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CONTENTS

New
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Court rejects plea against Pakistan in Reko Dig case	06
UAE Airlines trim Pakistan capacity until mid-June	08
CAA makes coronavirus test mandatory for diplomats, families	09
PIA resumes flight operations to Zhob	09
Wow: Qatar Airways is the largest air cargo operator	10
Air traffic control students from Saudi Arabia graduate in New Zealand	10
First cruise ship sails through Venice since start of pandemic	12
GulfAir to resume services to Alexandria and Sharm El Sheikh	12
Airbus delivers the 100th A400M	13
Canada extends India, Pakistan flight ban over pandemic	15
TCS launches first TIR pilot to Central Asia	15
European Travel and Tourism Sector launches "Destination Summer" campaign	16
United Airlines plans to be flying supersonic with Boom by the end of the decade	17
AirSial Starts flights to Quetta	14
Shandong Airlines implements Sabre's fares management solution	23
Qatar Airways to resume Phuket flights on July 1	24
Fading hopes of air crash victims	25
PIA Air Safari	26
Emirates Sky Cargo awards Seagold (private) Ltd.	27
SIAL holds groundbreaking ceremony of a 5- star hotel held	29
Gwadar Port, Free Zone to generate \$10bn activities yearly: Asim	30
Sialkot-a city with many feathers in its cap	32
Govt projects \$28bn export target for Fy22	33
The teen who takes his country to the top	36
New doppler weather radar activated in Karachi	37
EU gears up to reopen borders to vaccinated travelers	39
Govt takes possession of ancestral homes of Raj Kapoor, DilipKumar	40
Kuwait agrees to lift ban on visas for Pakistanis	40
Rare Persian leopard pair spotted in Balochistan	41
Over 70pc of snow leopard habitat in 12 range states remains unexplored:	43
IN ALIGHTER VEIN	45



10



12



36

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Court rejects plea against Pakistan in Reko Dig case

The High Court of Justice in the British Virgin Islands (BVI) on Tuesday 25 May ruled in favour of Pakistan in a case initiated by Tethyan Copper Company (TCC) for attachment of Pakistan's major assets abroad, including two PIA hotels in New York and Paris, in the Reko Dig international arbitration.

"Pakistan has won the BVI case initiated by TCC to enforce the ICSID award," stated the International Disputes Unit (IDU), housed inside the attorney general office on the Supreme Court premises, also explaining that all ex-parte orders obtained by TCC earlier have been set aside.

The TCC had initiated the dispute for the enforcement of July 12, 2019, \$5.97 billion award against Pakistan by the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) in the Reko Dig litigation.

"A short while ago judgement was announced by BVI High Court," Attorney General for Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan said while talking to media. He said it was a great legal victory for Pakistan in general and the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) in particular.

Explaining, the AGP stated that all the orders passed against PIA earlier now have been recalled by the BVI High Court besides the receiver appointed has been removed from the Roosevelt Hotel, New York, and the Scribe Hotel, Paris. The cost of litigation was also awarded.

On Dec 16, 2020 the BVI High Court through its ex-parte order had attached the assets belonging to the Pakistan International Airlines Investment Limited (PIAIL) including company's interests in two hotels, namely Roosevelt Hotel in Manhattan, New York, and the Scribe Hotel in Central Paris as well as froze 40 per cent interest of the PIA in a third entity, Minhal Incorporated. The BVI court in its Dec 16 order had also appointed the receiver on an interim basis.

The IDU stated that the BVI high court had ruled that it had no jurisdiction to decide the matter besides the receiver appointed had been discharged with immediate effect.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has also appreciated and lauded the efforts of the international disputes unit and the office of the AGP that helped securing a great victory for Pakistan.

The IDU said the provisional charging order against PIA's BVI companies was also set aside entirely besides TCC was ordered to pay costs of the present proceedings. Thus, the attempt



dispute between Pakistan and TCC that had claimed \$8.5 billion for rejecting latter's application by the mining authority of Balochistan for the multimillion dollar mining lease in the

province in 2011.

Earlier, Pakistan had taken the plea before World Bank's ICSID that the agreement/mining licence at the Reko Dig was procured through corrupt means and therefore, the claimant (TCC) could not ask for damages.

TCC is a 50-50 joint venture of Barrick Gold Corporation of Australia and Antofagasta PLC of Chile, whereas the Reko Dig district in the Balochistan province of Pakistan is famed for its mineral wealth, including gold and copper.

The ICSID tribunal had taken up the

to "steal" Roosevelt and Scribe hotels had been frustrated, the dispute unit added.

The information about the attachment proceedings and the order of the high court of justice of BVI was communicated to Pakistan on Dec 23, 2020.

Earlier, the AGP office had stated that Pakistan would vigorously pursue proceedings initiated by TCC in any jurisdiction and that the government reaffirmed its commitment of protecting national assets wherever they may be located.



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UAE Airlines trim Pakistan capacity until mid-June

UAE airlines are scaling back flights to Pakistan as that country continues to limit the number of inbound international passengers. The Pakistani Government began to cap arrival numbers in May in an attempt to halt the spread of COVID-19. With the arrivals cap now extended into mid-June, airlines are continuing to cancel their flights into Pakistan.



With borders closed and arrivals caps in place, UAE airlines are cutting capacity into Pakistan.

Pakistan limits arrivals in an attempt to curb COVID-19

On May 1, Pakistan's National Command and Operation Centre ordered an 80% reduction in international inbound arrivals. At the same time, Pakistan also put a range of testing and quarantine protocols in place. That order was valid until May 20. Major UAE airlines, including Etihad and Emirates, quickly moved to cancel flights. In total, the number of international flights arriving into Pakistan dropped from 590 to 123 a week.

The Pakistani Government later altered the arrivals cap to 50% of normal international arrivals. But they also extended the order until June 15. Not helping matters for the Gulf-based airlines, the UAE banned entry to travelers from Pakistan in mid-May. That ban remains in place until June 30.

COVID-19 remains an ongoing concern in Pakistan. The National



Emirates is just one Gulf-based airline with a big presence in Pakistan.

Command and Operation Centre reported 1,843 new COVID-19 cases and 80 deaths on Wednesday. The vaccination rollout, while underway, has been sluggish.

Pakistan an important market for Gulf airlines

Pakistan is an important market for Gulf-based airlines. Abu Dhabi-based Etihad has been flying to both Lahore and Islamabad. Doha-based Qatar Airways normally flies to Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, and Peshawar. Dubai-based juggernaut airline Emirates flies to Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Sialkot, and Peshawar. Bahrain-based Gulf Air normally flies to Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Sialkot, Multan, Faisalabad, and Peshawar in Pakistan. Low-cost carrier flydubai has been flying to Faisalabad, Multan, Karachi, Sialkot, and Quetta.

In response to the difficulties of traveling between the UAE and Pakistan, airlines are extending cancellations and



flydubai has canceled all of its Pakistan flights until at least mid-June.

scaling back their schedules. Dubai-based flydubai canceled all their Pakistan flights until at least June 15. Qatar Airways was flying 56 times a week into their various Pakistani destinations. The airline has reduced that to around 12 flights a week. The Gulf's biggest airline, Emirates, is no longer flying in passengers from Pakistan to Dubai. Gulf Air was flying up to 35 times a week between Bahrain and its destinations in Pakistan. Now, Gulf Air is flying around eight flights a week into Pakistan. Etihad has slashed its Pakistan flights from 30 plus a week to six.

"The Pakistani government has issued updated travel directives extending the limit on the number of international passengers allowed to travel to Pakistan. As a result, the temporary reduction of Etihad Airways passenger flights between Abu Dhabi and Pakistan will continue

until June 15 and may be extended," said Etihad Airways in a statement.

"This is an evolving situation, and we will update guests as more information becomes available."

Not just Gulf carriers canceling flights into Pakistan

But it's not only the Gulf airlines reducing their services into Pakistan. As Pakistan grapples with COVID-19, other countries are also closing their airports to travelers from Pakistan. That results in airlines flying those routes axing many of their flights.

Turkish Airlines and Pegasus Airlines have both dramatically curtailed their flying into Pakistan recently. Thai Airways has also reduced their flights into Pakistan by around 80%. With Pakistan not expected to get on top of COVID-19 anytime soon, passengers can expect the cancellations across various airlines to continue.

Rs600 levy on domestic flights reinstated

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has decided to reinstate the Rs600 aerodrome and air navigation facility charge on domestic flights. CAA spokesman Saad Bin Ayub said the authority had levied the charge for domestic flights on May 15, 2019, for two years to facilitate aviation growth in Pakistan.

He said the same was reinstated on May 5, 2021. But after airline operators expressed their inability to implement the charge on a short notice, the CAA extended the date to May 21, 2021.

Of the Rs600, the CAA will charge Rs500 as the embarkation and Rs100 as the security fee. All airlines operating domestic flights have been informed by the CAA to collect the charge from customers at the time of booking a ticket.

Meanwhile, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has started two weekly flights from Karachi to Zhob and the first flight departed for Zhob recently, PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said.

A ceremony was held at Jinnah International Airport Karachi before the departure of the flight. PIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Air Marshal Arshad Malik said it was a long-standing demand of Karachiites and the business community to start flights to Zhob.

The Karachi-Zhob flights will be operated every Tuesday and Friday, the spokesman said.

CAA makes coronavirus test mandatory for diplomats, families



The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has made the Covid-19 test mandatory for diplomats, diplomatic staff and their families traveling to Pakistan.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has made the Covid-19 test mandatory for diplomats, diplomatic staff and their families traveling to Pakistan.

They would also undergo a rapid antigen test (RAT) upon arrival in the country.

In case of a positive RAT result, the diplomats will be required to undergo mandatory indoor quarantine in their respective embassies or home.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will ensure the implementation of the standard operating procedures (SOPs) pertaining to the home quarantine.

Following the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) notification regarding travel and quarantine restrictions for diplomats, CAA Director Air Transport stated that diplomats, diplomatic staff and their families are bound to carry a negative Covid-19 PCR test certification conducted within 72 hours prior to commencement of their travel to Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the CAA has also specified designated laboratories for Covid-19 testing for inbound passengers from UAE and Bahrain.

Based on input from the Pakistan missions in UAE and Bahrain, all airlines operating to and from Pakistan have been directed to accept negative Covid-19 PCR tests conducted by the specified laboratories only.

All the airline operators have been directed to accept only those passengers holding valid negative PCR test results from a designated laboratory for travel to Pakistan.

The CAA has specified 10 laboratories in Abu Dhabi and Al-Ain, seven laboratories in Ras Al Khaimah, seven in Sharjah, eight in Fujairah, five in Ajman, four in Umm Al Quwain and 11 in Bahrain.

The CAA has already issued a fresh advisory extending the restrictions on

inbound flights to Pakistan and curtailing them by 80pc until June 15.

CAA spokesman Saad bin Ayub said a notification in this regard was issued by the department of air transportation recently.

He said domestic flights will be limited to 20pc but an additional 30pc will be allowed to carry cargo.

And permission for 50pc of foreign flights from Pakistan has also been extended till June 15, he said.

All airlines/operators shall be required to adhere to the applicable respective standard operating procedures (SOPs) issued from time to time, he added.

PIA resumes flight operation to Zhob

The national flag carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Tuesday 18 May resumed its domestic flights to Zhob, making Zhob airport functional after a gap of three years.

The first ATR flight PK-528 carrying 36 passengers, which operated from Karachi International Airport, landed at Zhob airport on Tuesday 18 May.

Balochistan Minister for Livestock Mitha Khan Kakar, PIA general manager Balochistan Bilal Afzal, Station Manager Zhob airport Abdul Shakoor, Assistant Commissioner Zhob Rohana Kakar and other officials received the passengers.

The PIA officials said that initially two flights would operate on the Karachi-Zhob and Zhob-Karachi route on a weekly basis every Tuesday and Friday. They said PIA had resumed the flight operations to facilitate the people of Zhob, who were running their businesses or working in Gulf states. One-way fare of Karachi-Zhob has been fixed at Rs6,500.

Earlier, the PIA ran its flights between Quetta-Zhob-Dera Ismail Khan and Peshawar.

However, later the flights were suspended for unknown reasons.

The flight that left for Karachi from Zhob airport carried 41 passengers.

On the occasion, Mr Kakar said the PIA decision would benefit people of Zhob who were doing their businesses or working in Gulf states.

He expressed the hope that PIA and other airlines would also start their flights for Quetta-Zhob-Peshawar sector.

PIA operates direct flight from Karachi-Skardu to promote tourism



A flight arrives at Skardu Airport from Karachi as another plane departs for Islamabad.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has started direct flights from Karachi to Skardu to promote tourism in Gilgit-Baltistan.

The first PIA Airbus-320 with 178 passengers and eight crew members landed at the Skardu Airport on Monday 24 May.

The airline will operate two weekly flights from Karachi to Skardu.

Earlier on April 7, the national carrier had launched direct flight operation from Lahore to Skardu twice a week.

In a press release, GB Governor Raja Jalal Hussain Maqpoon said the direct flights from Karachi to Skardu had been launched with a view to promoting tourism in the region and facilitating the local people. He said the federal government was fully cooperating to develop the tourism sector in GB.

He said international flights would also be launched from Gilgit-Baltistan in near future, which would further boost the region's tourism sector.

"In collaboration with the federal and provincial governments, practical steps are also being taken to make the Skardu Airport an all-weather and international airport," he said.

Separately, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has issued TPRI (Tourism Promotion and Regional Integration) licence to a newly-launched private airline named North Air in order to boost tourism in the region, according to a press release.

The private airline will operate flights between Islamabad and Gilgit, Islamabad-Skardu, Islamabad-Chitral and Islamabad-Gwadar.

Wow: Qatar Airways is the largest air cargo operator

In an exclusive interview with Simple Flying recently, Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker revealed the airline is now the largest cargo operator in the world. This comes after the airline flew through the pandemic, making cargo the key focus. Let's find out more about how Qatar Airways has leaped ahead of other dedicated cargo airline giants.



One of the reasons Qatar sustained flying through the pandemic was by filling aircraft bellies with cargo.

Freight capacity data in this article is from IATA's World Air Transport Statistics and Air Cargo News. Data for 2020's cargo capacity will be available by IATA in mid-July.

Number one

Qatar Airways' rise to the top of the cargo market has been a meteoric one. The airline has been growing its capacity drastically since 2014, seeing a growth of 117% in terms of scheduled FTKs (freight tonne-kilometers). From 5,997 FTKs in 2014 to 13,024 FTKs in 2019, no other airline has seen such sustained growth at this scale.

However, 2020 marked another milestone for Qatar Airways: it has become the world's largest cargo operator. Speaking in an exclusive interview with Simple Flying, CEO Akbar Al Baker confirmed that Qatar Airways is currently the world's largest cargo operator, and by quite a margin.



