vice Chairman M. Afzal Shaheen, Chief Executive Officer Amjad Ali Toor and Public Relation Manager Abdul Shakoor Mirza were also present on the occasion. Federal Secretary Sardar Ijaz Ahmed Khan said that due to the proximity of Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur to Sialkot, This airport will play an important role in religious tourism. Now the importance of Sialkot International Airport has increased. The construction of a five star hotel in Sialkot would further add great convenience for Sikh Pilgrims and Sikh Pilgrims from all over the world. They will benefit from the Sialkot Airport facilities. He further said, that he was very happy to see and hear about Sialkot airport. He added that his ministry has played an important role in the success of the airport by launching Hajj operations from SIAL. He said that Sialkot Airport has a unique tradition of providing better facilities to the pilgrims at the airport. SIAL management welcomes each pilgrim with a garland of flowers on their return. He thanked the airport

management for doing so. He assured the SIAL management that he would extend all possible support to the airport to make it more successful. In a response to a request from vice chairman for the Saudi government to start 'Road to Macca' facility at Sialkot international Airport for the Hajj operation, the Federal Secretary said that he would definitely talk to Saudi officials in this regard. He assured to do his best to facilitate the people.

On this occasion, Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed thanked Sardar Ijaz Ahmed Khan Jaffer for visiting SIAL and described the success of Sialkot Airport. Before this the Federal Secretary visited the airport terminal and appreciated the facilities.

The Chairman SIAL along with Vice Chairman and CEO presented a SIAL Commemorative Shield to the honourable guest.

TAAP'S Chairman met CEO-PIA

A team led by Chairman TAAP Mr. Tariq Siraj had a very useful meeting with the CEO PIA Air Marshal Arshad Mehmood Malik, to apprise Travel trade issues, who have very kindly listen the issues being faced by Travel trade under the current circumstances and assured TAAP to resolve the issues on priority.

TAAP assures its full cooperation and support to maximize business on PIA through all its member.

IATA: Travellers gaining confidence, time to plan for restart of international aviation with COVID testing



Passengers in protective overall and masks at Suvarnabhumi Airport going to check-in for repatriation flights and waving good bye during COVID-19 outbreak.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced results from its latest poll of recent travellers, revealing growing confidence in a return to air travel, frustration with current travel restrictions, and acceptance of a travel app to manage health credentials for travel. The survey found that:

- 88 percent believe that when opening borders, the right balance must be struck between managing COVID-19 risks and getting the economy going again;
- 85 percent believe that governments should set COVID-19 targets (such as testing capacity or vaccine distribution) to re-open borders;
- 84 percent believe that COVID-19 will not disappear, and we need to manage its risks while living and travelling normally;
- 68 percent agreed that their quality of life has suffered with travel restrictions;
- 49 percent believe that air travel restrictions have gone too far.

IATA Director General Alexandre de Juniac (centre) and other IATA officials.

While there is public support for travel restrictions, it is becoming clear that people are feeling more comfortable with managing the risks of COVID-19. People are also feeling frustrated with the loss of freedom to travel, with 68 percent of respondents indicating their quality of life is suffering as a result. Travel restrictions come with health, social and economic consequences. Nearly 40 percent of

respondents reported mental stress and missing an important human moment as a result of travel restrictions. And over a third have said that restrictions prevent them from doing business normally.

"The top priority of everybody at the moment is staying safe amid the COVID-19 crisis. But it is important that we map a way to being able to re-open borders, manage risks and enable people to get on with their lives. That includes the freedom to travel. It is becoming clear that we will need to learn to live and travel in a world that has COVID-19. Given the health, social and economic costs of travel restrictions, airlines should be ready to re-connect the world as soon as governments are able to re-open borders. That's why a plan with measurable milestones is so critical. Without one, how can we be prepared for restart without an unnecessary delay?" said Alexandre de Juniac, IATA's director general and CEO.

The survey also found that:

57 percent expect to be traveling within two months of the pandemic being contained (improved from 49 percent in

September 2020);

72 percent want to travel to see family and friends as soon as possible (improved from 63 percent in September 2020);

81 percent believe that they will be more likely to travel once they are vaccinated;

84 percent said they will not travel if there is a chance of quarantine at destination (largely unchanged from 83 percent in September 2020);

56 percent believe that they will postpone travel until the economy stabilizes (improved from 65 percent in September 2020).

There are some headwinds in travel trends. About 84 percent of travellers will not travel if it involves quarantine at destination. And there are still indications that the pick-up in business travel will take time with 62 percent of respondents saying they are likely to travel less for business even after the virus is contained. That is, however, a significant improvement from the 72 percent recorded in September 2020.

"People want to get back to travel, but quarantine is the showstopper. As testing capacity and technology improves and the vaccinated population grows, the conditions for removing quarantine measures are being created. And this points us again towards working with governments for a well-planned re-opening as soon as conditions allow," said de Juniac.

In regards to the IATA Travel Pass, the survey found that:

- 89 percent of respondents believe that governments need to standardise vaccine and testing certificates;
- 80 percent are encouraged by the prospect of the IATA Travel Pass App and would use it as soon as available;
- 78 percent will only use a travel credential app if they have full control over their data.

Travel health credentials are already opening borders to some countries. IATA believes that such a system needs global standards and the highest level of data security. The survey produced very encouraging data indicating traveller willingness to use a secure mobile phone app to manage their travel health credentials. Four of five people surveyed would like to use this technology as soon as it becomes available. They also expect that travel health credentials (vaccine or test certificates) must comply with global standards—a work that is still in progress by governments.



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Heirs of 20 PIA plane crash victims get compensation of Rs10m each

Pakistan International Airlines claimed on Tuesday Feb. 9 that it had paid compensation to the families of 20 victims at Rs10 million per deceased person, and said it was still waiting for succession certificates from 77 families to complete the process and bring the chapter to a close.

This was stated at a press conference by PIA chief Arshad Malik with Sindh Governor Imran Ismail at Governor House, where they urged the families of the victims to complete the formalities at their end and offered every legal and possible assistance in that regard.

"These 20 families have been paid Rs10m [per] each victim," said the PIA chief. "There are legal and procedural formalities which need to be met even for the legal heirs of the victims. We are offering every possible help to the families and our legal teams are available round the clock at their service."

Families of 77 others asked to complete formalities for the payment

Ninety-seven passengers and crew members of flight PK-8303 from Lahore to Karachi died when the A320 aircraft crashed in Model Colony on May 22, 2020 — just a day before Eidul Fitr. Two passengers, however, miraculously survived.

Besides the 97 dead, three girls on the ground also suffered burn injuries and one of them died later at a hospital. PIA said it had paid Rs1m to the family of the deceased girl and Rs500,000 each to the two injured girls.

Apart from the loss of lives, over a dozen houses on the ground were badly damaged and a number of vehicles parked in the streets of the neighbourhood were completely burnt.

Sindh Governor Ismail said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was well aware of the miseries of the heirs of the passengers killed in the PIA plane crash and the federal government was trying its best to resolve the issues of the heirs with the coordination of PIA.

"The process of compensation payment has already begun," he said. "The compensation amount has also been increased from Rs5m to Rs10m for each victim. The compensation is being paid through an insurance company for which a succession certificate is mandatory."

He said that a PIA team had already

briefed the prime minister twice on the matters related to the May 22 plane crash tragedy.

In August 2020, the National Insurance Company Limited announced that it would pay Rs10m each to the heirs of 97 passengers killed in the plane. Being a government company, the NICL has insured every PIA passenger for Rs5m as well as the entire fleet of the national carrier.

However, the PIA management persuaded the insurance company to pay

Rs10m per passenger instead of Rs5m as the maximum limit allowed in the Carriage by Air Act of 2012.

"PIA has also constituted a legal team to facilitate and expedite the process of issuance of succession certificates," said Governor Ismail. "As soon as the heirs submit the succession certificate, they will get the compensation. I would soon invite the heirs of the victims of the plane crash tragedy to Governor House to meet them personally." THAI and THAI Smile to Trial IATA Travel Pass

He said that eligible children of the victims were also being provided jobs in PIA and those who had not yet attained the legal age of 18 would get employment in the national flag carrier when they turn 18.

THAI and THAI Smile to Trial IATA Travel Pass

Mr. Chansin Treenuchagron, Acting President, Thai Airways International Public Company Limited

(THAI), Mrs. Charita Leelayudh, Chief Executive Officer, THAI Smile Airways have signed agreements to pilot the International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Pass. Witnesses were Air Chief Marshal Chaiyapruk Didyasarin, THAI Chairman of the meeting of the Rehabilitation Planner, Mr Louis Moser, Area Manager, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, IATA and members of the management team of THAI, THAI Smile Airways.

IATA Travel Pass consists of a mobile application that helps travelers to store

and manage their verified certifications for COVID-19 tests or COVID-19 vaccines. This will be important for governments that are likely to require either verified testing or vaccination proof as a condition of international travel during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The IATA Travel Pass will be more secure and efficient than current paper processes used to manage health requirements. This will be important given the potentially enormous scale of testing or vaccine verifications that will need to be securely managed.

The trials of IATA Travel Pass by THAI and THAI Smile aim to increase passenger confidence to travel, enabling a quick recovery for global aviation and the tourism industry around the world.



PIA plans Swat flights to promote tourism

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has decided to operate flights to Swat, Skardu and Gilgit with an aim to promote tourism.

Saidu Sharif Airport in Swat was scaled down due to security reasons in 2004 and would be made operational once the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) upgrades it and makes it operational.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said the national flag carrier had decided to operate two flights to Saidu Sharif from Islamabad on a weekly basis from next month to facilitate tourists.

He said PIA also planned to operate flights between Lahore and Skardu and Lahore and Gilgit from next month.

The spokesman said the CAA had already been informed about PIA's plan to start flight operations to Saidu Sharif and once the airport was made operational, the airline would announce its flight schedule.

Flights from Lahore to Skardu and Gilgit will start next month

A senior Civil Aviation Authority official said some construction work had been started at Saidu Sharif Airport which was now complete.

Meanwhile, out of 44 airports in the country, 27 are operational, six have been scaled down while 11 have been closed. Among the non-functional airports are the Sargodha and Bannu airports, said the CAA.

Sargodha airport does not have any CAA staff, but it has an operational PAF base Mushaf. The facility in Bannu was scaled down in 2002 due to commercial non-viability of airlines.

However, currently there is no proposal under consideration to operationalise it.

Among the airports that have been scaled down are the ones in Khuzdar, Muzaffarabad, Balakot, Bannu, Parachinar and Saidu Sharif. The airports that have been closed are in Jiwani PN, Ormara, Sibi, Mangla, Kohat,

Bhagtanwala, Mianwali, Sehwan Sharif, Mirpurkhas, Talhar and Jacobabad.

At present, 12 international airports are operating across the country. They are Jinnah International Airport Karachi, Allama Iqbal International Airport Lahore, Islamabad International Airport Islamabad, Bacha Khan International Airport Peshawar, Quetta International Airport, Multan International Airport, Faisalabad, Rahim Yar Khan, Turbat, Gwadar, old Benazir Bhutto International Airport and Sialkot International Airport, which was built privately by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The CAA, however, said if the location was deemed commercially viable by the airlines, a scaled-down airport could be upgraded or made operational within 90 days.

Of the 44 airports located across the country, 12 are handling international flights and 15 airports the domestic flights.

Etihad Airways posts financial results for full-year 2020

Etihad Airways has announced its financial and operating results for 2020, recording a 76% fall in passengers carried throughout the year (4.2 million, compared to 17.5 million in 2019) as a result of lower demand and reduced flight capacity caused by the unparalleled global downturn in commercial aviation.

As a consequence of the COVID pandemic and ensuing flight and travel restrictions, total passenger capacity was reduced by 64% in 2020 to 37.5 billion Available Seat Kilometres (ASKs), down from 104 billion in 2019, with the seat load factor declining to 52.9%, 25.8 percentage points lower compared to 2019 (2019: 78.7%).

The airline recorded US\$1.2 billion passenger revenues in 2020, down by 74% from US \$4.8 billion in 2019, due to fewer scheduled services and drastically fewer people travelling. A contributing factor to this was the total suspension of passenger services into and out of the UAE from end of March until early June 2020 to limit the spread of COVID, in line with a UAE government mandate. More than 80% of total passengers carried in 2020 were flown during the first three months of the year, demonstrating the precipitous drop

in demand as the global crisis deepened over the course of the year.

