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## **Gulf Air appoints AirLog Pakistan as its GSA for Cargo in Pakistan**



*“We are very proud and excited to be selected by Gulf Air Cargo as their GSA for Pakistan, and look forward to working with the Gulf Air Cargo team to provide a full range of cargo services to the freight community across Pakistan,” comments Imran Peracha, MD AirLog Pakistan.*





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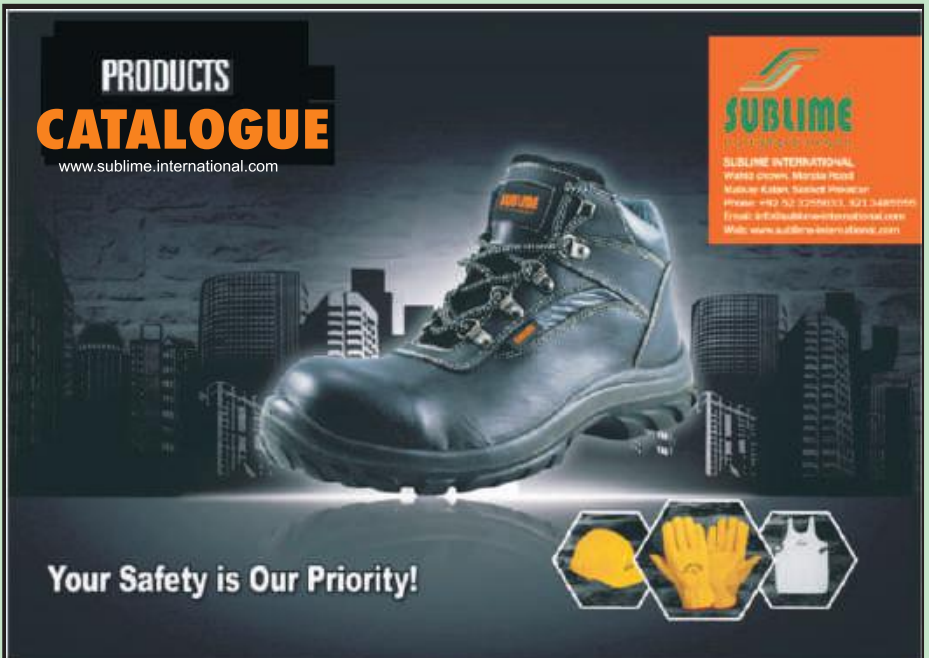
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## CAA defends decision to outsource its testing, licensing exam system to UK

The Civil Aviation Authority defended on Wednesday August 11 the decision to outsource its testing and licensing exam system to the United Kingdom saying that the move aimed at rebuilding the global confidence in Pakistani pilots.

"Whatever had happened was unfortunate, but it is not that easy to build international confidence," CAA director general Khaqan Murtaza told a press conference at the authority's headquarters here.

Mr Murtaza was referring to last year's episode when Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan had told the National Assembly that 40 per cent of Pakistani pilots possessed dubious licences. Following his statement, various international bodies, foreign carriers and countries imposed curbs on the country in view of safety concerns.

"This outsourcing will be for two to three years"

The CAA chief, however, insisted that the outsourcing of commercial/airline transport pilot licence to the UK Civil Aviation Authority was a temporary arrangement.

"We will not disband our licensing system," he said. "This outsourcing will be for two to three years."

About the exam process, he said that all exams would be conducted in Pakistan by the UK CAA on the pattern of the O/A Level examination conducted by the British Council on behalf of Cambridge International. "Our kids will not have to go abroad [for exams]."

Answering a question about increasing the cost of the exam for the potential candidates, he said that it was proposed that the CAA would provide some subsidy to candidates appearing for the first time in the initial level of testing.

Mr Murtaza conceded that the outsourcing plan had hit a delay because of the involvement of payment of foreign exchange by the CAA to the UK. "There's a delay because of financial issues and it requires approval from the federal cabinet."

Against the backdrop of suspension of licence of private carrier Shaheen International Airlines (SAI), Mr Murtaza said that the SAI collected CAA charges from passengers but instead of paying the charges "laundered" the huge sum abroad.

When asked whether a repeat of the SAI-like situation that was allegedly a failure of the CAA's oversight role was possible, he said that currently no "private airline" was heading towards default.

About Pakistan International

Airlines, he downplayed the question and said that PIA was the national carrier and its total losses were the responsibility of the government.

He said that the CAA had introduced a recovery unit that was following and taking action against airlines in case of delay in payment of dues.

### Flight of UAE-bound passengers

When his attention was drawn towards the problems being faced by Dubai-bound passengers, he said the UAE government wanted a passenger's rapid PCR test result, sample for which was taken four hours before the flight departure.



The CAA chief insisted that the outsourcing of commercial/airline transport pilot licence to the UK Civil Aviation Authority was a temporary arrangement.

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He said that the condition was imposed for only passengers going to the UAE and not on transit passengers. He said that around 90 per cent of the passengers from Karachi airport were going to Dubai as transit passengers, but the situation was worrisome at Peshawar and Islamabad airports where 90pc passengers were going to the UAE.

Mr Murtaza said that the facility was being provided at Sialkot airport, which was a relatively small airport with low flight frequency.

He said that the UAE authorities had communicated a list of labs conducting rapid PCR tests at the airport and the CAA

was in the process of facilitating them.

He said that most laboratories did not have required equipment and they informed the CAA that they had placed orders but shipment would take at least 10-11 days.

#### **Tourism promotion**

Earlier, briefing reporters on the Tourism Promotion and Regional Integration (TPRI) licence for adventure, medical and religious tourism, a CAA official said that the licensees would also be authorised to conduct helicopter services in addition to the fixed-wing aircraft.