Qatar Airways added three new 777Fs at the end of last year to bolster freight capacity. Photo: Qatar Airways During the interview, Mr. Al Baker said.

Air traffic control students from Saudi Arabia graduate in New Zealand



Air traffic control students from Saudi Arabia graduate in New Zealand.

The eighth cohort of General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) students from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has graduated from air traffic control (ATC) training with Airways International, 11 years after the first group to arrive in New Zealand completed their training.

GACA and Airways celebrated this milestone on Thursday 3 June, as 34 students attended their graduation ceremony in Palmerston North following two years of study in New Zealand. Almost 200 students from Saudi Arabia have completed ATC training with Airways since the first cohort landed in New Zealand in 2009.

The graduates included four female students the first Saudi Arabian females to train as air traffic controllers outside their own country. Saudi Air Navigation Services (SANS) will employ the graduates on their return to Saudi Arabia and are prioritising hiring women in the ATC profession, with the aim to extend female employment and empowerment. The organisation is offering theoretical and practical ATC training to 80 women per year to prepare them for work in the ATC sector the first cohort of female ATCs started work in Jeddah in March 2019.

HatoonAlotaibi, 21, is one of the female students to graduate with Airways. "It has been such a privilege to be one of the first women from Saudi Arabia to be offered this opportunity, I feel very lucky and I'm so proud to be one of the girls!" Hatoon says.

The graduation marks the students' successful completion of a two-year

scholarship provided by the Ministry of Education and GACA in Saudi Arabia. The students spent the first 12 months studying English at Kaplan International College, Auckland University of Technology and the Worldwide School of English, then completed a 12-month ATC training programme with Airways at its Palmerston North training centre.

AbdulrahmanAlsuhaibani, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to New Zealand attended the graduation ceremony.

Airways International Ltd CEO Sharon Cooke says: "We congratulate the graduates on the successful completion of their ATC training programme. We're delighted to have partnered with GACA for the past 11 years to deliver ATC training to almost 200 students at our training facilities in New Zealand, and we look forward to continuing to support them in their future careers as Airways Training alumni."

The Airways scholarship gave the Saudi Arabian students a unique opportunity to live and study in New Zealand on their journey to become licensed air traffic controllers. The students stayed with local homestay families or in flats during their studies and were immersed in the culture and lifestyle of New Zealand during their stay.

Qatar Airways to offer new United States

Qatar Airways' resumption of four-weekly Atlanta flights marks the full return of the airline's pre-pandemic United States network.

The carrier now offered 12 destinations, two more than it operated before Covid-19.

The airline will also be increasing frequencies to Boston, Miami, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Seattle offering more flexible travel options for its passengers with more than 85 weekly flights across the United States.

Qatar Airways Group chief executive, Akbar Al Baker, said: "Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Qatar Airways has remained committed to its passengers and trade partners in the United States, maintaining continuous services while rebuilding its United States network and launching two new destinations - San Francisco and Seattle.

"We have also strengthened our presence in the United States through strategic partnerships with Alaska Airlines, American Airlines and JetBlue that have enabled us to connect to more points in the United States than any other airline, providing travellers the most convenient way to travel internationally this summer."

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First cruise ship sails through Venice since start of pandemic



CRUISE ship MSC Orchestra arrives in Venice despite protests calling for an end to cruises passing through the lagoon city.

Early risers in Venice were surprised on Thursday 3 June to see a cruise ship nosing down the Giudecca canal for the first time since the start of the pandemic, despite repeated government pledges to reroute such huge vessels due to safety and environmental concerns.

The 92,409-ton MSC Orchestra passed through the basin in front of St. Marks Canal around 6am under tugboat and port authority escort, ahead of the first post-pandemic cruise ship departure from Venice, scheduled.

Its arrival comes two years and a day after the MSC Opera struck a dock and a tourist river boat in the same canal, an event that underlined safety concerns among anti-cruise ship campaigners.

Protests are amping up against the renewal of cruise traffic, just 2 months after Italy's culture minister, Dario Franceschini, vowed a definitive stop to the passage of big ships through the heart of the city. They include an open letter by the Venice Heritage non-profit organisation, signed by celebrities including musician Mick Jagger, actress Tilda Swinton, filmmaker Wes Anderson and director Francis Ford Coppola.

Venice is suffering, and we, citizens of the world, cannot remain deaf to her cries, read the open letter addressed to Italian officials including Premier Mario Draghi, members of his Cabinet, the Venice mayor and the Veneto governor.

Gulf Air to resume services to Alexandria and Sharm El Sheikh



Gulf Air will return to Alexandria and Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt, this summer.

Both seasonal destinations will be served by the airline's new Airbus A321neoLR with 2 weekly flights each starting from 30 June until 25 September 2021.

Captain Waleed Abdul Hameed Al Alawi, acting chief executive officer at Gulf Air said: "We are proudly watching our network grow further with the addition of new destinations and welcoming back routes to cater to the summer traffic. Our passengers have been through this journey with us as we navigated 2020 as one of the few airlines flying at the peak of the pandemic. Today, we are one of the first airlines in the world to have announced that 100% of our crew are vaccinated, provided all our passengers complimentary COVID-19 insurance as well as to have initiated the IATA Travel Pass which we launched on our flights to London, Athens, and Singapore."

US ends 'open skies' accord with Russia

US President Joe Biden's administration announced on Friday 28 May it has decided not to return to the Open Skies Treaty, which Donald Trump left, saying Russia had violated the accord.

The post-Cold War treaty was meant to build trust by allowing the two powers and their allies to monitor one another's airspace.

Trump left the accord in November citing Russian violations of it. "The United States regrets that the Treaty on Open Skies has been undermined by Russia's violations," a State Department spokesman said.

"In concluding its review of the treaty, the United States therefore does not intend to seek to rejoin it, given Russia's failure to take any actions to return to compliance," the spokesperson said. "Further, Russia's

behaviour, including its recent actions with respect to Ukraine, is not that of a partner committed to confidence-building."

Moscow announced in mid-January it would leave the treaty, saying there was no progress in making it work in light of the US withdrawal. Russian lawmakers on May 19 voted to uphold Moscow's exit from the accord.

But the government of President Vladimir Putin said it was prepared to honour the accord if the Americans proposed a "constructive solution".

Heathrow showcases sustainable aviation fuel

Heathrow has incorporated sustainable aviation fuel into its operations ahead of the G7 Summit.

Working alongside Vitol Aviation and Neste MY Sustainable Aviation Fuel, the fuel will be incorporated into the main fuel supply today, and blended to use across flights operating at Heathrow over the next few days.

While the fuel supply may be comparatively small - equivalent to fuelling five-to-ten short haul flights this commercial delivery will establish proof of concept at the largest airport in the UK.

Achieving this milestone is a critical first step in demonstrating to government that the technology will work in reducing carbon from aviation so long as the correct policy framework to incentivise take up at scale is achieved.

The first delivery of SAF at Heathrow in June this year is a pivotal and historic moment.

The type of SAF being used is called HEFA (Hydrotreated Esters and Fatty Acids) which can be made from vegetable oils, waste oils or fats.

The HEFA being used at Heathrow is made from waste (such as used cooking oil), residues (such as fish fat waste from the food processing industry) and sustainably sourced vegetable oils.

Heathrow chief executive, John Holland-Kaye said: "We are delighted that Heathrow is the first UK major airport to successfully incorporate sustainable aviation fuels into its operation.

"As we get ready to welcome the world to the G7, we can demonstrate how this technology can significantly cut carbon from aviation, whilst protecting its benefits.

"The UK government now has an opportunity to create a new British growth industry by backing sustainable aviation fuel production and also be leaders in the race to a net zero 2050.

Airbus delivers the 100th A400M



Airbus has reached 100 A400M deliveries with MSN111, the tenth A400M for the Spanish Air Force. The aircraft performed its ferry flight on 24th May ...

The milestone aircraft includes all new certified capabilities.

The global fleet has reached 100,000 flight hours.

Known as MSN111 this is the tenth A400M for the Spanish Air Force.

Airbus has reached 100 A400M deliveries with MSN111, the tenth A400M for the Spanish Air Force. The aircraft performed its ferry flight on 24th May from Seville to Zaragoza, where the Spanish A400M fleet is based.

In the same week, the A400M global fleet also achieved the 100,000 flight-hours landmark performing missions worldwide for all eight customer nations.

All A400M operators have been able to operate the aircraft intensively for Covid-19 emergency response missions, as well as conduct joint, collaborative operations.

These milestones clearly demonstrate the maturity of the A400M programme on all fronts.

New capabilities

Recently the A400M successfully conducted a major helicopter air-to-air refuelling certification flight test campaign in coordination with the DGA (French Directorate General of Armaments), completing the majority of its certification objectives, including the first simultaneous refueling of two helicopters.

The A400M is already able to drop up to 116 paratroopers, via simultaneous dispatch from the side doors with automatic parachute opening, or from the ramp with automatic parachute opening or in freefall, day and night. Recent tests were completed in Spain, in collaboration with the UK Royal Air Force parachute test team, to expand up to 25,000 feet (7,600 metres) for automatic parachute opening - and up to 38,000ft (11,582 metres) for free fall.

The A400M also completed additional tests to expand its air drop capability, including multiple platforms with parachute extraction (23 tonnes). France and Spain participated in these flights. Another way to deliver cargo on austere airstrips

without handling equipment was also certified: Combat offload of up to 19 tonnes of pallets (one pass) or 25 tonnes (two passes) on paved or unpaved airstrips.

The A400M also achieved a new decisive milestone after the certification flights of its Automatic Low Level Flight capability for Instrumental Meteorological Conditions (IMC). Using navigation systems and terrain databases, without the need of a terrain-following radar, this is a first for a military transport aircraft. This makes the aircraft less detectable in hostile areas and less susceptible to threats while conducting operations in hostile environments.

In operation

In terms of collaborative missions, the Spanish Air Force supported the French Armée de l'Air in the transport of a Caracal helicopter from Cazaux (France) to Tucson (USA), using a Spanish A400M. The flight was used by CLAEX (Spanish Logistics Center for Armament and Experimentation) and CECTA (Air Transport Cargo Evaluation Cell) to validate the loading process on Spanish A400Ms.

Key military missions last year included the delivery of almost 40 tonnes of food, water, fuel and ammunition by a single French A400M to troops based in the Sahel region of Africa, the first A400M to airdrop supplies in a country outside of Europe.

In addition, Germany became the first A400M customer to use the A400M as a tanker in real missions providing support in the "Counter Daesh" operation in Jordan.

Life-saving medevac missions during COVID-19

2020 and 2021 also saw the use of the A400M in civil emergency response roles during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, not least for civil medical evacuation (medevac) duties - with Airbus providing critical support for air force operators as well as for transporting key medical relief

supplies. The versatility of the aircraft also allowed a rapid conversion to medevac configuration, where installed critical care modules provided airborne intensive care units.

With the maturity, versatility and unique capabilities proven in operations all around the world, A400M is proving to be a game changer for military airlift and humanitarian missions in the 21st century.

British Airways to trial IATA travel pass



©BA is trialing IATA Travel Pass, the digital travel solution

British Airways will begin trialing digital travel solution, IATA Travel Pass, on flights from Heathrow to Geneva and Zurich in Switzerland, from June 1.

The app can be downloaded onto a mobile device directly from the app store. Once downloaded, customers will create a secure account and will be presented with the entry requirements for their destination. British Airways' customers can then book a Covid-19 test with an approved provider and the results will be automatically uploaded into the app by the laboratory.

The app then checks that a customer meets the entry requirements for their destination and will then notify the customer to let them know that they are ready to travel. The airline's parent company, International Airlines Group (IAG), has been working closely with IATA to co-develop the app that is now being successfully piloted by other global airlines, including British Airways' sister airline Iberia.

British Airways is also currently trialing digital travel app, VeriFLY, on routes to the U.S., France, Ireland, Barbados, Bahamas and Canada, as well as all inbound international flights. Once a customer has had their travel documentation certified through the app, they will be able to check-in through either ba.com or the British Airways app and download their boarding pass before arriving at the airport.

AirSial starts flights to Quetta

After a half year of operations, AirSial is starting its flights from Karachi to Quetta and Islamabad to Quetta on 23rd June. The airlines will offer new three weekly flights from Pakistan's major cities Karachi to Quetta and three flights from Islamabad to the provincial capital of Baluchistan, Quetta. The airlines already operates to and from five major cities i.e., Karachi-Islamabad, Karachi-Lahore Karachi-Peshawar, and Karachi-Sialkot. AirSial expanding its network in Pakistan even in COVID-related challenges.

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 and more, destinations 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 about 12 to13 flights daily e.i Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Sialkot. The airlines also has plan to operate flights from Karachi to Multan and other cities in Pakistan.

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

AirSial also has entered into collaboration with Unilever to offer a 'personal care pouch' to its passengers in AirSial flights to all the destinations.



Canada extends India, Pakistan flight ban over pandemic



A Canadian ban on direct passenger flights from India and Pakistan after increased Covid-19 cases were detected in travellers arriving from these countries was extended on Friday until June 21.

A Canadian ban on direct passenger flights from India and Pakistan after increased Covid-19 cases were detected in travellers arriving from these countries was extended on Friday May 21 until June 21.

“Our battle against Covid-19 continues,” Transportation Minister Omar Alghabra told a news conference.

“On April 22 Transport Canada issued a notice to ban all direct commercial and private passenger flights from India and Pakistan for 30 days based on public health advice to reduce the importation risk of Covid-19 and its variants,” he said. “We are now extending these measures to June 21.”

The minister noted a “significant reduction” in the number of positive Covid-19 cases arriving on international flights of late.

But “based on public health advice,” he said, “this is not the right time to consider loosening any border control measures.”

India, which has been undergoing an alarming surge blamed on a “double mutant” variant and super-spreader events, has recorded more than 26 million Covid-19 cases.

Last month, Ottawa said only 1.8 per cent of travellers to Canada had tested positive for coronavirus, but while India accounted for 20pc of air travel to Canada, more than half of all positive tests at the border were from flights arriving from the country.

Similar high numbers were also linked to Pakistan.

All travellers to Canada are subject to a mandatory 14-day quarantine. They must also present a negative Covid-19 test before boarding an international flight, and another upon arrival in Canada.

Etihad sign socially responsible MoU



Etihad Airways has become the first airline to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme.

The MOU was signed by Dr Nadia Bastaki, vice president medical services, corporate social responsibility, Etihad Aviation Group, and ToilyKurbanov, executive coordinator, UNV, remotely in Abu Dhabi.

The collaboration between the two entities will strengthen volunteering globally and expand the reach to customers of Etihad.

UNV supports volunteering globally and in the Arab countries and aims to engage Etihad volunteers in advocacy events, increase awareness of volunteering opportunities, and accelerate the Sustainable Development Goals in the “Leave no one behind” agenda.