The airline's cargo operation, on the contrary, recorded an extremely strong performance, with a 66% increase in revenue from US\$0.7 billion in 2019 to US\$1.2 billion in 2020, driven by huge demand for medical supplies such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and pharmaceuticals, paired with limited global airfreight capacity. Cargo yield saw an improvement of 77%.

Operating costs meanwhile decreased by 39% year-on-year, from US\$5.4 billion in 2019 to US\$3.3 billion in 2020, due to a combination of reduced capacity and volume-related expenses, as well as a focus on cost containment initiatives. Overheads reduced by 25% to US\$0.8 billion (2019: US\$1.0 billion) in this timeframe, despite their fixed nature, owing to cash and liquidity management initiatives during the crisis, while the finance cost reduced by 23% through an ongoing focus on balance sheet restructuring.

Overall, this resulted in a core operating loss of US\$1.70 billion (2019: US \$0.80 billion) in 2020, with the EBITDA turning to negative US\$0.65 billion (2019: positive US\$0.45 billion).

Aercap and GE announce landmark deal



AerCap has confirmed that it has entered into a definitive agreement with General Electric to acquire 100% of GE Capital Aviation Services (GECAS) for a total value of approximately \$30bn. Under the terms of deal, AerCap will acquire \$34bn of GECAS net assets, which includes its aircraft fleet and platform, engine leasing business and Milestone helicopter leasing company. AerCap will also take over GECAS' orderbook and more than 400 GECAS employees upon completion of the transaction, which is expected to be in the fourth quarter of 2021. AerCap will pay GE \$24bn in cash, \$1bn in AerCap notes and/or cash.

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ICAO to conduct safety audit of CAA in July



Sources said the team would arrive on July 5 and conduct the safety audit till 15th.

A team of the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) will visit Pakistan to conduct its universal safety oversight audit of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in July.

Sources said the team would arrive on July 5 and conduct the safety audit till 15th.

The ICAO, a specialised agency of the United Nations that works to ensure safety in international air transport, evaluates the aviation regulator's flight standards and other measures in addition to the safety audit.

The ICAO had conducted an USOAP CMA (Universal Safety Oversight Auditing Programme Continuous Monitoring Approach) off-site Mandatory Information Request (MIR) from September 13 to October 13 in 2020 and suggested Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority to immediately revamp "pilot licensing system" before issuing new licences.

Several observations came from the ICAO at that time after the Pakistani authorities started probe into 262 pilots' dubious licences and suspended five CAA officials after initial investigation and referred their cases to the Federal Investigation Agency for criminal probe.

Initially, the ICAO's audit team had made 36 observations regarding safety and Pakistan's aviation authorities cleared 26 out of them. Later the ICAO asked that the remaining 10 concerns be addressed which were technical in nature.

A senior official said the ICAO had asked about measures taken by the CAA to ensure fool-proof licensing system, questions put to the candidate in examination syllabus and how the question papers were prepared.

The Pakistani authorities have now revamped the licensing system and

constituted a separate directorate to ensure transparency.

The official said the CAA had been asked to revamp the licensing system before starting issuing new licences, and sought details of measures taken to ensure transparency in the system.

PM briefed on Walton flying club

Prime Minister Imran Khan has been briefed that it has become imperative to shift the flying club operating at Walton airport for training flights as it is now within the thickly populated location of Lahore.

The Walton airport has become unsafe as already a couple of training planes crashed in Lahore streets. However, the accidents did not claim any life.

The PM was chairing a meeting in Islamabad to review progress on the establishment of Central Business District in Lahore and the Ravi riverfront project. The meeting was attended by representatives of Naya Pakistan Housing Authority, CAA, RUDA, LDA and chief secretary office.

The PM also expressed his concern that a couple of accidents had already taken place wherein the training planes fell in the Lahore streets.

It may, however, be mentioned that the flying club at the airport had already moved the Lahore High Court, challenging its takeover by the government and alleged hindrance in its lawful business.

The meeting was told that after getting the land worth billions vacated from the flying club, a robust economic activity could be launched on it.

The PM was also briefed about the progress in the establishment of Ravi riverfront project with particular focus on environment.

The officials concerned told the prime minister that a 20km road would be constructed from the Motorway for access to the proposed riverfront project.

The PM said the proposed project would not only fulfill accommodation needs in Lahore but also offer massive economic activities. He stressed the officials concerned should keep him updated about the progress in the establishment of the project.

An airport ready for crash-landing

This is with reference to reports 'PM briefed on Walton flying club' (Feb 26) and 'Walton airport likely to be shifted' (Jan 26). Removal of historical landmarks by governments is nothing new. The latest milestone to face the wrath is the 90-year-old Walton aerodrome in eastern Lahore. It was founded in 1930 as the Punjab Flying Club. After 1947 it became a fine training institute for commercial pilots in Pakistan. But the aerodrome is now being readied for a crash-landing of its own.

Spread over 260 acres, it was also used as a wartime landing strip during World War II. Its historical value was further enhanced when Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah landed on this very strip in Lahore for the first time after the creation of Pakistan. The aerodrome remained in use for commercial passengers till 1960 when Lahore airport with a longer runway was completed.

Many developers had in their sights this valuable piece of land. The previous government in Punjab had first floated the idea to convert it into a 'business park' with foreign investment. The scheme, however, was never pursued vigorously for a variety of reasons.

Now the current government has taken up the initiative. In the first stage and in a late night operation on Feb 14, it removed all the nurseries that had been in existence since 1992, whether legally or otherwise, on the land that is owned by the Civil Aviation Authority.

An Abu Dhabi-based company has shown interest in constructing a multi-storey business hub, while the remaining land is expected to be utilised for the Naya Pakistan housing scheme.

There are already numerous high-rise buildings on the main boulevard in Gulberg. Adding more such buildings will increase the number of concrete jungles rather than restoring Lahore to its former glory as a city of gardens.

Among other things, this is in sharp contradiction with the government's stated policy of clean and green Pakistan.

Battle of the freighters: airbus vs Boeing



The market of commercial aviation is dominated by two giants. These giants remain in battle with each other. Airbus and Boeing have dominated the world of passenger aircraft for decades. Their positions keep on changing at the top of the table for orders and deliveries of new jets.

Boeing has an extended global supply chain that supports its aircraft operations around the world. With its presence almost everywhere, Boeing has earned a unique position in the minds of commercial travelers. Airbus also has a strong presence in almost every nook and corner of the world.

Boeing is the King of the Air Cargo Domain

However, in the freighter market, there is no contest. Boeing lists more than 760 freighter variants ordered by customers over its history, with 732 already delivered to customers. That's not including the many combi aircraft sold by the manufacturer or the hundreds of passenger planes that have been converted to carry cargo.

Airbus has not sold a new-built cargo aircraft for almost six years. The last order was recorded in March 2015, with four A330-200F ordered up by Turkish Airlines. The A330-200F is the only cargo

aircraft offered brand new by Airbus, and only 38 were ever ordered. All 38 have now been delivered, leaving Airbus with a backlog of zero new orders.

While Airbus is enjoying some success with its passenger to freighter (P2F)

conversions, under a modification program offered by specialist Elbe Flugzeugwerke (EFW), it's small numbers compared to Boeing. The A330-200P2F and -300P2F have seen eight planes redelivered to airlines already, with slots



filled at EFW through 2022. The A320 and A321 are also on offer as P2F conversions.

Boeing continues to dominate the freighter market, so why hasn't Airbus done more to challenge its position?

Cargo is in the Blood of Boeing

Boeing has forever embraced freighter variants as part of its product lineup. Just about every type of aircraft ever developed by Boeing has been either offered as a factory-built freighter or has been supported for a passenger to freight conversions by the manufacturer.

The exception to this is the 787 Dreamliner, which has never been offered as a cargo aircraft, at least not yet. While this may change in the future, the truth is that Boeing has quite the widespread offering for cargo carriers already, so there is just no need to spend the time and investment in developing a Dreamliner freighter. Right now, Boeing offers adequate choices for cargo aircraft and is further supporting the market with its Boeing Converted Freighter (BCF) program. Although it is planning to draw a line under the 747F Program with the last

aircraft to be produced by 2022, it has the cargo market all sewn up with the 777F, 767F, and its 737-800 and 767-300 BCF.

Does Airbus have any chance?

The problem for Airbus is twofold. First, it doesn't have an aircraft in its lineup that adequately provides for the cargo market. Its A330-200F is narrower than the 777, and cannot accommodate two pallets side by side. Even with the improved efficiency of the A330neo, it would struggle to compete economically. To really challenge Boeing's dominance, it would need to look to one of its larger aircraft.

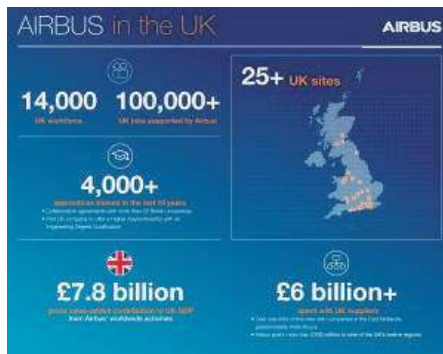
The Airbus product line up can't compete with the capacity of the 777F.

The A380F was proposed but never developed. It did attract some orders initially, but issues with production delays of the passenger variant caused potential buyers to cancel the deals. With the A380 production ending this year, there is no more hope for this aircraft to ever work as a brand new freighter (although some airlines have attempted conversions amid last year's cargo demand surge).

The remaining option for Airbus is the A350 Freighter. On paper, it could work, with a higher payload than the A330 and efficiency improvements. Airbus discussed an A350F back in 2007 but wanted to focus on the passenger variants before turning any attention to this project. About the Future



With cargo demand continuing to remain high, there could be an opportunity for Airbus in the future with an A350-1000F. However, with so many widebody aircraft taken out of service in 2020, there is an abundance of cheap alternatives for cargo airlines to consider.



The end of Etihad's A380, the residence and first class apartments

Unwelcome news about the Etihad A380 came recently, in an interview published by The National News with Etihad Airways CEO Tony Douglas.

Of their 10 Airbus A380 superjumbos, Mr Douglas said "We have now taken the strategic decision to park the A380s, I'm sure it's very likely that we won't see them operating with Etihad again."

This is indeed sad as Etihad was one of the last major carriers to receive the A380, from Dec 2014 to 2017. Etihad's A380 is much younger and arguably fitted out with the best luxury cabins. The retirement of the Etihad A380 means that two of the most sought-after premium cabins in the skies, The Residence and First Class Apartment, are now disappearing.



Etihad A380 in Abu Dhabi

I flew the Etihad A380 in The Residence a total of three times. There is no other product in a commercial airline like it. It has a three room (living room, bedroom and bathroom) concept allowing up to two persons to travel inside.

In Dec 2016, from Abu Dhabi to Mumbai (paid \$3,000)

In July 2017, from Abu Dhabi to Paris - inaugural A380 to Paris (paid \$7,000)



In July 2019, from Abu Dhabi to Seoul Incheon - inaugural A380 to Incheon (Invited)

I feel particularly sad that such a luxurious A380 has become a victim of the COVID-19 pandemic. I still fondly remember my first time on Etihad A380. It was also the first time I made a vlog that got over 20 million views!

Etihad A380 First Class is also arguably the best First Class out there.

With just 9 suites all with a separate seat and bed. The middle suite can also be converted into a double bed, making for a double suite style experience. Best of all, Etihad offered some great redemption opportunities for frequent flyers.

Etihad's A380 is the only A380 apart from Emirates that offers onboard shower in the Residence and First Class.

Etihad's A380 operated to London Heathrow, Paris, Sydney, New York JFK and Seoul Incheon before COVID



First Class Apartment on Etihad

pandemic.

Etihad plans to operate as a mid-sized carrier, building their operations around smaller twin-engine aircraft, focusing on



Etihad A380 First Class



Etihad A380 First Class

the Boeing 787 Dreamliner as the "backbone" of their fleet. At the end of 2020, the airline was operating flights to 50 passenger and seven cargo destinations from Abu Dhabi, representing approximately 35% of their pre-Covid capacity.

"It's one of those where you segment how you fight your way through 2021-2022 and we'd do that with the 787s predominantly" Etihad CEO Tony Douglas said.

The chief executive also said that besides their 40 B787 Dreamliners, Etihad will also deploy 12 Airbus A350s from 2023. Some of their A350s are currently, still parked.