The official said that the CAA had initiated new projects, including

expansion of the runway of Skardu airport, feasibility study for extending the Gilgit airport runway for jet aircraft operations or sighting of a new location for Gilgit airport, extension of the runway of Saidu Sharif airport to make it jet-aircraft capable and construction of new Gwadar international airport.

He said that for the promotion of tourism activities, the existing runways of Muzaffarabad and Rawalakot had also been rehabilitated. He stated that the CAA was open to facilitating any investor to help in building new private landing strips and helipads.

## **Emerging trends in the aviation industry**



The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a surge of technological advancement in the aviation industries and other sectors. Given that air travel was affected in the previous year, it becomes essential to revive the industry to ensure passenger safety. For this reason, many airlines have adopted innovative technology to maximize comfort and improve the travel experience. That said, here are some emerging trends in the aviation industry.

#### **The Move Towards Sustainability**



Despite the negative impact of the pandemic, the world experienced a decline in pollution. Having fewer aircraft in the sky has reduced the carbon in the atmosphere, leading to a cleaner air supply. Moreover, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) predicts that air travel numbers could double by 2038, affecting the environment if steps are not taken to reduce the carbon

footprints aircraft leave behind. Therefore, the aviation industry has seen the need for an eco-friendlier approach to air travel.

Although leveraging sustainable approaches may require extensive research and development, its outcome benefits the world for a long time. Fortunately, original equipment manufacturers create more fuel-efficient aircraft frames, leveraging lighter materials, aerodynamic design changes, and alternative fuel sources such as biofuels. Furthermore, air and ground traffic management adopt human and artificial intelligence and electrically-powered equipment to promote sustainability.

#### **Cryptocurrency as a Payment Option**

Many industries are adopting cryptocurrency as an alternative payment option. Although it is not yet prominent in the aviation sector, bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies show tremendous potential. Fortunately, the industry loves innovative technology and will adopt those that show great promise. Moreover, leveraging this innovative payment option will make flight bookings easier for air travelers. Additionally, cryptocurrency payments are faster and incur fewer transaction costs as compared to credit card payments.

Besides, its digital nature will work well with the industry's objectives of providing digital technology for passengers before, during, and after the journey. Therefore, digital payment is in order, as many airlines have already introduced digital check-in options, tickets, and flight management. What's more, airlines like PrivateFly and airBaltic have already embraced cryptocurrency as a payment option. Fortunately, passengers can learn more about it to make their travel experience less stressful.

#### **Digital Vaccination Visas and Health Passports**



While health and immunity passports aren't new to travelers, various initiatives have been adopted to create digital health passports in the world. The CommonPass project was established in 2019 after a partnership between the Common Project, a coalition of private and public partners, and the World Economic Forum. This platform verifies vaccination records and lab results by encouraging passengers to upload their results to their mobile phones. Moreover, the IATA has released the Travel Pass app to help passengers convey their test results to borderline authorities and airlines. It also allows governments to verify the genuineness of vaccination proofs and passengers' identities.

Furthermore, the European Union has introduced digital COVID-19 certificates to facilitate free and safe movements amid the pandemic. Therefore, passengers who wish to skip quarantine must obtain this digital health passport proof of their tests, vaccination, and recovery.

Many innovative trends are expected to develop as technological advancement increases. Therefore, you can look out for more procedures to make air travels less stressful and more enjoyable.



## Gulf Air appoints AirLog Pakistan as its GSA for Cargo in Pakistan



Mr. Imran Peracha Managing Director AirLog Pakistan.

**A**irLog Pakistan, a part of the Air Logistics Group, has been appointed as cargo GSA for Gulf Air Cargo (GF) in Pakistan, effective August 15.

Gulf Air has a large fleet of aircraft and can carry a wide variety of products, ranging from perishables and oversized



Gulf Air Airbus A321neo artist impression

freight to dangerous goods and valuable cargo as well as live animals. GF operates direct flights from seven cities across Pakistan: Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Peshawar, and Multan to Bahrain and beyond to Middle East, Europe, Africa and Asia.

“We are very proud and excited to be selected by Gulf Air Cargo as their GSA for Pakistan, and look forward to working with the Gulf Air Cargo team to provide a full range of cargo services to the freight community across Pakistan,” comments

Imran Peracha, MD AirLog Pakistan, “Our customers will have one-stop access to a wide range of air cargo transportation products and the extensive network of destinations served by GF.”

With a network of 88 offices in 48 countries across 6 continents, Air Logistics Group can provide customized cargo solutions across the globe, including expert sales, creative marketing, efficient operations, exceptional customer service and dedicated accounting, all supported by advanced business intelligence tools.

## Etihad says it's on its way to recovery

**E**tihad Airways has announced operating and financial results for the first half of 2021, showing a progressive recovery across its business despite a slower than expected return to global air travel. The airline carried one million passengers in H1 2021, with an average seat load factor of 24.9 percent. This represents an average 10% month-on-month growth in passenger volumes since Etihad restarted passenger operations in July 2020. Network capacity in the first half of 2021 came in at 16.4 billion ASKs, and has grown steadily since the start of the year, with the airline operating almost 3,500 flights a month to 67 passenger and cargo destinations by the end of June 2021. Since the beginning of 2021, Etihad has launched or restarted operations to 10 destinations including the historic launch of scheduled services to Tel Aviv in April 2021.

As a result of new variants of the coronavirus affecting key travel markets in the Indian Sub-Continent and Europe, passenger revenue came in at US\$0.3



billion, down by 68 percent year-on-year from US\$1 billion. However, the dip in passenger revenue was offset by strong performance in cargo operations, with a 44 percent year-on-year increase in freight carried in H1 2021 (365,500 tonnes) and a 56 percent year-on-year increase in revenue (US\$0.8 billion).