In addition, Etihad will promote UNV and activities across Etihad's own channels, including Etihad Guest loyalty programme to encourage members to donate their Etihad Guest Miles in support of UNV.

Dr Nadia Bastaki, vice president medical services and corporate social responsibility, Etihad Aviation Group, said: “Etihad is proud to be the first airline to partner with UN Volunteers, to support their talent pool and global initiatives. Etihad volunteers will have the chance to participate in the programme offering their unique skills and experience, and further extend Etihad's humanitarian footprint across the world. Furthermore, we're pleased to be able to offer our loyal Etihad Guest members the opportunity to make a significant contribution by donating their Etihad Guest Miles.”

TCS launches first TIR pilot to Central Asia

For the first time in Pakistan's history, a TCS truck carrying a commercial consignment travelled from Pakistan to Uzbekistan via Afghanistan, a press release said.

This landmark achievement was led by TCS in collaboration with the governments of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan Regional Economic Integration Activity (PREIA), the statement said.

The pilot shipment was the first in a series of five planned trial runs between Pakistan and Central Asia. PREIA provided technical and financial support for the pilot project involving TCS.

Commenting on this historic milestone, Khalid Awan, Chairman TCS, said, “In today's world, trade moves through borders under a global system. Pakistan has entered that system now and TCS is the first Pakistani company to do so.”

“Regional trade is very important for our region. We have very strong ties with countries to our north, such as China and Central Asian Republics. Pakistan has enjoyed a traditional trade relationship with them and it has a very strong future potential,” he added.

It is the first successful international trucking pilot project. The purpose of Pilot runs is to physically check out routes and the Customs Interface Systems set up by member states. Most Regional countries including Afghanistan are now members of this global trade system. TCS is the first and so far the only TIR accredited operator in Pakistan.

The shipment was also compliant with the UN's 'Transports Internationaux Routiers' Convention, an international customs transit system that facilitates trade by expediting border checks between countries.

European Travel and Tourism Sector launches "Destination Summer" campaign

Four leading industry associations are mobilizing employees and individual travellers to urge policy-makers to coordinate and lift travel restrictions across Europe.

Brussels As EU countries review the updated European Commission proposal to coordinate the easing of travel restrictions across Europe, Airlines For Europe (A4E), Airports Council International Europe (ACIEUROPE), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), and the European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC) have together launched Destination Summer, with the goal of working with European Union and national policymakers to adopt a harmonised approach for the lifting of travel restrictions enabling the safe and smooth resumption of free movement for European citizens.

Thanks to ongoing vaccination campaigns across Europe, growing scientific evidence around the efficacy of vaccines, increased testing capacities, and improvements in the epidemiological situation, the prerequisites are now in place to enable the reopening of travel and tourism in a coordinated manner that is consistent with health measures and avoids unfair discrimination between vaccinated/non-vaccinated travellers.

The coalition is calling for a common European approach based on:

The restoration of freedom of movement in the EU, notably via the swift implementation of the EU Digital COVID Certificate;

The roll-out of affordable, reliable and rapid EU testing capabilities, as needed, that allow for the end of blanket quarantines and make use of the growing availability of antigen tests;

A push for a progressive resumption of non-essential international travel through a regular revision of the 'EU White List' -- and by allowing entry into the EU for travellers coming from third-countries with a good epidemiological situation, and for those inoculated with EU-authorized vaccines.

The European travel and tourism sector, represented by the four associations, is encouraging European citizens wanting to travel again, aviation, travel and tourism companies, their employees and partners, to join the #destinationsummer campaign. This means sharing your need and desire to travel again whilst following clear rules and official information on the safe and responsible ways to do so. For more



Supporting the Safe Reopening of European Borders

information, visit www.destinationsummer.eu

"Freedom of movement is a core European principle and citizens need to be able to move both freely and safely. After 15 months of lockdowns and travel restrictions, it's time to reunite travellers in Europe. We need to see a coordinated easing of restrictions. Our campaign urges policy-makers to recognise the speedy, positive impact of vaccinations and scientific knowledge gained the last year for EU countries to better coordinate and restore free movement for citizens", said Thomas Reynaert, Managing Director, Airlines for Europe (A4E).

"There is huge pent-up demand to travel again and we do not want to reopen for summer, only to be in lockdown again. Travelling responsibly means staying safe and healthy so that Europe will have a better chance of a quicker and longer-term recovery. By respecting safety measures, together we can make the summer of 21 one to remember for all the right reasons", said Olivier Jankovec, Director General at Airports Council International Europe (ACIEUROPE).

"According to a recent survey by IATA, 76% of people want to travel to see family and friends as soon as possible. We have the means with testing and vaccination to safely reconnect people and restart the travel and tourism sector in time for summer. We just need the will and coordination by governments to make it happen", said Rafael Schwartzman, Regional Vice President for Europe at the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

"Together we can make the reopening of travel and tourism in Europe this summer a reality. This is a key strategy to ensure the health and wellbeing of citizens and the vitality of the whole European travel and tourism value chain in the long term", said Julie Lassaigne, Secretary General at the European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC).

For more information, visit www.destinationsummer.eu

About Airlines for Europe (A4E)

Launched in 2016, Airlines for Europe (A4E) is Europe's largest airline association, based in Brussels. The organisation advocates on behalf of its members to help shape EU aviation policy to the benefit of consumers, ensuring a continued safe and competitive air transport market. With more than 720 million passengers carried in 2019, A4E members account for more than 70 per cent of the continent's journeys, operating more than 3,000 aircraft and generating more than EUR 130 billion in annual turnover. Members with air cargo and mail activities transport more than 5 million tons of goods each year to more than 360 destinations either by freighters or passenger aircraft. Current members include Aegean, airBaltic, Air France-KLM Group, Cargolux, easyJet, Finnair, Icelandair, International Airlines Group (IAG), Jet2.com, Lufthansa Group, Norwegian, Ryanair Holdings, Smartwings, TAP Air Portugal, TUI and Volotea. Follow us on Twitter @A4Europe.

About Airports Council International Europe (ACIEUROPE)

ACIEUROPE is the European region of Airports Council International (ACI), the only worldwide professional association of airport operators. ACI EUROPE represents over 500 airports in 55 countries. Our members facilitate over 90% of commercial air traffic in Europe. Air transport supports 13.5 million jobs, generating €886 billion in European economic activity (4.4% of GDP). In response to the Climate Emergency, in June 2019 our members committed to achieving Net Zero carbon emissions for operations under their control by 2050, without offsetting.

About the International Air Transport Association (IATA)

IATA (International Air Transport Association) represents some 290 airlines comprising 82% of global air traffic. You can follow IATA at <https://twitter.com/iata> for announcements, policy positions, and other useful industry information.

About the European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC)

The European Travel Retail Confederation (ETRC) is an industry association for the duty free and travel retail industry in Europe, serving the industry and its members to help create

the right environment to allow the industry to achieve its potential and protect it when challenges arise. ETRC is composed of national and regional affiliated trade associations representing over 200 European companies, Tax Free World Association (TFWA) representing 500 brand companies, and direct corporate membership from individual companies working in the duty free and travel retail trade across Europe and beyond. The European Travel Retail Confederation's operations are directed by its Supervisory and Managing Boards and carried out by a full-time secretariat. For more information about the organisation.

Dubai Airshow: Call for submissions for disruptive start-ups

Dubai Airshow 2021, in partnership with Gothams, an accelerator that is helping to build the next generation of aerospace and defence start-ups, have launched the VISTA pitch competition.



The contest aims to support disruptive startups in shaping the future of the aerospace industry. Startups from all over the world, with game changing products and solutions in aviation, space, defence and technology, are invited to present their revolutionary ideas. Dubai Airshow 2021 is accepting submissions until June 10.

The VISTA pitch competition will give the two most innovative winning startups access to exclusive one on one mentorship session with Gothams, in addition to receiving an exhibiting opportunity at VISTA which will allow them to showcase their technologies, gain facetime with global investors, and a chance to enter exclusive pitch competitions and work with some of the region's biggest players within the aerospace and defence sectors.

Elodie Robin-Guillerm from Gothams said: "The VISTA competition comes as part of our efforts to support

startups in achieving their objectives and contribute to the growth of the aerospace and defence industries. Through this competition, we offer startups a golden opportunity that can be a turning point in their journey. We invite every startup with a revolutionary idea that can transform the future of the industry to take part in this competition, which could serve as a gateway for connecting them with global venture capitalists."

Startups will be asked to fill in the competition's submission form and include a three minute video pitch about their startup and its mission to transform the future of aerospace. All entries will be judged by a team of industry experts, based on different criteria, including creativity, potential, functionality, impact, and people. The two selected startups will secure their place on the VISTA program with a chance of winning exclusive prizes that will help support their groundbreaking ideas. The winners will be announced no later than 2 weeks after the closing date.

Co-located with Dubai Airshow 2021 - VISTA will provide entrepreneurs with an opportunity to connect with investors, partners, and mentors to launch, scale and grow their startups, and bolster the growth of the aerospace and defence industries.

Emirates restarts flights to Phuket

Emirates will resume four weekly services to the resort island of Phuket from 2nd July 2021, with the re-opening of the popular destination to international tourists.



The Dubai-Phuket route will be operated by a Boeing 777-300ER.

Those who are vaccinated against COVID-19 will enjoy hassle-free travel, with no quarantine on arrival. With measures in place to ensure a safe reboot of Phuket's tourism industry, customers travelling to the destination known for its sprawling beaches and white sands, will enjoy quarantine-free travel.

United Airlines plans to be flying supersonic with Boom by the end of the decade



United to buy 15 'Overture' ultra-fast jets from Denver-based Boom Supersonic ©United

United Airlines has announced its intention to buy 15 'Overture' ultra-fast jets from Denver-based Boom Supersonic with an option to acquire a further 35 provided that they meet United's safety, operating and sustainability requirements. This would see the return of supersonic trans-Atlantic flights which have been absent since the demise of Concorde in 2003.

The announcement has come less than two weeks since Aerion announced that it was no longer building a supersonic jet after it ran out of funding. One major concern for environmentalists has been the inability for supersonic aviation to meet greenhouse gas emission targets, with United having pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 100% by 2050. However, the carrier confirmed that the Boom Overture jet will operate using 100% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) by the time it enters into service, projected for 2029.

The Overture will initially provide business-class flights on an aircraft with between 65 and 88 seats, reducing current transatlantic flight times in half to approximately three and a half hours. United will also need to seek approval from the Federal Aviation Administration for supersonic flight over land, while airports will likely require that the jet be no noisier than current subsonic jets.

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Two ex-chairmen of PIA booked in graft case

The Federal Investigation Agency on Monday 24 May registered a case against three former top officials of the Pakistan International Airlines, including two of its chairmen, and arrested a former director on charges of causing a loss of over Rs1 billion to the national exchequer.

FIA Sindh Director Amir Farooqi told media that former PIA chairmen Nasser Jaffer and Irfan Elahi and then acting CEO Bernd Hildenbrand were booked in the case in which then director engineering Maqsood Ahmed was also arrested.

“They caused a loss of Rs1.25 billion and made advance payments for upgrade of business class seats and entertainment system in 2014-16,” he added. “The seats were never replaced and the system was never installed.”

The case was registered under relevant sections of the Pakistan Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947.

The FIA had initiated an inquiry against the PIA on the directives of the Supreme Court, which had directed a special audit in 2018.

The board of directors of the PIA in its 351st meeting in 2013 had approved upgrading business class seats and in-flight entertainment system, changing cabin ambiance including carpets, seats, covers, curtains, side trim, toilets, gallery, business class utility pack/gift items etc.

The FIA said ex-chairman Jaffer had approved a firm (Sogema) for changing seats of the entire fleet of Boeing 777s “dishonestly and illegally with ill motives by abusing his official position”.

The board of customer services committee did not recommend Sogema and it was also not the lowest bidder.

The FIA said then chairman Elahi and acting CEO Hildenbrand also dishonestly approved advance payments to Sogema and another firm, Panasonic, without bank guarantees and in violation of set rules.

Till November 2016, without executing any formal agreement, the PIA made an advance payment of €5,331,600 and \$756,449 to Sogema and Panasonic, respectively, in violation of PIA rules.

Furthermore, “the material/items and services against which advance payments/agreements were made were never received by PIA,” according to official document.

Thus, the said accused persons by

abusing their official position caused huge wrongful pecuniary losses to public exchequer without supply of any contracted goods or services from any company with their ulterior motives for their wrongful gain.

Plane lands safely on Sydney beach after engine fails



PEOPLE stand near the plane after it landed on the beach.

A recreational plane landed safely on a Sydney beach with three people aboard including a baby on Wednesday May 26 after its single engine failed, officials said.

The Tecnam P2008 aircraft landed without incident on Collaroy Beach in northern Sydney early afternoon, a police statement said.

The 25-year-old male pilot, a 28-year-old female passenger and a 1-year-old boy were not injured, police said.

The pilot made a forced landing following a reported engine failure, said the Australian Transport Safety Bureau, a crash investigator.

The plane appeared to land gently on the beach just above the water line.

The plane had taken off from Bankstown Airport in Sydney's southwest less than an hour before it had mechanical problems, Nine News reported.

They were OK. A little bit shaken up. Obviously, not the intended flight path for them, but they were fine. We didn't need to provide any medical treatment, ambulance official Dave Stubbs told reporters.

Surfer Fabio Silvestre watched from the sea the plane land and said it was fortunate that no one was on the beach in its path.

The plane was a recreational category aircraft and any safety investigation would be conducted by the Recreational Aviation Australia agency. An agency spokesperson was not available for comment.

China successfully launches cargo resupply spacecraft



A Long March 7 rocket carrying the Tianzhou-2 spacecraft lifts off from the Wenchang Space Launch Centre in southern China's Hainan Province on Saturday 29 May.

China on Saturday 29 May successfully launched an automated cargo resupply spacecraft to rendezvous with an orbiting module, in the second of a series of missions needed to complete its first permanent space station.

The Tianzhou-2, or “Heavenly Vessel” in Chinese, blasted off via a Long March-7 Y3 rocket from the Wenchang Space Launch Centre on the southern island of Hainan, the China Manned Space Engineering Office said.

Tianzhou-2 is the second of 11 missions needed to complete China's first self-developed space station around 2022, and follows the launch of the key module Tianhe in late April.

The three-module space station will rival the only other station in service, the International Space Station (ISS), which is backed by countries including the United States, Russia and Japan. China was barred from participating in the ISS by the United States.

Tianzhou-2 will autonomously dock with Tianhe, which will provide supplies for future astronauts as well as propellant to maintain its orbital altitude.

The rocket's launch was postponed this month due to technical reasons, state media said.



We are pleased to announce that YG Airline is operating B -757F from KMG-LHE-KMG (4 flights a week Day 2, 4, 6 & 7) to below destinations.

