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Curbs on air travel ease from July 1 as virus relents

As Covid-19 situation improves in most parts of the world, including Pakistan, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has decided to gradually normalise inbound international air travel, increasing direct flights to 40 per cent from the United Kingdom (UK), Europe, Canada, China and Malaysia.

On the other hand, the country continued to record less than 1,000 cases for the second consecutive day and fewer than 50 deaths for the last 10 days.

According to a document of the NCOC, available with media, from July 1 onwards, direct flights from the UK, Europe, Canada, China and Malaysia, which was 20pc of the normal volume, would be raised to 40pc.

It said pre-boarding and on arrival existing testing protocols for all categories of the countries would remain the same. However, home quarantine requirement for negative Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) cases has been abolished whereas those who test positive will have to undergo quarantine as per prevailing procedure, the statement added.

An official of the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) said Pakistan had introduced three categories A, B and C in October last year to deal with Covid-19.

"The countries in category A are exempted from the mandatory coronavirus testing, those in category B require a negative PCR test that has to be taken 72 hours before travel while people coming from countries in category C have to face restrictions and are only allowed under strict NCOC guidelines," he said.

At present, 38 countries, including India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Brazil, are in category C while others have been placed in category B, the official added.

Following the decision, the NCOC advised the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to disseminate information to all its high commissions and embassies and assign priority to inform the Pakistani diaspora.

The NHS ministry official said in April, due to emergence of the UK, Indian and South African variants, it had been decided that people would have to stay in quarantine facilities. Later, it was decided that they should stay in quarantine in their homes even if their RAT tests were negative.

"However, this condition has now been abolished for those with negative tests. Those who test positive will have to

undergo quarantine in their homes rather than in government facilities. The decision has been made after Covid-19 cases reduced in most parts of the globe. In India, around half a million people were getting infected, but now the situation has considerably improved there," he said.

Replying to a question, the official hoped that things would continue to normalise unless a fourth wave of the virus broke out.

Following the NCOC's decision, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority issued a NOTAM (notice to airmen) to all concerned.

"In view of the recent improvement in Covid-19 situation in various parts of the world, the curtailment of international inbound landing flight operation to Pakistan has been revised," the notice said.

It said direct flights from Europe, UK, China, Malaysia and Canada to airports in Pakistan had been increased by another 20pc from the existing 20pc of the approved summer 2021 schedule.

The notice further added that status quo would continue to be maintained on the current 20pc of the approved summer

2021 schedule for flights operating from all other regions except the countries mentioned.

Pakistan had revised travel restrictions for inbound passengers from countries in category C in the second week of June, allowing Pakistanis to travel without the exemption letter. However, foreigners would need the letter as per restrictions.

Passengers transiting through category C countries (not leaving the airport premises) will also not require an exemption letter irrespective of the country of origin.

Meanwhile, the NCOC data showed that 23 people succumbed to the virus and 901 more got infected during the last 24 hours.

New cases have remained below 1,000 for the second consecutive day, while casualties continue to hover below 50 since June 14 when 59 deaths were reported.

The number of active cases has been calculated at 32,241 whereas 2,197 patients were under treatment in hospitals out of whom 253 were on ventilators.

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The resumption of PIA's Air safari

The resumption of PIA's air safari flights to Skardu will hopefully attract international and domestic tourists, allowing them to enjoy the scenic mountain ranges that this country has to offer. The first air safari flight that flew from Islamabad airport recently, after a hiatus of 14 years, had on board 91 tourists from 13 countries. The revival of the tourism industry has been one of the PTI government's top priorities, and the re-launching of the air safari is among several initiatives taken by the authorities to boost local and international tourism. Others have included the opening of the Kartarpur Corridor and the inauguration of the Heritage Trail, both in Punjab. Home to the meeting point of three mighty mountain ranges, the Himalayas, the Karakoram and the Hindukush, Pakistan has been blessed with some of the world's most magnificent peaks. The air safari will fly over the second highest peak in the world K2 the elusive Nanga Parbat and the Broad Peak glacier before landing in Skardu for a break and then fly back to Islamabad. However, for this initiative to be a resounding success, the government must resolve the country's civil aviation crisis on a priority basis and improve the services of the national flag carrier.

PIA by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency for failure to follow the necessary safety standards remain a matter of grave concern. Flying in mountainous regions requires both exceptional piloting skills and top-notch aircraft maintenance. After last year's crisis, the country's aviation sector has yet to prove to the world that it has both. Meanwhile, the government should consider launching infrastructure projects and expanding internet coverage in northern Pakistan. It is good that the authorities are working hard to exhibit the country's natural beauty, but they should also take steps to provide travellers with basic modern amenities so that their stay here is comfortable along with being memorable.

PIA resumes flights to Toronto

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced resumption of direct flights to Toronto, Canada.

A PIA spokesman said on Monday

June 21 that Canadian officials had allowed PIA to resume flights to Toronto. Operations had earlier been restricted to cargo only on Pakistan to Canada routes due to surge in Covid-19 cases. However, other travel related advisories pertaining to Canada will remain in place, he said.

In the first phase, PIA will start three direct flights per week from Pakistan to Toronto. The airline will be following strict standard operating procedures (SOPs), the PIA chief executive officer (CEO) assured the Canadian government.

It is worth mentioning here that PIA has vaccinated its entire crew and ground staff against Covid-19 and now vaccination of all airline employees is underway. Its the first airline in the region to do so, the spokesman said.

PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik has instructed the airline officials to immediately start processing booking and purchase of tickets and it was expected that the first flight (Toronto to Pakistan) would operate recently. Other flights from Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad to Toronto will also resume.

Passengers will be required to present vaccination certificates with a negative test result prior to travel. Temporary restrictions were earlier placed by Canadian authorities due to the pandemic around the world. Passengers with old and new tickets can utilise them, subject to meeting terms and conditions of travel.

PIA special flights to repatriate Pakistanis from Gulf states

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will operate

special flights to repatriate thousands of Pakistanis stranded in Gulf countries due to a last-minute cancellation of flights by private airlines.

PIA's spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said that following the instructions by Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan and PIA Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Air Marshal Arshad Malik, special planes would be dispatched to the Gulf countries to repatriate the stranded Pakistanis before Eidul Azha.

"Thousands of Pakistanis have been stranded in the Gulf states as a result of last-minute cancellation of flights by private airlines," he added.

The spokesman said four flights of Boeing 777 had been planned to bring back the stranded Pakistanis from Qatar, while two more flights were scheduled for the next one or two days.

He said it was also decided to use Boeing 777 as an alternative flight to Airbus for Bahrain. "Boeing 777 aircraft has three times more capacity than Airbus plane," he added.

The PIA CEO has been closely monitoring the demand of Pakistanis in the Gulf countries. He said in a press release that the number of flights required would be adjusted according to the demand of the passengers.

Arshad Malik said the nation would always find PIA at the forefront of national duties. "Unlike foreign airlines, we can't leave our compatriots helpless abroad," he added.



A very BIG DAY (24 July 2021) in the history of Skardu airport... Today's PIA operated/handled 12 Airbus 320 flights from across Pakistan.... Flights arrived/departed from Karachi (02 flights), Islamabad, Lahore, Sialkot & Faisalabad....

SIAL elects New Chairman



Newly elected Chairman SIAL Khawaja Masood Akhtar and Vice Chairman Chaudhry Sarfraz Ahmed Bhatti are welcome by the Group Leader Sheikh Riaz-ud-Din, Former Chairman Babar Iqbal, Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, Tauheed Akhtar Chaudhry, Ashfaq Ahmed Chaudhry, Outgoing Vice Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen, Chief Executive SIAL Amjad Ali Toor, Former Vice Chairman Chaudhry Raza Munir, Naeem Yousuf Director SIAL Muhammad Javed Chaudhry, Mian Atiq-ur-Rehman, Syed Shahid Raza and Malik Faraz Akram Awan after resuming their charge at SIAL.

Newly elected Chairman Sialkot International Airport Limited Khawaja Masood Akhtar (Sitaralmtiaz) and Vice Chairman Chaudhry Sarfraz by Ahmed Bhatti have taken charge of their posts and started performing their duties regularly. Group leader Sheikh Riaz-ud-Din was among those who congratulated them. Former Chairman SIAL Babar Iqbal, Ghulam Mustafa Chaudhry, Toheed Akhtar Chaudhry Mayor Municipal Corporation Sialkot, Ashfaq Ahmed Chaudhry, Engr Khawar Anwar Khawaja, Outgoing Chairman Mian Naeem Javed and Outgoing Vice Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen, Former Vice Chairman Chaudhry Raza Munir, Naeem Yousaf, Director SIAL Muhammad Javed Chaudhry, Mian Atiq-ur-Rehman, Syed Shahid Raza, Malik Faraz Akram Awan and other directors presented bouquets to CM and VCM. Chairman SIAL Khawaja Masood Akhtar (SI) and Vice Chairman Chaudhry Sarfraz Ahmed Bhatti also attended the introductory meeting of the heads of all departments of SIAL. Retired Vice Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen and Chief Executive SIAL Amjad Ali Toor were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman SIAL Khawaja Masood Akhtar said that it was a great honour for him to be the part of SIAL as Chairman. SIAL has earned the name of Sialkot's business community with respect all over the world and has been instrumental in projecting a

positive image of Pakistan. Together with SIAL's professional and experienced team, we will further enhance the achievements of Sialkot Airport while striving to further nurture the foundations of corporate culture in this institution. Vice Chairman SIAL Chaudhry Sarfraz Ahmed Bhatti said that his doors are open round the clock for the betterment of SIAL. "We will work as a team and make SIAL an ideal airport and attract more airlines to start flights from here," he said. Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen hoped that Chairman Masood Akhtar Khawaja and Vice Chairman Chaudhry Sarfraz Ahmed Bhatti would use all their abilities to complete the projects started during their tenure while the airport was facing difficulties due to COVID. Chief Executive SIAL Amjad Ali Toor termed the SIAL team as an excellent professional team and assured the newly elected officials of all possible cooperation.



A view of the election gathering for Chairman SIAL shows Mr. Muhammad Yousaf (in above picture 2-L) who got 147 votes and Mr. Khawaja Masood Akhtar Secured 162 votes. The blow photo shows Mr. Fazal Jilani Chairman Air SIAL and Director SIAL with other guests on the occasion.

NCOC puts travel bar on people from 26 countries

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Saturday 12 June placed strict restrictions on travellers from 26 countries including India, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Indonesia and South Africa by placing them in C category.

In a separate development, the number of Covid-19 patients admitted to hospitals has fallen by around 60 per cent, with the positivity ratio remaining below 4pc.

An official of the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) said Pakistan had introduced three categories to deal with Covid-19. He said: "Countries in A category are exempted from the mandatory Covid-19 test, travellers from areas in B category require a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test that must be taken within 72 hours of the travel date while countries in C category are restricted and people can

travel only under specific NCOC guidelines."

According to a document available with media, the NCOC revised the inbound air/land travel categories with an immediate effect.

The document mentioned India, Iran, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Indonesia, Iraq, the Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Tunisia, Bolivia, Chile, Columbia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Namibia, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago as well as Uruguay in the C category list.

All other countries have been included in B category and passengers from these countries will be required to present a negative PCR test result.

Meanwhile, the NCOC data reported 1,194 new cases and 57 deaths in the last 24 hours.

As many as 2,990 patients are

currently admitted to hospitals compared to around 7,000 in April, indicating a drop of around 60pc. According to the official data, there were 42,717 active cases across the country on June 12, while 325 patients were put on ventilators.

Moreover, the country has been witnessing a positivity ratio of less than 4pc since May 30 when a rate of 4.05pc was reported at the national level.

Earlier on June 11, the NCOC had extended walk-in vaccination facility to around 39 million people in the age group of 18-30 years.

NHS ministry spokesperson Sajid Shah told media that the government wanted to inoculate people at the earliest so that herd immunity could be achieved. He said public sector employees would have to be vaccinated by June 30 and to facilitate the vaccination all relevant centres would remain open from 8am to 10pm daily, except Sundays.

Passengers suffer as foreign airlines cancel flights

The airlines scheduled extra flights and took bookings to Pakistan presuming ease of travel restrictions by authorities.

People intending to come to Pakistan or leave the country have been facing hardship and mental agony because of cancellation of their flights by several foreign airlines due to capacity restrictions, it emerged on Wednesday 30 June.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has taken notice of the large-scale flight cancellation and blamed foreign carriers for "overbooking", saying the agency had not cancelled a single flight.

The airlines scheduled extra flights and took bookings to Pakistan presuming ease of travel restrictions by authorities. However, they had to cancel them when the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) maintained its travel curbs i.e. to allow 20 per cent of the normal air traffic from all over the world with a few exceptions.

The NCOC has increased the capacity for only direct international inbound flights from Europe, Canada, the United Kingdom, China, Malaysia and some other countries to 40pc of the normal volume of passengers from July 1.

Passengers irked by the flight cancellations took to social media to vent their anger. The airlines did not give them the reason behind flight cancellations and, according to some passengers, an impression was given as if the CAA was



responsible.

"My family has had flights cancelled twice in a span of a week @qatarairways and for now they aren't able to adjust before July 26th," tweeted a social media user, Aniq Zafar.

In view of the outrage on social media, the CAA issued a statement to clarify its position. A CAA spokesman said on May 5 the CAA in compliance with NCOC directives had allowed foreign airlines coming to Pakistan to operate with 20pc of the total capacity and this permission had now been extended till July 15.

"CAA has taken notice of the excessive booking by foreign airlines for Pakistan," he said. "The responsibility of booking and suspension of flights lies on the airline concerned as CAA has nothing to do with cancellation or overbooking."