Etihad A380 Lounge





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Experts' team arrives to devise viable model for PIA

A delegation of foreign experts is arriving in Pakistan on the invitation of Adviser to the Prime Minister on Institutional Reforms and Austerity Dr Ishrat Hussain to work on a five-year corporate business plan for Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

The four-member team will stay in Pakistan for 12 days during which it will undertake a business model review and also meet government officials at the finance ministry, Dr Hussain, senior government officials and the airline's chief executive officer, Arshad Malik.

The airline's spokesman, Abdullah Hafeez, confirmed that the team would be reaching Pakistan recently.

The experts, who have an extensive consultancy experience, will devise a business plan for the airline to make it profitable and sustainable.

"We will be following the government's directives on restructuring and reforms in the airline," the spokesman said. Dr Hussain is supervising the reforms underway in PIA and in this context consultants had been invited to advice on the restructuring plan for the national carrier.

In November 2019, PIA had sought services of a reputed international firm with extensive aviation consulting experience to prepare a five-year corporate business plan through a tender.

The objective was to make the PIA a leading international airline and enable it to play an important role in Pakistan's economy.

The plan will include all proposed initiatives and strategies for organisational and financial restructuring within the relevant timelines. It will also provide a detailed forecast of the financial position, performance and cash flows under different possible/recommended scenarios. It will focus on recommendations to revise capital structure and provide a viable working plan for raising future funding requirements.

The proposed plan will also give a holistic view of PIA's current competitive position in the industry, with focus on its sales and marketing strategy for each region, route and destination.

Restructuring options will also be suggested, and the experts will advise on the best possible strategy for each area of the airline. The PIA will support the consultant by providing available operational and/or financial information required for the development of the corporate business plan.

Earlier, the Civil Aviation Authority had granted special permission for inbound travel to the foreign experts from the United Kingdom, South Africa and Portugal on the request of the PIA administration.

The delegation will be travelling onboard Turkish Airlines flight as per the travel itinerary. However, this approval was subject to PCR testing, mandatory quarantine and other stipulations as specified by the health authorities upon arrival.

Pakistan has restricted the entry of inbound passengers from countries categorised C in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Emirates boosts services to Maldives and Seychelles ahead of Easter Break

Emirates has announced it will increase services to popular holiday destinations, Maldives and Seychelles, ahead of the Easter break. Starting 28 March, the airline will offer customers 28 weekly flights to Male, and seven weekly flights to Mahe. The added services will meet market demand and offer customers greater flexibility, choice and connectivity while planning their travels this Easter holiday.

Fly better with Emirates to Maldives

Emirates currently offers customers 24 weekly flights to the Maldives, utilizing a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. Starting from March 28 until April 18, 2021, the airline will ramp up services to 28 flights a week – offering customers enhanced connectivity to the popular Indian Ocean destination, via Dubai.



All travelers to the Maldives, excluding Maldives citizens, must present a negative COVID-19 PCR test result, conducted within 96 hours prior to departure. Travellers are also requested to complete the online Immigration and Health self-declaration form within 24 hours prior to arrival.

Man faces jail and \$250,000 fine over unruly behavior onboard



A 24-year-old resident of the United States might be sent to jail and get a possible \$250,000 fine for unruly behavior onboard the Alaska Airlines flight.

The resident of Colorado state was accused of disrupting the Alaska Airlines flight. The incident occurred on the regular Alaska Airlines route from Seattle (SEA) to Denver (DEN) on March 9, 2021. During the flight, a passenger informed the cabin crew about the man urinating in his seat. The conflict appeared when the flight attendant repeatedly asked the reportedly drunk passenger to put his mask on, as it is required by the Federal Aviation Administration, but the passenger rejected the flight attendant's request.

Alaska Airlines puts its first Boeing 737 MAX into service

For the first time, Alaska Airlines deployed a Boeing 737 MAX 9 from its base in Seattle to airports in California.

The unruly passenger was accused of standing up and urinating the cabin while interfering with the crew. After the plane landed at DEN airport, the passenger was arrested by the FBI. The man told the police that he had several beers and shots before the flight, but after the boarding, he fell asleep on the jet and woke up being yelled at by the cabin crew to stop urinating. The man claimed to have no recollection of hitting the flight attendant.

Pseudo air traffic controller arrested after faking radio orders to aircraft

A pseud-air traffic controller was arrested in Germany after multiple illegal radio contacts with passenger and cargo aircraft crew.

The U.S. District Court in Denver released the man on a \$10,000 bond, meanwhile, the next court appearance was scheduled for March 26, 2021. For the disturbance during the flight and interfering with cabin crew the unruly passenger may face a maximum term of 20 years in jail and a possible fine of \$250,000.



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LHE-KMG	TAO	Daily
LHE-KMG	PEK	Daily

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Cell: 0302-8283192

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KHI-KMG	CAN	Daily
KHI-KMG	XMN	Daily
KHI-KMG	TAO	Daily
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Why Airblue abandoned its A340-300s?



Airblue is Pakistan's largest private carrier operating on both domestic and international routes. With its establishment in 2003, the airline started its flight operations in 2004 with a fleet of Airbus A320. Within the first year of its launch, airblue earned adequate popularity to tough competition to the national flag carrier, i.e., PIA. Therefore, upon getting a lucrative response from the market, it extended its operations to international borders in 2005. The progressive growth of this private-owned airline encouraged it to launch its long-haul flight to Manchester in 2007 with the help of A321.

Induction of A340-300s in its fleet

In June 2012, airblue inducted two leased A340-300s to cater to its growing and expanding domestic and international routes. This airline decided to operate these 4-engined aircraft for its Lahore-Manchester and Islamabad-Manchester routes. Due to the features like crew commonality of A340 with that of A320, airblue found this pair the perfect match for its direct flights to Manchester. The airline also planned to configure 328 seats of the planes in an all-economy layout to facilitate every class with the best services on board. During their reign, these twins served different Middle East routes, two destinations of the UK, including Manchester and Birmingham.

Retiring of A340-300s from the fleet

Airblue had acquired both of these jets from Los Angeles-based International Lease Finance Corporation (ILFC). Despite hoping for far destinations with these A340s, these fuel inhaling aircraft did not prove beneficial

for the airline. The prevalence of technical issues in these planes right after two years of acquisition compelled the airline to retire them. Furthermore, airblue possesses a single kind of narrow-bodied fleet. Therefore it became hard for it to

provide ample maintenance to these wide-bodied birds. In addition to it, possession of only two A340s ensured the unavailability of spare parts in any malfunction. Moreover, the routes to Manchester proved too costly to continue. Hence, with an overall reduction in the demand for A340 worldwide, airblue also considered retiring them. Therefore, the airline closed its operations in the UK, and with this closure, it retired the A340s.

Dubai cuts processing times for dangerous shipments

Air Cargo Newsdesk, air transport safety, aircraft, airlines, business news, compliance, dangerous Goods.



EMIRATES SkyCargo and the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA) have agreed a memorandum of understanding which will streamline the cumbersome processes involved in the transportation of dangerous goods, at the same time reducing wait-times and making it easier and quicker for customers to obtain no-objection certificates.

Under the terms of the agreement the two entities will now work closer together to strengthen mechanisms to "pro-actively share information on certain classes of dangerous goods" booked for transportation on the freight division of Emirates' fleet through Dubai.

It complements the information already required in Dangerous Goods Declaration submissions to the DCAA in accordance with the International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Dangerous Goods Regulations (IATA DGR). Every day, airlines, freight forwarders, ground handlers and shippers rely on the IATA DGR documentation to ensure that their dangerous goods are transported safely and efficiently.

IATA's regulations cover the shipper and the operator's responsibilities

including training, security and incident reporting, along with a range of limitations regarding forbidden and hidden goods. These include storage and transport quantities; transport by post; transport by passengers or crew; the classification for explosives, gases, flammable, toxic, oxidising, radioactive and corrosive products; as well as packing instructions and packaging specifications and documentation such as the shipper's declaration, airwaybill and other handling requirements.

Nabil Sultan, divisional senior vice-president of cargo at Emirates, stresses: "We are stepping up our cooperation with the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority for the coordination of information sharing and best practices around the transport of dangerous goods."

Mohammed Abdulla Lengawi, Dubai's executive director of aviation security and the accident investigation sector, reveals that the DCAA has issued more than 26,090 No Objection Certificates (NOCs) through its system between 2018 and 2020 and is therefore particularly pleased with this close cooperation with Emirates SkyCargo.

"This will link the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority system with that of Emirates SkyCargo and will contribute to streamlining the processes for the transport of dangerous goods, making it easier for customers, including airfreight agents, to obtain an NOC.

"The memorandum of understanding ensures safety and a high degree of quality in the field for the transportation of dangerous goods, which serves various fields of work globally, as Dubai represents a strategic location and a logistical centre for air freight", he adds.

Looking beyond the crisis towards a new era of personalized travel

Weathering many crises over the decades, travel has always proved resilient, and the industry now has the opportunity to come out of the COVID-19 crisis stronger. Technology will play a major role in facilitating recovery, ushering in a new era of personalised travel that will present more opportunities for businesses and a better experience for travellers. In a conversation with Lea Jordan at ITB Berlin, Sabre CEO Sean Menke outlined how he set up Sabre to enable change beyond the pandemic.

2020 was game-changing – it presented the greatest challenge ever faced in the travel industry, with global air and hotel bookings down more than in any previous year. As a leading technology provider to the global travel industry, Sabre has had a front row seat, with insight into global trends and data as events unfolded.

As the impact of the COVID-19 virus spread, Sabre took quick and decisive actions to improve its resilience, taking measures such as reducing fixed costs, raising additional liquidity, and introducing a flexible “work from anywhere” program. These actions allowed the team to focus on the day-to-day business in 2021 and 2022.

“We also had to focus on our customers – many of them around the world were facing the headwinds that we were dealing with and we needed to help them work through what was taking place,” said Menke. “While we are still managing through the crisis, there is a group of us at Sabre that is very focused on our evolution beyond COVID-19. We believe that the initiatives we have been able to set up through 2020 and are continuing to work on now will enable us to reshape travel in the years and decades to come.”

Despite the headwinds of 2020, Sabre recorded some major achievements. The Company advanced its technology transformation and modernization which included the continuing migration of its technology to Google Cloud. On the hospitality IT side, the Company signed key commercial wins and renewals in 2020 with major players like All-Inclusive by Marriott and Louvre Hotels. Sabre also extended distribution agreements with some of its largest airline customers, among them Southwest Airlines and Lufthansa Group.

The evolution of consumer demands

We are operating in a highly digitalized world and that has only accelerated with the events that unfolded



over the last year. Consumer expectations are continuing to evolve based on the ever-changing situation and the demand for tools and capabilities in areas such as self-service has grown significantly.

The demand for personalization also continues to increase. Consumers expect that retailers personalize offerings around them as individuals. They demand choice when developing their journey and this greatly influences the way in which they shop and compare offer. Sabre wants to enable intelligent retailing by providing the technology that allows its customers to create unique, relevant and appealing offers and distribute them through multiple channels.

Menke highlighted that whilst revenue generation and cost efficiency remain important to customers, they are also focused on the brand promise that they put out in creating and delivering those unique offers. Providing guests with a transparent, trustworthy, seamless, and enjoyable experience is key.

Key focus areas to help the industry to overcome the crisis

Early last year Sabre introduced a set of strategic initiatives to set the Company up for success. Despite the dramatically different market environment, these priorities haven't changed. They are still essential for allowing Sabre to shape how people experience travel in the future and help the industry overcome the crisis.

The first initiative is around the consumer demand for a personalized experience, focusing on IT capabilities, processes and intelligence to enable intelligent retailing.

A key element of this is Sabre's long-term partnership with Google. The first result of this collaboration was Sabre Travel AI, which leverages AI and machine learning tools to analyze and predict consumer behaviors. By

across all relevant channels, customers are positioned to deliver tailored personalization to travelers that should drive higher conversion rates and build traveler loyalty.

The first solution powered by this capability is the Smart Retail Engine: employing a data-driven, AI-supported test-and-learn approach, it allows Sabre's customers to deliver personalized, dynamically priced offers to their customers.