Starting from FEB 22nd 2021

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

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

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KHI-KMG	CAN	Daily
KHI-KMG	XMN	Daily
KHI-KMG	TAO	Daily
KHI-KMG	PEK	Daily

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Shandong Airlines implements Sabre's fares management solution to maximize revenue opportunities and accelerate recovery

A leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, announced recently that Shandong Airlines has successfully implemented its fares management solution to support the China-based airline's efforts to drive revenue optimization and accelerate recovery as it looks to launch new services and increase frequencies during summer 2021.

Shandong Airlines, which is owned by Shandong Airline Group, is now using Sabre AirVision Fares Manager and its Contract Manager capability to manage millions of the airline's fares, and proactively sense and respond to changing market conditions, while optimizing and publishing fares and rules with minimal latency.

"While the entire airline industry continues to operate in challenging times, we aren't simply sitting back to wait for recovery to happen," said Mr Yuan Fei, General Manager, Network & Revenue Management Department, Shandong Airlines. "We have ambitious plans to launch new services as well as increasing frequencies on existing routes, and we're working hard to prepare for the future. That's why it is vital that we are working with the right travel technology partner to help us to reach both our short and long-



term business goals."

With an extensive domestic network and serving destinations across Asia, Shandong Airlines has plans to launch 26 new services and to increase frequencies on 13 existing services during the 2021 summer season. The successful launch of Sabre AirVision Fares Manager for Ji'nan-headquartered Shandong Airlines means the carrier will now be able to use the solution to help the airline boost revenue opportunities, minimize revenue leakage, and support improvement of analyst responsiveness and productivity through advanced decision support and automation, proactive and dynamic competitive fare response and strategic fare optimization.

"We're delighted that, as the travel industry continues to move through the

pandemic and into recovery, Shandong Airlines is now able to leverage Sabre's innovative technology to enable appropriate and effective market positioning," said Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions Airline Sales. "Utilizing robust, intuitive technological tools is more important than ever at a time when it is not always possible to rely on past years' data to predict future demand and make pricing decisions. This latest implementation will further strengthen the position of both Shandong Airlines and Sabre in the increasingly competitive Chinese marketplace as well as being testament to Sabre's deep commitment to helping airlines to prepare for recovery and future growth."

Malaysia scrambles jets to intercept Chinese planes

Malaysia scrambled jets to intercept 16 Chinese military aircraft off the country's coast in the South China Sea, a rare incident that the foreign minister angrily denounced on Tuesday 1st June as an "intrusion".

It took place on Monday 2nd June off the Malaysian part of Borneo island over the fiercely contested waters, where China and Malaysia have overlapping territorial claims.

The Chinese air force transport planes approached Malaysian airspace in "tactical formation" and flew to within about 60 nautical miles of the coast, Malaysia's air force said in a statement.

They were spotted by radar and several attempts were made to contact the planes, but they did not turn back.

As they approached, the Malaysian air force sent planes to intercept and identify them, before they flew off.

The air force described the appearance of the planes as "suspicious".

The aircraft did not enter Malaysian airspace over the country's territorial waters.

But Foreign Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said they had flown over Malaysia's "maritime zone" an area extending much further from the coast and described it as an "intrusion".

The foreign ministry will lodge a protest with Beijing and summon the Chinese ambassador for an "explanation regarding this breach of the Malaysian airspace and sovereignty," he said in a statement.

"Malaysia's stand is clear having friendly diplomatic relations with any countries does not mean that we will compromise our national security," he said.

"Malaysia remains steadfast in

defending our dignity and our sovereignty." China has laid claim to nearly all of the South China Sea and has built numerous military outposts on small islands and atolls, angering other countries with competing claims to the waters.

Despite their overlapping claims, relations between Malaysia and China are usually cordial, and Monday's incident was unusual.

There have been tensions in the area in the past, however.

Last year, a Chinese survey ship had a long standoff with a Malaysian oil exploration vessel off Borneo.

Other claimants in the sea include Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei and Taiwan.

The United States has also sent warships through the waters to assert international rights to freedom of navigation, angering China.

Muslim woman sues Southwest Airlines after being forced to change seat telling it was discrimination



Launched in 2010, Phuket became Qatar Airways' 93rd destination at the time.

The route will be served by the airline's modern and sustainable Boeing 787 Dreamliner with seating for 22 passengers in Business Class and 232 in Economy Class.

Phuket schedule starting July 1, 2021:

Doha (DOH) to Phuket (HKT) QR 840 departs 02:55 arrives 13:30 (Wednesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday)

Phuket (HKT) to Doha (DOH) QR 841 departs 02:30 arrives 05:30 (Monday, Thursday, Saturday, Sunday)

Top Copyright Photo: Qatar Airways Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner A7-BHD (msn 64216) PAE (Nick Dean). Image: 948026.

Indian court orders Air India to rehire 61 terminated pilots

The High Court of Delhi annulled Air India's decision to terminate 61 pilots from their duties due to the financial crisis caused by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

10 months after dozens of Air India flight crew were terminated from their job due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the High Court of Delhi stood up to preserve pilots' rights. On June 2, 2021, the Court concluded that the flag carrier of India unlawfully cut off employment contracts with 61 pilots.

Following the conclusion, Justice Jyoti Singh ordered the airline to rehire the flight crew members who were sacked in August 2020 as well as fork out the unpaid salaries for the period from April 2020, when their contracts were suspended.

Air India flights allegedly operated by unemployed pilots

Air India has reportedly sacked 48 pilots who had resigned the year before, but later withdrew their resignations. The unexpected firings have led to violations of "comical proportion", union claims, saying some pilots operated flights for Air India after being laid-off.

The group of terminated pilots initially had resigned from Air India in July 2019 but withdrew their resignations within the lawful six-month notice period. Then, on August 13, 2020, Air India issued



A Muslim woman from Texas has filed a complaint with the Department of Transportation, saying she was not allowed to sit in an emergency exit row on a Southwest Airlines flight because she was wearing a hijab, but her sister was allowed to sit there without one. Southwest says it's not what it seems.

Fatima Altakrouri and MunaKowni were traveling from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to Dallas on May 22, when they spotted the last two seats together in the emergency exit row.

Altakrouri said that at first, she didn't think anything of it when she asked a flight attendant if they could sit there and was told no.

► **Banned for life:** Southwest Airlines bans passenger who 'seriously assaulted' flight attendant

► **Alcohol service postponed:** Southwest Airlines delays return of alcohol sales after incidents with unruly passengers



"As I was walking, I overheard her saying to the passengers in the seats that were around that area, laughing, saying that 'If we sat her there, she'd bring down the plane in an emergency,'" said Altakrouri, who wears a hijab. "You can imagine the shock I was in at that time."

Altakrouri said she wasn't sure she heard that right, but then her sister followed up.

"She asked her, 'Why can't my sister sit here?'" Altakrouri said the flight attendant responded, "She cannot sit here because she can't speak English."

"I told her twice, 'She speaks English,'" Kowni added. "She's spoken English in front of her."

In a statement to USA TODAY, Southwest spokesperson Brandy King said: "Our internal reports from the flight do not support claims made by the passenger regarding comments or decisions being made based upon appearance. The safety of our passengers is paramount, and individuals seated in an exit row are required to verbally indicate that they can perform certain duties in flight. Our Crew is responsible for getting that confirmation from a passenger before seating them in an overwing exit row and was unable to gain acknowledgment from the passenger during boarding. Therefore, as a courtesy, the Crew offered her an alternate seat."

Qatar Airways to resume Phuket flights on July 1



Qatar Airways marks a significant milestone in the rebound of international leisure travel with the resumption of four weekly flights to the famed holiday destination of Phuket, Thailand, starting July 1, 2021. In addition to its 12 weekly Bangkok flights, the airline will operate a total of 16 weekly flights to Thailand, providing seamless connectivity for its passengers traveling from Europe, the Middle East and United States.

termination letters for several pilots including those who had wanted to withdraw their resignations.

The company justified its decision arguing that it no longer required the services of these pilots and decided to accept their resignations. Besides, it also added that the sudden termination of contracts came as a consequence of the

pandemic impact on the airline's financial situation.

Although the pilots were sacked, a part of them reportedly had still operated Air India flights on August 14, 2020 a day after they were officially fired.

In response to an unexpected termination, more than 40 sacked pilots

filed petitions and applied to the High Court of Delhi seeking to reverse the airline's move and return back to the job. Although following the recent Court judgment the terminated pilots will be rehired by Air India again, they cannot expect to earn much as its employees keep flying minimal hours due to the second wave of the virus in the country

Fading hopes of air crash victims

MOHAMMAD Zubair had never met with an accident in his entire life but when he did, nobody believed him. Seriously!

Even in his childhood the 26-year-old had never fallen while playing; he himself wonders how he never got scratches on his knees or elbows during school life, unlike almost every other child. The engineer by profession counts himself lucky that he never slipped while riding a bike on the bumpy and dilapidated roads of Karachi. The youngest among six siblings, he was brought up as "darling" of the family amid much care and fondness.

He encountered a particularly bad situation for the first and last time exactly a year ago. Zubair, along with 98 other people on board Airbus A320 on Pakistan International Airline's flight 8303 crashed into the densely-populated neighbourhood of Model Colony hardly a couple of kilometres from Karachi airport. And he came out of it alive!

Of the 99 on board, Zubair was one of the two people who survived the deadly crash. He and senior banker Zafar Masud became headlines of the local and international media networks on May 22, 2020 and were treated like celebrities after their miraculous stories of survival became known widely.

"I only remember a glimpse of light after regaining consciousness following the crash amid thick smoke, fire and distant noise of people shouting and yelling," recalls Zubair. "I came out from one of the windows of the crashed plane and found myself on the rooftop of a home. Not fully in my senses, I finally found the stairs. I moved to the stairs and saw a man and a woman of the house running down the staircase. I joined them and finally came out of the street where the plane had crashed."

He recalls how after coming out of the crash site he was not believed by onlookers and even rescuers that he was one of the passengers. It took Zubair some time to convince them that he was a lucky survivor so they could call an ambulance and take him to hospital for treatment of his minor injuries and burn wounds.

But a year on, not many characters



Mohammad Zubair, the survivor of the May 22 plane crash, finds it hard to forget the memories of deadly incident even after a year of the tragedy.

and lives attached to PIA's Flight 8303 crash are lucky enough. On the first anniversary of the incident, it seems the stories of Zubair and Masud are the only positives that came out of the episode. The 97 other persons are in fact reflections of the country's typical red-tapism and justice system.

Just a day before Eid, the Karachi Press Club gives a reality check on this tragic fact. More than a dozen men and women, standing outside the club and carrying placards, panaflex posters with photographs of 97 lives lost in the crash and visibly shattered and aggrieved share their pain with media personnel.

For them, justice is still awaited. Among them is Junaid Hamid, a 2010 Airblue crash affectee who founded Airblue Crash Affectees Association a body recognised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), with an aim to promote safe air travel and in case of any accident to pressurise the authorities for an independent and impartial inquiry and make the inquiry public.

"Unfortunately, Pakistan had the highest rate of aviation disasters during the last decade," he says showing facts and referring to the record of international aviation industry. "Does it sound normal? Absolutely not. There must be a reason for it. We have the right to know who's at fault? This must be stopped and stopped immediately."

Azmat Yar Khan lost his brother and niece in the crash. After suffering tragedy and pain, his family has been going through other challenges as well. Each day they wake up with the hope that their miseries may finally come to an end. How

he sums up his experiences since the air crash is a matter of great concern.

"This incident has brought us all [affected families] together," he says. "What we have learnt is that only families of 36 [out of 97 victims] have been paid compensation so far and most of them are the families of the PIA crew who lost their lives in the crash. Others are being offered compensation with certain conditions.

"Many of our colleagues here have already rejected the compensation, because it is being offered on the condition that we would not ask for a probe [into the crash]. We would not make noise for impartial inquiry and to make the report public."

He is seconded by Dr Mohammad Mohsin Aman, the family member of another victim. "[For us] the most worrying among the conditions laid out before the families is that they can accept the compensation or insurance money only if they would not question the findings of the crash investigations or challenge them in any court of law," he says.

The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's slogan of justice seems to be fading before the small number of people who are openly sharing what they have gone through in their experiences with the PIA and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) managements since the May 22 tragedy.

The claims they are making are not mere allegations but should set alarm bells ringing in the power corridors, which vowed to bring reforms in the affairs of national flag carrier before it is too late. However, for some families it is already too late.

"I lost my father [Mohammad Saleem Aslam] in the crash," says Zarka Khalid Chaudhary. "My mother couldn't handle that grief and passed away within 21 days of the terrible tragedy. We are here to share what we have been facing afterwards and all that we want is to prevent such a tragedy in future. We have certain expectations from the government, PIA, CAA, courts and the cabinet. We don't want anyone else to go through what we have been facing. It is what helps us move on, with our mission."

Victims relatives, mark PIA air crash anniversary

Relatives of the 97 victims died in the Pakistan International Airlines' plane crash on May 22, 2020 on Saturday held a memorial event near the site of the crash in Model Colony to remember their loved-ones on their first death anniversary.

PIA flight PK-8303 had crashed onto houses in Model Colony's Jinnah Garden killing 97 passengers and crew members on board and one teenage girl on the ground. Two passengers, however, miraculously survived the crash. The relatives observed the first death anniversary of the plane crash victims in a park in Jinnah Garden, Model Colony after Asr prayers. A special prayer was also made for the departed souls.

While the victims' families said that they had invited provincial government's high-ups to the programme but none of them attended the event. Most victims' families have not been paid compensation/insurance money. They held the event to show all those concerned that they were united in seeking justice for their loved-ones who died in the crash.

Meanwhile, special prayer and one-minute silence was also observed by the PIA staff at all airports across Pakistan to mark the first anniversary of the air crash.

A PIA statement issued on Saturday said that the one-minute silence was observed at exactly 2:44pm, when PIA staff stopped work in remembrance for all those who lost their lives due to the tragic air crash. A special prayer (Dua) was also offered.

PIA chief retired Air Marshal Arshad Malik said that PIA safety management system had been revisited and improved, whereas continuous steps were being taken in accordance with the international safety standards, the statement said.

PIA Air Safari



Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has recently announced the fare for its Air Safari service that is scheduled to start from June 12. According to PIA spokesperson, the inaugural flight will fly from Islamabad to Skardu on June 12 and the one-way fare for Air Safari service will be Rs25, 000. PIA has named this service 'Sadpara Air Safari,' after the prominent mountaineer, Ali Sadpara, who lost his life along with two international mountaineers during their quest to conquer K2 in winter. The national airline said that the Safari flight would operate every Saturday from the New Islamabad Airport and fly over the mighty K2, Nanga Parbat, Gaherbrum peaks, Deosai plains and famous SaifulMaluk lake.