Tony Douglas, group CEO, said: “Every day, Etihad Airways is making up for lost ground. Despite the curveball of the Delta variant disrupting the global recovery in air travel, we have continued to ramp up operations and are today in a much better place than this time in 2020. As soon as destinations are added to the

Abu Dhabi green list or UAE travel corridors, we are seeing a three to six-fold jump in bookings in some cases, showing there is a tidal wave of demand waiting to be unleashed. We are ready to welcome more guests on board to experience why Etihad is second to none when it comes to ensuring passenger wellbeing.”

Throughout the first half of 2021, Etihad retained a singular focus on cost control, decreasing operating costs by 27 percent year-on-year from US\$1.9 billion to US\$1.4 billion, supported by reduced capacity and volume-related expenses. Fixed overhead costs saw a significant improvement, reducing by 22 percent to US\$0.3 billion, while finance costs reduced by 22 percent owing to an ongoing balance sheet deleveraging. As a result, the airline managed to rebuild its liquidity position to pre-pandemic levels.

Overall, Etihad recorded a core operating loss of US\$0.4 billion for H1 2021 (half the loss of US\$0.8 billion in H1 2020), with EBITDA turning to a positive US\$0.1 billion from a negative US\$ 0.1 billion in the same period of 2020.

## PIA Pilot hailed for dealing with crisis-like situation at Kabul airport

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) Chief Executive Officer Arshad Malik has praised Captain Maqsood Bajrani for bringing a PIA flight from Kabul during a crisis-like situation recently.

"In a crisis situation, the use of understanding, experience and skills is a sign of a real professional," the PIA CEO said.

He said as soon as the situation in Kabul deteriorated, the captain contacted PIA management.

Captain Bajrani of Airbus A320 was waiting to get clearance from Air Traffic Control when the Taliban took control of Afghanistan on Sunday 15 August. "Take your own decision," one of the cabin crew said following which Captain Bajrani of PIA flight PK6252 chose to take off for Islamabad.

While emergency had been declared at the airport as thick black smoke emitting from the surrounding hills could be seen from the plane, the PIA Airbus A320 was kept on hold.

A crew member said the captain promptly decided to take off after making a surprise announcement that they were ready to take off for Islamabad. She said soon afterwards the plane started moving with high speed to take off, it was because the captain was following two fighter planes running ahead of the PIA plane as he thought it better to follow them.

The crew took a sigh of relief when the captain informed them that they had entered into the territory of Pakistan. The plane landed at Islamabad International Airport at about 7.10pm on Sunday.

As the plane landed at the airport and its door opened, a PIA staff member came on to the plane and told the crew that he had an important note for the captain from the CEO.

In his message, the CEO praised Captain Bajrani for bringing the flight from Kabul after the situation deteriorated, as he flew safely in adverse conditions after informing the PIA management.

## CAA allows Air Arabia to operate four flights a week

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCCA) has granted permission to Air Arabia of Abu Dhabi to operate four flights to and from Faisalabad and Multan in a week.

In a letter to the company, the PCAA said the competent authority was pleased to authorise Air Arabia of Abu Dhabi to operate four flights to and from Faisalabad and Multan in a week.

Two flights would be operated between Abu Dhabi and Multan and two others between Abu Dhabi and Faisalabad, it said.

Meanwhile, the PCAA has issued a Covid-19 guideline for safe tourism in the country with continuing travel restrictions in addition to random restricted air travel (RAT) for inbound passengers, if the Gilgit-Baltistan government considered it important to ensure safe tourism.

The PCAA had already revised the guideline which took effect from July 1 on air travel to Gilgit-Baltistan as no boarding would be allowed to passengers over 30 years of age without valid Covid-19 vaccination certificates.

Foreign tourists, mountaineers and trekkers on flights to Gilgit-Baltistan will continue to ensure compliance with all relevant SOPs, including policy on international inbound passengers.

## IATA comment on Afghanistan airspace situation

Safe and secure flight operations are the top priority for aviation. In this respect, IATA is closely monitoring developments in Afghanistan.

Owing to recent developments, the Kabul FIR (Afghanistan airspace) which serves major traffic flows between Europe and Asia, is now without provision of a civilian Air Traffic Service. Airlines have advised IATA that they are avoiding the airspace.

IATA is participating in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Coordinated Contingency Coordination Team (CCT) which has been activated. This standard protocol for managing such situations combines the resources of ICAO and IATA in the regions involved, all affected States, and Eurocontrol.

Traffic through Afghan airspace is lower than usual because of reduced demand due to COVID-19. States near Afghanistan have indicated they can accommodate additional traffic. The use of alternative routes through these states will support safe and secure operations, but will have time, operational and fuel impacts upon airlines.

## Virgin Atlantic Cargo and Delta Cargo extend dnata partnership in the U.K.



Virgin Atlantic Cargo and Delta Cargo will continue ground handling and export services from the joint London Heathrow hub and Manchester Airport ©Delta Cargo

Virgin Atlantic Cargo and Delta Cargo have extended their long-standing partnership with dnata for a further five years, continuing the successful operation of ground handling and export services from the joint London Heathrow hub and Manchester Airport. The partnership also includes regional cargo gateways London Gatwick, Aberdeen, Birmingham, Edinburgh and Newcastle.

In conjunction with the partnership extension, the Virgin Atlantic Cargo and Delta Cargo teams will continue to work from the dnata City East facility. The airlines' cargo operational and customer teams have so far benefited from working under one roof, sharing ways of working to support significant growth for the cargo sectors of the two carriers in the last year.