The second initiative concerns the future of distribution. Sabre wants to enable airlines to distribute personalized offers through its GDS marketplace and through their direct channels. The Company is actively engaged with leading airlines to develop sustainable models that work for airlines, agencies, Sabre, and ultimately, the traveler. Forward-thinking agreements with Southwest or Lufthansa Group are an example of this approach. With the third initiative Sabre focuses on the low-cost carrier market – working to create more ways for LCCs to retail and distribute content. With their relatively lean cost structure and their reliance on domestic and intra-regional routes, LCCs are recovering faster from the crisis, making this initiative especially important.

With the fourth priority Sabre wants to strengthen its hospitality IT solutions portfolio by growing our CRS business and adding full-service capabilities to our property management system.

Finally, Sabre is continuing its tech transformation. Here again the partnership with Google is very important.

“Long term we believe that travel will continue to be a growth industry,” concluded Menke. “Over the last 50 years there have only been six calendar years in which global passenger volume declined, and the maximum decline was less than two percent – even factoring in previous obstacles to growth like the 9/11 attacks, SARS or the 2008 financial collapse.”

“While no one can predict exactly what future travel will look like, especially on the other side of this pandemic, I am certain that travel will rebound. We are committed to our vision to create a new market for personalized travel by 2025 and intend to deliver on that vision by continuing to focus on our own tech transformation and on developing and delivering flexible, differentiated products that help our customers drive revenue and yield.”

This piece is based on Sabre CEO Sean Menke's interview at ITB Berlin 2021

Two of China's major airlines go live with Sabre's industry-leading technology

A leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, recently announced the implementation of Sabre's Recovery Manager Operations solution for China's national flag carrier Air China as well as China Eastern Airlines, to enhance their operational recovery capability and future growth.

Air China and China Eastern are both now using Sabre's market-leading Recovery Manager Operations solution to identify operational issues across their extensive domestic and international networks which will help to further increase the footprint of Sabre's advanced decision support solutions in China's marketplace.

Recovery Manager Operations will empower the airlines to manage flight disruptions by proposing immediate contingency and recovery plans, while minimizing downtime impact, improving operational performance, maximizing staff productivity and, ultimately, boosting customer satisfaction.

"Adding Recovery Manager Operations to their technological arsenal heralds a new era in disruption management for Air China and China Eastern, and we're thrilled to support both carriers in intelligent, informed and intuitive decision-making when the unexpected happens," said Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions Airline Sales. "Both will be able to better recover from disruptive situations at the lowest cost, adjusting flight and crew schedules to minimize schedule interruptions while taking pan-operations constraints into consideration and making the most of every seat."

"The Chinese travel market has been showing strong signs of recovery for some time now, particularly in the domestic sector, and the adoption of our industry-leading solution will support this momentum by helping the carriers to recover more quickly from any large or small-scale disruption, whether it is caused by Covid-19 or any other factor," added Mr Narayanan. "Together with our innovative airline partners, we remain fully committed to supporting the rapid recovery and growth of the tourism industry in China and worldwide."

PIA plans of reviving direct New York flights



In 2019, PIA disclosed its avid plans to resume direct flights from Islamabad International Airport and New York. Superficially, it seems like the national carrier aims to add prestige to its country by flying on one of the most desirable routes. But in fact, this plan is a tool to get PIA out of the consistent loss by making money through flying this lucrative route. In the past, the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) banned PIA flights due to the lack of sufficient security and safety management systems. That's the reason PIA used to have a stopover at Manchester for passengers rescreening before entering the US. The involvement of the third point made this route quite unviable to operate.

During the pandemic, PIA did operate a one-off direct flight from Islamabad to Newark. A Boeing 777-200LR operated this direct flight. This was the first time that a PIA airliner landed on US soil originating directly from Pakistan.

Pakistan International Airlines Boeing 777 landing at Newark International. VariableCraft Photography took the picture.

Establishment of Islamabad International Airport Electrified this Plan

Now, PIA is confident in its safe and secure execution of flights after the establishment of New Islamabad International Airport. Therefore, it hopes to revive successful non-stop flights to New York as Islamabad International Airport is extensively equipped with security gadgets and safety procedures. Such universally standardized security

checks and safety procedures require no more demand PIA to stop over at Manchester for further security grants. Hence PIA is planning zealously to operate this route as removing the third point will make this route economically viable.

Unstable Present May Distort Future Plans of PIA

This brainchild of resuming flights to New York gives rise to different questions. For instance, would PIA be able to eradicate its notorious image of getting banned from Europe after its recent crash in May 2020? Would the US Transport Security Administration allow to resume these flights after getting banned from Europe as well? Even on getting approval grants, would PIA be able to conduct these flights with its old B777 fleet on beneficial terms? If PIA satisfies travelers' safety-related concerns and strategy of business expansion, this dream will reach its destination.

PIA begins VSS payments

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has started paying dues to its employees who have opted for Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS) and made full payments to more than 100 such workers on Wednesday 10 March.

PIA's spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said that the airline's chief financial officer Khalilullah Sheikh distributed cheques among the ex-employees at a ceremony held at the PIA head office.

PIA introduced the VSS after the federal government's approval, which benefited about 2,000 employees. The finance ministry allocated Rs9.6 billion for the purpose during the current financial year.

PIA Chief Executive Officer Air Marshal Arshad Malik thanked the Ministry of Aviation and Accountant General of Pakistan for the payments.

Following the release of the funds, the PIA management said it would complete the process of payments to the employees who had opted for VSS within the next few weeks.

About 2,000 PIA employees had availed the VSS offer before its expiry on Dec 31, 2020.

Dream of becoming a Pilot: true facts about this work

Being a pilot is a dream of many – the allure of soaring through the skies with nothing but clouds and sunshine for company. Being a pilot is a rewarding career. Still, like most professions, there are pros and cons. You might be asked for an essay before admission to pilot school, check buy coursework for professional and well-written essay at affordable prices.

What you will Gain

Short Haul versus Long Haul Pilots

You have two career choices when it comes to being a pilot. The first is the short-haul pilots. As a short-haul pilot, your days will follow a similar routine. Your flights are short ranging from between thirty minutes to three hours, and you typically return to base that day. You

no secret. The startup salary might be a bit low, but as you move up, especially if you switch to long hauls, you will earn up to \$200,000 per year – the bigger the aircraft, the bigger your pay.

Flying itself is an adventure. Pilots claim the adrenaline rush when they ascend into the atmosphere is exhilarating. You get to travel the world, visit new places, and you can get really cheap fare prices to visit the places of your dreams when you are off the clock.

Interacting with different culture and learning new things is the hallmark of a flying career. You also get to do solo flights to destinations planes do not usually fly to.

The Downsides of the Profession The high cost of training

You need a lot of cash to become a pilot. Training cost a whole lot. It will cost you an estimated \$100,000 within your first year. That price does not include feeding and accommodation during your program. Training takes up lots of money and time.

Missing out on holidays and anniversary

As a pilot in training or working after training, you often cannot dictate your schedule. It is even more difficult if you are a long haul pilot. You will miss out on a lot of amazing holidays and memories. It can put a strain on your relationship with your family.

Accumulation of Stress

Stress is a regular part of being a pilot, especially long hauls flights. Flying is no doubt exciting, but it does take its toll on the body. The constant feeling of jetlag and the pressure of safeguarding hundreds of passengers' lives every day reduce the excitement of flying for pilots.

Women in Aviation

Starting on International Women's Day, March 8, 2021, AeroTime dedicated a week to celebrating women in aviation, their impact & achievements: in the past, present, and looking forward to the future. The more we focused on this important work, the more we realised there was still more to be done and that one week is simply not enough. We are therefore extending our work for another week as we continue to showcase the contribution made by women to our sector and as we consider how best to maintain this approach throughout the year - starting with the adoption of a new hashtag #oneweekisnotenough.

We've been so proud to publish new and unique content about women who are changing the aviation world through their work. We've been honored to publish interviews with some of the most senior women in aviation.

We spoke to women across our sector and across the world, including Kate Staples, the General Counsel at UK CAA, Jacqui Sutton, the COO at Rolls Royce Civil Aerospace, Katherine Bennett, the Senior Vice President at Airbus, leaders at the United States Federal Aviation Administration Deloris W. Martin and Ali McDermott, Temitayo Shittu, the Head of Product and Marketing at Wakanow travel agency, and Simona Liukaityte-Suszczynska, an optical systems engineer who worked on the Perseverance rover.

In a week of 'firsts', AeroTime also launched its first television programme called 'Behind the Scenes'. In partnership with major aviation YouTuber Josh Cahill, the new programme documents the first-ever all-female crewed flight in Afghanistan. We also presented the first 10 'AeroTime Aviation Achievement Awards' to inspirational women across three continents.

At the end of one week highlighting the role women have and continue to play in aviation, the AeroTime team decided that #oneweekisnotenough. It's an obvious conclusion to reach and we are proud to play our part in highlighting the hard work that is on-going, and helping to promote equality across aviation. We will be continuing this work into the future and we invite everyone else to join us. Thanks to all the inspirational women who featured in our first week and thanks too to those who will now feature in week two. We will continue to promote the cause throughout the year so get in touch if you want to nominate a woman in aviation for us to profile.



will work five days a week. You can fly between two to six flights per day depending on the location.

Long haul pilots, on the other hand, fly for over 6 hours in a single trip. Long haul takes you all over the world to different destinations. You will spend a lot of time away from your home. Your trips can be between a couple of days to weeks.

Working long hauls guarantee you longer off days compared to short hauls. All long haul pilots need experience as short hauls before applying for the job. Long haul pilots get higher pay than short hauls.

Wages, Adventure, and Travelling around the World

Pilots earn a quite high wage; this is

An Exciting Excursion

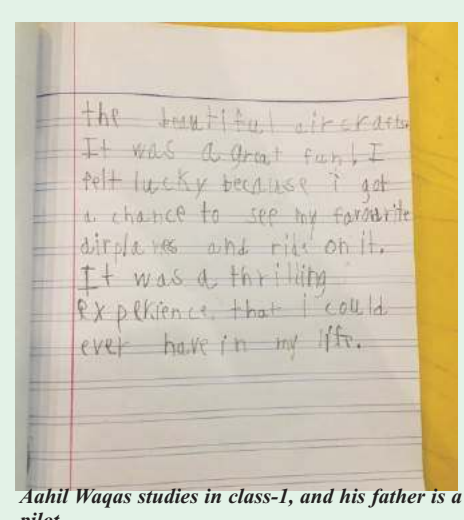
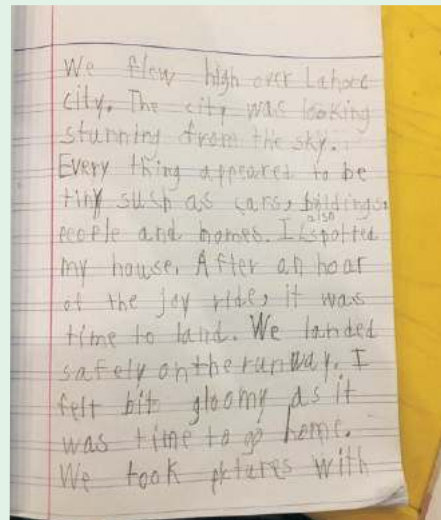
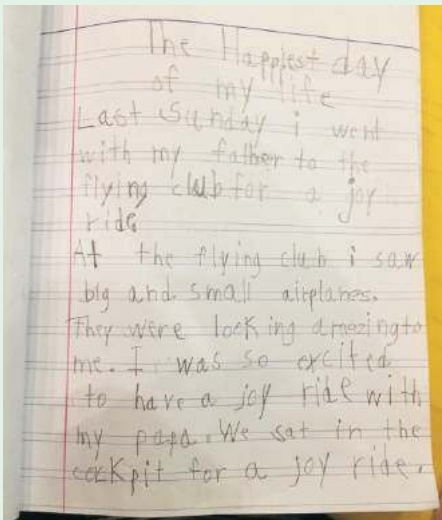
By Aahil Waqas

The Happiest Day of my life:

Last Sunday I went with my father to the flying club, for a joy ride.

At the flying club, I saw big and small airplanes, they were looking amazing to me. I was so excited to have a joy ride with my papa. We sat in the cockpit for a joy ride. We flew high over Lahore city. The city was looking stunning from the sky. Everything appeared to be tiny such as cars, buildings, people and homes. I also spotted my house. After an hour of the joy ride, it was time to land. We landed safely on the runway.

I felt a bit gloomy as it was time to go home. We took pictures with beautiful aircraft. It was great fun, I felt lucky because I got a chance to see my favorite aeroplanes and ride on it. It was a thrilling experience that I could ever have in my life.