Meanwhile, an official of Qatar Airways told media some of its flights had been cancelled to comply with the NCOC's restrictions.

In view of the situation, the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has announced it will operate relief flights for Doha.

A PIA spokesperson said due to limited number of flights operated by Gulf-based carriers, a large number of Pakistanis were unable to travel to Pakistan from Doha and vice versa. "PIA has planned to operate four relief flights."

He said two flights were planned from Islamabad to Doha one each on July 5 and 12, while as many return flights from Doha to Islamabad were planned on July 6 and 13.

He advised intending passengers to purchase tickets at the earliest to avoid inconvenience as tickets were being sold on a first come, first serve basis.

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Lion Air Group and Sabre announce long-term partnership

A leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, recently announced an extended and enhanced agreement with Indonesia's Lion Air Group, to enable its airlines to make the most of every seat by increasing its ancillary revenue capabilities, and to improve its performance with new technology.

Lion Air Group and Sabre have a valued and long-standing relationship, with the carrier already using Sabre's SabreSonic Customer Sales and Service (CSS) as well as a suite of crew management, operations, and scheduling solutions to help optimize daily functions, reduce costs and plan strategically across the Lion Air group, which also includes Batik Air Indonesia, Wings, Malindo Air and Thai Lion Mentari. The group also distributes its inventory globally through Sabre's GDS platform.

The Jakarta-headquartered airline group, the market leader in Indonesia, which flies to destinations across Asia Pacific, is adding to its technological toolkit with an extra set of omni-channel tools from Sabre.

Additional ancillary revenue optimization solutions will provide end-to-end capabilities to easily create, and market ancillary offers across all channels, including differentiated seat price, and facilitating the payment and delivery of ancillary services across the airline group. This will provide significant opportunities to increase revenues through the sale of ancillary services via partner carriers, as well as enabling Lion Air Group to sell supplementary ancillaries at check in. The Group will also be able to create unique ancillary inclusions, selling and price points for each of its brands. Sabre technology will also provide Advance Shopping capabilities, for more accurate shopping results, and enable self-service features complementing the Automated Exchange and Refund capabilities, as well as the automation required to reaccommodate ancillaries to the new flights after a disruption.

Lion Air Group will also be using Sabre's Digital Workspace to enable faster processing of passenger requests on-the-

go, including using its tablet version to provide personalized customer service remotely away from a traditional check-in, gate desk, or workstation. Digital Workspace reduces user training, improves productivity and reduces errors. In addition, the Group will use Sabre Digital Connect, a comprehensive, micro-services enabled API Hub, to power eCommerce capabilities. Finally, a series of revenue integrity management tools to aid in the drive for additional revenue by detecting and optimizing less profitable bookings in real time in order to improve each aircraft's load factor.

"We're delighted to affirm and strengthen our long-standing relationship with the Lion Air Group in an agreement which is testament to the group's confidence in Sabre to deliver the advanced solutions needed to enable its airlines to capture market recovery, to solidify its leading position in the Indonesian marketplace and power future global growth," said Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions Airline Sales. "Now, more than ever, it is essential to have the right technology to enable a well-implemented ancillary-services strategy in order make the most of every seat, while ensuring that the changing needs and wants of every traveler can be met."

"The Lion Air Group is one of the largest entities in the global aviation market with evident rapid expansion, especially over the past two decades," said Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy, Group Strategy Director, Lion Air Group.

"Our Airline Group encompasses LCC, FSC and Hybrid models, so it is imperative that we have the right technology partner, capable of providing robust solutions across all airline segments. The Lion Air Group's 21-year relationship with Sabre and this renewed agreement with Sabre means we can continue to optimise our day-to-day operations and distribute content globally through Sabre's GDS, while simultaneously being able to focus on modernising our ancillary revenue capabilities as we look forward to playing a key role in the recovery of travel in our markets."

Qatar Airways resumes Phuket service with Boeing 787 Dreamliner



Qatar Airways has resumed flights to Phuket Island, Thailand, as the country reopened its borders for international operations for fully vaccinated travelers. The airline plans to deploy its Boeing 787 Dreamliner on the route.

Starting from July 2021, the air carrier will operate four weekly flights from Doha International Airport (DIA) to Phuket International Airport (HKT) with expectations to increase the total number of services to Thailand to 16 weekly operations. The airline already operates 12 weekly flights to Bangkok International Airport (BKK) this way providing a connectivity option for passengers traveling from Europe, the Middle East, and the United States.

The recent Qatar Airways decision to resume flights to Phuket is considered as "a significant milestone in the recovery of international tourism," Akbar Al Baker, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Qatar Airways, was quoted in the company's statement.

Phuket Island became the 93rd Qatar Airways destination, and the airline seems to be confident that Phuket could attract the high demand of travelers since it is considered to be one of the ideal destinations for the summer season of 2021.

Qatar Airways operates 30 Boeing 787-8s and 2 787-9 Dreamliners, 2 out of which are parked.

Turkish, US officials discuss security plans for Kabul airport



In this file photo taken on May 8, 2018, people arrive at the domestic terminal of the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.

Turkish and US military officials met in Ankara on Thursday June 24 to discuss plans for Turkish troops to continue securing Kabul's airport after the withdrawal of US and other Nato troops from Afghanistan.

Turkey, Nato's only majority-Muslim member, has offered to protect and run the Hamid Karzai airport, the main gateway into Afghanistan after the alliance pulls out of the country.

Turkey, which has around 500 non-combat troops in Afghanistan, is however, seeking US and other allies support for the mission.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said after a meeting with US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of a Nato summit that Turkey was looking for diplomatic, logistic and financial assistance from the United States to protect and operate the airport. Turkey also wanted Pakistan and Hungary to be involved in the mission, he said.

Defence Minister Hulusi Akar said a technical delegation from the United States had arrived for talks.

"We will continue to take on the responsibility of operating the Hamid Karzai international airport, which we have been doing for the past six years, if the necessary conditions are met," Akar said.

Discussions on this matter are continuing. No decisions have been reached for now.

Akar said: We want to achieve the best result for the interests of our country and for those of Afghanistan. That's what we are working for. Our aim is to continue working for the security, peace and welfare of our Afghan brothers.

Critics see Turkey's offer to operate the airport as being part of an effort by Erdogan's government to mend ties with the United States which have deteriorated over an array of disagreements.

Those have centred on Turkey's purchase of Russian weapons and US support to Syrian Kurdish fighters which Ankara says are linked to a Kurdish insurgency inside Turkey. They question the safety of the Turkish non-combat forces there.

World's largest aircraft lands in Karachi



Antonov An-225 Mriya in the background at the Antonov aircraft factory in Kyiv, Ukraine.

The world's largest cargo aircraft, known as Antonov An-225 Mriya, made a technical stopover at Karachi airport on Wednesday 23 June.

The Russian-made wide-body aircraft, which is powered by six turbofan engines and said to be the longest and heaviest plane ever built, took off from Afghanistan and landed at Jinnah International Airport a little before noon.

With maximum take-off weight of 700 tonnes, it has the largest wingspan of any aircraft in operational service.

Airport sources said the aircraft was scheduled to leave Karachi in the early hours of Thursday 24 June morning. They said the aircraft contained military cargo that was being transported from Afghanistan as part of withdrawal plan of the US and allied forces from the war-torn country.

Meanwhile, social media is abuzz with the arrival of the world's largest cargo aircraft in Karachi as people shared its photographs and videos on their Twitter and Facebook accounts.

All US, Nato troops quit key Afghan air base

American troops pulled out of their main military base in Afghanistan on Friday 9 July, leaving behind a piece of the World Trade Centre they buried 20 years ago in a country that the top US commander has warned may descend into civil war without them.

"All American soldiers and members of Nato forces have left the Bagram air base," said a senior US security official on condition of anonymity.



Personnel of the Afghan National Army stand guard at the Bagram air base after all the US and Nato troops left it on Friday 9 July.

Though a few more troops have yet to withdraw from another base in the capital Kabul, the Bagram pull-out brings an effective end to the longest war in American history.

The base, an hour's drive north of Kabul, was where the US military has coordinated its air war and logistical support for its entire Afghan mission. The Taliban thanked them for leaving.

"We consider this withdrawal a positive step. Afghans can get closer to stability and peace with the full withdrawal of foreign forces," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Reuters.

Other Afghans were more circumspect. "The Americans must leave Afghanistan and there should be peace in this country," said Kabul resident Javed Arman. But, he added: "We are in a difficult situation. Most people have fled their districts and some districts have fallen. Seven districts in Paktia province have fallen and are now under Taliban control." For the international forces, more than 3,500 of whom died in Afghanistan, the exit came with no pageantry. A Western diplomat in Kabul said the United States and its Nato allies had "won many battles, but have lost the Afghan war".

It was at Bagram, by a bullet-ridden Soviet-built air strip on a plain hemmed in by the snow-capped peaks of the Hindu Kush, that New York City firefighters and police were flown to bury a piece of the World Trade Centre in December, 2001, days after the Taliban were toppled for harbouring Osama bin Laden.

It was also here that the CIA ran a "black site" detention centre for terrorism suspects and subjected them to abuse that President Barack Obama subsequently acknowledged as torture.

Later it swelled into a sprawling fortified city for a huge international military force, with fast food joints, gyms and a cafe serving something called "the mother of all coffees". Two runways perpetually roared. Presidents flew in and gave speeches; celebrities came and told jokes. An Afghan official said the base would be officially handed over to the government at a ceremony.

The US defence official said General Austin Miller, the top US commander in Afghanistan "still retains all the capabilities and authorities to protect the force" stationed in the capital, Kabul.

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Data shows coronavirus seldom hits vaccinated people



The 'Covid Certificate' application of Switzerland for "Covid-19 certificates" for people who have been vaccinated, tested negative or recovered from an infection, is seen in this illustration picture.

Switzerland's move to allow large public events with 10,000-plus people from Saturday 22 June comes as government data appears to show vaccines are helping control new infections that are mostly hitting people who remain unprotected.

Only 209 of 180,000 new infections recorded in Switzerland between Jan 27 and June 21 were in people fully vaccinated with shots from Moderna or Pfizer and Germany's BioNTech, according to Swiss health ministry data provided to *Reuters* on Thursday 24 June.

The ministry said the vast majority of these so-called breakthrough cases -- infections of fully vaccinated people -- that were studied using genetic sequencing involved the Alpha variant, first recorded in Britain and which began spreading in Switzerland around the new year.

Just a single breakthrough infection has been reported for the more infectious Delta variant, first documented in India and now causing concern globally as it fast becomes the dominant variant.

"There is currently no evidence that the Delta variant leads to more vaccine breakthroughs than Alpha," a health ministry spokesman said.

However, there is emerging, and sometimes conflicting, data regarding the Delta variant's threat.

One study, from Scotland, indicated the Delta variant may double hospitalisation risk.

In another, Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines were judged effective against the variant, while yet another <https://> from a U.K. and Indian group concluded Delta's rapid growth was "most likely explained by a combination of increased transmissibility and immune evasion", including vaccine escape.

England, which has delayed fully

reopening as cases rise despite high vaccination rates, has trimmed the recommended gap between first and second COVID-19 shots to eight weeks from 12 for some groups of the population, because of the fast-spreading Delta variant and data showing protection is much higher after the second dose.

In Switzerland, 2.6 million of its 8.6-million-person population have received two doses of mRNA vaccines from Moderna and Pfizer, the only two available in the country.

Another 1.5 million people have received a single shot and are awaiting a booster.

100 new routes starting in July 2021

Routes selects 100 new air services set to start around the world in July 2021, looking at the planned frequency, start date and aircraft to be used.



As the peak northern summer travel season gets underway, airlines are continuing to target pent-up leisure demand and capitalize on traveler desire to reconnect with friends and family.

Many of the new routes beginning this month focus on short-haul beach and outdoor destinations, as well as locations that are free from quarantine measures and other COVID-19-related restrictions.

In Europe, tourism-dependent countries like Greece and Spain have eased entry requirements to lure back international visitors, and carriers have responded by adding service and new routes. Capacity to Greece is scheduled to rise by 83.3% in July compared to June, while capacity to Spain is set to increase by 64.3% over the same time period.

However, the rapid spread of the Delta coronavirus variant is casting a cloud over the season, with Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel leading calls for tighter controls on travel across

Europe.

Elsewhere, the US continues to see an influx of new domestic leisure-focused routes, while new services in China remain solely concentrated on domestic markets.

Analysis of data provided by OAG Schedules Analyser reveals that carriers around the world are collectively planning to launch more than 1,000 new routes in July, with an average distance of 1,743 km.

Routes has selected 100 services starting this month, paying closer attention to new international routes joining airline networks.

Given the lower number of new long-haul routes, among the more eye-catching services are Air France's flights between Paris Charles De Gaulle (CDG) and Denver International (DEN) and Emirates' operations between Dubai (DXB) and Miami (MIA).

All the data is supplied by OAG and is correct as of July 1, 2021.

Airbus records 52% jump in first half deliveries



In the first half of 2021, Airbus recorded a total of 297 aircraft deliveries to 67 customers, as announced by the manufacturer on July 8, 2021.

The planemaker's deliveries rose by 52% in comparison to 196 deliveries in the first half of 2020. This followed a strong performance in June 2021 in which the manufacturer delivered 77 aircraft to 44 customers and recorded 73 orders.

Airbus' first half deliveries in 2021, fall just 92 aircraft short of its aircraft delivery total of 389 aircraft in the first half of 2019. However, momentum from the manufacturer's June 2021 deliveries places Airbus within reach of surpassing its full year 566 aircraft deliveries score in 2020.