Virgin Atlantic and Delta Cargo are also set to take advantage of the brand new import facility, dnata City East Phase 2, later this year. The building will provide an additional 117,000 ft<sup>2</sup> in an adjacent state of the art building, as the two carriers continue to support vital supply chains across the globe.



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## AI tools employed for speedy cargo clearance

**P**akistan Customs has introduced artificial intelligence and machine-learning tools in the Web-Based One Customs (WeBOC) Risk Management System in line with the international best practice with assistance of the World Customs Organisation.

The July 2021 figures revealed that more than half of the import consignments and majority of export shipments are cleared by Customs immediately subject to post-clearance verification, according to an official announcement issued on Tuesday 3 August.

In addition to quick clearance of exports shipments, WeBOC RMS application has also been extended to duty drawback processing through which a new mechanism of online payments of duty drawback for disbursement directly to the accounts of the exporters by slashing the manual processing and eradicating traditional cheque system.

This has become possible by introducing the scrutiny of duty drawback claims through risk parameters by e-rebate module in RMS. So far Rs16 billion have been paid through e-rebate system providing financial support in times of global pandemic in line with current government policy.

By systematic application of RMS, pre-arrival clearance at sea ports, clearance in sky at airports, and risk based selection of cargo for scanning under Blue channel have also been implemented which have modernised the customs clearance process in the country.

Pakistan Customs is also working to develop an Integrated Risk management System (IRMS) through Pakistan Single Window the programme by which trade regulatory bodies will be processing the certifications through single integrated platform. This will bring the transformation in trading across the borders landscape and contribute immensely to the economic growth and national development of Pakistan.

Pakistan Customs under comprehensive Customs Reforms Programme has successfully implemented a number of trade facilitation initiatives which have made cross border trade easier and have contributed significantly in reduction of the time and cost of doing business in country, added the announcement.

## American Airlines first class passenger taped to seat after inflight incident

**I**n the latest of a series of high-profile disruptive passenger incidents on American Airlines recently, flight attendants duct-taped a first class passenger to her seat after she physically attacked them and tried to open the plane's door.

Flight attendants duct-taped a passenger to her seat on an American Airlines flight.

A series of high-profile disruptive passenger incidents onboard American Airlines

Multiple media reports are circulating concerning American Airlines Flight AA1774 from Dallas Fort Worth (DFW) to Charlotte (CLT) on Tuesday, July 6. The female passenger reportedly had an inflight mental breakdown. She assaulted and bit a flight attendant and attempted to open the forward boarding door.

On a different flight, AA2289, operating between Los Angeles (LAX) and Miami (MIA), the flight crew ordered passengers to put their hands on their heads for nearly an hour before the plane landed. Upon landing, police armed with machine guns boarded the aircraft to arrest a passenger.

On Monday, July 5, a group of

teenage high school students traveling on American Airlines Flight 893 from Charlotte to Nassau (NAS) were non-compliant with federal mask requirements. American Airlines says they became disruptive to other customers and refused to follow crew member's instructions while onboard. As a result, American Airlines removed the students from the plane. However, the flight was delayed overnight in Charlotte as a result.

## Woman kicked off American flight for cursing at attendant

The unnamed American Airlines agent kept his cool while speaking to the passenger.

An unnamed American Airlines agent at Dallas-Fort Worth Airport is being applauded on social media for his calm demeanor after coming face to face with a woman who apparently cursed at a flight attendant during a mask dispute.

The incident was caught on video it was posted on Twitter and showed the agent speaking to the woman.

"Second of all, you called my employee a b----, completely uncalled for and inappropriate," the agent said. "We don't tolerate that crap with us at all."

He told the woman that she was no longer welcome to fly American.





## Kuwait Airways prepares to take delivery of its 3rd rare A330neo

Of the eight Airbus A330-800s ordered by Kuwait Airways, the airline has so far taken delivery of two. However, its third widebody is set to be delivered soon and has been undergoing final test flights in the past few weeks. The most recent test flight took place on

To date, it has taken six test flights with a total of 20 hours of flight time. For reference, 9K-APF had a total of three test flights totaling nine and a half hours, while 9K-APG had five test flights totaling 13 hours.

9K-APH's most recent test flight was on August 18th and lasted four hours and 45 minutes.

Data from RadarBox.com showed that the jet took off from Toulouse and headed to the Bay of Biscay, flying circles off the coast of La Rochelle and Rochefort.

Like the other -800s it will join, the jet is configured to have 32 seats in business class and 203 in economy.

The flight path of the most recent

With Kuwait's travel restrictions to date, frequencies to these destinations have been limited. However, the country has been progressively opening up, which will perhaps mean more flight time for Kuwait Airways' A330neo fleet.

Of its existing destinations, flights to London, Guangzhou, or Manila could suit the A330-800 well. Once the airline resumes its service to New York, the type would also fit well for it. This could also be the case for Bangkok in the east or Frankfurt and Milan up north.

With vaccination efforts ongoing in Kuwait, the country is poised to open up more. This will allow the airline to lay on more services and should, in turn, put its newly-delivered aircraft to good use.

Have you flown on the A330-800 yet? Share your experiences with us by leaving a comment.

## Pakistan International Airlines to fine

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) decided to make vaccination against the COVID-19 virus mandatory for its employees. However, Geo New Pakistan is reporting that since a part of the airline's workforce refuses to get their dose, the airline is taking more serious measures to prevent its staff from spreading the highly contagious Delta variant, which currently rages in the country.

The national air carrier of Pakistan warned its employees that it will charge unvaccinated staff a fine of around \$4 each day, while other employees, including airline officers, would be fined \$7 per day, the local media reported.

The air carrier requested staff to get vaccinated against the virus by August 13, 2021, to escape daily fines.