Aahil Waqas studies in class-1, and his father is a pilot.

Highlanders women's Football team dinner at Pearl Continental Karachi



Mr. Waleed Javed Khan Head Couch of the team Photo graphed with Mr. A. S. Azad Editor Flyer International on the occasion.



Mr. Haseeb A. Gardezi Chief Operating Officer Hashoo Group, Hospitality Division Hosted Highlanders Women's Football Team Dinner at Peral-continental Hotel Karachi. Pearl - Continental Hotel Karachi General Manager Mr. Tariq Deen was also Present on the occasion.

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BRANCHES: KARACHI - LAHORE - FAISALABAD - ISLAMABAD - PESHAWAR

Xpress Aviation, CSS YG Cargo Airlines hosts reception for Cargo Agents in Lahore

YG Cargo Airline operates 4 flights a week from KMG (China) to Karachi and 4 flight to Lahore, using Boeing 757 F aircraft. Now the airlines has started booking of export cargo from Pakistan effective 23rd February 2021. The airlines covers 21 destinations. This was told by Mr. M. Ilyas CEO Xpress Aviation CSS for YG Cargo airlines in Pakistan.

Mr. M. Ilyas briefed the cargo agents

about the airlines and its services at a reception held at Ramada Hotel Lahore recently. He said that YG Cargo airlines has appointed Xpress Aviation as CSS (Cargo Sales & Service) Agent in Pakistan. He further said "CSS for the airlines will accept cargo only through IATA cargo agents, it will not accept directly from the shipper etc."

YG (YTO Cargo Airlines Co. Ltd.) operating as YTO Cargo airlines, is a

Chinese Cargo airlines based in Hangzhou China. It was founded in 2015. It has 12 aircrafts and operates to 21 destinations. Xpress Aviation headed by Mr. M. Ilyas was established more than a decade ago and has a rich experience of handling every kinds of cargo. It also has a vast experience in operating chartered cargo flights from Pakistan to various countries.

Xpress Aviation is one of the active cargo airlines marketing company.



Mr. Muhammad Ilyas CEO Xpress Aviation CSS YG Cargo Airlines briefing the cargo agents at a reception hosted at Ramada Hotel Lahore.



Uzbekistan offered access to Pakistani ports



Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi welcomes his Uzbek counterpart Dr Abdulaziz Kamilov to the Foreign Office on Wednesday 10 March.

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday 10 March assured Uzbekistan of complete facilitation in access to Pakistani ports.

Mr Khan held out the assurance during a meeting with Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Dr Abdulaziz Kamilov, who was on a two-day visit to Pakistan.

Mr Khan, according to a statement issued by the Prime Minister Office after the meeting, said that Pakistan's Karachi and Gwadar ports could become "the gateway to the landlocked Central Asia as Pakistan provided the Central Asian Republics the shortest route to international seas".

Pakistan, he said, would facilitate Uzbekistan's access to its ports.

Uzbekistan, which currently relies on Iranian seaport of Bandar Abbas for external trade, is exploring other options and is prioritising Pakistani ports because of short distance, being more economical and due to some political considerations.

Uzbekistan is working with Pakistan on the development of two options — the first is the Trans-Afghan railway project while the second is the road route via China.

Pakistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan had in Tashkent in February signed a roadmap for the construction of almost 600km of Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar railway line. The project, which is expected to take five years for completion at an estimated cost of \$4.8 billion, enjoys the backing of international lending agencies including the World Bank.

Mr Khan welcomed the proposed Trans-Afghan railway project and underscored Pakistan's commitment to support all efforts for the earliest realisation of this important connectivity project.

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan has been

desirous of acceding to the Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA), an agreement between China, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan to facilitate transit traffic and trade. Pakistan has been supporting Uzbekistan in this regard also.

The road project under this agreement would provide an alternative link between Pakistan and Central Asia while bypassing Afghanistan through the Karakoram Highway which connects Gilgit-Baltistan to China's Xinjiang region and further on to Central Asia.

Dr Kamilov's visit was also focused on regional connectivity and he extended invitations to Mr Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi for participation in Central Asia-South Asia Connectivity Conference in Tashkent in July.

Mr Khan told Dr Kamilov that he looked forward to visiting Uzbekistan and that his government wanted enhanced trade and regional connectivity.

DELEGATION-LEVEL MEETING

During the delegation-level talks, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Uzbek counterpart Dr Kamilov exchanged views on enhancement of economic cooperation, mutual support in international fora, regional connectivity and tourism promotion.

The two foreign ministers, the Foreign Office said, expressed satisfaction at the progress achieved in advancing the rail connectivity between the two countries and agreed on early completion of the Trans-Afghan railway project.

Mr Qureshi called for establishing direct air connectivity between the two countries to boost up trade and tourism. He also stressed the need for quick facilitation of visas for businessmen and tourists.

Visit to GHQ

Dr Kamilov later visited the General Headquarters for a meeting with Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa. Director General of ISI Lt Gen Faiz Hameed also attended the meeting.

"Matters of mutual interest, overall regional situation including the Afghan Peace Process and bilateral cooperation in various fields were discussed. Both reiterated the desire to further enhance bilateral relations including efforts for peace and security in the region," the ISPR said in a statement.

Resumption of ECO freight train delayed

Operation of Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) freight train, which was set to resume recently after a period of over nine years, has been delayed for two weeks due to administrative and functional issues.

The issues include some apprehensions from the freight forwarders, dilapidated condition of the railway track between Taftan-Quetta and Sukkur.

A senior PR official said that the train would resume operation by the end of this month.

"In a virtual meeting of the ITI freight train working group of the 10 member countries organisation — Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) — held recently, it was revealed that the private freight forwarders in three countries — Turkey, Iran and Pakistan — have some apprehension/observations about tariff/fare, duration, safety, security etc. Coordination on their part is another issue. Hopefully, they will make a final decision about booking their goods within next days," Pakistan Railways Chief Marketing Manager Kashif Yousfani told media.

"It may take approximately two weeks as I am sure that the operation of ITI train, named as ECO train, will resume by the end of this month," he said.

Mr Yousfani said the Turkish railways had already booked goods consisting of 20 containers and the PR also told the Pakistani freight forwarders to submit their proposals (if any) in this regard.

Talking about the condition of the track, he said though it was not good, it did not mean it was unfit for the trains' operation.

"The condition of the track is not so good. But it is fit for the freight trains since they run with the maximum speed of 50km per hour," he explained.

Mr Yousfani said the railways divisional superintendents concerned had been directed to ensure complete maintenance of the track before resumption of the train.

It is pertinent to mention that the first train from Islamabad to Istanbul was inaugurated on Aug 14, 2009.

The first train from Istanbul to Islamabad dry port reached on Aug 13, 2010. So far, eight trains have been dispatched from Pakistan to Turkey.



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Efficient and empowered authority urged for CPEC



Experts at a webinar on Saturday March 13 feared that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) might become a debt trap if the authorities did not efficiently actualise the targets of the game-changer initiative.

Experts at a webinar on Saturday March 13 feared that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) might become a debt trap if the authorities did not efficiently actualise the targets of the game-changer initiative.

Institutions, experts and the public at large are still unclear about the scope and targets of CPEC where the Pakistan government has committed billions of dollars to pool in on high rates of interest.

They said a fact-based narrative building is very important while the enemies and unwise friends are spreading rumours for their own vested interests and to malign the CPEC initiatives. A one-window operation shall be the backbone of the agricultural and industrial phase of CPEC which should be handled by the relevant and expert human resource.

Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) organised the webinar. The panel of experts included Adviser to President National Defence University (NDU) and former ambassador retired Gen Raza Mohammad, who is a PhD on CPEC, former project director CPEC with the Planning Commission of Pakistan and presently CEO KP Board of Investment Hasan Daud Butt, NASCOM Director and former executive director CPEC Centre of Excellence, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Dr Shahid Rasheed, Director CPEC Study Centre SDPI Shakeel Ramay, development experts Dr Zahoor Bazai (Quetta) and Dr Khushboo Ejaz (Lahore), and executive director Devcom-Pakistan Munir Ahmed.

General Mohammad said CPEC was a ray of hope for the economic prosperity of Pakistan.

“We need to make the CPEC projects more transparent and efficient if inspired to achieve the targets and harness the economic benefits. A rational narrative is imperative to wipe off the ambiguity and rumours by engaging parliamentarians and media counter-offensive campaigns,” he said.

Hassan Daud Butt said 22 projects had been completed

so far despite an 18 months delay due to political disruption.

“The federal government need to revive the monthly meetings of the CPEC stakeholders and the periodic meetings of the seven joint working groups to improve efficiency. CPEC is indeed a game-changer but it could be a debt trap if not taken seriously and worked hard to achieve the targets of the project on time. The CPEC authority shall have more powers and authority to combat the challenges and bottlenecks,” he said.

Dr Shahid Rasheed said CPEC improved Pakistan's GDP to 5.7 per cent in 2018 from 3.3pc in 2013, and also improved the security situation.

“Covid-19 and political instability has marred the performance of CPEC in recent years. But a reborn of CPEC would bring much better benefits to the nation. Parliamentarians of both sides shall work in harmony for an inclusive CPEC authority that is much needed in its new phase to invigorate agriculture and industrialisation around CPEC,” he said.

Shakeel Ramay said Pakistan needed to understand that it is one of the 139 countries that have signed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and in case of sluggishness the investors would go to other parts of the BRI.

“Speed of work matters in the international development projects but we are lagging behind the schedule of development because of very casual behaviour. Unfortunately, the government could not project the economic benefits of CPEC. Rumours are in the air without any check. We need to have an empowered CPEC authority,” he said.

Munir Ahmed said only the strategic partners could understand the importance of the CPEC initiatives while politicians have no idea about the strategic and socioeconomic culmination of the project.

“Many have been projecting it as a debt trap. Every investment and loan has the capacity to become debt if not used efficiently. We need to develop the CPEC narrative according to its objectives and targets beyond the political scoring and vested interests of the individuals and the interests groups,” he said.

Dr Zahoor Bazai stressed the need to prioritise the engagement of locals in the projects and also ensure environmental integrity through adequate Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs).

Container train between Karachi, Lahore launched

In what is being described as a major development aimed at modernising the Pakistan Railways' freight service, a modernised premium container train between Karachi and Lahore has been launched by the PR.

Officials said the first of such train departed from Juma Goth railway station here for Lahore. They said that the booking procedure for all of the wagons of this container train can be carried out online by open bidding from the railways' website.

The PR has scheduled six up-country departures of this premium container train on the 1st, 6th, 11th, 16th, 21st and 26th of each month, whereas the subsequent down-country departures shall take place on 3rd, 8th, 13th, 18th, 23rd and 28th of every month.

The newly introduced container train is expected to cover the Karachi-Lahore distance within 32 hours.

“Punctuality of this premium train shall be under strict observation as refunding provision to the parties has been entailed if the train does not reach its destination within the stipulated time,” said a PR statement issued.

Each train comprises 30 wagons and bidding for each wagon starts at Rs125,000. The train's estimated minimum monthly earning shall be Rs22.5 million, if per wagon bidding of all six trains closes at starting value.

Walking on the well-travelled road

Pakistan's resurging trade deficit isn't surprising given the nation's heavy reliance on imports and the limited range of products it can sell to the world. This was expected to increase in the wake of new growth in import demand with the pick-up in economic activities and consumption. Few believed that the government and central bank could reduce the trade gap by holding down the import demand for a very long time to keep the pressure off the country's current account.

The new trade data published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) shows that the February trade gap expanded by almost 24 per cent to \$2.5 billion year-on-year, mainly owing to the rebounding imports and the falling exports, which luckily continued to grow by above \$2bn for the fifth consecutive month. The gap, however, declined by about 5.9pc from January on a month-on-month basis.

The data for the first eight months of the current fiscal year shows that the trade deficit posted a double-digit growth of 10.6pc during the period between July and February after the gap between what the country paid for its imports and what it earned through its exports swelled to \$17.5bn from \$15.8bn a year ago. This is in spite of the 4.3pc growth in exports to \$16.3bn from \$15.6bn a year ago.

Imports, on the other hand, rose by 7.5pc to \$33.8bn from \$31.5bn.