CAA asks five international airlines to compensate passengers

As the nation continues its fight against the coronavirus pandemic with another consignment of vaccine from China scheduled to arrive on Sunday 4 July, the government has not overlooked the Pakistani travellers stranded in other countries after some international airlines cancelled their flights.

Presuming ease of travel restrictions by the authorities, the airlines had scheduled extra flights to Pakistan and made bookings as well but then cancelled those flights after the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) maintained travel curbs considering the rise in Covid cases in some areas.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) took up the matter with five international airlines, directing them to accommodate the passengers on the earliest possible flights of the same or any other airline to Pakistan besides hotel accommodation and payment of damages to passengers.

The CAA also cautioned those airlines that it would be constrained to initiate regulatory action against them, which may include financial penalty, cancellation of one or more flights and revocation of schedule authorization.

In its letter to five airlines i.e. Qatar Airways, Turkish Airline, Emirates Airline, Etihad Airways and Fly Dubai, the CAA took up the issue of inconvenience caused to passengers by flight cancellations. "It has been seriously noted that a huge number of passengers have been affected by flight cancellations of your airline to Pakistan in recent weeks. Keeping in view the imposition of flight operation restrictions (i.e. 20pc of approved inbound scheduled flight operations) since 5th May 2021 and subsequent periodic extensions of the restrictions which were duly communicated to the airlines through timely NOTAMs, the reservations made by your airline after 5th May 2021 or such passengers on such flights, were unjustified," stated the aviation regulator.

"Such reservations should only have been made after confirmation of lifting of restrictions. A substantial number of the affected passengers have been facing great inconvenience and financial losses (in the form of hotel accommodation expenses, living expenses etc.) as they had planned their departure from foreign countries to Pakistan as per their reserved flight departure dates," the CAA mentioned.

About hotel accommodation and refund, the CAA in its letter suggested:

"Hotel accommodation, as and when required by such passengers, should be provided, especially to those passengers who do not have own accommodation. In cases where passengers choose ticket refunds, the tickets of the affected passengers should be fully refunded in addition to the payment of compensation for the damages suffered by them, in line with Article 22(1) of The Montreal Convention, 1999 / Rule 22(1) of The Fourth Schedule of Carriage by Air Act, 2012."

The airlines were informed that compliance reports on the directives should be provided at the latest by July 8, failing which Pakistan CAA would be constrained to initiate regulatory action that could include financial penalty, cancellation of one or more flights and revocation of schedule authorisation.

While maintaining travel curbs with 20pc of the normal air traffic from rest of the world, the NCOC had earlier recommended increased the capacity for only direct international inbound flights from Europe, Canada, the UK, China, Malaysia and some other countries to 40pc of the normal volume of passengers from July 1.

According to latest data of the NCOC, 34 deaths and 1,400 cases were confirmed in a single day and number of active cases was 32,319. Also, the positivity rate of cases, which was less than 2pc with around 1,000 cases just last week, climbed to 2.91pc with 1,400 cases being reported in past one day.

Meanwhile, another consignment of around two million doses of Sinopharm is expected to arrive here from China on Sunday 4 July as the government is making all-out efforts to boost vaccination.

'Fake entries in Punjab'

The Punjab primary and secondary healthcare department has taken notice of fake entries at Covid-19 vaccination centres.

According to a press release, the healthcare department secretary has constituted a fact-finding committee to monitor vaccine stocks. "Amid Covid-19 mass vaccination drive in Punjab, it was discovered that vaccinators and data entry operators were doing fake entries," the statement added.

An official of the Ministry of National Health Services, requesting not to be quoted, said vaccination staff could also be involved in fake entries but the trend was also witnessed among visitors to different vaccination centres.

"We have observed that some people come to vaccination centres and after registration they leave rather than going in the hall for vaccination. We have been trying to address the issue but people should understand that it is in their benefit to get them vaccinated," he said

**British Airways
fined £1.8 million
after an employee
was crushed by a
baggage tug**

She was hit by a passing baggage tug loaded with luggage at Heathrow's Terminal 5 when she was walking in the centre of a roadway used by tugs in the baggage hall, according to Southwest Crown Court.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive discovered that the centre of the roadway was being used as a walking route for at least 10-years. An HSE spokesperson said that it was an unsafe practice.

"The situation in the baggage hall at Heathrow Terminal 5 was an incident waiting to happen," said HSE inspector Megan Carr.

According to the Health and Safety Executive, the investigation also discovered notable failures in the general management of health and safety and workplace transport risks.

"British Airways failed to appreciate the serious nature of the risks to which its employees were exposed and as a result failed to take appropriate action to ensure they were properly protected."

British Airways was fined £1.8 million for breaking the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974. In addition, the airline was also ordered to pay £35,724.



Turkish Cargo delivers 100 million COVID-19 vaccines

As the cargo company that flies to more countries than any other, Turkish Cargo continues to fly uninterrupted and contributes to the fight against the pandemic for the return to better days.

Managing to grow under the leadership of Turkish Airlines board chairman İker Aycı and the executive committee and despite the shrinking sector during the pandemic, the global air cargo brand also carried out an important mission for vaccine transportation. With its strong fleet, wide flight network and great service quality, Turkish Cargo delivered 100 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to more than 35 countries around the world.

On the topic, Turkish Airlines chairman of the board and the executive committee, Aycı stated: "As the pandemic is an unprecedented threat to the human health, our Turkish Cargo brand is a significant advantage when it comes to combatting this threat. Our brand is able to carry vaccine doses to



more than 100 countries with its international air bridge, becoming a lifeline for countries that are located too far from the ones with vaccine production facilities.

"Proving itself with hundreds of vaccine transportation operations to countries all around the world ranging from China to Brazil, India to Democratic Republic of the Congo along with operations to our own country, Turkish Cargo showed its reliability by transporting 100 million doses.

"With these successful operations, we increased our global market share to 7.5 percent in pharmaceutical transportation and became one of the most active carriers

in vaccine transportation. Concurrent with the application of the vaccines which increases every day, we will continue to shoulder this responsibility until we win this battle against the pandemic."

450 tonnes

With the start of the vaccine distribution, Turkish Cargo carried 100 million vaccine doses, which is approximately 450 tonnes, from the vaccine production centres to destinations in its wide flight network with over 250 flights. Air cargo carrier transported the COVID-19 vaccines to key and certificated destinations such as Turkey, Baku, Rome, Belgrade, Copenhagen, Miami, Sao Paulo and Mexico City, creating a global corridor between more than 400 destinations. With 30 years of experience when it comes to special cargo transportation, successful brand proved its capability with vaccines that have different transportation requirements by carrying 7 different COVID-19 vaccines in containers with special cooling systems.

UK Airlines welcome government easing of travel restrictions for fully-vaccinated citizens

UK airlines have been quick to capitalize on changes to travel restrictions for fully vaccinated citizens and residents of England. Recently UK Transport secretary Grant Shapps announced that those returning to the country from countries on the UK's 'amber list' from 19 July would not be required to undertake 10 days quarantine and PCR tests on days 2 and 8. Instead, the rules of a return from a 'green list' country would apply to no quarantine and a single 'travel test' on day 2. The date of the rule change coincides with a broader 'opening up' of the country announced earlier in the week by Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

In response, British Airways was quick to advertise that the airline flies to 43 green and amber countries, the most of any UK airline. Chief executive Sean Doyle said: "We're pleased to see this common-sense approach which is already working safely for many other countries, but there is more work to do." In a statement released after the announcement Johan Lundgren, the

easyJet chief executive, said: "We have always said that vaccination is the key to unlocking travel and now millions will finally be able to reunite with family and loved ones abroad or take that long-awaited trip this summer. But with unnecessary testing staying in place, more needs to be done." easyJet's social media team also responded with a countdown to 19 July, a day which has been labelled 'Freedom Day' by Mr Johnson.

Responses from the wider aviation industry reported in The Guardian have also celebrated the news though there is cautious optimism and hopes that the lifting of restrictions will go further to apply to non-residents and citizens.

Tim Alderslade, CEO of Airlines UK, the industry body representing UK-registered carriers, said, "This is a positive move towards the genuine reopening the sector has been looking for. Opening up the market for the rest of the summer, this announcement will provide far greater opportunities to travel, do business and see family and friends, and enable many more of our customers to book with certainty. The

summer season essentially starts here."

Mr Alderslade did voice concerns that the industry has been raising on the ability to deal with and process the increase of travellers with such short notice at the country's airports. He stated: "Airlines look forward to working with Ministers and Border Force to ensure measures are in place by 19 July to provide a safe and streamlined experience at the UK border. We now urge the Government to continue this momentum by adding many more countries to the green list next week and removing onerous testing requirements at its next review on 31 July, thereby opening up more non-quarantine travel to all."

The next review of the 'traffic light' system of countries is expected in the week of 12 July with the expectation that more countries from the 'amber list' would be classified 'green'. This would add to industry optimism given that currently a minority of those under 35 years of age can be classified as fully vaccinated and so are currently restricted to quarantine upon return from popular holiday destinations such as France.



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Qatar Airways joins IATA's Turbulence Aware platform

Safety and environmental sustainability as its top priority. It is the first and largest turbulence data contributor in the Middle East. Sharing data on turbulence could help the airline industry cut carbon emissions.

Geneva - Qatar Airways and the International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced that Qatar Airways will become the first airline in the Middle East to join the IATA Turbulence Aware platform.

IATA's Turbulence Aware helps airlines mitigate the impact of turbulence, a leading cause of passenger and crew injuries and higher fuel costs each year, by pooling and sharing anonymized turbulence data from multiple participating airlines and thousands of daily flights. The real-time, accurate information enables pilots and dispatchers to choose optimal flight paths, avoiding turbulence and flying at optimum levels to maximize fuel efficiency and thereby reduce CO2 emissions.

Qatar Airways was the first Middle Eastern airline to participate in the Turbulence Aware initiative when it was launched as a pilot project in December 2018. Turbulence Aware has since expanded into a fully operational platform with over 1,500 reporting aircraft sharing real-time turbulence data. With today's announcement Qatar Airways has equipped 120 aircraft with the Turbulence Aware platform, with plans to expand to the rest of its fleet.

Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, His Excellency Mr. Akbar Al Baker, said: "With safety and environmental sustainability as our top priority, we show our commitment towards responsible flying. We continue to innovate as one of the world's leading airlines by adopting this new solution that combines technology and big data for more efficient flight planning not only to ensure a smooth journey, but also to reduce fuel burn, in turn lowering our carbon emissions. To make flying safer and more sustainable, the airline industry must leverage such digital innovations, and work together to share turbulence data for more precise forecasting."

IATA's Director General, Willie Walsh, said, "We welcome this major commitment from Qatar Airways in becoming the first Middle East airline to join the Turbulence Aware program. This will significantly increase the coverage



area for this important safety and operational initiative, providing real-time turbulence information not only to Qatar

Airways aircrew, but to all the other participating airlines. Qatar Airways has a long history of working with IATA and supporting us on multiple industry initiatives."

The challenge of managing turbulence is expected to grow as climate change continues to impact weather patterns. This has implications for both safety and efficiency of flight. Turbulence Aware is a significant improvement in turbulence reporting and avoiding excess fuel consumption.

Qatar Airways also see this as a contributor to helping the aviation industry tackle its carbon targets, alongside other initiatives like carbon offsetting, sustainable aviation fuels, electric aircraft, and general awareness about the impact of flying.

PayCargo adds payment solution for forwarders



PayCargo, has developed a tailored solution, called Freight-Pay, which will allow International Federation of Freight Forwarders Associations (FIATA) members to instantly make and receive payments between themselves, while benefitting from reduced transaction costs and heightened security features. FIATA members can register on the platform free of charge to make and receive payments globally.

"We have worked with FIATA to develop a cost-effective custom online payment platform to ensure their members have access to, and can benefit from, the ongoing digitalisation of the freight payment industry," said Lionel van der Walt, global chief commercial officer, PayCargo. "Freight-Pay simplifies transactions and reduces costs in a secure environment, supporting FIATA members to grow their business and improve efficiency and customer service delivery.

PayCargo remains focused on leading open collaboration projects that will benefit the broader industry as we continue to digitise."

Freight-Pay is end-to-end encrypted and allows FIATA members to create an account, send and receive money to and from other members worldwide, and provides them with instant visibility and access to transaction data.

"Freight-Pay is meant to simplify the freight forwarder's day-to-day business and we are excited to introduce this new tool to our members," said Dr Stephane Graber, FIATA director general. "As we dive deeper into the digital world, we must continue to equip our members with hands-on resources that make their daily practice easier. That's why we collaborated with PayCargo to develop the Freight-Pay solution, so that FIATA members can have an efficient and secure platform to transfer money among themselves at a reduced cost."



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American airlines flight delayed after teens refuse to wear face masks

A flight from North Carolina to the Bahamas was delayed overnight a slate of disruptions, including teenage passengers reportedly refusing to wear face masks during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

American Airlines flight 893 was scheduled to leave Charlotte, North Carolina, traveling to Nassau, Bahamas.

The flight was initially delayed several hours because of a maintenance issue with the first plane for the travelers, American Airlines confirmed in a statement to USA.

The airline directed all of the passengers to another gate at the North Carolina airport, but "due to non-compliance with federal face mask requirements, disruptive behavior and failure to adhere to crew member instructions, the Captain made the decision to deny members of the group boarding on the replacement aircraft."

The flight was pushed several more hours after baggage checked by the travelers was removed from the plane, in addition to other delays, according to the



airline.

The flight was ultimately moved to Tuesday because, after the set of delays, the plane would have arrived in the Bahamas after Immigration and Customs resources closed.

"We expect our customers to comply with our policies when they choose to fly with us, and we take action when that is not the case," American Airlines said in the statement.

The airline also claimed that the group was playing music with profane lyrics, yelling and using explicit language.