Progress on climate action UNWTO invites tourism stakeholders

MADRID: UNWTO is inviting public and private stakeholders from around the world to take part in a Global Survey of Climate Action in Tourism and help identify frontrunning initiatives and opportunities to accelerate climate action in tourism. Launched on World Environment Day, the survey aims to support the ongoing efforts of the sector to reduce its environmental impacts and carbon emissions, as well as to strengthen its capacity to adapt to a changing climate.

In May, the Tourism Ministers of the G20 nations stressed the need to rethink tourism and shape a more resilient, sustainable and inclusive sector. They also committed to take action and to promote such a green transformation. The UNWTO Recommendations for the Transition to a Green Travel and Tourism Economy, welcomed by the G20 Tourism Ministers, highlighted the need to transform tourism operations for climate action. Otherwise, emissions from global tourism could rise by at least 25% by 2030, as estimated in the latest research carried out by UNWTO and ITF. The green transformation of the sector is needed, not just for the planet, but also for tourism itself, boosting competitiveness and increasing resilience UNWTO Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili says: "The pandemic and its impact on tourism, jobs and revenues, offers an unprecedented reminder of the need to rebalance our relationship with people, planet and prosperity. The green transformation of the sector is needed, not just for the planet, but also for tourism itself, boosting competitiveness and increasing resilience." The Global Survey is part of the preparations for the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 and the results will be presented in November 2021 in Glasgow. It has been developed within the framework of the One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme. The survey is open until 15 July 2021 and destinations, businesses and tourism associations are all invited to take part.

Emirates Sky Cargo presents an award to Seagold (Private) Ltd.



Emirates Sky Cargo awards certificate of appreciation to Seagold (Private) Limited in recognition of their continued support during the year 2020-21 for the airline. Photo shows Mr. Faisal Yaqoob Cargo Manager Pakistan Emirates Sky Cargo presenting the certificate to Mr. Ayaz Admani CEO Seagold (Private) Ltd.

The Pakistan American Voters Association lauds services of Mr. Qamar Sheikh



The Pakistan American Voters Association presents certificate of thanks to Mr. Qamar Sheikh for the recognition of his services.



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SIAL holds groundbreaking ceremony of a 5- star hotel

Sialkot: The construction of a five star hotel at Sialkot International Airport will not only provide the best accommodation and food to the airline staff but also provide an opportunity for the business community and tourists from all over the world to come to Sialkot and buy its products. These views were expressed by Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed and Chief Executive Officer Ramada Plaza Islamabad Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed while addressing the inaugural function of the first five star hotel of the region at Sialkot International Airport (SIAL). Vice Chairman Chaudhry Mohammad Afzal Shaheen, Chief Executive Officer SIAL Amjad Ali Toor, Founder Chairman Mian Mohammad Riaz, Former Chairman Naeem Akhtar, Mohammad Hanif Khan, Sheikh Mohammad Yaqub, Malik Mohammad Ashraf Awan, Engr Khawar Anwar Khawaja, Nadeem Anwar Qureshi, Director Ramada Plaza Islamabad Umair Chaudhry, General Manager Ramada

Plaza Islamabad Mian Tahir Raza, Executive Assistant Manager Afzaal Mirza, Director Sales Athar Khan, Manager Foods and Beverages Tarkhan Butt, Chairman Sialkot Dry Port Sheikh Naveed Iqbal, Chairman Logistics Services Mian Usman Javed, former Vice Chairman Chaudhry Raza Munir, Sheikh Adnan Sarwar Kapoor, Haseeb Ahmed Bhatti, Airport Manager Nisar Ahmed, Project Director Engr Ameer Sajjad Baig, Public Relations Advisor SIAL Abdul Shakoor Mirza and other officials were also present.

Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed said that there was a severe shortage of five star hotels in Sialkot Airport and the entire region and due to lack of hotels many major airlines of the world were reluctant to start their services for Sialkot. The SIAL management has been working for many years to set up a five-star hotel here. Now, by the grace of Allah, the efforts of the SIAL management have come to fruition. With the patronage of Son of Gujarat Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed, the world's largest

brand hotel. It will be big opportunity for everyone at Sialkot Airport. Chairman SIAL also lauded the services of former Chairman SIAL Nadeem Anwar Qureshi in approving the plan of five star hotel while also thanking Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed and his entire team.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Executive Officer Ramada Plaza Islamabad Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed said that 150 rooms would be constructed in the five star hotel. Food catering will also be provided for the aircrafts. Three restaurants will be built. Separate swimming pools and health clubs for men and women will also be set up. Apart from Sialkot Airport, the hotel needs of the entire region will be met. The hotel construction project will be completed in two and a half years. Earlier, the bottom of the project was unveiled and groundbreaking was started. On this occasion, SIAL Memorial Shield was presented to Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed and gifts were presented to Director Ramada Islamabad Umair Chaudhry.



Photo taken on the occasion shows Chairman SIAL Mian Naeem Javed presenting a shield to Chaudhry Riaz Ahmed CEO Ramada Plaza Islamabad, also seen in the picture are Mr. Ashraf Malik (2nd R), Eng. Khawar Anwar Khawaja (4th-R), Mr. Nadeem Qureshi, Chaudhry M. Afzal Shaheen Vice Chairman SIAL, Mian Riaz, Mr. Hanif Khan, Mr. Naeem Akhtar, Sheikh Muhammad Yaqub and Mr. Razaa Munir.

Gwadar Port, Free Zone to generate \$10bn activities yearly: Asim

After becoming fully operational, the Gwadar Port and Gwadar Free Zone (GFZ) would generate economic activities of around \$10 billion per annum, besides creating thousands of new jobs, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority Chairman retired Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa said on Monday 7 June.

“Soon after the completion of GFZ, a lot of manufacturing and trading activities will start, cargoes will move, and transshipment activities will increase,” Mr Bajwa said while talking to the media here after reviewing the Gwadar Port and other projects under CPEC. “We will continue to monitor the development work in Gwadar till all projects become fully operational,” Mr Bajwa said. The port's infrastructural work has been completed by the China Port Holding Company at a cost of around \$300 million and all four berths are fully operational.

The official said that during the last few months, over 67,000 tonnes of cargo had been handled at the port, comprising consignments mostly under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement which were later transported to Afghanistan.

A vessel carrying 8,000 cubic feet liquefied petroleum gas is due at the port soon while another ship with 24,000 tonnes of diammonium phosphate fertiliser and feed cargo for Afghanistan would arrive here from Australia, he added.

The official said that port handling capacity has been enhanced while the Customs system is also in place to facilitate the investors and traders. Now our full emphasis is to increase the port traffic for which we are pursuing the logistic companies to establish their offices in the city, he added.

With regards to GFZ, Mr Bajwa said the first phase, spread over 60 acres of land, has already been completed, with 47 enterprises registered. Six factories had been completed, three of them were now fully operational, while six others were under construction. For the last three years, he said, both the port and free zone had created some 1,200 direct jobs, while 12,000 more persons were hired for building the support infrastructure.

The second phase of GFZ would be spread over 2,221 acres of land and Prime Minister Imran Khan would perform its ground breaking.

He said the China Port Holding Company had already lined up an investor for the second phase, who would need some 1,600 acres of land. The investor had pledged a direct investment of \$3



The Gwadar Port's infrastructural work has been completed by the China Port Holding Company at a cost of around \$300 million and all four berths are fully operational.

billion in the single industry that would create 30,000 jobs.

“The Eastbay Expressway would directly take the cargo from port to M-8 for onward shipment to Karachi and the rest of the country. 94 per cent work on the expressway had been completed, which would hopefully be inaugurated in September,” he said. Regarding the reservations of fishermen on the expressway development, he said three bridges were under construction to address their concerns.

Similarly, he said, work on Gwadar Airport is also going on at fast pace while the technical and vocational institutes in the city would also be completed in October. Mr Bajwa said the prime minister had specifically directed to create maximum job opportunities in the area, with capacity building of the local youth by imparting them skill training.

The CPEC Authority chairman said a 150-bed hospital was under construction in the Gwadar city, which was a gift from the Chinese president for the local residents. The master plan of Gwadar City had also been approved and it is now at the implementation stage.

Australian cargo ship arrives at Gwadar port

An Australian ship carrying 21,000 tonnes of urea under the Afghan transit trade was anchored at Gwadar deep seaport on Sunday. Chairman of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Authority retired Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa had announced last week that Gwadar port had become fully functional as big cargo ships had started arriving there. Official sources said the cargo ships carrying import and export

goods had started arriving at Gwadar port from different countries. The Afghan transit trade had begun in 2020 and since then over a dozen ships brought thousands of urea bags through Gwadar port. Officials of the Gwadar Port Authority welcomed Seaken-Mv from Australia and said ample job opportunities would be created for the local people as the port had become fully functional.

Shipping agents seek amendments to transshipment rules

In its Budget 2021-22 proposals shared on Saturday 5 June, the Pakistan Ship's Agents Association (PSSA) urged the government to facilitate re-export of shipments by amending trans-shipment rules as it was shifting businesses from local ports to other facilities in the region. The PSSA asked the government to amend Rule 510A of SRO 03(I)/2021, Jan 4, 2021, related to the 'trans-shipment of imported cargo from gateway port to a foreign port'. Under the rules, only Full Container Load (FCL) or sealed cargo containers are allowed for 'International transshipment (IT)' via seaports in Pakistan. While ship agents have asked the government to allow trans-shipment of Less than Container Load (LCL) cargoes too, which are forwarded to the country of origin in the form of 'grouped shipment' as an international business practice. Allowing LCL cargo will enhance business opportunities and revenue generation for the sector, the association added. The PSSA has asked for five amendments in the Customs Act 1969, including enhancing HOME LATEST CORONAVIRUS PAKISTAN BUSINESS OPINION CULTURE SPORT MAGAZINES WORLD TEC.

The limit of ocean losses on bulk oil cargo to 0.50 per cent of the manifested quantity. The other demand was an amendment in clause 24 (i) of section 156 asking that the 'shipowner' should be defined as 'shipowner not as a local agent'. The association said that amendments were needed in Section 55(1)(e) and 55(2) of the Customs Act as under the current rules a shipping agent is held liable for claims brought by the owner of the goods even when the agent has excluded his liability under the Agency Agreement and in situations where the agent was not involved in default, negligence or willful act.



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Sialkot a city with many feathers in its cap

The birthplace of the poet of the East Allama Iqbal, Sialkot has many other feathers in its cap. Along with adjacent districts of Gujranwala and Gujrat, it forms the 'golden triangle' of relatively industrialised northern Punjab.

With the highest per capita income of over \$3,000 in the province, the district also earns international fame through its sports, surgical instruments and leather industries, while agricultural engineering manufacturing at Daska, one of its four tehsils, makes it a household name among the domestic farming community. Located at the Indian border along the Working Boundary, it has inherited paper and ironworks industries from the pre-colonial period and takes pride in having the first privately constructed and owned airport in the country.

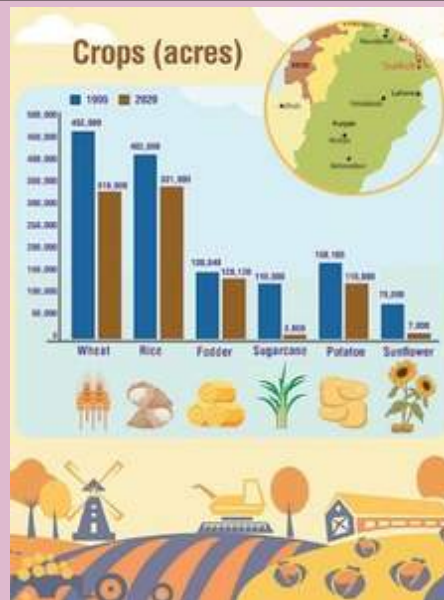
Tradition has it that the city, then named Sagala, existed millenniums ago and Alexander the Great had conquered and razed it to the ground in 326 BC. It was rebuilt and served as the capital of the Euthydemus dynasty's Indo-Greek king Menander-I and prospered as a major silk trade centre being adjacent to Kashmir, home to the once popular mulberry and other varieties of silk. However, it lost its prominence and importance to Lahore by the year 1,000 and was made a suba or province of Lahore during the Mughal period.

The industrial revolution here began during the rule of Akbar the Great when papermaker migrants from Kashmir started producing Mughal Hariri paper known for its extra whiteness and strength. Local metalworkers also provided most of the weaponry to the Mughal crown then and became a hub of metalwork in the 1890s.

'The imposition of US sanctions on Iran, one of the major importers of the local Basmati variety, has reduced rice exports to the neighbouring country and subsequently its price in the local market has plummeted, nudging farmers to shift to alternative crops'

By the 1920s, surgical instruments were being manufactured in Sialkot for use throughout British India. The availability of nearby timber reserves in the valleys of Kashmir also converted it into a centre for sports goods for the British troops stationed along with the North-West Frontier (now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa). The increased industrial activities and creation of jobs attracted a large number of migrants from Kashmir, who constitute one of the major castes of the local population. Other prominent castes included Rajput, Arain, Awan, Jat and Sayyed.

Before the 1947 Partition, Sialkot was considered as the second most



industrialised city after Amritsar in Punjab and was one of the few areas in British India to have its own electric utility company. But, the communal rioting ensuing the Partition destroyed 80 per cent of the local industry in one way or the other, while the arrival of around 200,000 refugees, mostly from Jammu, further stressed the local economy. The industry, however, was soon rehabilitated under various provincial initiatives, while the entry of local entrepreneurs filled the vacuum created by the departure of Hindu and Sikh traders.

As of 2019, Sialkot exported goods worth \$2.5 billion or over 10pc of total national exports (\$23bn) and local industries employed about 250,000 people. Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry data shows that of its over 6,500 members, most are active in sports goods, leather, and surgical instruments sectors.

The largest producer of hand-sewn footballs, Sialkot manufactures roughly between 40 and 60 million or 60pc of the total production of footballs in the world per annum. Since the 1997 international objection, there is a well-applied child labour ban in the industry under the Atlanta Agreement.

Also, the world's largest centre of surgical instrument manufacturing emerged from the need to repair, and subsequently manufacture, surgical instruments for the nearby Mission Hospital close to the beginning of the 20th century. By the 1920s, Sialkot-made surgical instruments were being used throughout British India.

Sialkot's share in the agriculture sector is not less than any other district. It mostly produces world-known Basmati rice varieties, wheat and sugarcane.

Comprising 3,015 sq km, at least 642,624 acres of it is under cultivation, while 99,241 acres are uncultivated. Around 71 acres are under forest and 19 acres are cultivatable waste.

Wheat claims a major share of cultivable land with rice and fodder standing at second and third. These major crops are, however, losing their acreage as farmers disappointed with volatile wheat and rice markets and a stagnant per acre yield are turning towards alternative crops.