The continuous drop in imports on suppressed domestic demand helped by the declining global oil prices in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis had provided some breathing space to the central bank in managing external accounts despite stagnating exports. Last fiscal year, the country's import bill shrank sharply by \$10.3bn or 18.8pc to \$44.5bn from \$54.8bn in the previous year.

However, the rebound in imports is likely to again create pressures on the external side in case the workers' remittances sent home by non-resident Pakistanis also start dropping going forward.

Elaborating on the factors leading to import growth, commerce minister Abdul Razak Dawood tweeted that most of this growth had come from an increase of 7.8pc in the import of raw materials and intermediate goods (which is reflected by an increase in the manufacturing output in recent months) even though the imports of capital goods declined by 0.2pc. The imports of consumer goods also went down by 7.3pc.

Besides raw materials and intermediary goods imported by the industry, the increased purchases of food products — especially wheat and sugar — this year owing to domestic shortages also increased. The rising cotton imports on the

to surpass their annual target of \$42.4bn.

According to the State Bank of Pakistan Governor Reza Baqir, the industry has already opened letters of credit worth \$1bn for importing machinery for new projects or expansion and balancing, modernisation and replacement of the existing ones under the bank's concessionary, long-term Temporary Economic Refinance Facility (TERF), implying that the trade gap will continue to expand. However, he recently told media that the increase in exports and remittances would offset the impact of the rising imports on the current account (for the time being at least). The banks have so far approved TERF loans of over Rs430bn or equal to 1pc of the GDP. The rising global oil prices and commodities like palm oil etc may further swell the import bill and, in turn, the trade gap.

While imports are likely to rise, Pakistan's overseas shipments are anticipated to decline in the next four months as its regional competitors — India and Bangladesh — reopen their economies and the textile and clothing importers from the US and

Europe return to their old suppliers. However, the textile industry, which comprises almost 60pc of the nation's total export revenues, is confident of retaining a larger share of the new export orders despite reopening India and Bangladesh.

The recent widening of the trade deficit has indeed raised concerns about sustainability of the country's external sector. Although we have been managing the balance-of-payment situation with the help of unanticipated growth in workers' remittances as well as foreign loans, this is not going to sustain for a very long time and we may face a new economic bust in next few years. The only sustainable way forward is to boost exports through expanding the product range, finding new markets, as well as attracting foreign direct investment in export industries by escalating work on the development of special economic zones with plug-and-play facilities.



back of the failure of the domestic crop at a time when the textile and clothing industry is operating at its full capacity to meet the export orders also forced the import bill to go up. The cumulative expenditure on the import of wheat, cotton and sugar alone stands at \$1.95bn in the July to February period. In addition to them, the spike in the energy prices — oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) — too played its part in raising the dollar value of the import bill and consequently the trade deficit.

Analysts agree that the trade deficit will likely remain wide in the remaining four months of the current fiscal year as imports will continue to post growth as the global economy reopens while the domestic demand for food products, cotton and industrial machinery is expected to stay high. Driven by food imports and domestic economic activity, imports are projected by the central bank

Pakistan offers unique, diverse opportunities for tourism: Imran



Prime Minister Imran Khan interacts with locals after inaugurating the Nandana Fort heritage trail project.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said Pakistan can provide a multiplicity of choices for tourists that no other country can, elaborating on the diversity of opportunities to be found in the country — from its long coastline to some of the world's tallest mountains and heritage sites, including those belonging to ancient civilisations.

He expressed these views after inaugurating the heritage trail project at Al-Bairuni Point (Baghan Wala Village) at Nandana Fort in Jhelum district recently. The trail in Pind Dadan Khan, the premier said, would be the gateway to seven archaeological sites, including Nandana Fort, Shiva Temple, Tilla Joggian, Khewra Salt Mines, Mallot Fort and Takht-i-Babri.

Nandana Fort is a place of historical significance, where renowned mathematician Abu Rehan al-Bairuni measured the circumference of the Earth. Built in the eighth century, the fort was strategically located on a hilltop overlooking the Salt Range.

The tourism and archaeological department of Punjab has designed the project for preservation and conservation of the site to convert it into an international tourist spot as per the desire of the prime minister. Over Rs120 million had initially been allocated for the preservation project.

Inaugurates Nandana Fort heritage trail project, two national parks

Speaking to the local community

after the inauguration, Mr Khan said no nation could progress without exploring and examining its history. Preservation and protection of archaeological sites provided an insight into the history and ethos of the nations, he said, while regretting that little or no effort had been made in the past to preserve or discover heritage. “Even Mohenjodaro and Harappa [archaeological sites of the Indus Valley civilisation] were discovered by the British,” he remarked.

However, he said recently the archaeology expert, Mr Samad, who was also present at the ceremony, had discovered a 40-foot statue of Buddha near Haripur. After the discovery, he added, the followers of Buddhism from across the world wanted to visit the site.

He said the conservation and preservation of the historical sites in Jhelum was aimed to convert them into international heritage and tourism sites.

The premier, who also inaugurated Tilla Joggian and Salt Range national parks in the Paddri area near Jhelum, said the preservation of the Nandana Fort and the establishment of the national parks was part of the 2020-30 vision for tourism in Pakistan.

Mr Khan said the Nandana Fort in particular was a “very special place” and would find its way on the world map, as “for the first time if someone tried to measure the [circumference of the] world, then it was from there. From the Nandana Fort, which was an observatory around 1,000 years ago, Al-Bairuni had measured the radius of the Earth with precision, he

said, adding that the great mathematician made this site part of the world's heritage for all times to come.

“The amazing thing is that today the world still accepts the accuracy with which that result was found out by Al-Bairuni after staying all those years there about 10 centuries ago.”

While talking to Baghan Wala villagers, Mr Khan said all the developed nations had protected their old buildings, ancient archaeological and heritage sites. He said countries such as Turkey, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and even the western countries had developed tourism as an industry by preserving the archaeological sites. Unfortunately, he said, work done in Pakistan in the past was insufficient to protect the heritage sites. He said that protecting those sites was inevitable for the upcoming generations and for the livelihood of the youth.

Mr Khan assured the locals that Baghan Wala would be developed as a modern village and expressed the hope that they would take care of the comfort of the tourists. He said promotion of tourism would create employment opportunities for the youth. He also announced that the government would arrange loans and other incentives for the local population for establishing hotels and other requirements for the tourists.

While drawing attention of the prime minister towards the issues of his constituency on the occasion, federal minister for science and technology Chaudhry Fawad Hussain demanded dualisation of Jhelum-Pind Dadan Khan-Lilla interchange road link. He said if the road was built, the area could become a hub for tourism. The chief minister Sardar Usman Buzdar Khan responding to the prime minister's query, assured that he would soon exclusively visit the district Jhelum and resolve all issues of area development.

Punjab tourism minister Asif Mehmood told the prime minister that rehabilitation process of the Rohtas Fort had started and a museum in the fort was also being set up for tourists. He said many villages had a route from within the Rohtas Fort and a bypass road with the help of World Bank was being built to provide the villagers an alternative route. He said that a 27km-track for jeep rally was being built for Tilla Joggian heritage site and a 3.5-km hiking trail was also being developed. A feasibility study was being conducted to upgrade the tourism spots in the region of Jhelum, Chakwal



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and Salt Range which would be completed till June, he said, expressing the hope that the project would be added in the next Annual Development Project (ADP).

Later while talking to the media, the prime minister said he had visited the area about 30 years ago and had thought to develop them for tourism. He told reporters that Pakistan had a range of tourism sites from mountains to the coastline as well as historical sites. He said Turkey and Malaysia were earning many billions of dollars from the tourism industry but unfortunately Pakistan earned nothing from this industry. The country also had old cities of Lahore and Peshawar that had a great potential to attract tourists. The PM said people were aware of the tourism spots on hills and mountains but were not familiar with the historical places such as Nandana Fort.

The PM vowed that a tourist guide with map would be made to facilitate their travel to scores of places worth visiting in Pakistan. He said domestic tourism in Pakistan had recorded a boom in recent years. Overseas Pakistanis also visited the beautiful areas of the country while international tourism would also increase in the coming years, he believed.

Mr Khan said Pakistan had a great potential for religious tourism. There were a lot of sacred sites for Buddhists in the Gandhara civilisation, a large community of Sikhs visit Kartarpur and Nankana Sahib, Hindus visit the Katas Raj and other temples and those who were interested in the Sufism visit the shrines of great Muslim saints.

National parks, olive plantation

Later, PM Khan also inaugurated Tilla Jogian and Salt Range national parks in the Paddri area near Jhelum.

The premier was briefed about the development and importance of the two national parks, which were included in the six protected areas. Besides the two national parks, other protected areas included Kheri Murat National Park, Chinji National Park, Namal Wetland and Chashma Wetland Nature Reserves.

Special Assistant to the PM on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam gave briefing on the protection of wildlife and environment in the area.

On the occasion, Mr Khan planted an olive sapling and said the government was going to take steps to cultivate olive plants in the region. He said the grafting of the wild olive would also be done next month and plantation drive of olive would be kicked off. He said olive production could be very helpful in foreign exchange.

'A heart as big as K2'



The proud Pakistani at the K2 summit in 2018

When his son died fighting in World War I, former US President Theodore Roosevelt wrote that "only those are fit to live who do not fear to die and none are fit to die who have shrunk from the joy of life and the duty of life."

For the people of Pakistan, the tragic news of the disappearance of one of its proudest sons, mountaineer Muhammad Ali Sadpara, is a difficult and heartbreaking blow. Sadpara disappeared, along with his companions John Snorri from Iceland and Juan Pablo Mohr from

Chile, attempting to become the first Pakistani to climb K2 during winter.

Sadpara, Snorri and Mohr could not be contacted since they made their push for the summit from Camp 3 at midnight between February 4 and 5. Sadpara's son Sajid had accompanied his father on the expedition but had been forced to return from the 'bottleneck' — the most challenging part of the climb — a mere 300m from the top, after a leak in his oxygen tank.

The 'Savage Mountain', as K2 is often called, had recently been conquered by a Nepali expedition during winter in what was a landmark achievement in mountaineering history. Fortune, physical endurance and good weather had managed to smile upon the Nepali team during their endeavour. But sadly this was not the case with Sadpara's team. Though rescue operations continue at the time of this writing, the chances of the team's survival in extreme sub-zero temperatures are very low, and a sense of inevitability now surrounds the recovery process.

As a high altitude porter and mountaineer, Sadpara had already made the country proud in 2016 by becoming part of the first winter ascent of Nanga Parbat, another equally dangerous mountain, along with Simone Moro of Italy and Alex Txikon of Spain. Along with Nanga Parbat, Pakistan is home to five of the 14 8,000m peaks in the world.

Fellow climbers pay tribute to Muhammad Ali Sadpara, the mountaineer who disappeared attempting to become the first Pakistani to scale the 'Killer Mountain' in winter, and who left a lasting impression on all whose lives he touched.

Ali Sadpara was born February 2, 1976 in a village called Sadpara, near Skardu in Gilgit-Baltistan, famous for its porters who have made numerous expeditions. The life of a porter is as relentless and unforgiving as it is unrewarding. To carry many kilos of weight over jagged topography is a challenge in itself, even more so when it is the only means of livelihood for a person.

The key element here was survival, which Sadpara learned at a young age. His mother had breastfed him till the age of six, determined to make him survive, a fate that eight of his 11 siblings did not share. Like the Scots of the Highlands or the Druze of the Chouf Mountains of Lebanon, the rugged terrain of Pakistan's northern areas have bred an air of toughness among the villagers who live there. The people there are able to endure physical hardships that would break most people, yet still adhere to a humility and sense of optimism about a better life.

Having gotten married at the age of 19, his determination to provide for his family, drew him towards becoming a porter for foreign mountaineers, which was the best paid job available. With an iron will, he carried loads for climbers back and forth in the Karakoram mountain range, often for wages amounting to a mere three US dollars a day.

However, Sadpara's real baptism by fire as a porter came about during the mid-1990s when Pakistan and India locked horns over the strategically vital Siachen Glacier — he was recruited by the army to carry heavy supplies for soldiers while under fire. The lessons of his childhood of being physically and mentally tough served him well to survive in such an unforgiving environment.

As spiritually strong as he was physically tough, Sadpara had always been passionate about the mountains. During an interview with media Images in 2016, he had said that "Whatever I have achieved is due to my love for the mountains." He loved the mountainous outdoors and the challenge that they exemplified. As natural monuments of a rugged and brutal terrain that balances with an ethereal beauty, the mountains have always symbolised a majestic



Muhammad Ali Sadpara

spectacle that challenges climbers to conquer them.