The travelers cited by the airline were identified as a group of teenagers traveling to celebrate their high school graduation, The Washington Post reported.

Breakaway Beach, a student travel company that organized the trip for the teenagers, alleged that the dozens of graduates on the flight were cast as "unruly" and "disruptive" over the actions of a few of its members, the company confirmed to USA.

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Traveling: FAA says traveler called in fake plane hijacking threats, another punched a woman holding a baby

Flights: No, you (still) can't bring fireworks. Yes, masks are required: What to know before flying

The company also said that, as the initial plane with maintenance problems sat outside of the airport, "some passengers including the students may have removed masks due to no air-conditioning/ventilation, quite unbearable conditions."

All of the passengers, including the students, were allowed to depart to the Bahamas.

American Airlines joins White House to distribute COVID-19

As part of the White House initiative to share at least 80 million US vaccine doses globally this summer, American Airlines moved 1.5 million coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine doses from Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) to La Aurora International Airport (GUA) in Guatemala City on a Boeing 777-200 aircraft. The shipment departed ORD this morning.

In close consultation with the White House COVID-19 task force, American's Cargo team worked with pharmaceutical partners and trucking logistics specialists to move the shipment of vaccinations from a distribution site in Kentucky to American's cargo terminal at ORD. The shipments were loaded onto the 777-200 and flew on a special donated cargo-only nonstop flight to GUA.

"We commend President Biden and the White House for their commitment to distribute life-saving vaccines to people around the world to bring an end to the



COVID-19 vaccine doses are offloaded from the aircraft after the arrival at Guatemala City (GUA).

COVID-19 pandemic, and our team is proud to have a hand in the effort and deliver vaccines to Guatemala," said American Airlines President Robert Isom. "We are grateful to our team for the work they've done throughout the pandemic to keep the country moving and deliver critical supplies."

American moved its first shipment of COVID-19 vaccines in December 2020. Since the beginning of the pandemic, American has leveraged its internationally

recognized climate-controlled shipping solutions to fly more than 9,400 cargo only flights moving everything from vaccines and pharmaceuticals to perishable and agricultural goods.

With specialised facilities and its team of certified life-sciences experts, American handles temperature-critical shipments in more than 150 cities in 46 countries, and also operates the largest temperature-controlled pharmaceutical shipping facility for airlines in the United States. This level of expert care has earned American the International Air Transport Association's prestigious Center of Excellence for Independent Validators in Pharmaceutical Logistics (CEIV Pharma) certification the premier distinction for airlines that have established the tools, procedures and staffing to ensure life sciences products are properly handled and arrive at their destination fully effective.

Airports One in a billion

Less than five years after its launch, a new billion dollar terminal at Bahrain International Airport is open for business. Alan Peaford took a tour and met the men behind the state-of-the-art facility.

Kamal bin Ahmed Mohammed is not a man given to exaggeration. As minister of transportation and telecommunication for Bahrain, when he describes the \$1 billion terminal at Bahrain International Airport as the “dawn of a new era” for the country's aviation sector, you know this is serious.

And, one step inside the spacious kilometre-long terminal building, it is clear that there is no hyperbole here.

The terminal project is the largest investment in Bahrain's aviation sector to date and one of the most important national projects in the kingdom's history, according to the minister.

The project also includes car parks for 5,500 vehicles, two world-class hospitality lounges for premium passengers, future-proofed contactless check-in kiosks, latest technology security, e-gates, and an expanded duty-free area surrounding a safe impressive children's games and play area to relax all travellers. There's even a hotel.

Both the minister and the CEO of the Bahrain Airport Company (BAC), Mohamed Yousif Al Binfalah, are clearly excited to be leading a walkaround of the new facility.

Ironically, the new terminal would have been complete and opened a year earlier, were it not for the Covid pandemic. The extra year has allowed the BAC project team 90% Bahraini thanks to a positive graduate recruitment effort when the project was first mooted to check and check again that the terminal was ready, first for its soft opening in February and then the inauguration later in the year.

“It was a fast-track project. We have a leader who is chasing us on every detail,” the minister said. “I think that was good to make sure that we delivered the project on time and to budget.”

“I think this is the shortest period [we could have taken] to build such a facility, especially when, with airports, you have multidisciplinary systems the mechanical system, the electrical system, the IT systems.”

“The integration was amazing. At the old terminal there were, maybe, two systems. Here there are 25. It is so sophisticated.”



Plenty of space: The new terminal will comfortably handle 14 million people.

The new terminal is vital for the island of Muharraq. It has housed aviation activities since the flying boats would tie up on their way to India and Australia from Europe; it was an RAF base and the first real commercial airport in the Gulf.

The historic original terminal building, most recently the headquarters of Bahrain's Civil Aviation Authority, is now being restored to its former glory, with all extensions demolished. It will become the VIP terminal for Bahrain's growing private aviation requirement.

In the middle of the growing Muharraq urban area was the airport's fuel farm.

“It was one of the government objectives to relocate the existing fuel farm, which happened to have housing developments around it,” said Binfalah. “We entered a partnership with the oil and gas holding company and, through that joint venture, we have built a new fuel farm, which is in the very late stages of testing and commissioning.”

The old terminal was built to handle four million passengers a year by the time Covid hit, Bahrain was seeing just short of 10 million. The new terminal will comfortably handle 14 million but the country's transportation masterplan still has proposals for a new airport in the future.

“The plot of land is allocated for the future airport. But I think, with everything that we've done on this platform, we have debottlenecked. All of the pressures that used to be put on us have gone and it allows everybody on the government side to take time to plan the future airport in a much more relaxed manner,” Binfalah said.

With the opening of the new terminal, Covid was still having an impact. Having remained open throughout the pandemic, BAA was well drilled in implementing the Bahrain Government protocols for PCR testing on arrival.

The huge baggage hall gave up a large section for the makeshift testing centre, which worked like clockwork to get

passengers through the system quickly and efficiently. “From day one, we decided that this airport would be business-friendly,” the minister said. “We said it would be hassle-free and would enhance the experience of our passengers.”

“Not only is the airport four times bigger than the old one and operating the latest technology, it also has our local touch to make sure that the whole experience is clear, sweet, easy to navigate and quick.”

With national flag-carrier, Gulf Air, already now based in the new terminal, passengers are beginning to pass through in growing numbers. But the leadership team can't wait until the international carriers start returning in force.

For their premium passengers, probably one of the most impressive lounges in the world awaits. It is more like a VIP club in a five-star hotel with its different sections, each with its own charm and purpose.

“We're not exaggerating when we say that we wanted this to be the best lounge, not only with its furniture and looks and feeling, but with the service and everything. It's designed completely differently to other commercial lounges,” the minister explained.

With live cooking stations and areas with baby foods, the lounge has a huge number of options.

The five-star feel is complemented by the artwork on the walls. Each is an original piece produced by leading Bahraini artists.

Throughout the lounge there is always something different including a pool table and foosball table. The highlight is a grand piano. “In peak times, we will have a pianist here,” the minister said.

A lift from the lounge heads to the hotel, with 60 rooms for relaxing transit passengers. There is a gym and, on either side, there are rooftop terraces one with a view of Manama, Bahrain's capital just a few minutes' taxi ride from the airport, and the other with a view of the runway. Both views can be enjoyed with a traditional shisha pipe.

“You wouldn't want to leave here,” I said the CEO. “That's what we say. We think we are a destination on the way to your destination,” he replied.

It may be a boutique setting but it is certainly grand. Bahrain is back on the map.

flydubai adds Sharm El Sheikh to its route network



Flydubai, the Dubai-based airline, has announced the launch of flights to Sharm El Sheikh. The carrier will operate three weekly flights to Sharm El Sheikh International Airport from 15 June. The route will become flydubai's second destination in Egypt alongside Alexandria Borg El Arab International Airport.

The launch of flights to the popular resort city follows the launch of several holiday destinations brings the number of seasonal routes served by flydubai to seven destinations including Bodrum and Trabzon in Turkey, Batumi in Georgia, Mykonos and Santorini in Greece and Tivat in Montenegro.

Ghaith Al Ghaith, Chief Executive Officer at flydubai, said:

"As more countries gradually lift restrictions on international travel, we are excited to grow our network and give passengers more options to travel this summer. Sharm El Sheikh has been a popular holiday destination for many years and we expect to see strong demand for travel from the UAE and GCC."

flydubai will restart its operations to Batumi in Georgia and Tivat in Montenegro from 25 June and both destinations offer UAE residents visa on arrival. Flights to Bodrum and Trabzon in Turkey will start from 04 and 24 June respectively with flights Mykonos and Santorini starting on 18 June. The carrier plans to start flights to Naples in Italy and Salzburg in Austria from July onwards.

Commenting on the announcement, Sudhir Sreedharan, Senior Vice President of Commercial Operations (UAE, GCC, Africa and the Indian Subcontinent) at flydubai said:

"With demand for travel returning we can see from the enquiries that we are receiving that our customers are keen to travel again and are starting to make their travel plans. Sharm El Sheikh is another exciting destination for our passengers to visit for their summer holidays.

UK pilot to pay £191,620 fine for falsifying pilot license entries



Pivate pilot David Harbottle has been convicted of three charges as of July 6, 2021, resulting in a £175,000 fine for false entries to his pilot's license and a misrepresentation of his pilot status.

According to a statement released by the UK Civil Aviation Authority, two charges pertain to deliberately recording falsified entries on his pilot's license and one charge is for misrepresenting his pilot status absent of a valid pilot's license on a total of seven flights.

"The Civil Aviation Authority's prosecution, the subsequent convictions and substantial fines show that the CAA and the Courts treat offending of this kind with the upmost severity," commented a spokesperson for the UK Civil Aviation Authority.

Harbottle, who is from Lancing, West Sussex, United Kingdom, was fined £100,000 for the two false license entries, as well as an additional £75,000 for carrying out pilot duties with an improper license, following a trial at Brighton Magistrates Court. Additional costs include payment of £16,500 to the Civil Aviation Authority and a victim charge payment of £120.

The total amount to pay, including fines and charges, amounts to £191,620.

Lufthansa Cargo deploys two Airbus A321s permanently converted into freighters

Lufthansa Cargo is investing in the expansion of its cargo capacities. From the beginning of 2022, the company will offer its

customers additional capacity in Europe by permanently converting Airbus 321 passenger aircraft into freighters. For this purpose, the twin-engine medium-haul aircraft will receive large cargo doors to enable the transport of containers on the main deck as well. Initially, the conversion of two Airbus aircraft is planned. These aircraft will be operated by Lufthansa CityLine on behalf of Lufthansa Cargo. They will be stationed in Frankfurt.

The growth for cross-border eCommerce shipments is forecast at around 20% per year for the next five years. Consumers expect ever shorter delivery times for their ordered goods. This is also increasing the demand for air freight connections within Europe.

The Airbus A321s (A321P2F) converted to freighters offer a payload of 28 tons with a range of 3,500 kilometers. The conversion allows the use of standardized cargo pallets on the main deck as well. The twin-engine Airbus A321 is one of the most versatile aircraft in its class and enables very efficient continental operations

Wizz Air Abu Dhabi adds Baku to its network



Wizz Air Abu Dhabi will commence flights to Baku, Azerbaijan starting on August 14, 2021.

The launch of the new route will see the airline now fly to 29 destinations. Azerbaijan is currently on Abu Dhabi's green country list meaning that travellers will not be required to quarantine upon arrival or when returning back to the UAE's capital.

Kees Van Schaick, managing director of Wizz Air Abu Dhabi said: "We are once again adding a new and exciting destination to our route network. Baku is a city like no other with a unique fusion of cultures offering a wide variety for everyone, from hospitality, history to F&B. As restrictions across the world start to ease, we continue to provide more travel options for those with a desire to travel."

How to keep cargo in the boardroom



Air cargo has undeniably stepped into the spotlight since the start of the pandemic. Traditionally sidelined by airlines, the sector has been responsible for providing the world with medical, safety, fresh produce and other vital supplies throughout the Covid-19 crisis while passenger transport ground to a halt.

Crucially, with cargo yield at unprecedented levels, it's been a lifeline for the aviation industry: airlines with a strong freight focus were able to quickly and efficiently adapt once the pandemic hit and grounded passenger fleets, adding new freighter schedules including more stopovers in existing schedules, translating into more revenue, and giving them a major head start in the race to capitalise on the critical profit generating opportunity that cargo presents.

Covid-19 restrictions forced passenger airlines into pivoting to adopt a cargo focus over the past year as a means to stay afloat. And despite being late to the freight game, many have started to use new innovations in the sector to get ahead of traditional cargo-focused airlines who are stuck using older technologies.

Although air cargo has been a roaring success during the pandemic, and its value has been demonstrated by the likes of the Suez Canal blockage, it's possible that the sector will be relegated from its elevated status when passenger travel begins to open up again in earnest. But to feel the full benefits cargo can offer, airlines should be seriously re-evaluating their business models, and keep freight in the boardroom long-term.

Given cargo's traditional status, keeping cargo's seat at the boardroom table and achieving investment in sector innovation and practices may be easier said than done. Maintaining momentum rests largely on these three factors:

Creating a mindset shift on the value of air cargo

The air cargo industry needs to demonstrate that the true value of cargo is not limited to mitigating risk and

maintaining revenue during a time of crisis. As an industry, we must prove that cargo is deserving of greater investment that it's a long-term strategic source of growth and innovation and a core profit engine rather than simply an ancillary service. Only a comprehensive mindset shift that ripples across the aviation industry with enough impact to reach the c-suite and, crucially, investors, will allow cargo to step well and truly into the limelight as we head into a new post-pandemic era for travel. Establishing a positive differentiation for cargo will hinge on elevating customer experience, providing transparency and incorporating purpose-built products that will ultimately benefit the business as a whole.