Wheat was sown on 452,000 acres in 1995 and the land under it gradually increased to 533,000 acres by 2010-11 only to see it rapidly declining to 319,000 acres in 2019-20. Likewise, the paddy crop covered an area of 402,000 acres in 1995. With a steady increase, the total land under it went up to 471,000 acres in 2007-08 and then started its downfall as it was sown on 331,000 acres last year.

Ali Khan, a paddy grower from the district, says that since the imposition of US sanctions on Iran, one of the major importers of local Basmati variety, rice exports to the neighbouring country and subsequently its price in the local market has plummeted. Seeing no earlier opening of the Iranian market, he too, like other paddy growers, has gone for alternative crops. He says that he has allocated 25pc of his lands for sugarcane as the sugar mills in the district became functional after lying dormant for around one and half decades, and a similar portion of land for guava orchards.

Mr Khan says that maize and millet are also being adopted as alternative crops by farmers as acreage of maize has more than doubled during the last five years from 51,000 acres in 2015 to 126,000 in 2020. Attempts were made to popularise sugarcane in the area after a businessman from Chiniot took over the Pasrur Sugar Mills last year but so far the acreage of the water-guzzling crop is stagnant at 3,000 acres and has not increased even though the area under it once hovered around 115,000 acres back in the 1990s.

Potato and sunflower were prominent among the minor crops in the district. Potatoes were planted on 158,100 acres in 1995 and the next 10 years saw around a 60pc increase in its acreage before the beginning of its decline. It stood at 115,000 acres last year. The story of the oilseed crop sunflower is no different. The crop was once sown on 70,000 acres but is now planted hardly on 7,000 acres in the district.

Most of the lands allocated for oilseeds and vegetables have unfortunately fallen prey to the mushroom growth of housing societies emerging around urban centres because of the influx of rural population towards towns to seek

employment as well as better education and health facilities for their children.

Dr Abdul Sami, a former official of the agriculture department from Sialkot, points out that because of the suspension of trade ties with India sunflower seed could not be imported from there. He regrets that once Quetta used to supply seeds for canola and other oilseed crops to the sub-continent but now the country is forced to import the same from India.

According to him, poor marketing of agricultural produce is the main issue for most of the farmers, who cannot also fix the price of their product, unlike other sectors. Unstable and non-transparent price mechanisms at vegetable, fruit and grain markets are hitting both the farmers and consumers, while the middlemen are pocketing most of the profit.

Referring to the bumper wheat crop just harvested by Punjab, he says the offer

of a good return for their labour and investment made the farmers work hard and achieve around 1.5m tonnes more grain year on year. Pointing out a major hurdle in getting good crop yields in Sialkot, he says that a vast majority of farms are too small in size in the district, unable to provide sustenance to a family on its own. So, these landowners are doing part-time farming that leads to higher production costs and lower yields.

Govt projects \$28bn export target for FY22

The government is targeting exports of \$28 billion next fiscal year as it plans to extend the duty-free import regime to more raw materials in the upcoming budget to support the manufacturers.

Speaking with media, Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood said the country was expecting its export revenues to jump to over \$24bn this fiscal year.

The nation's exports jumped by over 13.5 per cent to \$20.9bn in the first 10 months of 2020-21 from \$18.4bn a year ago, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) data for the period between July and April.

The textile and clothing exports posted a growth of over 18pc in 10MFY21 and Mr Dawood hopes the textile and clothing shipments to jump to \$16bn by the end of June. "You see textile and clothing exports will fetch an additional \$3bn equal to half of the money the country had borrowed from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in July 2019 under a 39-month bailout package. So I am very hopeful that growth trend in exports will sustain going forward. I am also discussing with the finance minister the possibility of cutting customs duties on more raw materials. Today 40pc raw materials are coming into Pakistan at zero duty. We want to make import of all raw materials duty-free in next few years," he contended.

Mr Dawood said his ministry planned to encourage export diversification to reduce the country's reliance on textiles alone. "In next budget we intend to focus on pharmaceutical, engineering, processed food and footwear exports by reducing taxes on import of their raw materials to make them competitive internationally."

In the engineering sector, we are looking at exporting two- and three-wheelers, washing machines, refrigerators, transformers, etc. In textiles, the adviser is looking at encouraging production and export of garments for women, an area where Pakistan does not

exist at all, as part of product diversification plan.

He recognises that Pakistan's exports have significantly increased this year, widening the trade deficit and bringing pressures on foreign exchange reserves. But he said the imports had increased mainly because of higher food, especially wheat and sugar, and raw material imports.

The imports during 10MFY21 rose 17.8pc to \$44.7bn against \$38bn last year, expanding trade deficit to \$23.8bn. The increase in imports, said the adviser, is attributable to higher food sugar and wheat imports, rising global oil and commodity prices, and increased inbound shipments of industrial raw materials for import substitution and exports.

"I don't support luxury imports; we have in the last couple of years taken a few actions to stop imports of such items by increasing taxes and imposing stringent regulatory requirements. This has helped local food industry immensely and increased shelf space for local products. We will continue this policy in the next budget as well and raise duties on luxury imports."

He said the government was pursuing a two-pronged trade policy to substitute imports and boost exports. "Import substitution is critical to create surplus for exports. Gradually we are seeing export culture taking roots in the country and policy formulation. Our survival lies in increasing our exports," he argued.

TEXTILE POLICY: He said the textile policy will be announced soon once the differences over energy rates are sorted out. He said the textile industry had performed well this year and is investing heavily in new technology and capacity expansion taking advantage of the cheap credit made available under the SBP's Temporary Economic Recovery Facility (TERF). "They have increased exports because we gave them regionally competitive electricity rate of 7.5 US cents a unit, which was later increased to 9 cents a unit till June 30, 2021.

Cutlery industry seeks relief

The Punjab government has declined to accommodate local cutlery industry's demand for the allocation of Rs350 million fund to provide electricity and gas in Wazirabad Small Industrial Estate (WSIE), according to the Pakistan Cutlery and StainlCutlery industry seeks reliefess Steel Utensils Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCSSUMEA). Instead, owners of industrial plots have been asked to bear the provision cost of these basic utilities, the association added.

The PCSSUMEA had demanded the Punjab government's Ministry of Industries to provide a sum of Rs250m for the establishment of a grid station and another Rs100m for installation of gas pipeline infrastructure at WSIE. The association held several meetings with Punjab Minister for Industries Mian Aslam Iqbal and other stakeholders in this regard during the last six months.

Talking to media, Khalid Mughal, a former chairman of the cutlery association, said the government has categorically conveyed to the body that the demand cannot be met under the rules and agreement. "The industrial area had been established as a public-private partnership project. The government helped in land acquisition and other legal formalities whereas the cost of land and infrastructural development of the site is to be borne by the businessmen who were allotted the plots there," he explained.

"The cutlery industry in Wazirabad is a cottage industry. Most of the small and medium-sized manufacturers would find it hard to bear the cost for the provision of electricity and gas in the industrial area," Mr Mughal added.

Meanwhile, another official of the PCSSUMEA said that a sum of at least Rs1m might be charged from each plot owner in WSIE whereas around Rs70m were already available for the purpose with the concerned company that had developed the industrial area.

Wazirabad is famous for its cutlery sets and stainless steel utensils in Pakistan and internationally.

Govt mulls customs duty cut to spur growth

With its focus firmly fixed on the upcoming budget, the government has decided in principle to reduce Customs Duty (CD) on approximately 3,000 tariff lines mostly raw materials and intermediate goods to accelerate industrial growth ahead of the next general election.

The tariff reduction on these tariff lines will directly benefit 40-50 industries including textile, pharma, engineering, footwear, and chemicals. The tariff lines are selected in a fashion to mitigate the impact of the Covid19 pandemic and encourage import substitution of major consumer items in the country.

As per decisions, there will be major reduction in duty on 600 tariff lines while rate of additional customs duty may be reduced on more than 2,400 tariff lines in the budget 2021-22 to reduce cost of doing business, documents seen by media on Thursday 27 May showed.

Government studies show that tariff rationalisation plan of the government has led to industrial growth in the country. Exemption of duty on raw materials leads to its bulk import and subsequent exports of those industries. HOME LATEST CORONAVIRUS PAKISTAN BUSINESS OPINION CULTURE SPORT MAGAZINES WORLDTEC

The government has established the Tariff Policy Centre (TPC) chaired by chairperson National Tariff Commission in the year 2019 and shifted tariff policysetting powers from the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and to the Tariff Policy Board (TPB) led by Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood. The TPC proposed tariff reduction on products which was approved by the TPB. On TPC's recommendation, the government exempted three per cent duty on 1,638 tariff lines in the 2019-20 budget and 2pc Regulatory Duty on 2,000 tariff lines in the 2020-21 budget. 'We will continue this exercise in coming years to remove tariff on raw materials and intermediate goods', an official source in the Ministry of Commerce told media.

The source said the tariff centre has done a lot of work in the last two and half years. 'We want to continue this work to spur industrialisation across the board,' the source further said.

Under the 600 tariff lines, it has been agreed to withdraw 3pc customs duty on 150-200 tariff lines, reduce duty from 11pc to 3pc on 100 tariff lines. 'This will be across the board changes which will create environment for industrialisation,' the source said, adding that the proposed measures will reduce cost of production for domestic industries especially export

oriented industries in the textile sector.

The tariff policy board has already done study on value chains of textile and plastic industries. The proposed measures in the light of recommendations will boost exports of value-added textile from the country.

Similarly, the government has proposed drastic reduction in duty on import of raw materials for engineering goods. The duty will also go on import of specific machinery, raw materials and intermediate goods for pharmaceutical sector and footwear. Duty will be drastically reduced in the upcoming budget on several products which will benefit 40-50 industries.

The tariff policy board has also proposed to reduce Additional Customs Duty (ACD) from 7pc to 4pc on more than 2,400 tariff lines and gradually bring the duty to the original level. However, the Customs department is not willing to accept this proposal on the plea that it will lead to reduction in CD collection. There are several hundred raw materials, intermediate goods which were placed in the slab of 20pc, which is the highest. It is high time that government only place finished products under this slab.

The ACD was increased to 4pc from 2pc on products at slab 16. It has also been proposed to reduce it and bring it to original level.

Exports growth starts showing recovery

In line with world trade, Pakistan's exports bounced back after a sharp hit during strict lockdown in the last fiscal year mainly due to export-oriented government policies and strong economic recoveries in the main export markets. And the surge in imports may be attributed to the rising demand for intermediate goods with the resumption of economic activities, according to Economic Survey 2020-21 released recently. Export growth is hindered owing to lack of diversification in export goods. The trend of Pakistan's exports of major items has remained more or less the same with concentration on three items viz cotton manufactures, leather and rice. These three categories accounted for 70.5pc of total exports during July-March FY21. Within these three items, cotton

manufactures remain the major contributor with 58.8pc in total exports. Thus, Pakistan's exports are still concentrated in a few items. Exports were targeted at \$22.7bn for the FY21. HOME LATEST CORONAVIRUS PAKISTAN BUSINESS OPINION CULTURE SPORT MAGAZINES WORLDTEC.

Exports during July-March FY21 amounted to \$18.7bn as compared to \$17.4bn in the same period last year, which shows a growth of 7.1pc as compared to the 2.2pc in the same period last year. Higher textile exports came on the back of quantum growth in high value-added products, particularly knitwear, home-textiles (bedwear and towels) and made-up articles. At the same time raw cotton, cotton yarn and cotton cloth showed a declining trend. This indicates countries preferences shifting from raw and intermediate goods to value-added exports. The textile sector also benefited from Export Financing Scheme (EFS) and out of Rs68.7bn EFS loan, Rs44.8bn has been given to textile sector during July-March FY21. This significantly helped to improve the liquidity conditions and enhanced the capacity utilisation of the sector. Meanwhile, declining share of China in the US apparel market and shifting focus from apparel to global textile market provided some room to Pakistan and other competitors to enhance their shares in apparel exports. The contraction in export of rice was mainly driven by higher prices due to unavailability of shipment containers which raised the average cost of shipping.

Erdogan opens mosque in Istanbul

President Tayyip Erdogan inaugurated an imposing new mosque in Istanbul on Friday 28 May, achieving a decades-old goal and stamping a religious identity on the landmark Taksim Square in the heart of Turkey's largest city.

The Taksim mosque and its 30-metre high dome loom symbolically over a monument to the foundation of the Turkish republic by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, whose secular legacy has been eroded by nearly two decades of Erdogan's rule.

After performing Friday prayers with thousands of worshippers, Erdogan said completion of the mosque marked the culmination of a dream for Turks, and that the call to prayer would be heard there "until the end of time."



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The teen who takes his country to the top

On May 11, 19-year-old Shehroze Kashif became the youngest Pakistani to summit Mount Everest. He is also the fourth youngest mountaineer in the world to have summited the world's highest mountain.

Before reaching the 8,848.86-metre peak, the teen also has the honour of being the youngest Pakistani to have climbed the 8,047-metre Broad Peak at the age of 17, which also earned him the title of 'Broad Boy'.

After being locked down in Nepal for 15 days following the summit, Shehroze finally returned home to a rousing welcome on Monday 7 June. Media caught up with the young mountaineer to look back at the life-altering experience.

Shehroze was just 11 when he wanted to climb up a mountain while accompanying his father on an official trip to Shogran. But, of course, his father refused.

"As a kid, I had a lot of questions about what could be up there: a playground, cricket field or what? But my father said we'll return soon with proper equipment and gear."

The 11-year-old ended up climbing the 3,885m Makra Peak two weeks later, while his father waited at the base camp.

"I gained a sense of achievement. I felt I was at the top even though it was 3,000m."

Thus began a string of tougher treks over the years with Shehroze peaking the 4,080m Musa Ka Musalla at the age of 12; 4,600m Chandra Peak the same year; 6,050m Manglik Sar in Shimshal at 13; 5,585m Gondogoro La K2 base camp at 14; 5,800m Khurdo Pin Pass at 15; Broad Peak at 17; and 6,050m Khushar Gang at 18.

The pampered, first born child to his parents was never an adventurous soul and wanted to be a scientist rather, even though he was a poor student.

"The pampering made me dependent and lose my self-confidence. When I saw the mountains, all my plans changed. Plus, I was a terrible student who sat re-send-ups at least five times."

So bad was he at school that a teacher had once told his parents the child couldn't achieve anything in life. "Today, I have so many medals that I have run out of space," he says with pride.

After Shehroze peaked the



Shehroze Kashif pictured at Mount Everest.

challenging Khurdo Pin Pass at age 15, he claims the great writer Mustansar Hussain Tarar, who's a family friend, had spoken about him at an event, saying: "Whether I'm alive or not, Shehroze will be the youngest Pakistani to climb the Everest. I saw his future through his eyes."