Though he came from a humble background, he had great drive and ambition to achieve greatness in mountaineering.

Climber and CEO of Alpine Adventure Guides Pakistan Ali Muhammad Saltoro says it was widely acknowledged among climbers that Muhammad Ali Sadpara was a truly unique person in the world of mountaineering. Saltoro and Sadpara had attempted Nanga Parbat together in 2008 — with Sadpara reaching the summit — and had been friends for many years.

“Recently I spoke to Denis Urubko [famous Russian-Polish mountaineer] and his wife Maria and she was crying,” Saltoro tells me on the fourth day of the search. “A person like him comes along very rarely in the field of mountaineering. In 2018-19, when there was an accident on Nanga Parbat, I called him and he arrived there that very day in Skardu,” he says, recalling how Sadpara helped retrieve the bodies of British mountaineer Tom Ballard and Spanish mountaineer Daniele Nardi.

“People like that are very rare. There are many climbers in Pakistan and if I praise them it would be embarrassing but, not in his case — you won't find a person like him. There was no malintent about him. There was only one Sadpara.”

Mountaineer Alex Txikon first met Ali Sadpara 20 years ago. “In almost two decades, you have time to know each other very well,” he says. “Today many people know his career, but above all he was a kind, warm man, always taking care of his family.” Txikon says that though financial benefits were never the main motivation for Sadpara, the past year had been particularly difficult for him. “Work

had become so scarce that he needed the money to support his family.”

Sadpara had expressed his dream to Txikon to climb all 14 of the world's 8,000m peaks, a target all great mountaineers seek to achieve. “These last few months and weeks we had talked a lot. I think I remember him telling me he would not try K2 in winter, but necessity led him to do so,” he says. “It's a shame and a great loss, more than as a mountaineer, as a person.”

Txikon's manager Ignacio Zuloaga remembers Ali Sadpara as a man with a great heart who always loved to dance and sing the traditional songs from Pakistan's mountain regions. Zuloaga recalls him as

a patriot who was very proud of his heritage and of being from Sadpara. “He wanted to invite me to discover his family and that magical mountain region. He wanted to show to Pakistan's young people that they can also be climbers and was an example for everybody,” says Zuloaga.

Romanian climber Alex Gvan remembers Sadpara for “a heart as large as K2 ... His everlasting smile and positive mindset were inspirational and contagious. Generous and altruist, always putting others first. He was a high altitude extraordinaire and one of the very greats. I was blessed to have met him,” said Gvan.

Mountaineering has always been regarded as a merciless endeavour and a supreme example of man versus nature. Its triumphs are as sweet as its defeats are bitter. In an interview with the Alpinist, Sadpara had once said that, “In climbing, there are two outcomes — life or death — and you must find the courage to accept either possibility.”

With his apparent death, Pakistan has lost a hero and a true braveheart.

Punjab celebrates Culture Day

First time in the history of Punjab, Culture Day celebrated day on Sunday 14 of March.

Under the direction of Chief Minister Usman Buzdar, all-district officers wear turbans to highlight the importance of occasion.

In this regard, Punjab Culture Department completed all preparations to celebrate the day.

Main function held at Alhamra Hall in Lahore.

A cultural village was built at Alhamra while stalls of Punjabi food and cultural arts and crafts were set up in the village.

Punjabi artists performed Punjabi folk songs and dances during this event.



Swedish citizen hunts two markhors in GB



A Swedish citizen hunted two Astore Markhors in Jutal conservancy near Gilgit on Sunday.

Mr Donald had obtained permit for hunting a single markhor at payment of 63,000 US dollars.

According to a press release, the hunter was in the area for last two weeks. On Sunday, he killed a markhor with 40 inches horns.

The Jutal conservancy committee members presented a traditional cap to the hunter. They also vowed to take more steps to ensure conservation of wildlife species in the region.

Conservator parks and wildlife Khadim Hussain and DFO Gilgit region Raja Arif arrived in the area and congratulated the community on successful hunting of markhor in their area.

Meanwhile, sources told Dawn that the Swedish national hunted another markhor under one permit in the same area without informing of officials and local people.

According locals, the second hunted markhor was of young age and was not identified for trophy hunting which was against wildlife rules.

DFO Raja Arif said the foreign hunter had obtained one permit, however, he mistakenly killed another markhor.

He explained that when the hunter fired at a markhor, the bullet crossed its body and killed another, which was standing nearby. He said the second hunt was not illegal as the hunter did not intend it.

The wildlife official, however, said the hunter would pay another 63,000 US dollars for hunting the second markhor under one permit.

Changing World Order

Prof. Safdar Sandal



Within little more than a year (since January 2020) the world has undergone a drastic change. No one could have imagined a complete devastation of the most advanced health system achieved by man in the past century, by having to face a sudden fall of COVID -19 on the world which made its large population succumb to death and un-paralleled grief. The tragedy has not ended yet and is re-surfing its head again and again like a sea-monster.

Even more devastating has been its effects on the human activity, loss of industrial pace and growth, poverty among the masses, rise in beggary and sufferings. No one could imagine or anticipate overnight collapse of industries, airlines and tourism including, that the oil-dependent economies would suffer irretrievable rise in losses. : that the West would be forced to yield to China (and the East): and that the myth of Indo-Pacific , designed to contain China would decipher, resulting in the 'containment of India' instead along with the fall of the infamous Trumpian anti-Islamic period, pinning hopes on Biden who prefers diplomacy against brinkmanship – a negation of Trump's thought process. We seem to be passing through a gigantic phase of global change. Much like the period of the two World Wars, or the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; history bears witness to the fact: that an alteration in the global power structure necessarily affects the governance systems of corollary states.

A merely hundred years ago, the world was un-recognizably a different place. Europe and the Middle East were predominantly split between the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the British Empire, the Ottoman Caliphate and the French pockets of power. Russia, China and Japan had empires of their own. India which had been ruled by Mughal Empire for centuries now belonged to the British (which personally I abhor, because they intentionally made it poor, uneducated



Roman Empire



Ottoman Empress

and backward). And this “empire” structure of the ruling powers also dictated the manner in which local governments operated. Raj, Khilafat and Kingship were the accepted norms. Democracy was not the mantra of any people. The only exception, at the time was the United States, whose influence did not extend beyond its oceanic boundaries. The First World War changed the whole

scenario. The Ottoman Empire, along with its Khilafat structure, was entirely obliterated. The Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated, giving way to German Austria, Hungarian Republic, Czechoslovak Republic, and the spinning off of Croatia, Serbia and parts of Romania.

The United States, which had just arrived at the international scene, was not yet the power we see today. And its governance structure, an open democracy, had not been proclaimed as the preferred form of State structure across most parts of the world. Then came the Second World War and its decisive victory for the Allied Forces. This victory abolished the “Empire” structure of the old, ushering in the age of democracy. Japan effectively shed its cloak of Kingship, under American dictate, and adopted western governance structures. Even the British



USA president Joe Biden



South China Sea

Empire, which was among the victors of the Second World War, could no longer retain its empire status, and chose the allied form of democratic enterprise. The self-coined name of 'Great Britain' had to be shed away as no other people of the world reconciled with this self-aggrandizement. Importantly, as empires crumbled, so did Britain, the ruling powers carved out a new map of the world. Israel was born out of thin air. The Middle East was [literally!] split across borders that the Queen drew at the back of a napkin. The Indian-continent was split through a border drawn by the Viceroy—in many places, against the will of the domestic people. Parts of Africa were split into smaller nation States. And institutions such as the United Nations (and other Western alliances) were established to institutionalize the allied power structure.

Importantly, the Western global powers, which redrew most of the global map at their whim, also guaranteed the sanctity of the new borders—either directly or through their proxies. For almost four decades after the Second World War, the only real challenge to Western hegemony was the Soviet Union. Within the territories controlled by the Soviet Union, the 'American democratic enterprise' was resisted. These territories—from Eastern Europe took their governance lead from the communist State structure of the Soviet Union. Fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991, once again resulted in re-making of International boundaries. The eastern part of the Soviet Union was carved into 18 different international territories. Each of these borders was redrawn with the consent of the only remaining super power (the United States). And the consequent governments formed within these territories, also took their lead from the

United States. Collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in the age of a unipolar world. For the first time, since the Roman Empire, the world was 'dominated' by a single country: the United States. This extraordinary turn of events ushered in the age of American Imperialism. Since 1990, the United States has enjoyed almost hegemonic power. It has invaded countries at whim, ousted governments it did not like, brought in Army dictators who would easily obey them than the elected Assemblies, even when the domestic population did not want it—e.g. changes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Greece, and several others.

International governance bodies (e.g. IMF) forced countries to undergo reforms that suited the United States and to adopt American style of governance. Those who followed the American lead were rewarded (South Korea, India etc.). Those who differed (e.g. Venezuela, Iraq, Syria, Libya etc.) were punished. But 2020 seems to have changed all that. Crippled by the spread of COVID-19 and having been drained off its global energies during ill-conceived wars, Donald Trump's reactionary "American First" policy—which shuns the idea of an inclusive American Dream—resulted in withdrawal of American hegemonic global influence. Trump's xenophobic Islam-phobia has further disillusioned the Muslim world from the US. And American withdrawal has prompted competing interests to fill this vacuum. In Syria and Lebanon, for instance, France and Russia are already more important to the local power structure than America is. Countries like UAE and Qatar are looking east, towards China and Russia, for their long term goals.

In particular, the rise of China, which was slow and sluggish till recently, has gained tremendous pace during the course of Corona virus epidemic. As the West reels from the effects COVID-19 and America loses itself to the madness of domestic strife, China is gaining ground. In the South China Sea, as China asserts its claim on various territories (including Taiwan), American influence is dwindling. Maintaining status quo in the South China Sea may require the United States to threaten military conflict. One that the Americans are not sure they can win, despite the recent fanciful pact between US, Australia and be-shamed India by China, to make feel their presence in this hot bed sea of the South. China's swift aggression in Ladakh and a speeding up of CPEC projects (despite COVID – 19 lockdown) is a testament to the Global

repositioning of China. A global reset is afoot. And the new age of "Look East" is about to start. Pakistan stands at the gaining end. Already, institutions such as WHO and even the EU are no longer in the strangle of American influence. In the South China Sea, as China asserts its claim on various territories (including Taiwan). American influence is dwindling fast. Maintaining status quo in the South China Sea may require the United States to threatening military conflict. This shift in global power has real consequences for international boundaries that were artificially drawn across the Middle East and even Asia. The powers that created those boundaries and guaranteed their sanctity can no longer do so. And places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, even Ladakh, are a perfect example of this. As China decides to consolidate its control over these areas, will the US risk a war to liberate them? If China stays in Ladakh, or expands its dominion across the Indian border through Nepal, will the United States and its friends come to the aid of India? Will they fight a war to jeopardize CPEC, or the larger Belt and Road Initiative? The answer is big NO; given the worst bad effects of COVID – 19 in the West and the humiliating ouster of Trump in the U.S. Lately, there has been an origin and spread of the new 'UK- Virus' as its third phase which has proved to be more lethal and has lately encircled the whole West where the situation is grimmer. Resultantly, the haughty posture of the past has minimized and will diminish with the time. The UK-Virus has reached Pakistan too with velocity.

History bears witness of the fact that the rise of a new global power usually results in the corresponding spread of its peculiar governance structure too. Like the structure of the "Empires" in the time of First World War and the structure of American democracy, in the post Second World War period are before us. 2021 may be the first year of the rise of the East. And this new world order, which seems to be evolving before our eyes today, will have profound impacts for Pakistan and its assumingly dysfunctional democratic enterprise. In the months and years to come, countries in our region (and perhaps across the world) may be forced to pick sides between the United States and China. Those who come to the Chinese Camp may also have to grow out of the borrowed American model of democracy and follow something closer to the "Chinese model" – where a loose democracy is coupled with a decisive writ of the State.

Fourth Sindh Literature Festival



Mehtab Akbar Rashdi speaks at the event on Friday March 12 evening.

The fourth Sindh Literature Festival (SLF) began at the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi with some thought-provoking speeches highlighting the rich culture and traditions of Sindh on Friday March 12 evening.