The measure was taken while observing continuously growing rates of COVID-19 infection in Pakistan. According to the National Institute of Health data, half of the daily positive cases in the country are caused by the new strain.

As of August 10, 2021, the country reported 4,856 new virus cases and 81 new.



Kuwait Airways is the largest customer of the 'rare' A330-800. However, it has only ordered eight.

### The progress of 9K-APH

It was back in late October of 2020 that Kuwait Airways took delivery of its first two A330-800s. The shorter version of the A330neo family, the -800, has only had orders for 15 of the jets, with over half (eight to be precise) going to Kuwait Airways.

After an extended lull, the third -800 will soon be delivered to the Middle Eastern carrier. Although its test registration is currently F-WW KU, the aircraft is set to be registered as 9K-APH, with its MSN set at 2005.

Here's what we know so far about 9K-APH with the help of data from AIB Family Flights:

flight of 9K-APH.

Where will this aircraft fly?

To find out where this new A330-800 will fly, we only have to look at where the two other A330neos have been deployed. Cities thus far include:

Amman (Jordan)  
Beirut (Lebanon)  
Bodrum (Turkey)  
Chennai (India)  
Cochin/Kochi (India)  
Dhaka (Bangladesh)  
Dubai (UAE)  
Islamabad (Pakistan)  
Istanbul (Turkey)

L a h o r e (Pakistan)

M u m b a i (India)

New Delhi (India)

Paris (France)  
Riyadh (Saudi Arabia)

As you can see, none of these destinations make full use of the A 3 3 0 - 8 0 0 s fantastic range. This is largely due to the global health crisis.



The first delivery of the A330-800 to Kuwait Airways took place in last October 2020.

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## Russian airlines' traffic reaches 88 per cent of pre-crisis levels in July



In July this year Russian airlines' combined traffic reached 12.5 million passengers, just 12 per cent down on the same month of the pre-COVID 2019, according to the recent report by the country's aviation authority Rosaviatsiya. The Russian air travel market clearly continues on track of a steady recovery, reaching 88 per cent of the pre-crisis levels past month, up from 86.6 per cent in June, 81.3 per cent in May and 77 per cent in April.

The total RPKs reached 23.1 billion, still 33.74 per cent below the 'normal' levels, due to severe international travel restrictions.

For the first time since the onset of the crisis, Russia's largest airlines of the TOP-5 elite have all passed the psychologically sensitive milestone of 1 million monthly passengers. These airlines are accountable for nearly 65 per cent of the total traffic.

In July, Russia's flag carrier Aeroflot served 2.5 million passengers for the first time, less than 50 per cent below its 'norm'. It is gradually stretching the lead from its closest competitor, privately-owned S7 Airlines, which carried 1.7 million passengers past month. Boasting an unbelievable 50 per cent growth compared to July 2019 results, Aeroflot's low-cost division Pobeda served 1.5 million passengers. Its sister airline Rossiya Airlines carried 1.2 million passengers. The last of the TOP-5 ranking, Ural Airlines started a slow climb with 1.1 million passengers in July.

Russian Airlines Combined Traffic July 2021, passengers (compared to July 2019)

(1) Aeroflot	2.5 mln	32.2%
(2) S7 Airlines	1.7 mln	12.4%
(3) Pobeda	1.5 mln	+50.0%
(4) Rossiya	1.2 mln	21.0%
(5) Ural Airlines	1.1 mln	+2.7%

In total, since the beginning of the

year to end of July, Russian airlines collectively served 56.6 million passengers, down 21.3 per cent on the same period of 2019. The total RPKs for seven months was 119.8 billion, down 34 per cent on the pre-crisis year.

RUSSIAN AIRLINES COMBINED TRAFFIC JANUARY JULY 2021, passengers (compared to January July 2019)

(1) Aeroflot	10.86 mln	49.5%
(2) S7 Airlines	9.76 mln	3.4%
(3) Pobeda	7.90 mln	+41.3%
(4) Rossiya	5.02 mln	24.0%
(5) Ural Airlines	4.86 mln	8.4%

## Sharm El Sheikh receives first EgyptAir flight from Moscow

Sharm El-Sheikh International Airport has received the first EgyptAir flight coming from Moscow, with 297 Russian tourists on board.

The plane was received by the tradition of spraying water upon its arrival to Sharm El-Sheikh airport.

EgyptAir is scheduled to operate a regular route with three flights per week between Moscow and Sharm El-Sheikh on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays using Airbus A330-300.



## Travel mask mandate extended till January for planes, trains, buses

Travelers on airplanes, trains, buses and in airports and train stations should be prepared to continue to wear masks for holiday travel and into next year.

The Transportation Security Administration will extend its travel mask mandate through Jan. 18 to "minimize the spread of COVID-19 on public transportation," according to a Tuesday 17 August statement from the agency.

The news comes as the highly contagious delta variant of COVID-19 continues to sweep the nation, with mask mandates returning to some destinations and mask sales climbing again.

"The emerging evidence about the Delta variant demonstrates it is more formidable than the original virus," the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said in a statement Tuesday 17 August. "Wearing a well-fitting mask that covers your nose and mouth is a way to prevent germs from spreading between yourself and other people."

## Saudi Arabia set to accept IATA Travel Pass for all passengers

Passengers arriving to or departing from Saudi Arabia can start using IATA's Travel Pass to confirm pre-departure COVID-19 test results from September 30. While many airlines have trialed IATA's Travel Pass, Saudi Arabia joins just a handful of nations to start using it at their borders.



*Saudi Arabia will start accepting IATA'S Travel Pass from September 30.*

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's acceptance of IATA Travel Pass will demonstrate how digital solutions can effectively manage both COVID-19 vaccine and test certificates," said Willie Walsh, IATA's Director-General. "The trust that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has placed in IATA Travel Pass is an example for other governments to follow."