Enhancing profits and pricing

Creating the mindset shift towards cargo requires evidence of value. The vital role of cargo during the pandemic has prompted a re-examination of the traditional pricing model: by evaluating the value of shipments rather than focusing on passenger capacity alone, airlines can increase overall yields and profits. What's more, switching to a more dynamic pricing model will allow them to deliver a more innovative service that is able to react to real-time market demands.

Prioritising digital over legacy

Ultimately, the efficacy of providing the evidence for a mindset shift rests upon having the right systems to deliver real insight. Digitalising and automating air cargo systems, and moving away from the traditional, more antiquated paper-based processes means airlines can gain actionable insight from how their operations are running and make genuinely informed business decisions that serve customers better and impact the bottom line.

The pandemic has been the much-needed catalyst for airlines to open their eyes to the true value cargo has to offer. But to unlock its full potential, the sector needs nurturing long-term. Companies that keep freight at the top of boardroom agenda will be able to extract healthy profits from a supplementary revenue stream when passenger travel reenters the priority list. Those that fail to give the sector sufficient airtime might make it back to recovery on passenger income alone but will be missing out on a golden opportunity for growth.

Korean Air vows to reduce cosmic radiation exposure for aircrews



South Korea's biggest air carrier, Korean Air, has reportedly vowed to reduce cosmic radiation for its aircrews. The move came after several members of the airline's flight crew developed leukemia.

Korean Air's labor union and management held talks in June 2021 about cosmic radiation and problems it causes, the insider sources familiar with the matter told the Korean Bizwire on July 4, 2021.

Following talks with labor unions about the dangers of cosmic radiation exposure, Korean Air said it would start a new program that would automatically calculate crew members' radiation exposure and switch flight schedules accordingly to reduce the cosmic radiation exposure.

What is cosmic radiation?

Cosmic radiation is one of the natural forms of radiation. It is generated by either the explosion of supernovas in the distant universe or by the sun.

During air travel, the amount of cosmic radiation passengers or flight crew are exposed to can differ depending on the latitude and altitude of the flight, the timing of the flight, and the amount of solar radiation due to solar activity. According to Korean Air, the amount of cosmic radiation exposure during short and long-haul flights is known to be around 0.001 - 0.003 mSv and 0.004 - 0.005 mSv per hour, respectively.

People working in air transport were found to have "statistically significant higher ratios of other, ill-defined cancer incidence compared to their respective reference groups", according to the Cancer Incidence Among Air Transportation Industry Workers Using the National Cohort Study of Korea by Wanhyung Lee, Mo-Yeol Kang, and Jin-Ha Yong in August 2019.

AeroTime News reached out to Korean Air for comment and did not receive a response at the time of publication.

SIAL to promote tourism

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between Sialkot International Airport Limited and Discover Pakistan, Pakistan's first TV channel for the promotion of tourism. Mian Naeem Javed Chairman and Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kazmi, President of Discover Pakistan signed the agreement. Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen, Human Resource Manager Discover Pakistan Khizra Ashraf, Business Development Manager SIAL Aamir Yaqub and Public Relations Advisor SIAL Abdul Shakoor Mirza were also present on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kazmi, President Discover Pakistan, said that the business community of Sialkot has completed a number of mega projects with its own help and is successfully running them to make Sialkot. In addition to exporting world class products across the globe, a new style is being identified by the Sialkoties. Sialkot International Airport is one of the most important and great projects about which the world is in dire need of full information. Since his channel has started working with a commitment to project a positive image of Pakistan, its management will promote such successful projects free of charge and make documentaries on important destinations to promote tourism in the entire region. Expressing his views, Mian Naeem Javed signed a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the management of Discover Pakistan, especially the President of Discover Pakistan, Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kazmi, to take steps for the promotion of tourism in collaboration with Sialkot International Airport Limited. He thanked Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kazmi for being a partner of his Company with SIAL and provided practical proof of being an ambassador of Iqbal city. Mian Naeem Javed hoped that this cooperation between the two institutions would provide ample opportunity to introduce the tourist destinations of Gujranwala region and Azad Jammu and Kashmir and highlight the positive activities here.



The then Chairman Mian Naeem Javed and President of Discover Pakistan Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Kazmi signing a MOU between Sialkot International Airport Limited and TV channel Discover Pakistan to promote tourism in the region. Chaudhry Muhammad Afzal Shaheen and Human Resource Manager Discover Pakistan Khizra Ashraf are also present.



UAE's Royal Aircraft Maintenance Company (RAMC) based in Dubai and Malta's AVIET will establish aircraft Maintenance, Repair, Overhaul (MRO) facility at Sialkot International Airport under European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) License starting with Line Maintenance. Subsequently, capacity will be enhanced to undertake components, engine and aircraft maintenance under their license and certifications.

RAMC shall bring in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) along with their technical expertise for this joint venture. Picture show Mian Naeem Javed signing the MOU.

PIA starts Air safari flights from SIAL

In pursuance of the vision of developing tourism in Pakistan and particularly in the region, with the continuous efforts of our Chairman Mian Naeem Javed, we feel immense pleasure to inform you that Pakistan International Airlines has started its weekly flight (every Saturday) from Sialkot to Skardu w.e.f. 3rd July 2021, said SIAL spokesman.

PIA is offering the services to the people of Export Triangle comprising of Sialkot, Gujranwala & Gujrat at their door steps instead of travelling to Lahore or Islamabad. PIA's first flight PK-457 took off from Sialkot at 11:50 hours (local time) on 3rd July 2021 - in Sha Allah.

The passengers planning to stay at Skardu for less than a week, may return via Lahore (2 weekly flights) or Islamabad (daily flight) Now you can book your flight from SKT to Skardu.

Flight PK 457 - SKT-KDU

Day of Operation: Saturday Starting from 3rd July 2021 Time of Departure: 11.50.

Starting One Way Fare - Economy Class PKR-11,700

Starting Round trip Fare - Economy Class PKR-23390

Starting One Way Fare Business Class PKR-23090

Starting round trip Fare - Business Class PKR46,170

You can plan your return journey from Skardu to Sialkot, Lahore & Islamabad as per your convenience.

Skardu to Sialkot: Weekly 01 flight (Saturday)

Skardu to Lahore: Weekly 02 flights (Tuesday & Sunday)

Skardu to Islamabad: Daily flight

Enjoy your ride to the spectacular beauty of Gilgit Baltistan.

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Brexit bedevils pandemic - hit UK

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

Five years on, Brexit bedevils pandemic-hit UK now. Among the G-7, (a self-coined title by the member states, although not recognized by the world community, as such). The *raison d'être* behind, has been their proclaimed riches or economic prosperity through which more often than not, they use to achieve their Machiavellian goals while dealing with countries, outside their ambit. However, despite their hegemonic position, advanced scientific technology and medicinal research, they have been able to overcome only minimally, the travail of the pandemic Covid-19, which is taking new and severer forms every six months, in these countries. They have been involved or entrapped in the outbreak of Corona-virus, more than the rest of the less developed world. The worst hit among the G-7 member states have been Italy, France, Germany, UK and USA. They have even given birth to new pandemic forms such as UK-Virus which has badly affected the world community. It has hit the life of mankind and the economy too, including the country UK itself. Some friends living in Italy, UK and France have gone so far to tell me that their governments have intentionally got rid of their old people whose utility in society had diminished and who are in vast majority in their demographic proportions and are considered as a burden on their worsening economic plight. Loneliness or segregation created by Covid - 19 among these old people living in 'old-age homes' and with their already lowered immune system due to old age-factor; have been thought better to get eliminated earlier than their remaining-expected span of life. Economy of UK has also badly suffered due to the persistent Covid - genie, of which fourth face has emerged from the most populous country India. The most dangerous variant killer as referred to 'Indian Delta-virus' has emerged dangerously, since India has got the most



poorest combatant capability in their people, lack of respiratory cylinders and the pitiable position of admission in their hospitals, with the result that their patients have been dying on the roads outside their hospitals as widely displayed by the international media.

Minister Boris Johnson, himself from an ethnic origin, asserted on 23rd June 2021 and extolled Britain's decision to have left the rest of main Europe, which in one of my previous articles; I had opined as commercially detrimental for the solidarity of the whole region of EU from commercial point of view. With "the decision to take back control of destiny", five years after a decisive 'Brexit' referendum, political, economic and social aftershocks have been felt in Britain. The Corona virus has put the death nail on the European business and economy and consequently upon the rest of the connected world. The pandemic has literally placed a mask on progress, innovation and an immense trade deficit, caused by the fresh referendum in UK in favour of Brexit, with a slim majority voted to end the five decades of integration with the European mainland. It is LIKE losing the final football 'European Cup match' by England, by just one miss of the kick to the goal and the unsporting reaction of the British people after the defeat. International public saw the most ill-

mannered behavior of the British public against the Italian viewers by beating them and violent protests for nothing, on their roads annihilating all civic norms of a claimed civilized society. It is in fact a shame for the game 'football'.

Air- Flights from Pakistan to and from have been stopped singularly by the UK aviation authorities. This has also adversely affected business of aviation in Pakistan, affected the claimant passengers and has no less badly affected our nascent 'Sialkot International Airport', being run by private sector which has to thrive now on an decreased business. The case has been of a winning-loss to the tune of one billion rupees, as commented by the ex-Chairman of SIAL, within the three month's complete due COVID-19 and now the extending UK's closure of flights to Pakistan will have to be borne out, albeit with a bad taste.

The benefits promised by Johnson for a newly invigorated "Global Britain" remain a work in the offing while the UK's own cohesive unity is at risk from an emboldened nationalist movement in pro-EU Scotland. But the conservative prime minister, who rode to power after years of post-referendum political paralysis, remains upbeat. "Five years ago the British people made the momentous decision to leave the European Union and take back control of their destiny, said Johnson; now as we hope to recover from this pandemic, we will seize true potential of our regained sovereignty to unite and level up whole of United Kingdom; his government got the Brexit done as we have already reclaimed our money, laws, borders and waters" he said. In reality, Britain remains bound by realms of EU-era legislation, its fishermen are in the uproar, and its farmers are crying betrayed, over the new trade deals. Britons voted by a narrow margin of 52-48 to leave the EU. A new "ServantaComRes" poll found that if the referendum were repeated today, the result would be 51-49 in favour of staying in. But when asked if the UK should now join the EU, 51 percent disagreed. "I think that whatever happens, whether it's going to be good or bad, it is better to have our future in our own destiny, a 60-year-old musician Stephen Clark said in Boston, eastern England, which recorded Britain's highest pro-Brexit vote in 2016. But for the majority of Scots who voted to stay in the EU, the question of national destiny rings equally loud. A silent majority of Scots aspire for an independent and separate state. Wish them a stable future, in either of the situations.



Exit of Britain from EU named as 'Brexit'

ICAO announces new Resource Package for countries establishing COVID-19 Travel Corridors



International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has released a new implementation package (iPack) on Establishing a Public Health Corridor (PHC) to assist countries seeking to establish public health travel corridors during their COVID-19 recovery phases.

Composed of guidance material, support personnel, training, and other resources, the new travel corridor iPack is fully aligned with the latest recommendations issued by the ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), and with the guidance developed jointly by ICAO, the World Health Organization (WHO), and other contributors in the UN aviation agency's new Manual on Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures (Doc 10152).

Dr. Fang Liu, ICAO Secretary General, explained: "This initiative has greatly benefitted from the continuous feedback which we've been receiving from our Member States through our COVID-19 monitoring and coordination platforms and other feedback mechanisms. It expands on the guidance already developed by ICAO in this area, and provides access to training courses, a practical hands-on workshop updated regularly with the latest scientific evidence, and a dedicated subject matter expert to consult on the participating countries' planning and progress."

ICAO said its COVID-19 iPacks have served as key global pandemic resources during countries' air transport recovery efforts in areas such as safety risk management, facilitation, aviation



Dr. Fang Liu, Secretary General, ICAO

security, and airport re-openings that was implemented through its Technical Cooperation Bureau and supported by several donor States and organizations.

Salvatore Sciacchitano, ICAO Council President, emphasized: "National authorities taking advantage of the new PHC iPack will gain access to the latest PHC best practices already identified by other countries, including on the design and conduct of effective gap analyses against the latest guidance issued by ICAO, the CART, and the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA)."

"The iPack will also aid countries' efforts to determine a multi-layer pandemic risk management strategy in accordance with current mutual recognition and global harmonization objectives, and to keep their PHC planning, approaches, and outcomes continuously updated," Sciacchitano stressed.

American airlines announces new MIA winter routes



American Airlines is adding two new international destinations and six new domestic routes from Miami International Airport (MIA), further solidifying its position as the largest airline at MIA, operating 341 peak daily flights this winter. American is adding two new international destinations in Mexico and Colombia in December. Six new domestic routes launch this winter, further connecting South Florida to the broadest global network. "With more than 30 years of service, American is and will always be Miami's hometown airline, and we are proud to strengthen our footprint at our MIA hub later this year," said Juan Carlos Liscano.

Qatar Airways Cargo joins Pharma.Aero



Qatar Airways Cargo has become a member of Pharma.Aero, a worldwide platform catered to excellence in pharma transportation. Both organisations share a common goal of achieving excellence in reliable end-to-end air transportation for pharma shippers. Through the membership, the airline will also participate in Pharma.Aero's board meetings and focus groups to contribute its expertise.

The non-profit organisation with its headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, brings added value for the shipper by placing them as strategic priorities of Pharma.Aero, providing insights into the capabilities of the air cargo industry, as well as facilitating direct collaboration with the different air cargo stakeholders in the supply chain.