While training for Everest, the teen received a video message from Mr Tarar, who told him to "remember that an 80-year-old man will be climbing right behind you". At the Everest peak, Shehroze recorded a message for the veteran telling him that the 80-year-old man, who was climbing behind him, was actually ahead of him pulling him along. "He responded with a video, saying that was the best Eid gift he had ever received."

However, Shehroze feels dejected that his father had to solely fund the entire expedition that cost them a hefty Rs10 million, including the \$10,000 permit. "We met the president and sought sponsorship, as the government sponsored other sportspeople. I told him Pakistan should own this expedition. He said he'd look into it, but no one got back to us. We even reached out to airlines and banks. In fact, the Punjab Sports Board added my name to their website as a national athlete, but didn't treat me as one."

Prepping for the perilous trek was nothing short of rigorous. From physical exercises to a strict diet, for six months Shehroze cut himself off from the world and trained day and night. "I would run daily with a 20kg bag, do squats and swim. I dedicated my life to training. My diet consisted of everything from eggs, bread, butter, olive oil, peanut butter and shakes to salads, rice and meat to fruits. I avoided all kinds of sweets. But being a big foodie I'd skip the routine sometimes. It wasn't easy."

There were avalanches, rock falls, icebergs collapsing and only five or six of

the 25-member team could reach the Everest summit, while three died and the remaining turned back. But nothing deterred the young boy. "I was focused towards my goal. After all, we pay for feeling homesick. I wanted to take my country to the top. I was representing Pakistan, so that kept me going. Physically, I was fit throughout."

When he reached the Hillary Steps, considered the toughest point on the mountain a few hundred metres before the summit, he "thought I was at the point that I had seen only in movies. One wrong step and you're part of history. But all I was thinking was that I'm only a couple of hours from the summit".

He tells aspiring mountaineers not to rush to the mountains if they aren't trained enough. "I have seen people die. It's not about making a name for yourself. There are strong winds, ice storms, temperatures below -30. Get adequately trained before setting off."

After around 60 days of climbing, during which the team survived on soup only, Shehroze reached the summit a little after 5am local time. "I saw God's nature that not everyone can see; the 36-degree view was breathtaking. You're literally on top of the world, there's nothing beyond that."

Just like the Everest expedition, his future plans are equally grand, but, this time, he expects some government assistance beyond social media acknowledgement.

"I want to get a commercial pilot licence, which takes a lot of money. I have served Pakistan a lot, so I expect the government to support me. Also, I have summited two of the 14 peaks above 8,000m, called the 8,000-ers, and plan to cover the remaining as soon as possible. I want to do this with Muhammad Ali Sadpara's son, Sajid, to continue his legacy. But that's not possible without sponsorship. My father has been sponsoring me so far, but he can't anymore."

Pakistan has five of the biggest mountains, but there's no regard for mountaineering or support for it, which Shehroze feels is unfortunate.

"I hold two records for Pakistan, represented my country at the Everest, but there has been no government support. It's high time the government acted and treated mountaineering as a sport."

New doppler weather radar activated in Karachi

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) on Friday 28 May activated a modern doppler weather radar in Karachi after a period of 30 years.

The doppler radar is capable of forecasting rainfall in a radius of about 450kms and strong winds in a radius of about 200kms.

The new radar, which was built at a cost of around Rs1.58 billion, is also capable of providing timely reports of cyclones and other tropical storms in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal regions.

The PMD department had also provided a link to radar imagery on its website. The weather device would be able to detect conditions much faster as compared to its analogue predecessor which was installed in 1991.

The new device was supposed to be activated before the monsoon rains of 2020, however, due to the pandemic, the operation was delayed.

According to met department Director Sardar Sarfraz, the new radar has twice the wavelength as compared to the analogue equipment, which had about a wavelength of 10cm.



“Unusual activities including thunderstorms, cloud masks and others can be observed simultaneously from the east, west, north and south with the new doppler radar,” he said.

He added that the state-of-the-art

device would also be able to predict rainfall in advance, in both millimetres and centimetres, two to six hours before its occurrence.

“This will facilitate town planning and forecasting for rainwater discharge. It would also detect passing weather systems near the city,” he added.

Sarfraz further stated that the radar would also be helpful for the aviation industry as it would be able to gauge strong winds.

“Flights and ships will be protected from hazards. The system of international shipping and shipping traffic forecasting will be improved. A quick warning will be possible in case of storms, rains, hot weather and other weather disasters,” he added.

He added that fishermen will also be warned of inclement weather conditions and storms.

“People living in the coastal areas of Balochistan and Sindh will be provided with accurate forecasting and warning,” he said, adding that the new radar would reduce the loss of life and property due to natural disasters in Pakistan.

A Mughal-era monument left to decay



The shrine of Hazrat Shah Burhan, a 17th-century Mughal-era monument located in Chiniot has been left to decay by the authorities concerned, allowing its grand architecture and ornamentations to be swept away by the ravages of time.

As per local historians, Shah Burhanuddin Bukhari, born in 1605 A.D, was a disciple of Hazrat Mian Mir. His forefathers had migrated to India from central Asia and settled in Lahore from where he moved to Chiniot in 1630 and converted a large number of local Hindu and Sikh clans to Islam with his preaching. He died in 1669 and his Urs is celebrated on 12th of Ramazan.

Later on, Nawab Saad Ullah Khan, prime minister of Mughal Emperor Shah Jehan, built a grand complex spreading over several acres, comprising Shah Burhan's tomb, a well, a pond and a mosque to honour the saint.

The walls of the tomb and its grand dome are adorned with intricate and colourful fresco work, a hallmark of Mughal architecture. Persian language quotes written inside the tomb add to its grandeur. The well and the pond were meant for supplying water to the visitors to the monument.

However, with the passage of time the rot set in and people started encroaching upon the shrine land, reducing it to a great extent. After the Partition, this shrine was handed over to the Auqaf department, but instead of making efforts to preserve the monument, its local officials' main concern appears to be collecting the donations given by the devotees and the fees from the vendors who set up stalls on the premises during the annual Urs.

Because of the persisting official neglect the structure of the monument has been decaying fast. The fresco panels on the walls are fading and bricks have either been stolen or decayed at many places of the complex. At some places cracks have appeared in the walls, threatening the structure. The well had been closed for a long time, while the pond that once catered to the visitors' need of clean water for ablution and drinking has gone dry.

The main gate of the shrine had broken and was never repaired since. The empty part of the complex's land has been



reclaimed by nature, filling it with thorny bushes and weeds.

A couple of years ago, the then deputy commissioner, Aman Anwer Kedwai, had chalked out a plan to revive the historical monuments of Chiniot, in collaboration with the Archaeology and Auqaf departments. Under the plan some rehabilitation work was done in the local Badshahi mosque, another Mughal-era relic, but the project was halted after the officer was transferred in November 2019.

Dr Irshad Thaheem, a local historian, regretted the government's apathy towards the monument and demanded Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar to order its preservation and restoration to save it from total collapse.

Sitting DC Syed Masood Noman, who has been posted here less than a month ago, has pledged measures to preserve historical buildings and sites in the district.



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EU gears up to reopen borders to vaccinated travelers



In this file photo, women cross a bridge as the Eiffel Tower is seen background in Paris.

European Union member states on Wednesday May 19 agreed to reopen the bloc's borders to travellers who have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, European sources said.

Meeting in Brussels, diplomats also agreed to increase the level of new cases a country can hit before being declared unsafe a measure that would open up travel into the EU from more places.

The recommendations would be adopted by EU ministers recently, they said.

Currently, non-essential travel into the 27-member European Union is banned, apart from a small number of countries deemed safe because of their low Covid case rate.

But businesses on the continent are reopening as virus restrictions are phased out and bars, hotels and restaurants are worried about the summer tourist trade.

Diplomats said under the new rules, travellers who could demonstrate that they had received the required number of doses of an EU-approved vaccine could enter the EU. Coronavirus vaccines authorized by the European Medicines Agency, the bloc's drug regulator, include the ones made by Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca and Johnson & Johnson.

In addition, the number of cases per 100,000 people that a country could register over two weeks and still be considered for the green list will rise from 25 to 75.

This would still exclude non-vaccinated travellers from much of the world, but could allow travel from, for example, Britain, which is well-advanced in its vaccination campaign.

European Commission spokesperson Christian Wigand said the European Council made up of EU nations would now recommend that member states ease some of the current restrictions for those who have been vaccinated.

He didn't give a precise date for when

the borders would reopen since EU countries have yet to formally approve the measures. The council should also soon expand the list of non-EU countries with a good epidemiological situation from where travel is permitted, said Wigand.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control is to give advice on the list.

The US Travel Association praised the EU's move and urged the US government to adopt a similar approach to allowing international tourism to resume.

Cable car crash leaves 13 dead in Italy

At least 13 people died and three were seriously injured on Sunday 23 May when a cable car linking Italy's Lake Maggiore with a nearby mountain in the Alps plunged 20 metres to the ground, local officials and rescuers said.

The Stresa-Mottarone cable car takes tourists and locals from the town on Lake Maggiore, almost 1,400 metres above sea level to the top of the Mottarone mountain in 20 minutes.

"We are devastated, in pain," Marcella Severino, Stresa's mayor told national broadcaster RAI, while Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi voiced his condolences to the families of the victims, "with a special thought" for the injured children.

The accident happened as the cable car was travelling up the mountain, with the cabin dropping some 20 metres and rolling several times down the steep slopes before it was stopped by trees, Severino said.

People hiking on the mountain heard a loud hiss just before the crash, she said, adding that it was believed to have been caused by one of the cables breaking.

A call came just after midday, Italy's alpine rescue service said, adding that the cable car was "crumpled" in the woods and two children had been taken by helicopter to a paediatric hospital in the nearby city of Turin.

Severino told SKY television that some of the victims had been found trapped inside the car, with

The executive commission also proposed permitting EU member nations to decide individually whether to allow in travellers immunized with vaccines approved by the WHO for emergency use, which include the Chinese Sinopharm vaccine.

Wigand said ambassadors also agreed on an 'emergency brake' mechanism designed to stop dangerous virus variants from entering EU nations through quickly enacted travel limits if the infection situation deteriorates in a non-EU country.

Once the non-binding measures are approved, EU countries will keep the possibility to impose restrictive measures on tourists such as PCR tests or quarantines.

others thrown out into the woods. Another injured person, an adult, had also been taken to hospital by helicopter, she added.

Coroners had started identifying the victims, who included foreign nationals, she said, without giving further details.

Luca Cari, a fire brigade spokesman, said it was still not clear how many people were in the cable car.

"Our teams are still pulling bodies out," Cari added.

The Stresa-Mottarone lift had only recently reopened following the gradual lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

The Mottarone peak is popular among tourists because of its panoramic views on Lake Maggiore and its picturesque islands as well as the vista of the surrounding Alps.

The cable car service first opened in August 1970 after almost three years of works to replace a cog railway, its website said.

The dual cable system is split into two sections, just over two kilometres between Stresa and Alpino and another three kilometres between Alpino and Mottarone.



THIS picture provided by the Alpine Rescue Service shows the cable car after it fell in Stresa, near Lake Maggiore, on Sunday 23 May.

Govt takes possession of ancestral homes of Raj Kapoor, DilipKumar

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa directorate of archaeology and museums on Tuesday 8 June took the possession of ancestral homes of Bollywood legends Raj Kapoor and Dilip Kumar inside the walled city of provincial capital.

The development came after the deputy commissioner of Peshawar issued a notification of the transfer of the ownership of both properties located in the old city to the archeology department during the day.

The provincial government had announced in Sept last year that it would acquire both properties and turn them into museums after restoration.

Director (archaeology) Dr Abdul Samad told media that the directorate took possession of both properties from their current owners after their ownership was transferred to the provincial government.

“Now, both residences are officially the properties of the directorate of archaeology,” he said.

Dr Samad said the possession was taken following all legal procedures.

He said the directorate would start restoration and rehabilitation of both badly damaged properties before turning them into museums.

The director said the directorate would also contact members of both families about restoration.

He said the restoration of both properties and their subsequent turning into museums was aimed at restoring Peshawar city's links with Bollywood.

Dr Samad said the directorate had also paid the determined price of both properties to the DC Peshawar for further payment to the owners.

Earlier in the day, the DC issued two notifications of the transfer of the ownership of both properties to the directorate of archaeology under the colonial era compulsory property acquisition law. Under the award, Raj Kapoor's haveli in Dhaki Dalgaran area was valued at Rs11.5 million and Dilip Kumar's ancestral residence in Mohallah Khudad at Rs7.2 million.



The entrance to Dilip Kumar's ancestral residence in Peshawar. (Right) The facade of Raj Kapoor's haveli.



Both properties have been valued at Rs1.5 million per marla.

The notifications said both homes would vest in the name of the directorate of archaeology 'free from all encumbrances'. The provincial government has long been eyeing the acquisition of both properties located in

Kuwait agrees to lift ban on visas for Pakistanis



KUWAIT CITY: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed calls on Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Sahab Al-Khalid Al-Sabah on Sunday 30 May during his visit.

After a decade-long suspension, Kuwait on Sunday 30 May decided to resume granting visas to Pakistani families and businessmen.

The Kuwaiti government took the decision during a meeting between Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Sabah and Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed in Kuwait City.

During the meeting it was also decided that Kuwait would issue technical visas for Pakistani workers in medical and oil fields.

The interior minister, who is on an official visit to Kuwait, handed over a special letter of Prime Minister Imran Khan to his Kuwaiti counterpart.

Following the meeting, the ministry of interior issued a press release which said that Kuwait had decided immediate restoration of family and business visas for Pakistanis.

It said that Pakistani workers would also get Kuwait's visas according to the agreement.

The statement said that the meeting, which was also attended by Kuwaiti

Mohallah Khudad and Dhaki Dalgaran area next to historic Qissa Khwani Bazaar.

In 2016, Raj Kapoor's ancestral home was badly damaged by its current owner during demolition, which came to a halt due to the intervention of the archaeology directorate. However, the exercise destroyed the upper portion of the house and badly damaged rest of it.

Also, the Awami National Party government had tried to acquire Dilip Kumar's ancestral home for preservation during its tenure in 2018-13. However, the price dispute hampered the bid leading to litigation during the last Pervez Khattak-led government.

In Oct 2015, the provincial government had informed the Peshawar High Court that it had dropped the plan of acquiring the house but declared it a protected antiquity stopping the owner from renovating it or making changes to it.

Interior Minister Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Sabah and Pakistan's Ambassador to Kuwait Syed Sajjad Haider, discussed bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest.

Kuwait had stopped issuing visas to citizens of Pakistan, Iran, Syria and Afghanistan in 2011, while citing difficult security conditions in these countries. Since then Pakistan made several attempts to get restoration of visas for Pakistani citizens but to no avail. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif during his visit to Kuwait in 2017 had also pleaded Pakistan's case and requested for restoration of visas for Pakistani citizens.