Saudi bound travelers still need paper proof of vaccination status.

Saudi Arabia is open to most vaccinated international visitors traveling on a tourism visa. Currently not making the cut are travelers coming from Afghanistan, Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Turkey, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam.

Travelers from other countries, including the United States and European Union nations, must provide evidence of a full course of one of the three vaccines currently recognized. Those four vaccines are Oxford/Astra Zeneca, Pfizer/BioNTech, or Moderna.

Travelers arriving in Saudi Arabia must also provide a negative PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before departure. From September 30, travelers can start flashing their IATA Travel Pass to show their test results coming to or going from Saudi Arabia. IATA hopes Saudi Arabia will soon start accepting vaccine results on their Travel Pass. For the time being, travelers will need to bring an approved paper vaccination certificate.



*IATA's Travel Pass travels with you on your smartphone. Photo: IATA*

### Travel pass one step in restoring international air travel

IATA's Travel Pass will supplement Saudi Arabia's homegrown national health app, Tawakkalna. Abdulaziz A. Al Duailej, Director-General of Saudi Arabia's General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA), says adopting the IATA Travel Pass is part of the country's drive to adopt digital health certificates and restore international connectivity.

"GACA is committed to supporting all stakeholders to ease and facilitate air travel in an efficient and effective way by adopting best international practices," GACA's Director-General says. "We are committed to drive the adoption of digital health certificates and restore international air travel."



*IATA wants Saudi Arabia to also start accepting their digital travel pass to prove vaccination status.*

### Saudi Arabia's big air travel plans

Inputs from Saudi's airline industry contribute around 6% to Saudi Arabia's GDP, and this is anticipated to grow. Saudi Arabia has watched how its Gulf neighbors have developed their airlines into global names by harnessing the advantages of their location at the junction of three continents. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz wants a slice of that pie and plans to develop Saudi Arabia into a significant air transit hub.

In addition, Saudi Arabia has attempted to bolster inbound international tourism. In 2019, the country relaxed its visa regime for tourists from 49 countries

to encourage more inbound travelers.

Like everyone else, Saudi Arabia didn't anticipate COVID-19 and its impact on air travel. Now, like everyone else, the Kingdom recognizes that digital travel passes will be part of the future of travel. If Saudi Arabia wants to get back on track with its plans, simplifying entry and exit procedures will be crucial.

IATA believes its travel pass is part of that solution. IATA says their travel pass will simplify and enhance compliance with health requirements for travelers entering Saudi Arabia and contribute to the safe restart of the travel and tourism industry.

Travelers eyeing a trip to Saudi Arabia should check with the airline they are traveling with for eligibility to use the IATA Travel Pass.

## PIA to start Rapid PCR tests at Sialkot airport

Following restrictions from the UAE authorities regarding Covid-19 Rapid PCR/RTPCR tests, the Pakistan International Airline will start Rapid PCR tests at the Sialkot International Airport for passengers of Dubai-bound flights.

A PIA spokesman said that the national flag carrier has arranged special flights from Sialkot to Dubai on Aug 12 and 14 and Rapid PCR tests of passengers will be conducted at the Sialkot airport. He said in view of the tests, passengers are requested to arrive at the airport at least 5 hours in advance.

The UAE authorities have imposed a restriction of having Covid-19 Rapid PCR testing for passengers within four hours before flight departure at main concourse halls located at the airports.

Passengers must report 5-6 hours prior to departure at the Citi Lab Research & Diagnostic Centre desk and complete registration. They need to give samples within 4 hours of flight departure and wait till 90 minutes for test results. After receiving negative test results, passengers will proceed to the check-in counter.

Special discount: PIA has offered a special discount on purchase of domestic flight tickets for the eve of the Independence Day.

A PIA spokesman said the national flag carrier is offering a 14 per cent discount on domestic ticket purchases. The discounted tickets will be available from Tuesday onwards.

He stated that the reduced tickets would be available for travel beginning from Aug 14 till Aug 16, 2021.



## UK Supreme Court rules in favour of PIA in key duress case

The United Kingdom Supreme Court on Wednesday ruled in favour of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC) in an appeal filed by a travel agency over a contract for tickets and commissions.

The issue put before the court was what constitutes as economic duress, and whether such duress can arise where lawful acts or threats are made by one party in support of a demand which that party genuinely believes it is entitled to make.

PIAC's legal counsel, solicitors at Farani Taylor, said the ruling was a "huge victory" for PIA that averted the loss of considerable amounts of money.

"If PIA had lost, the floodgates would open and all travel agents would withdraw contracts saying they were under duress. This has averted a huge financial loss for PIA," a solicitor said.

The case was heard by Lord Reed, president of the Supreme Court, Lord Hodge, deputy president of the apex court, as well as Lord Lloyd-Jones, Lord Kitchin and Lord Burrows. The hearings took place on Nov 2 and 3 last year, with a judgement delivered on Wednesday, Aug 18.

The issue being considered by the court was whether, and in what circumstances, a party can set aside a contract on the grounds that it was entered into as a result of the other party threatening to do a lawful act.

The court outlined that Times Travel (TT) was a family-run travel agency whose business consisted almost exclusively of selling plane tickets to and from Pakistan.

PIAC was the sole operator of those flights. It allocated tickets to the travel agency and paid commission to TT for the tickets it sold. This contractual arrangement could be terminated by PIAC at one month's notice.

A dispute arose in 2011 and 2012 when certain travel agents, including TT, alleged that PIAC had not been paying them certain commission payments.

Claims were brought to recover the unpaid commission.

Under pressure from PIAC, TT did not join those claims.