Guillaume Halleux, chief officer for cargo at Qatar Airways said, "Collaboration is vital to strengthen the pharma supply chain integrity. The full membership with Pharma.Aero will allow us to share and receive market knowledge and also collaborate with different air cargo stakeholders in the supply chain which will ultimately lead to continuous improvement of life science, medtech and the pharma air cargo supply chain. We look forward to collaborating with Pharma.Aero members and excel in offering a reliable end-to-end air transport and seamless cool chain."

Nathan De Valck, chairman of Pharma.Aero, said, "In the past months, though they were volatile for the entire industry, we expanded our global network and raised awareness of the need for global collaboration within the industry. The onboarding of Qatar Airways Cargo one of the world's leading cargo carriers underlines our worldwide impact as a neutral collaboration platform for the global air cargo industry and pharma and life science sector."



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Railways freight revenue hits record Rs18.76bn in FY21

A comparative study of Pakistan Railways (PR) spread over a period of five years shows annual an uptick in freight revenue, with Karachi division generating record freight revenue of Rs18.76 billion in the outgoing fiscal year (FY21).

The study, shared by Railways with media, shows that PR's Karachi division, which has been entrusted with the management of freight trains, generated an all-time high freight revenue of Rs18.76bn in FY21 and surpassed the collection of Rs17.75bn achieved in FY19.

The cumulative tonnage loaded in all freight wagons during FY21 stood at 6.40 million tonnes, which is the highest since FY94, while surpassing the previous best of 6.321m tonnes in FY19. In addition, Karachi division loaded 215,291 freight wagons during FY21 unmatched since FY94 against the previous highest of loading 214,792 wagons during FY18.

A comparison of Karachi division's five-year freight performance kicks off from revenue generation of Rs10.48bn during FY17. The transshipment of coal to two 660 MW coal-fired power plants in Yousufwala from January 2017 kicked a new era for freight service, with burgeoning revenues. During FY18, FY19 and FY20, Pakistan Railways' Karachi division freight revenue escalated to Rs17.02, 17.2 and 17.75bn, respectively.

Multiple freight performance indicators shone through during March 2021. The loading of 20,000 wagons and revenue generation of Rs2bn plus per month are feats that were attained during the month of March 2021. It was only twice in the last five years that the freight service has generated Rs2bn plus in a month. The all-time monthly highest revenue of Rs2.114bn was generated in March 2021 while surpassing the previous best of Rs2.04bn achieved in October 2019.

The past five-year data reveals loading of 20,000-plus wagons seven times besides highlighting the achievement of this benchmark thrice in FY21 (December 2020, March and April 2021). During March 2021, loading of 22,566 wagons was carried out thereby outshining the previous best of 21,664



achieved in July 2018.

Yousufwala coal trains are the hallmark of freight trains departing the loading terminals from Karachi and they chip in around 55-60 per cent in overall freight revenue generation. Since the inception of this service in January 2017, 4,880 such trains had transported coal to Yousufwala. Each train comprises 40 advanced ZBKH hopper wagons having a cumulative tonnage capacity of 2,400. On average, during the last five years, 3.2 coal-laden trains from Karachi have departed for Yousufwala per day.

FY19 depicted promising statistics for Yousufwala freight trains as 97,426 wagons were loaded, maximum number of 1,227 trains were dispatched and an earning of Rs10.68bn was achieved that occupied a significant chunk of 62pc in overall annual freight earnings. July 2018, the first month of FY19, ended in the loading of a maximum number of 12,330 wagons and processing of 155 trains that was followed by the loading of 11,124 wagons and processing of 138 trains during March 2021.

The monthly earning from Yousufwala service hit its climax at Rs1.365bn in March 2021. On March 27, 2021, an unprecedented per-day wagon loading of 392 for Yousufwala trains was achieved.

Apart from coal-laden trains, the ZBFC wagons, flat in shape, carry containers, ZBKC wagons carry coal and rock phosphate and two ZBC cargo trains 501Up and 503Up transport multiple items to upcountry from Karachi.

The highest number of all such wagons was loaded in February 2021 that stood at 13,104 against the previous highest of 12,344 in July 2016. The all-time highest revenue from these services stood at Rs.895m during November 2019.

Federal Minister for Railways Mohammad Azam Khan Swati has twice

visited all the loading terminals in Karachi and directed for their upgradation to that of state-of-the art facilities so that all freight-related proceedings including loading can be conducted as per modern standards.

While talking to the media during his first press conference in Karachi on Jan 9, 2021, he vowed for doubling the freight revenue of the department and all efforts are now being made to achieve the minister's targets in freight service.

Exports to China up by 34pc: Razak

Despite the negative impact of Covid-19, the country has recorded an increase in exports to major markets, said Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razzak Dawood on Tuesday 6 July.

"I'm pleased to share that our exports have done quite well in our major markets," Mr Dawood tweeted, adding that the country's exports to China increased by 34 per cent to \$2.33 billion during the fiscal year 2020-21 as compared to \$1.74bn exports in the previous fiscal year.

This showed an increase of around \$586 million exports to China during FY21.

Likewise, the adviser said, exports from Pakistan to Germany grew by 19pc to \$1.5bn over the previous year's \$1.3bn while exports to the Netherlands increased by 23pc to \$1.2bn as compared to the previous year's \$1bn.

With a 28pc increase in exports to Poland, Pakistan also performed well by recording \$308m export in FY 2020-21 as compared to \$241m FY 2019-20, he added.

He said the exporters accomplished achievement despite the problems created by Covid-19 pandemic and they deserved credit for it. He also lauded the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce and Trade and Investment Officer in different countries for their contribution towards promotion of country's exports.

The adviser earlier said Pakistan's exports to the US increased by \$1.45bn to reach \$5.2bn as compared to \$3.7bn export of last year.

He said this was for the first time that Pakistan's exports to the US crossed the \$5 billion mark.

Pakistan hopes to achieve mango export target

Pakistan has exported over 50,000 tonnes of mango during the first five weeks (May 25 to June 30) of the season and hopes that its export target of 150,000 tonnes would be met in the next two months despite mounting challenges presented by a pandemic-hit world.

Mango exports peak during June but decline for a month or so before late varieties (such as White Chaunsa) renew the momentum that maintains itself through August.

Though exporters hope that the target may be met, the value (targeted \$160 million) may not be achieved as buying power in the world has declined substantially due to Covid-19 and expensive fruits like Pakistani mango may lose some share in the high-end markets.

Major markets so far (absorbing over 30 per cent) are Iran and Afghanistan, followed by the Middle East. Last year, Pakistan exported 125,000 tonnes and earned \$72m. This year, it aims at doubling the income with around 15pc increase in volume.

Counting the challenges, Waheed Ahmed, patron-in-chief of the All Pakistan Fruits and Vegetable Exporters and Merchants Association, says that air space has become a huge hurdle. "The airlines around the world are mostly grounded, hardly operating at their 30 to 35pc capacity. Under these circumstances, it is next to impossible to get space for mango for markets like Canada, UK and USA or even relatively closer Europe. What made the mango travel doubly difficult is the recent increase in freight charges. In order to make up for their losses, the airlines have increased freight charges by Rs8 to Rs10 per kg on July 1, adding massive cost to export expenditures."

"The shipping lines contribute their own share in making exports expensive," Waheed continues. With trade reduction and low mobility of ships, availability of containers has become a huge hassle. Finding a propitious place (mango needs open top for quality issues) at the ship because of space pressure is yet another issue. All these challenges have slowed the pace of export heavily. Pakistan has been able to send mango to 35 countries, out of traditional 40 export destinations, but volumes have dropped and pace slowed down."

The United Kingdom, which left the European Union and mandatory hot water treatment with it (an EU restriction), was expected to provide better prospects for



Farmers packing mangoes into wooden boxes to supply to market.

export, but airspace issues and hike in freight seem to have robbed exporters of the potential advantage.

"Hot water treatment used to cost Rs6

a kg, which is saved in case of UK, but the benefit is neutralised by an increase in airfare and shrinking space in the airplanes. So, export to UK has not picked the pace as expected and numbers may not be different than what they were during the last year," says Muhammad Siddiq, an exporter.

About reaching the target of 150,000 tonnes this season, Arif Goraya, an exporter from Lahore, says, that hitting this target should not be a problem as Pakistan produced 2.3m tonnes this year and exporting 6-7pc of should hardly be a problem. "Pakistan is now trying to rope in smuggling to Iran and Afghanistan in formal export. Both these low-end markets can take that much volume. The issue is opening new and high-end market, not celebrate markets that has historically been extension of Pakistan's mango market.

Afghan transit trade pact extended for six months



Ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan is handing over a copy of Protocol-VI of APTTA 2010 to Afghan Commerce Minister Nisar Ahmed Faizi Ghoryani.

Pakistan and Afghanistan on Thursday 8 July extended the 'Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) 2010' for six months beyond May 11, 2021.

The extension was essential to facilitate uninterrupted flow of transit trade between the two countries and to provide sufficient time to technical teams to conclude negotiations on the new APTTA-2021, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

The 2010 agreement superseded the Afghanistan Transit Trade Agreement that was signed in 1965. The 1965 agreement granted Afghanistan the right to import duty-free goods through Pakistani seaports.

The 2010 APTTA allows both countries to use each other's airports, railways, roads and ports for transit trade along designated transit corridors. The

agreement does not cover road transport vehicles from any third country, be it from India or any Central Asian country.

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood and Afghan Minister for Industry and Commerce Faizi Ghoryani jointly chaired a virtual ceremony for signing of the 'Protocol-VI of APTTA 2010'. Secretary Commerce Mohammad Sualeh Ahmad Faruqi and Deputy Commerce Minister of Afghanistan also attended the ceremony.

The Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan along with the trade and investment counselor in Kabul represented the government at the ceremony held at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce in Kabul.

The two sides also agreed to meet in Kabul on the sidelines of the ninth APTTCA meeting to push forward the negotiations on APTTA-2021 and also to hold business and investment conference next month.

Mr Dawood and Afghan Minister Ghoryani appreciated the work of technical teams for the progress attained so far in the negotiations. They directed the technical teams to forge consensus on the outstanding issues in the new APTTA-2021, to ensure its conclusion, signing and notification at the earliest for the benefit of trade, transit, investment and connectivity between the two brotherly countries.

GSP+ conventions to be fully enforced: FM



Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi greets EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell prior to their meeting on Friday 18 June.

Pakistan has reaffirmed its pledge to fully implement 27 international conventions as part of its commitment to the European Union's preferential trade arrangement, the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+).

The commitment was conveyed twice recently first at the meeting of Pakistan-European Union Joint Commission held on Wednesday 16 June, but whose joint declaration was issued two days later, and during a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell on the sidelines of the Antalya Diplomacy Forum in Turkey on Friday.

The Foreign Office in a statement on Mr Qureshi's meeting with Mr Borrell said the foreign minister "reiterated Pakistan's firm commitment towards the GSP Plus preferential trade regime and effective implementation of the twenty-seven related international conventions".

Moreover, the joint statement on the Pak-EU Joint Commission meeting said: "The EU and Pakistan agreed to enhance bilateral trade, including by addressing issues that are hampering trade and investment, improving the business climate, and Pakistan's efforts towards full implementation of the 27 international conventions stipulated under the EU's unilateral trade preferences scheme, the Generalized Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+)."

Assurance conveyed to EU during Qureshi's meeting with Borrell in Turkey

"Pakistan acknowledged the extension of its GSP+ status as a mutually rewarding step and affirmed its full

commitment to fulfil its obligations under the GSP+," it added.

The GSP+ is a special trading arrangement that provides developing countries preferential access to the European markets by slashing tariffs to zero on most of the products. The countries benefiting from the scheme have to implement 27

international conventions related to human rights, labour rights, protection of the environment and good governance.

The EU describes it as a "special incentive arrangement" for sustainable development and good governance.

Mr Qureshi said the GSP+ had played an important role in the growth of trade between the two sides.

The EU is Pakistan's second most important trading partner. Pakistan's exports to EU were about 5.5 billion euros in 2020, which accounted for 28 per cent of the country's total exports.

Pakistan, which has ratified all 27 conventions, has been benefiting from the GSP+ status since January 2014. Its GSP+ status was extended for another two years in March 2020.

Pakistan's progress on the implementation of the 27 conventions has been mixed. Despite introduction of domestic legislation for the implementation of these conventions, various quarters have been raising questions over their implementation.

The EU has on number of occasions raised concerns about the overall situation of press freedom, the situation of civil society organisations and human rights defenders, gender equality, minority rights, and the death penalty.

"Pakistan informed about developments concerning the Journalist Protection Bill, the Forced or Involuntary Disappearance Bill and the Anti-Torture Law," the joint declaration said.

The EU raised concerns regarding the death penalty and the abuse of blasphemy laws, it added.

Mr Qureshi and Mr Borrell discussed the entire spectrum of Pakistan-EU

relations as well as global and regional situation, including the Afghan peace process and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The two also exchanged views on the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appreciating the EU's support, the foreign minister delineated the steps taken by Pakistan to effectively tackle the situation.

Mr Qureshi also briefed Mr Borrell on Pakistan's progress towards the comprehensive implementation of the Financial Action Task Force action plan and sought the EU's support in the review process.

He emphasized that at a time of rising Islamophobia, racism and populism, the international community must show a common resolve against xenophobia, intolerance and incitement to violence on the basis of religion or belief.

In the regional context, the foreign minister briefed on Pakistan's contributions to the Afghan peace process, and stressed that the conflict could only be settled through an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned political process.

Both sides urged all the Afghan factions to seize the historic opportunity presented by the peace process to settle the conflict through political means.