The press release said that now Pakistani nationals settled in Gulf countries could also get online visas to visit Kuwait.

The press release quoted the Kuwaiti prime minister as saying that relation between the two countries spanned over seven decades and people of the countries had been enjoying relations based on love and trust.

Meanwhile, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid, while thanking Kuwaiti prime minister, said that after the decision of restoration of visas for Pakistani citizens, huge job opportunities would be available for Pakistani citizens in Kuwait.

The minister said that Pakistani families and business fraternity faced enormous problems with the ban on Kuwaiti visa, adding that Pakistani labourers played an important role in Kuwait's early development. He said that all Pakistani considered Kuwait as their second home, adding that with lifting of ban on business visa, trade would also increase between the two countries.

Rare Persian leopard pair spotted in Balochistan



THIS handout video grab taken on May 7, and released by the Wildlife Department, shows a rare Persian leopard (Panthera Tiliiana) at the Hazarganji-Chiltan National Park on the outskirts of Quetta.

A pair of rare Persian leopards has been found in the Chiltan mountain range adjacent to the Hazarganji National Park, southwest of Quetta.

Officials of the Balochistan wildlife department first came to know about the presence of the pair six months ago. They launched a search for the Persian leopards, mostly found in Iran and Central Asia as well as some areas of Balochistan and Sindh.

Hectic efforts made by experts of the wildlife department bore fruit when they spotted the pair in a rugged mountainous area of Chiltan range and took pictures of the pair, said the Chief Conservator of Wildlife Department, Sharifuddin Baloch.

While releasing pictures of the leopard, the conservator said that the existence of this leopard species was in danger as it was rapidly becoming extinct.

Deputy Conservator of Forest and Wildlife Department Nazir Ahmed Kurd and some other officials took part in the search efforts.

Pictures and video showed the pair to be confident and they looked comfortable while living in the mountains.

Mr Kurd said the wildlife department would approach the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and WWF for the protection of the leopards and seek their help and resources to provide them a natural atmosphere for increasing their population.

Adult leopards are solitary in the wild and pair only to mate.

"We equipped our staff with cameras and binoculars to film the pair and take photos," Mr Baloch said.

Persian leopards are a panther sub-species native to Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and the Caucasus.

They are extremely rare, however, and listed by the IUCN as endangered.

Herd of wild elephants approaches Chinese city after 500km journey



A MAY 28 file photo shows the herd of wild Asian elephants in E'shan county, southwestern China's Yunnan province.

A herd of 15 wild elephants was approaching the city of Kunming, the capital of southwest China's Yunnan province, on Wednesday 2nd June, defying attempts to redirect them after a journey of several hundred kilometres from forests to the south.

The group of Asian elephants, which includes three calves, originally lived in a nature reserve, according to the official Xinhua, and has trekked for nearly 500km along highways and through fields of crops over the past months.

They were within a few kilometres of the edges of Kunming, a city of some 8 million, on the afternoon of June 2, according to state television CCTV.

While it is unclear why the elephants are moving north, the Xinhua report said a decline in edible plants in forest habitats has put pressure on the animals, whose numbers have grown in Yunnan in recent decades.

Conflicts between villagers and elephants can emerge as they leave protected areas to enter villages and eat crops. Some 6.8 million yuan (\$1.1 million) of damage has been caused by this elephant herd, according to Xinhua.

Local governments in Yunnan, which borders Vietnam, Laos, and Myanmar, have used roadblocks and tonnes of food to try to shift the elephants' course over recent weeks, while evacuating residential areas.

Lady luck smiles on Balochistan's fisherman



THE prized fish is being weighed.

A fisherman from Pishkan, Gwadar, caught a rare fish weighing 48kg off the coast of Jewani, which was sold for a whopping Rs7.2 million, it emerged on Sunday 30 May.

According to Sajid Haji Ababakar, the owner of the boat credited with catching the prized croaker fish, the vessel was being skippered at the time by Waheed Baloch of Pishkan.

Deputy Director for Fisheries in Gwadar Ahmed Nadeem confirmed that he had never come across a fish that had fetched a greater price.

At one time during the auction, said Mr Ababakar, the price of the fish had gone up to Rs8.64m. "However, after taking into account the discounts allowed under our traditions, we settled for a price of 72 lakhs," he said.

Abdul Rahim Baloch, marine biologist and assistant director for environment at the Gwadar Development Authority, said the demand for the large croaker fish was very high in Europe and China.

"Some fish are expensive because of their meat. But this species (large croaker fish) has a high demand because parts of it are known for their use in medicine and surgery," he said.

According to sources, not long ago a fisherman called Abdul Haq had caught a croaker fish that was sold for a rather modest Rs780,000.

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Over 70pc of snow leopard habitat in 12 range states remains unexplored: WWF report

The vast majority of snow leopard habitat, spanning over 12 range countries, remains under-researched, and critical knowledge gaps must be plugged for informed snow leopard conservation, according to a World Wildlife Fund report.

The report titled *Over 100 Years of Snow Leopard Research* A spatially explicit review of the state of knowledge in the snow leopard range examines the current state of knowledge across their range by reviewing peer-reviewed published papers on the species and its habitat.

The report shows some glaring gaps in knowledge of this elusive and threatened big cat and reveals that lack of basic data could be hampering their conservation.

“The elusive snow leopard lives in rugged terrains some of the harshest landscapes on the planet so research poses significant logistical challenges. Serious efforts to learn more about the species began in the 1970s but the snow leopard's remote and vast range and elusive nature, means that still most of the habitat is unexplored and we don't have a full picture of the status of this magnificent big cat,” said Rishi Kumar Sharma, WWF Global Snow Leopard Leader, who is the lead author of the report.

The WWF report points out that despite a major research focus on snow leopard population assessments, less than three per cent of the big cat's range has robust data on snow leopard abundance. Though snow leopard research in the past few decades has been growing exponentially, only four research hotspots, where multi-year research is being carried out, emerged.

All the research efforts, spanning over a century, covered only 23 per cent of the snow leopard habitat. Most of their vast range possibly over 1.7 million km² of rugged mountain terrain has never been researched from a snow leopard context.

According to the report, Pakistan covered the largest geographic area with research enumerating snow leopard population followed by Bhutan, Nepal, India, Mongolia, Tajikistan and China. Bhutan had the largest proportion of its snow leopard habitat covered by population density-focused research (76pc) followed by Pakistan (24pc) and

Nepal (19pc).

Rab Nawaz, senior director programmes, WWF-Pakistan, said that frequent sightings of snow leopards in the Chitral National Park in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Passu Valley, Khyber, Hopper Valley, Baltoro Glacier and other areas in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) indicated a viable population of the wild cat in Pakistan.

“Snow leopards cannot survive without immediate conservation interventions. Therefore, the organisation is campaigning to raise awareness among people, world leaders and politicians in range states to take decisive action to tackle threats facing this elusive animal,” he said, emphasising transboundary cooperation among countries that were host to the snow leopard.

WWF-Pakistan is working with GB's parks and wildlife department to reduce snow leopard poaching, conflict with communities, and piloting SMART tools to collect data on these shy big cats.

The data collection will help bridge the knowledge gap that the 100 years of snow leopard research report points out.

The organisation also supports other solutions to reduce human-wildlife conflicts such as livestock insurance schemes, livestock vaccination scheme, building predator-proof corrals, advocacy and awareness, capacity building and community development.

It plans to establish a GIS-based data recording system for the snow leopard population in GB which would help track trends in population and movement and will identify potential threats.

Globally, there could be as few as 4,000 snow leopards left in Asia's high mountains and the remaining population faces traditional and emerging threats. Increased habitat loss and degradation, poaching and conflict with communities have contributed to a decline in their numbers and left the species hanging by a thread in many places.

The report also highlights that though conservationists are addressing several of the traditional threats, mainly habitat degradation, human-wildlife conflict, loss of prey species, new and emerging threats such as climate change, a robust analysis of how effective the interventions are in achieving their objectives remains scarce. Although not studied much, climate change is predicted to have affected large parts of snow leopard habitat, where one

third of the total habitat might become unfit for snow leopards to live in.

“We need to build a more accurate picture of the status of snow leopard populations and establish baselines and indicators for both snow leopards and their prey species so that range states can better assess future changes and evaluate the impact of conservation actions. But more than anything else, we need a much better understanding of what the people sharing space with snow leopards think,” said Sharma.

Cultural festival in Gilgit

The three-day Pakistan Learning Festival began at the Fatima Jinnah Government Degree College for Women here on Tuesday 8 June under strict coronavirus standard operating procedures.

The organisers said the event was meant to celebrate and preserve the multicultural heritage and eco-diversity of the region.

The festival was organised by the Idara-i-Taleemo Aagahi's flagship programme, Children's Literature Festival, in collaboration with the regional education department and with the support of the GB government, Rupani Foundation, British Council, Oxford University Press, State Bank of Pakistan, Bank of Punjab, Telenor Pakistan, Serena Hotels, Sightsavers, Northern Areas Transport Corporation, and GB tourist police.

Its first day was attended by hundreds of students and their parents, teachers, academics, educationists and people from other walks of life.

GB chief secretary retired Captain Mohammad Asif appreciated the ITA and CLF's efforts for providing an inclusive learning platform and a wonderful avenue to the children of Gilgit to improve their learning and creativity.

OUP managing director Arshad Saeed Husain, British Council area director Michael Houlgate, Rupani Academy executive director Bahadur Ali Khan and CLF co-founder Ameena Saiyid appreciated the ITA and CLF for holding the learning festival in the region.

The participants paid tribute to mountaineer Ali Sadpara and other lost legends associated with the CLF, including Haseena Moin, Farooq Qaiser and Akbar Zia.



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IN A LIGHTER VEIN

By: Dr. S.M.Moin Qureshi

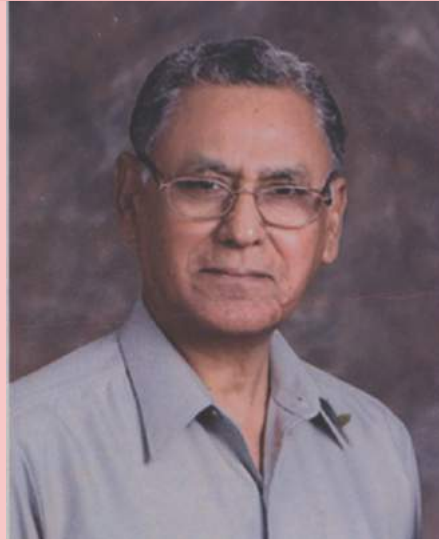
A super being called the boss

For those in service, public or private, the basic rule of duty is: You have not done enough; you have never done enough, so long as it is possible that you would still do enough. Which means that there is always something lacking in your performance that keeps you on your toes. A Hindi proverb eloquently ranks various professions in order of their respective nobility thus: agriculture, business, service and beggary. Hence, it would be noted that service appears very low in the list; indeed preceded by beggary alone. To me, the main reason of service being of such a low-ranking profession is that one is compelled to work against one's own temperament and sometimes even against the dictates of one's conscience. The boss's will right or wrong almost always holds supreme and the subordinate has to reconcile with it willy-nilly.

According to an amusing (yet penetrating) definition, (given by a far-sighted columnist in this very newspaper a few years ago), "A boss is a boss-no matter big or small, short or tall, fat or lean, good or mean, young or old, shy or bold, stiff or cold..." The word boss has an interesting etymology. In France, it means "a chief, a leader, manager... a person who pulls the wires in political intrigues... to domineer over the others." In Scotland, it means "hollow, empty." As a slang it means "to make a mess of" while a boss-eyed is one "who has only one good eye." Barring all definitions and terminologies, you can't help liking your boss for he holds the reins of your career.

In our part of the world, 'boss' stands for a symbol of unassailable authority a super being who regulates your future, who has a typical adamant nature, who attaches unstinting expectations with his subordinates (without providing them the requisite facilities), who thinks himself as a paragon of efficiency, epitome of decency and embodiment of accuracy in all matters official or personal, temporal or spiritual. Claiming to be democratic to the core, he speaks, writes, behaves and even thinks in an abysmally aristocratic manner.

A boss was lecturing his subordinates on his democratic mindset. "I don't need



any yes-man around me," he declared. "I want everybody to tell me the truth even if it costs them their job." However, some courageous subordinates have the temerity to differ for their bosses. One such jiyala boasted, "I am not a yes-man to my boss. On the contrary, when my boss says no, I say no." In England, the King can do no wrong; in our region, this virtue singly rests with the boss.

One boss had made life miserable for his subordinates by pretending his infallibility. One day, however, he startled them by admitting that once he had been wrong.

"You wrong?" exclaimed one of the listeners.

"Yes," replied the boss. "Once I thought I was wrong when I wasn't."

Of late, I came across a pamphlet which drew a very seminal distinction between a boss and his subordinates. The pamphlet headlined as "My Boss and I" reads as under:

When I take a long time-
I am slow.
When my boss takes a long time-
He is thorough.
When I don't do it-I am lazy.
When my boss doesn't do it-
He is too busy.
When I do something without being told-
I am trying to be smart.
When my boss does the same-
That is initiative.
When I please my boss-
I'm apple-polishing.

When my boss pleases his boss-

He's cooperating.

When I do good, my boss never remembers.

When I do wrong, he never forgets.

It is more than obvious that the pamphlet has been craftily drafted by some dejected subordinate who has portrayed himself as a sacred cow and his boss as a devil incarnate which may not be the case always. Yet, the general guidelines for bosses are: (1) when in charge, ponder, (2) when in trouble, delegate, and (3) when in doubt, mumble.

There is a special class of subordinates in every organization who enjoy the most privileged and prestigious position. They do nothing and are, in that sense, completely "Duty-Free." They go rudderless while dealing with the bosses and talk to them in a dominating tone giving scant regard to the latter's administrative positions. They consider official discipline and decorum as a mere plaything. The bosses have to put up with them and (in some cases) are compelled to bow before them if they have to preserve their honour and dignity in the presence of other subordinates.

With my own naked eyes, once I saw a hard-nosed bureaucrat chastising a low-grade employee of the said special class. For a minute or two, the employee listened to the chastisement with listless attention and then his patience wore thin. He eyed the bureaucrat quizzically. The bureaucrat instantly went off at a tangent and apologized for being "a little harsh." This class of subordinates wields a licence to do whatever it likes with complete protection and impunity. What special type of subordinates they are is everybody's guess.

By and large, however, service means and implies self-effacement and total surrender of one's own will to the will of one's boss. Mark Twain suggests a good trick of becoming a successful subordinate. He writes: "Make it a point to do something everyday that you don't want to do. This is the golden rule for acquiring the habit of doing your duty without pain."

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