However, in September 2012 PIAC cut TT's normal fortnightly ticket allocation from 300 to 60 tickets, as it was entitled to do, and gave notice that it would terminate their existing arrangement at the end of October 2012.

This would have put TT out of business and so on Sept 24, 2012, TT

agreed to accept new terms by which it waived any claims it might have for the previously unpaid commission. One of the directors of TT had been shown a draft of the new agreement a few days beforehand but PIAC had refused his request to take a copy with him in order to discuss it and obtain legal advice.

TT subsequently brought a claim against PIAC for the unpaid commission. It argued that it could rescind the new agreement for lawful act economic duress.

The trial judge agreed but also found that PIAC had genuinely believed that the disputed commission was not due. The Court of Appeal allowed PIAC's appeal as the airline had not acted in bad faith in that sense. TT appealed to the Supreme Court, which dismissed the appeal saying that TT cannot rescind the new agreement for lawful act claiming economic duress.

A summary of the judgement read, "When it is alleged that a defendant has induced a claimant to enter into a contract by duress, Lord Hodge and Lord Burrows agree that there are two essential elements that the claimant needs to establish to rescind the contract: (i) the threat or pressure by the defendant must have been illegitimate and (ii) the threat or pressure must have caused the claimant to enter the contract. Economic duress also has a third element: (iii) the claimant must have had no reasonable alternative to giving in to the threat or pressure. It is not in dispute that TT entered into the New Agreement as a result of PIAC's threats, and that it had no reasonable alternative. This appeal solely concerns the first element: was PIAC's threat illegitimate."

Farani Taylor said PIAC had contracts with travel agencies, all of whom demanded that they should get a commission on the fuel surcharge though it was not part of the existing agreement.

"PIA said on these terms we will not renew your contract and serve a new contract with new terms," Farhan Farani said at a press conference.

Farani said that a new agreement was signed in 2012. However, he added that in the meanwhile a court of appeal in Australia decided that commission can be sought on fuel surcharge. "After that, the agents said they made the new contract under duress and that it should be rescinded so they can get all the commissions."

Speaking to media, Farani said, "This has set out the boundaries for economic duress for the future. It has wide ranging ramifications in English law. After this, in commercial negotiations one can use whatever leverage they want to as long as

it was done in good faith."

PIA spokesperson told media: "It's a major legal victory for PIA and a big decision in UK history clearly defining agents rights and claims. PIA has been hearing good news in international courts recently as cases are now being pursued with full vigour and transparency."

### Skardu airport set to operate international flights: Sarwar

Federal aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan has said international flights will be operated from the Skardu airport to boost tourism and trade activities in Gilgit-Baltistan.

He said Skardu airport would have all-weather and nighttime flight operations.

Talking to media on Friday 6 August, he said measures were being taken to exploit tourism potential in GB under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Mr Sarwar said located at an altitude of over 7,000 feet, the Skardu airport was listed among the world's highest altitude airports.

He said first time flights had started from Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Sialkot and Faisalabad to Skardu.

The aviation minister claimed that Skardu airport had become one of the busiest airports in Pakistan.

Mr Sarwar said a notification would be issued declaring Skardu airport as the international airport from next month.

He said the airport's runway was being expanded for wide-body aircraft landing.

"International chartered flights will be allowed to Skardu airport," he added.

Besides, he said nights from Lahore to Gilgit had also been started, and the number of daily flights from Islamabad had increased.

Ghulam Sarwar said a plan was afoot to expand the Gilgit airport, adding options were being explored to construct a new airport in Gilgit.

He said a study was also being conducted to construct a bridge for landing of heavy aircraft at the Gilgit airport.



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## One year on, hopes for lifting of EU curbs on PIA flights fade

After passing of one year, hopes for lifting of a ban on all Pakistan-registered aircraft to enter European Union member states as well as the United Kingdom have been eroded after the global aviation watchdog delayed this month's scheduled safety audit of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for an unspecified period, it emerged recently.

In July 2020, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) had suspended the third country operator authorisation of the national flag carrier, Pakistan International Airlines, to operate flights in the EU member states for six months due to safety concerns against the backdrop of the May 22 Karachi plane crash and the subsequent damning statement of Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan that 40 per cent of Pakistani pilots possessed dubious licences.

While the EASA ban is on the state of Pakistan because the aviation minister used preliminary findings of an ongoing investigation to point an accusing finger towards the oversight role of the CAA in testing and licensing of pilots, it's the PIA that has borne the brunt of the ban the most being the only Pakistani airline at that time operating flights to EU states and the United Kingdom.

While the PIA tried its best to get provisional permission to operate flights in EU states, the EASA in December extended the ban for additional three months and made it clear that it would not be lifted without the safety audit of the CAA by the aviation watchdog International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

The suspension was extended again from April for an indefinite period and EASA linked any development with the ICAO's safety audit of the CAA.

Doubts over CAA's seriousness

The CAA said the ICAO's visit to Pakistan was earlier scheduled in the first week of July, but it was postponed due to the Covid-19 situation in the country.

"We are working with ICAO...their visit to Pakistan was planned for July but it was postponed because of (Covid-19) pandemic, etc. We hope their visit would take place somewhere in October or November if the pandemic situation in the country gets improved," CAA director general Khaqan Murtaza recently told an online forum.

Aviation sources, however, cast doubts over the seriousness of the regulator in being audited.



"They [CAA authorities] are still pushing ICAO audit from July last year to December, to March to July, then November [2021] and now we don't have a tentative date," said a source.

"Covid is not the only reason of the audit getting pushed back because during the same period PIA got audited by IATA [International Air Transport Association] and IOSA [IATA Operational Safety Audit]. These are periodic audits that one cannot and should not miss," the source added.