KPT cargo handling up 25pc

Amid global lockdowns relating to shipping operations and cargo handling, the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) saw an increase of 25 per cent in volume to 52.28 million tonnes (both import and export cargo) in the outgoing fiscal year compared to 41.84m tonnes in FY20.

Dry cargo exports rose by 9pc to 15.27m tonnes from 13.97m tonnes in FY20, KPT said in a statement issued recently.

According to the statement, KPT achieved highest-ever container handling of 2.29m TEUs (twenty feet equivalent unit) in the outgoing fiscal year.

Vessels' movement increased by 21pc to 1,845 ships while containers carriers were reported at 868 in FY21 compared to 744 in FY20.

Bulk cargo ships stood at 280 in the outgoing fiscal year as against 172 ships in FY20.



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航班号 Flight number	出发地-目的地 Origin-Destination	起飞时间-到达时间 Departure time-Arrival time	班期 Frequency	机型 Aircraft
CA945	北京-伊斯兰堡-卡拉奇 Beijing-Islamabad-Karachi	15:30-18:40-22:25	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	A330-200
CA946	伊斯兰堡-卡拉奇-北京 Islamabad-Karachi-Beijing	20:30-00:05-09:10	1,2,3,4,5,6,7	A330-200



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Gujranwala businessmen ready to invest in cargo train

The business community of Gujranwala has expressed its willingness to operate a cargo train on a commercial basis between Gujranwala and Karachi.

It has offered to pay the freight/rent with profit in advance for one year as the Pakistan Railways is already outsourcing the commercial management of loss-making trains.

The Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) has also sought to sign an agreement on a lease basis to develop the cargo terminal of the city's main railway station as a dry port for the transportation of containers carrying goods for export and import purposes.

The in and out of at least 500 containers between Gujranwala and Karachi daily has been a routine for long for which mainly the road link is being currently used. Moreover, Gujranwala which has 21,000 units and cottage industry and is the second largest business hub in the country after Karachi for having the most diversified industrial sectors, has not got connected with the motorway.

Apart from seeking approval of operating a cargo train on a commercial basis, the GCCCI has also offered the Punjab government to invest Rs3 billion on the construction of a 16-kilometre long link road to connect with the Sialkot-Lahore motorway (M-11).

GCCCI president Umar Ashraf Mughal told media that the chamber's proposal had already been approved by the Punjab chief minister and consultant had also been hired in this regard but the government had to provide Rs900 million for the acquisition of land for the motorway.

He said the chamber would register a company to make an investment in the project and the invested money would be recovered from the toll tax in eight to 10 years.

Mr Mughal said the chamber delegation had held a meeting with Federal Minister for Railways Azam Swati and discussed the matter of launching a cargo train between Gujranwala and Karachi and the deputy superintendent railways, Lahore had also held a follow-up meeting in Gujranwala after which a joint inspection was made at the cargo terminal of the Gujranwala railway station. It was found in the



The Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce and Industry has sought to sign an agreement on a lease basis to develop the cargo terminal of the city's main railway station as a dry port for the transportation of containers carrying goods for export and import purposes.

inspection that the station was much capacious and feasible for the commercial

cargo train which can increase the business, said the GCCCI head.

He claimed that Gujranwala's industry had been earning at least 2.5 billion US dollars through exports as well as saving more than 3 billion dollars in the shape of import substitution and contributing at least Rs40 billion in shape of taxes annually.

It is learnt that initially the proposal was made to launch the cargo train from the Wazirabad railway station for being located in the centre of golden triangle districts of Gujranwala, Gujrat and Sialkot but the cargo terminal was said to be insufficient compared to the capacity of the Gujranwala station's terminal.

Textile, clothing exports soar to \$13.7bn

Pakistan's exports of textile and clothing sectors posted nearly 19 per cent growth in the 11 months of current fiscal year (11MFY21) compared to the same period a year ago, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed on Saturday 19 June.

The growth in exports of value-added sectors contributed to an increase in overall exports from the sectors. One of the reasons for growth in these sectors is due to low-base of last year when export-oriented industries remained closed due to the Covid-19 lockdown and cancellation of orders from international buyers.

Total exports of textile and clothing were up 18.85pc to \$13.748 billion between July and May this year against \$11.567bn over the corresponding period in FY20.

On a monthly basis, export proceeds posted a growth of 41.14pc on a year-on-year basis to \$1.06bn in May 2021.

Exports of ready-made garments were up by 14.35pc to \$2.706bn in 11MFY21 against \$2.367bn over the corresponding months of last year. Knitwear exports were up 32.70pc to \$3.414bn against \$2.572bn over the corresponding months of last year. Exports of bedwear increased by 24.60pc to \$2.472bn this year against 1.984bn in FY20.

A growth of 28.54pc was seen in export of towels to \$838.507m in 11MFY21 against \$652.351m over the last year.

Similarly, in the value-added leather sector, exports of leather garments up by

9.92pc, leather gloves 19.08pc respectively. Exports of raw leather declined by over 17pc during these months.

In the non-value added sector, exports of cotton cloth posted a paltry growth of 0.97pc in 11MFY21 from a year ago. Similarly, exports of cotton yarn declined by 1.60pc and raw cotton 96.51pc. It clearly indicates that these raw materials were consumed mostly by the value-added sector as the government allowed duty-free import of these products.

Exports of cotton carded were up by 3.17pc and yarn other than cotton yarn by 20.24pc during the period under review.

Export proceeds of tents, canvas and tarpaulin are up by 15.54pc, art, silk and synthetic textile saw an increase of 12.26pc and made up articles excluding towels, bedwear went up by 23.43pc during the months under review.

Pakistan is one of the main suppliers of global surgical instruments. However, these instruments are re-marketed from western countries with famous brands. As a result, the export value of these products remain very less.

To bridge the shortfall in the domestic sector, the industry imported 775,428 tonnes of raw cotton between July to May against 472,015 tonnes last year, showing an increase of 69.52pc. Similarly, the import of synthetic fibre posted growth of 43.24pc as industry imports 419,459 tonnes this year as against 269,881 tonnes.

Erdogan launches work on controversial Black Sea canal



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan speaks during the groundbreaking ceremony of Sazlıdere Bridge over the planned route of Kanal Istanbul on Saturday 26 June.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Saturday 26 June launched the start of construction on a controversial canal aimed at easing congestion on the Bosphorus but which critics say courts environmental disaster.

The “Canal Istanbul” is a gigantic waterway running parallel to the Bosphorus Strait connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara and the Mediterranean.

“Today we are opening a new page in the history of Turkish development,” Erdogan said during the ceremony to lay the foundation stone of a bridge forming part of the project. The 45 kilometre long waterway will connect the Black Sea to global maritime networks, a strategically important issue at the heart of European geopolitics and conflicts for centuries.

Erdogan's detractors accuse him of clinging to a project that will lead Turkey to ecological disaster and debt as massive as it is unnecessary. Erdogan devoted almost all of his speech to defending the project.

Citing the risks posed by the rising number of ships passing through the Bosphorus, Erdogan said the project was mostly aimed at “ensuring the safety of (Turkey's) citizens in Istanbul” and allowing the country to take “a more important place” in international trade.

Dismissing critics, he said: “All stages of the project have been designed in accordance with science.” The project has also sparked criticism abroad, mainly in Russia, a country that fears seeing easier access to the Black Sea for Nato forces.

Under the Montreux Convention governing navigation through the Bosphorus Strait the only natural maritime access to the Black Sea countries that don't have a coastline to the

waters must give advanced notification of plans for their ships to pass through the region. And then, the vessels can only stay for a limited time.

“This project in no way violates Montreux,” said former Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, who spoke before Erdogan at the ceremony.

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. 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.

Thailand prepares for Phuket reopening despite Covid surge



AN empty swing hangs from a tree on an empty beach at Patong, southern Thailand.

Thailand prepared on Wednesday 30 June to reopen the holiday hotspot of Phuket to tourists quarantine-free, even as the country registered its highest single-day death toll from Covid-19.

High hopes have been pinned on the so-called “Phuket sandbox” a model that will allow vaccinated travellers to visit without a quarantine period in an effort to revive Thailand's battered tourism industry.

But the lead-up to its July 1 launch has been plagued with uncertainty amid delays to government approval.

Thailand has been trying to contain a third wave of the coronavirus by imposing restrictions in the capital Bangkok and its suburbs, which have seen the Alpha and Delta variants spreading. Wednesday 30 June saw the kingdom's highest single-day death toll yet of 53.

However, authorities say the Phuket sandbox will go ahead as planned. About 250 passengers are scheduled to land on the island on Thursday on four flights, according to Covid-19 taskforce spokesman Taweasin Visanuyothin.

The return of tourists will bring welcome relief for businesses. Thailand usually welcomes about 40 million tourists every year and about 18 percent of the country's GDP comes from the sector.

But for over a year Phuket's pristine sandy beaches have been unusually quiet and more than 80 percent of hotels have been shuttered.

To prepare for the reopening, two-thirds of Phuket's population have been inoculated.

In the notorious Patong Beach neighbourhood once humming with a thriving nightlife scene vendors were busy preparing for a return to action.

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Tourism can pull country out of financial crisis: Imran



VISITORS cross a bridge in Naran valley on Monday 28 June after the provincial government lifted the ban on tourists imposed due to Covid-19.

Prime Minister Imran Khan has said tourism offers excellent potential for boosting the country's revenue and employment opportunities and it is his vision to keep Pakistan clean and green to attract tourists from across the world to this heavenly land.

"Switzerland is half the size of our northern areas and has no match with the natural beauty of our landscape, yet it earns \$80 billion from tourism whereas our total export is of \$25 billion," the prime minister said while addressing a gathering of Tiger Force volunteers in Naran, the commercial hub of Kaghan valley, on Monday 28 June.

Mr Khan, who spoke for hardly 11 minutes amid tight security measures put in place by the law enforcement agencies in and around the tourist resort, remained entirely focused on the tourism potential that according to him could pull this country out of the current financial challenges.

"I have visited Switzerland and Austria and could never compare their beauty with our heavenly lands which are more beautiful and exotic in nature. But I would admire their cleanliness and true enforcement of laws, as nobody there could break the laws for his personal gain," he said.

The prime minister told the locals to pay due attention and care to all the tourist spots for the prosperity and development of the country. "Insha Allah, we will earn such big money and people will get employment with a rise in tourism that they would not need to leave these areas

looking for jobs," said Mr Khan.

He advised his party leaders elected to the assemblies from the area to protect this land and trees, as they would ultimately enjoy maximum benefits when their area would progress because of tourism.

The prime minister said the Kaghan valley had suffered deforestation in the past but he was happy over the tree plantation campaign that restored the beauty of the areas. "The younger people sitting in front of us are our future and we have to leave such a Pakistan behind for them so that the coming generations would admire our efforts in preserving nature and soothing the environment," he said.

Pointing toward youngsters, Mr Khan said their predecessors didn't do justice with Pakistan. They did not protect trees



and destroyed jungles, but he was pleased that the divisional administration was adopting measures for their protection, he said. "I have toured the world but have not witnessed such a beauty that has been bestowed by Allah upon this Kaghan valley," he said.

He directed the administration to adopt tough measures to protect forests and ensure cleanliness in Kaghan valley. For this purpose, he said, the administration could hire locals as guards. Mr Khan said: "As trout fish is rapidly becoming an endangered species, the administration should take measures for its preservation."

Mr Khan also released trout fish in the Kunhar River during his daylong visit to area where he launched emergency response services for tourists and planted trees along the river bank. He also distributed 550,000 biodegradable bags and motorbikes among the community rangers.

Tourism potential

IT is a truth universally acknowledged that Pakistan's tourism industry is a potential shot in the arm for the country's deflated economy. On Monday 28 June, Prime Minister Imran Khan said as much to a gathering of Tiger Force volunteers in Naran. Surely, there is no dearth of breathtaking natural landscapes in the country, and few can compete with traditional Pakistani hospitality. Why then should international tourism be confined to a few areas in the country and Pakistan remain excluded from the list of nations that people want to visit at least once in their lifetime? As with other industries, tourism too cannot flourish without proper planning, investment, marketing and sound government policies. Despite the growth of the domestic tourism industry, many popular destinations lack modern amenities such as high-speed internet and cashless banking, at times even a proper Basic Health Unit. Moreover, the country remained in the grip of violent elements for a number of years. Large-scale military operations eliminated the militants but not

before they had dealt a severe blow to the tourism infrastructure, leading potential travellers to perceive Pakistan as unsafe. In more recent times, a European ban on the national flag carrier over the dubious licences issue has also raised concerns.

Meanwhile, an unregulated hotel industry in many areas has harmed local ecosystems and marred the beauty of the land, perhaps the biggest example being that of Murree where haphazard development has ruined the hill station's natural landscape. The once pristine Lake Saiful Mulook, situated not far from where the prime minister addressed the Tiger Force squad, is now littered with trash thrown by visiting Pakistanis. The prime minister rightly pointed out the need for responsible tourism. But for this, the government would have to regulate both the construction of hotels and the inflow of tourists to popular destinations, in order to conserve the scenery and reduce the carbon footprint. The tourism industry can thrive only in an atmosphere of security and convenience for travellers. This is missing at the moment.

Postal stamp on 10th anniversary of SBP Museum issued



Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Sima Kamil attends a ceremony held here on Friday 2 July to mark the issuance of a commemorative stamp on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the bank's museum.

Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Sima Kamil on Friday 2 July unveiled a commemorative stamp to mark the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the bank's museum.

The design of the stamp is based on the SBP Museum's building, featuring rich cultural heritage of the country and a manifestation of art in its architecture.

The building was built by the Imperial Bank of India in 1920 for its branch office in Karachi. In 1950, the building was handed over to the SBP and remained in its use for various purposes till it was converted into the SBP Museum in the 2000s.