Before formal proceedings started, a delightful performance by the shehnai player Ustad Abdullah Khan entertained the audience. He was followed by Ali Mohammad Ronjho, who played the chang. Then Ustad Zulfiqar Ali played multiple instruments to set a melodious tone for the things to come.

One of the three principal organisers of the event, Naseer Gopang, was the first speaker of the evening. He talked about the gist of the programme, which is to seek peace in the world.

Writer Noorul Huda Shah lauded the youngsters' effort in arranging the event, saying we should be proud of them. She also mentioned that the festival came into being in response to another similar event.

PPP's govt termed pro-culture dispensation

President of the Arts Council Ahmed Shah said SLF's sun has now risen at the council. But, he pointed out it wasn't for the first time that has happened. In 1975 Zulfikar Ali Bhutto held a programme called 'Sindh through the Centuries' at the same venue. For the late prime minister, the council was the centre of culture. The founder of the PPP was also responsible for setting up institutions such as the PNCA, Alhamra Arts Council Lahore, the National Book Foundation and the Academy of Letters.

'Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Pashto should be declared national languages'

He remarked that even today the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government is a "pro-culture dispensation".

Mehtab Akbar Rashdi said the SLF was everybody's institution. Carrying on with the political argument made by an earlier speaker she commented, "Give love, take love."

Renowned writer from Balochistan Dr Shah Mohammad Mari was the keynote speaker at the inaugural session.

He said Shah Latif Bhitai was not just a poet of Sindh and represented its culture; he was also a buzurg and leader of the Baloch. In his poetry he called the Baloch the ideal human. Shah Latif also compiled a list of points of what constituted the ideal human. The point at the top of that list was respect for Sassui.

Dr Mari said man was the only creature who didn't communicate with horns, paws or claws. Man (insaan) speaks, sings and plays music, which is why he lives in groups and establishes societies. And which is why he comes up with festivals and carnivals such as SLF.

Poet Imdad Husaini said Pakistan is a multilingual society. All languages (Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi, Pashto, etc) should be declared national languages. They are not a danger to Urdu or the Urdu language poses any threat to them. Even English should be accepted because writers of the world are our writers, he added.

Dr Syed Jaffar Ahmed said SLF was important on two counts. One, it helps us understand the history of Sindh. Two, it enables us to celebrate the region's achievements in the arts. After saying that, he read a detailed paper, which raised some questions about the cultural growth of the region.

'Cultural activism taking place in Sindh'

Sindh Culture Minister Syed Sardar Shah was the final speaker of the opening session.

He started off by congratulating the young organisers of the festival arguing that it's not easy to be consistent in one's endeavours.

Referring to the queries that Dr Ahmed had raised in his paper, he said a small answer to one of his questions was SLF. "For the last eight to nine years,

cultural activism has been taking place in Sindh."

Coming back to Dr Ahmed's concerns, he argued that only the state can provide some of the answers to his questions, not society. To back up his statement, he said the bill of accepting four languages as national languages was moving around in the National Assembly and Senate. "India has declared 26 languages as national languages, why can't Pakistan do the same with four," he asked.

With respect to Urdu, he said, "We love Urdu but a similar sentiment should also come from the other corner."

Zohaib Kaka delivered the vote of thanks. Najia Mir and Sajjad conducted the opening session.

Karachi resident hunts ibex in Shigar



A man from Karachi hunted on Wednesday March 10 an ibex with 42 inches horns in the Hushy valley of Shigar district under the trophy hunting

A man from Karachi hunted on Wednesday March 10 an ibex with 42 inches horns in the Hushy valley of Shigar district under the trophy hunting programme 2021.

Zaffar Syed had obtained the licence from the GB wildlife department for Rs360,000. Separately, the nine-day-long Sut Das Peace Festival concluded in Darel valley of Diamer district.

Competitions of polo, cricket, football, donkey race, paragliding and other games were held. Players from across GB participated in the competitions.

The final ceremony was attended by political, civil and military officials, and large number of games' lovers.

Force Commander Gilgit-Baltistan Maj-Gen Jawwad Ahmed Qazi was the chief guest of the concluding ceremony.

A music programme was also held on the occasion. The Pakistan Army in collaboration with the local administration also arranged a free medical camp. Gen Jawwad Qazi distributed gifts and trophies among the players.

Gabin Jabba festival ends amid colours



Cyclists on their way to Gabin Jabba top during a race on the concluding day of the sports and cultural festival in Swat.

The three-day sports and cultural festival also concluded amid colours and adventures in Gabin Jabba on Sunday 28 Feb.

The festival attracted a large number of tourists from across the country. The festival was organised by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Culture and Tourism Authority (KP-CTA) in collaboration with district administration of Swat. Young men and women from across the country participated in various snow sporting events.

Separately in Malam Jabba, national and international cyclists participated in a six-kilometre race on a dirt track. Cyclists from Mingora, Islamabad, Lahore and Canada took part in different categories of the race.

Forest Secretary Shahid Khan, who was chief guest on the occasion, distributed certificates and prizes among the players. He said that Malam Jabba Ski Resort had great attraction for tourists and adventure seekers. "The ski resort is serving not only as a tourist destination but is also promoting sports and adventure activities," he added.

Athletes showed remarkable performance on difficult terrains of the valley where many had to put their bicycles in low gear to reach the finish line. Winners were awarded with cash prizes.

Under the junior category, Zeeshan got first, Abuzar second and Zeeshan Ali third position respectively. In male category, Danish Mand got first, Mohammad Usman second and Hammad Hussain got third position respectively.

In the female category, Bisma got first prize and famous Canadian biker Rosie Gabriel got second position.

Rosie Gabriel said on the occasion that she was surprised to see the stunning natural beauty and enjoyed the hospitality

of the local people. "Pakistan is an amazing country. Photos and videos cannot grasp the unique beauty and the kindness of the people of Pakistan," she said.

She said that she would come to Swat in future to participate in more such activities.

The event had other attractions including cultural performance by a group from Lahore. The participants enjoyed traditional dances of Chitral, Gilgit and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa while performance of violinist Sofija from Serbia enthralled the tourists.

Four-star hotel to be launched in Hunza

Hashoo Group will soon launch PC Legacy hotel in Hunza, according to a press release issued here on Thursday 25 Feb.

Located in the scenic valley of Nasirabad, Hunza, it will be the second hotel by Hashoo Group in its recently introduced brand of hotels by the name of PC Legacy, following PC Legacy Naran.

The brand "PC Legacy" is a new chain of four-star hotels by Hashoo Group, who already owns and operates Pearl Continental, Marriott and Hotel One across the country.

PC Legacy will bridge the gap for travellers between the five-star and the select service hotels. In this connection, an agreement was signed between Pakistan Services and Linked International Pvt at Islamabad Marriott Hotel.

The agreement was signed by Haseeb Gardezi, the chief operating officer of hospitality division at Hashoo Group, and Mehboob Bhulani of Linked International Pvt.

"In line with the prime minister's vision, our goal is to develop sustainable infrastructure of hotels in Northern Pakistan. We plan to promote domestic tourism by offering state-of-the-art travel and lodging facilities to visitors at the most beautiful destinations of Pakistan. Our focus is, and will always remain, Pakistan," said Murtaza Hashwani, the deputy chairman and CEO of Hashoo Group.

Faisal Sawani, the director of Linked International, said that they were proud to partner with such a prestigious group of hotels that had decades of hospitality management experience. "We are very confident that this project will be a huge success," he added.

Opening of this four-star hotel will not only boost economic activities in the area but will also provide prospects for domestic employment.

Qasim Jafri takes over as Avari Hotels Cluster GM



Avari Hotels has acquired the services of renowned hotelier Mr. Qasim Jafri, who comes with 35 years of industry experience. He has taken charge of Avari Hotel Lahore, Avari Xpress Gulberg and Avari Xpress Faisalabad as the Cluster General Manager.

Jafri is a Cornell University Alumni who speaks five languages, also attended hotel schools in Europe and Asia. He is a seasoned professional who has worked with known hotel chains in Europe, Middle East, Canada and Pakistan, namely; Hilton International, Marriot International, Pearl Continental and Avari Hotels International.

He was General Manager of various 5-star hotels around the world and also Director Hospitality Division of Orient Group, CEO Emporium Hospitality and CEO of Nishat Hotels and Properties. He is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC). He is also on the steering committee of the World Bank funded programme of tourism uplift in Punjab and Member Foreign Minister's Core Group on Cultural Diplomacy.

Jafri is a man of multiple passions like preservation and promotion of poetry, literature, music, environment and heritage. He is also President of the Board of Governors of Goethe Institute, Lahore and a member of the Board of Directors of Dabistan-e-Iqbal, Faiz Foundation and life member of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan.



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TO BE FRANK

By: Dr. S. M. Moin Qureshi

Population - more or less?

In America, when a teacher asked the class in what part of the world the most ignorant people were to be found, a small boy volunteered quickly, "In New York, sir." The teacher was amazed, and questioned the lad as to where he had obtained such information. "Well," the student replied, "the geography says that's where population is the most dense."

For quite too long now, Western nations have been linking population growth with ignorance. The most significant manifestation of this linkage can be seen in African countries. Western intellectuals, social reformers, politicians and economic planners have been vehemently pleading for keeping the population to the bare minimum level. Toynbee was one of the staunchest supporters of birth control. According to him, maximum welfare, not maximum population, was the human objective. He went on to ridicule, "We have been God-like in our planned breeding of the domesticated plants and animals, but we have been rabbit-like in our unplanned breeding of ourselves." Another scholar (Jack Rock) reasoned, "A society which practices death control must, at the same time, practice birth control."

However, the Western concept that contraception should be used on every "conceivable" occasion has backfired. Even, otherwise, somebody should tell the proponents of birth control that you should have thought of all this before you were born. Everybody in favour of birth control has already been born. Now the efforts of containing the growth rate have started bearing 'fruit' in the form of acute dearth of manpower in Western countries. Those at the helm of affairs are bewildered as to who, if the preset trend continues, will run industries, development projects, atomic plants, etc.

Germans have already stopped having children and the number of couples opting for a childless life is rising every year to the consternation of politician and employers in the Euro zone's biggest economy.



A published report of UN predicts that Germany's population is set to pummel from 82 million to 70.8 million by 2050. A study by Germany's federal institute for demographic research showed that 26 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women aged between 20 and 39 do not want to start a family, a sharp rise since 1992 when the figures were of 12 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. Forty per cent of university-educated women of childbearing age are without a child in Germany, which is faced with the problem of rapidly ageing population.

Faced with the same-problem, France has 'deregulated' its population policy. Hence, anyone (male or female) who takes one year's leave without pay subsequent to the birth of his/her third child would be paid an allowance equivalent to 916 dollars a month. The idea is to induce couples to remain indoors for the sake of 'common weal of society. Canada too £S working on a similar policy day providing gifts in various forms to the couples who have more than two children. Privately also, these couples receive valuable presents besides widespread publicity on radio/TV.

In Asia, the craze of economic development has plagued the Japanese society. An entire generation born there during the 1970s is still mostly childless. Average age being steadily increased, that country is also faced with the shortage of

adult pupation to maintain the level of economic prosperity. The desirable birth rate for Japanese has now been suggested as 2.1 which, in most other (over-populated) Asian countries, is taken as high. The same is true of Singapore, which has the highest per capita income in the region.

In China, where population once used to be the greatest asset of the country, one-family-one-child formula was strictly enforced over the decades. The result was that the couples went on abortion rampage once the ultrasound confirmed that the baby in the mother's womb was a girl. This disturbed the gender proportion in that country with only 100 girls for every 119 boys. The government had to react by imposing ban on gender-related abortions.

This is not to suggest that the poverty-stricken African countries and under-developed Asian countries should give up their population planning programmes. In fact, countries like Pakistan are hit by population explosion. Every socio-economic problem in these countries traces its origin in uncontrolled births. Overpopulation is virtually the root cause of every evil in these countries. What (late) President Lyndon B. Johnson of America said of his country in fact applies to South Asian countries in to-to: "Five dollars invested in population control is worth one hundred dollars invested in economic growth." Yet, as some one said, "We all worry about the population explosion -but we don't worry about it at the right time."

In Kolkata (former Calcutta), a man asked an auto rickshaw driver to take him across the town to the west side. Off the rickshaw driver flew, darting into busy traffic, making precarious turns and changing lanes a dozen times a minute.

"Please keep the vehicle under control," the passenger pleaded adding, "I have ten children at home."

Answered the driver, "You have ten children and you're advising me to control?"



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