The latest commemorative stamp is the third such stamp issued to honour the SBP. Earlier, stamps were issued on the occasion of the 25th and 70th anniversaries of the central bank.

On the issuance of the commemorative stamp, Ms Kamil thanked the Pakistan Post for honouring the SBP Museum on its 10th anniversary and for the hard work in issuance of this stamp.

Sadpara's son search for missing climbers

Sajid Ali Sadpara, the son of legendary mountaineer late Mohammad Ali Sadpara, and Canadian Filmmaker Elia Saikaly announced on Thursday 24 June to climb K2 for a ground search of the three missing climbers.

The missing climbers included Mohammad Ali Sadpara. They went missing during K2 winter expedition in



In this file photo, Muhammad Ali Sadpara is seen at the K2 summit in 2018.

February this year. "It's time to announce that Elia Saikaly and I are going to K2 for a ground search of the three missing climbers of K2 winter expedition including my father Ali Sadpara. To find out what happened to them and possibility of his recovery. Need lots of prayers and good wishes," Sajid tweeted.

Mohammad Ali Sadpara, John Snorri of Iceland and Juan Pablo Mohr of Chile went missing at K2 in February this year.

Sajid Ali Sadpara was also member of their expedition team and Elia Saikaly was making a documentary on K2. Both of them had also taken part in the rescue operation.

Elia Saikaly in his social media post said: "I'm in Pakistan and headed to K2 with Sajid Sadpara to search for his father, Ali Sadpara, and our dear friend John Snorri."

"The truth is: I just couldn't do nothing. These are our friends. These were our teammates. We were making a film about their winter ascent. We were supposed to be with them the night they disappeared with JP Moer and we are likely alive because fate intervened as an oxygen mix-up forced PK and I back just below camp 3. Ali, JP Mohr and John never returned. Sajid survived" he said in his post.

Meanwhile, two members of expedition team with renowned Pakistani mountaineer Samina Baig reached the base camp to attempt world's second highest peak K2.

Samina Baig along with five local guides of the expedition themed 'K2 dream expedition 2021' and more than 20 local climbers of Joint Pakistan-International Broad Peak and K2 Expedition had started the journey from Shigar.

Train service for tourists launched in Quetta

In a move aimed at promoting tourism in Balochistan, Pakistan Railways has launched a special train service.

The train will run between Quetta and Bostan as well as Quetta and Kolpur twice a week, with fare ranging from Rs20 to Rs50.

Quetta Divisional Superintendent Engineer Akhtar Mahmood inaugurated the train service here at a ceremony held at Quetta Railways Station.

The first train with a large number of tourists aboard left for Bostan from Quetta. The tourists showed great interest in the service and termed it a milestone for promoting tourism in the province.

Engineer Mahmood said the special train was launched on the special request of the Balochistan government, which was taking steps for the promotion of tourism in the province.

"The train will run between Quetta and Bostan and Quetta and Kolpur every Saturday and Sunday," he said, adding that the fare of tourist trains had been kept nominal.

Buddha statue recovered

Officials of the Malakand district administration recovered a statue of Buddha from a deserted house in Thana town during a raid here the other day.

After getting information that some people had illegally kept a Buddha relic, stated to be from Gandhara civilisation, in a deserted house, Malakand deputy commissioner Suhail Khan directed assistant commissioner Mohibullah and commander Thana Levies post to take immediate action.

The Levies personnel raided the house in Nal area of Thana and seized the statue.

Talking to mediapersons, the deputy commissioner said that the ancient Buddha relic was 3.5 feet long with a width of 1.5 feet. He said the relic would be handed over to the archaeology department after completion of legal work.

He said that an FIR had been registered against unknown persons and further investigation was underway.

According to local residents, the illegal excavation of archaeological sites was going on in Palay, Zalamkot, Shahkot, Nal and Gunyar areas, which were known for Buddha artifacts and relics.

TO BE FRANK

By: Dr. S.M. Moin Qureshi

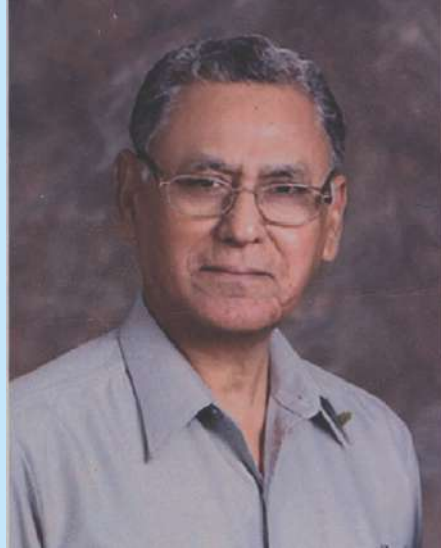
The hidden world of meanings

The other day, a few friends were talking about current affairs in the backdrop of US threats to Iran to roll back its peaceful nuclear programme - or else. During the conversation, one of them referred to CTBT. Another asked, "What does CTBT stand for. by the way? I was set to reply, but before I could do so, one gentleman prompted, "It stands for "Catch the Timid, Boost the Tyrant." Somehow, the spontaneity of the remark went off. Everyone appreciated it and held it the virtual explanation of "Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty." What the Big Five are doing to the third world today speaks of outrageous discrimination on the basis of their lopsided policies.

Every language has its own norms of brevity. Some abbreviations become so popular that people don't bother to know the actual terms. Or, perhaps, these terms are too lengthy and difficult to remember. Thus, during Ayub era in Pakistan, two laws were very common topics of public discussion and both of them were hated as well as dreaded by politicians. They were EBDO and PODO. Opposition politicians were 'Ebdoed' and 'Podded' day in, day out. Very few people knew that EBDO and PODO stood for "Elective Bodies Disqualification Ordinance" and "Public Office Disqualification Ordinance" respectively.

Certain acronyms are so commonly used that illiterate and semi-literate people take them for granted without knowing about the full phrases they imply. Locally speaking, these are, for instance. CDGK (City District Government, Karachi), UC (Union Council), KPT (Karachi Port Trust), etc. Hence, if you ask a cab driver to take you to Karachi Port Trust building, he will look bewildered. But if you just ask him to drive you to KPT, he will readily understand your destination.

Every trade or profession has its specific acronyms applicable to that particular activity. Hospital doctors frequently speak of LAMA patients i.e. those who "Left Against Medical Advice." Hospital OPD is 'Out-patient Department' while OT is 'Operation Theatre.' In government offices, PC is 'Previous Corresponded' (not Pearl



Continental'(Hotel). Similarly, "Paper Under Consideration" is abbreviated as PUC. A layman has no knowledge what does a PUC actually mean? It is said that when late Mir Rasul Bux Talpur assumed the charge of Governor of Sindh, it took him quite some time to get himself acquainted with official terminologies. On his first day in the office, he noticed that his paper tray was being constantly heaped up with files containing PUC slips (called 'flags'). Unable to decipher and even properly pronounce 'PUC' he sent for his Private Secretary and asked him in an irate tone, "Baba, what is this Puk Puk?" The P.S. (don't take it for Police Station) was transfixed on this bizarre query. Dumbfounded for a while, he thought Mir Sahib was annoyed at the 'Buck Buck' (loud chattering) outside his office.

Sometimes people interpret abbreviations in a totally wrongful perspective and then suffer for their innocence and ignorance. Once, the US Department of Interior tagged the migratory birds with metal strips reading "Wash. Biol. Surv." (for Washington Biological Survey) below the name of the department. The code was changed, so the story goes, after a farmer wrote to the department:

"Dear Sir,

I shot one of your crows. My wife followed the cooking instructions attached and made no mistake. As advised, she washed it, boiled it and served it, I feel it my duty to inform you

that it was the worst thing we ever ate. Will you please let me know where did you get this recipe from?"

At times, people invent mischievous explanations of some popular acronyms to express their innate feelings or just for fun sake. As such, BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) was said to mean "Beware of Another Crash." (Was it the reason that BOAC later changed its nomenclature as simply "British Airways?") Similar acrimonious explanations have been concocted for PIA (Perhaps I arrive), Arrive), KDA (Keya Dainay Aae?) and KPT (Khao Peyo Turkhao). Even the employees of these organizations relish the reputation they enjoy in public eyes.

Mark Twain once advised the readers, "Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint." The was about reading a health book. What about writing one? If doctors resort to abbreviations indiscreetly the situation might turn quite awesome. Several year ago, a GP (General Practitioner) in Karachi referred one of his company's patients for consultation to an eye specialist. The referral letter depicted the preliminary diagnosis as "D/V" meaning "Defective Vision." Incidentally the Eye Specialist' clinic was located next to a general surgeon's in Rex Annexe. By mistake, the illiterate patient hopped into the general surgeon's clinic where he was accepted and registered. Due to rush of patients the surgeon could not read the address on referral letter carefully. However, he read the hurriedly scrawled diagnosis as D/U (which stood for Duodenal Ulcer) instead of D/V. Having examined the patient he confirmed the diagnosis (D/U) and later performed an operation in his private nursing home. The discrepancy surfaced only when the company doctor received the surgeon's bill. On enquiry, the patient admitted that he felt occasional pain in his abdomen (before operation), but he always attributed it to indigestion which later turned out to be ulcer. The GP's mistake to write and the surgeon's mistake to read the diagnosis properly, proved a boon, not a bane, for the patient. His ulcer was imperceptibly discovered and removed.

Certain acronyms are so skilful



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coined that they indicate the nature' of the organization as well. ABAD (Association of Builders and Developers), NATAK (National Academy of Theatrical Art, Karachi) and WAR (War Against Rape) are but a few of such meaningful acronyms. NAB (National Accountability Bureau) too amply projects its functioning for 'nab' literally means to catch somebody doing wrong. The best acronym I ever heard of is, however, IQRA which stands for "International Quran Reciters' Association." The beauty of IQRA lies in the sanctity of its meaning and since it is an Arabic word which means 'read,' it has gained currency throughout the Muslim world.

Quite a contrast to IQRA, some abbreviations of one language bear unsavoury meaning in some other. So, when the members of the teaching staff of Karachi University decided to unite themselves, they initially formed "Karachi University Teachers' Association." Its abbreviation KUTA when, pronounced in Urdu, meant a dog. The moment the teachers realized that the shortened name of their Association was plying havoc with their status, they changed it into "Karachi University Teachers' Society" (KUTS). Similarly, the National Institute of Public Administration (NIPA) was originally "Pakistan Institute of Public Administration." Since the abbreviation 'PIPA' (meaning a keg in Urdu) was not liked by the hard-nosed bureaucrats, the institute was renamed as National Institute of Pakistan Administration (NIPA).

In America, there is a special telephone whose number always remains secret. As such, whoever receives a call from that phone, the display on his/her telephone receiver blinks not with the number, but with the word "POTUS" which is the acronym for "President Of The United States." Abbreviation of academic degrees produces interesting and, sometimes, intriguing situations. For quite too long now, MBBS is taken to connote "Mian Bewee Bachchon Samait" (Husband and Wife with Children). Last week, I met a gentleman in a party. He gave me his visiting card which showed his degrees as "M.A.B.F." Puzzled and unable to assess his actual qualification, I requested him to enlighten me what did "M.A.B.F." stand for, "Simple enough," he said cheerfully. "It means, Matric Appeared. But Failed."

Tourism putting stress on Pakistan environment: study



Pakistan has a rich mountain landscape, boasting some of the highest peaks and longest glaciers in the world.

Stating that the mountainous regions of Pakistan offer some of the most spectacular and fascinating landscapes and ecology in the world, a study released by the World Bank has warned that tourism in these areas is placing increasing stress on the local environment, leading to increased pollution, natural habitat loss and pressure on endangered species.

"These effects can gradually destroy the environmental resources on which tourism itself depends," warned the study titled Pakistan: Sustainable Solid Waste Management in Mountain Areas.

According to the study, reliable estimates on the quantity and characteristics of waste are not readily available in mountain areas, as these vary significantly depending on tourism influx, regional characteristics, and seasonal factors. Additionally, mountain areas present unique challenges such as sudden spikes in the quantity of waste generated during tourist season, widely varying waste characteristics including large volume of plastic and other special waste and constraints of land availability for waste treatment and disposal, it says.

Pakistan has a rich mountain landscape, boasting some of the highest peaks and longest glaciers in the world. The Karakoram, Hindu Kush, and Himalayas are all part of the country. Melting snow and meltwater from glaciers in the mountains also feed the country's rivers, including the Indus, which is a key resource for Pakistan's agricultural and industrial sectors, as well as for the country's potable water requirements.

While all settlements, whether

mountainous or not, face solid waste management challenges, mountain areas tend to face additional challenges which are by virtue of their location, characterised by remoteness, topography, scattered settlements, sensitive and fragile ecosystems, lack of infrastructure and road networks, and poor institutional and financial capacity. This makes service provision in mountain areas all the more demanding compared to the plains, suggests the study.

Mountain tourism in Pakistan is gaining importance and has the potential to be an important part of the economy in these regions, but a polluted landscape will hinder that opportunity. Furthermore, solid waste management in the mountains can provide job opportunities through collection, segregation, and decentralised approaches. However, if not done correctly, it may have long-lasting negative impacts on the environment, human health, and the local economy, cautions the study.

The study represents the first attempt of the World Bank to examine solid waste management issues in these unique, ecologically-fragile areas that face concurrent challenges of high poverty and increasing pressures from tourism development. With funding from the Korea Green Growth Trust Fund, the World Bank had initiated the study "Supporting the Development of Sustainable Solid Waste Management Strategies for the Mountainous Regions of India, Nepal and Pakistan" with the objectives to analyze the current situation regarding solid waste management in the mountainous regions of India, Nepal, and Pakistan.



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