Officials said that the CAA did not get its biyearly ICAO audit for the past many years. "It has been getting it postponed ever since. CAA bosses say that the people who got the last audit conducted were retired without sharing any knowledge. It's not good for international bodies who demand reforms so that the system is not breached regardless who is at the helm of affairs," said an official.

Besides, the sources said, the CAA was not losing much revenue because of the EASA ban, as the space vacated by PIA was immediately filled up by the British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, who are making equal amount of landing/parking charges to the regulator.

Exams outsourcing hits snags

The aviation sources told Dawn that the real problem lied in the CAA's testing and licensing system as the global aviation industry as well as the ICAO lost trust following the aviation minister's statement and subsequent investigations into the fake pilots' licences saga.

They said the CAA had decided to outsource the conduct of all licensing exams, including commercial/airline transport pilot licence (CPL/ATPL), to the UK Civil Aviation Authority (UK CAA) to address the concerns of ICAO and EASA.

They said the process was supposed to be completed by April, but till now it had not been finalised. For the past one year, all CPL/ATPL tests remained suspended following the aviation minister's statement.

According to the CAA, it is in consultation with the UK CAA and trying to have a framework agreement but it would take two to three months after

signing of the agreement and sorting out modalities.

However, the sources said the CAA went ahead with its outsourcing move without completing required formalities and now the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) had raised objections on the way exams were being outsourced without following proper procurement procedures.

The sources said that after the fake licences issue, the CAA instead of quickly fixing the challenges and coming out clean, first hid behind prosecuting the culprits and then went without planning and approval of outsourcing the licensing exams.

"A new system development could have done it, but they took nearly a year to decide what to do and then are in a limbo because proper procedures were not followed," said another source.

Ban causing huge revenue loss

The sources said that PIA has been suffering huge revenue losses due to the EASA curbs for the past one year. It has made some alternatives arrangements to continue its flight operations to Europe and the UK via third party, but it could not mitigate the revenue losses due to the ban.

A senior PIA official, requesting anonymity, told media that the revenue loss was around Rs17bn during the one-year period. However, the total loss from the UK and European routes is estimated at around Rs2bn.

The losses could have been greater, but the PIA hired a Portuguese firm to keep on operating on the UK and Paris routes with charter flights.

"We could have never been in this mess had the aviation minister spoken wisely in the parliament a year ago," lamented a former CAA chief, who asked not to be named.

"He [the minister] said licences of 262 pilots were fake, but the investigations proved that all licences were genuine and the discrepancies were in some written tests that a licensed pilot takes for upgrade. The CAA cancelled licences of 50 pilots and suspended 32 others. This is nowhere near the minister's figure of 262 pilots," he said.

About the unpreparedness of the CAA in being audited, he said that the incumbent and previous governments chose to run the CAA on an ad hoc basis as they wanted to bifurcate the authority to privatise airports and other assets.

"Bringing improvement or even appointment of a dedicated director general was never on their agenda. Hence the mess," he said.

## PIFFA certificate award ceremony 2021 held



*Mr. Riaz Iqbal, Manager Training hosting the function.*

A certificate award ceremony for successful students of 31st batch of PIFFA FIATA Diploma in Freight Forwarding and 2nd batch of PIFFA FIATA Higher Diploma in Supply Chain Management was held at PIFFA Training Institute Karachi on 30 June 2021. YIFFY (Young International Freight Forwarder of the Year) Global Award was also presented to the winner of the year 2020 contest, co-sponsored by FIATA & the TT Club. Mr. Umair Aamir Sheikh from Pakistan, an alumni of PIFFA Training Institute won the award. Chairman PIFFA Mr. Muhammad Ilyas and President PIFFA Training Institute Mr. Izhar ul Haq Qamar were the Guests of Honor for the ceremony. Secretary General PIFFA Mr. Habibullah A. Latif, several faculty members and trade media also witnessed the ceremony. The ceremony was hosted by Training Manager Mr. Riaz Iqbal.

The every student was given the opportunity to express his views about the training and the institute.



*Chairman PIFFA, Mr. Muhammad Ilyas, Mr. Izhar ul Haq Qamar, President PIFFA Training Institute, Mr. Habibullah A. Latif, Secretary General PIFFA and Mr. A. S. Azad Editor flyer International along with students listening National Anthem.*



*Group photo of students and teachers taken with PIFFA Chairman on the occasion*





*Chairman PIFFA and President Training Institute present Global award to the winner of the year 2020 contest, Co sponsored by FIATA & the TT Club, Mr. Umair Aamir Sheikh.*



*(R-L) Mr. Muhammad Ilyas Chairman PIFFA, Mr. Izhar ul Haq Qamar President PIFFA Training Institute and Mr. Habibullah A Latif Secretary General PIFFA on dais on the occasion of certificate award ceremony.*







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## Airlines start checking vaccination certificates of passengers

In this photograph taken on April 26, 2018, airport officials take part in a test rehearsal at the new Islamabad International Airport ahead of its official opening.

The airlines staff, including that of the national flag carrier Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), started checking vaccination certificates of passengers on all flights from Sunday August 1 before boarding in the light of guidelines of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC).

The NCOC has made the vaccine certificate mandatory for air travel, with effect from August 1, as part of the government's steps to curb the spread of Covid-19. A total of eight air travellers not having the immunisation certificate were stopped from boarding flights at all airports across the country on the first day of the travel ban on unvaccinated people.

Earlier, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had issued a notification which said: "No Pakistani passenger of 18 years of age and above will be allowed to undertake domestic air travel within Pakistan without proof of Covid-19 vaccination."

It said the condition would not apply to international passengers arriving or departing from Pakistan and connecting domestic flights of such passengers within 72 hours of arrival in/departure from Pakistan.

In addition, partially vaccinated individuals holding proof of vaccination verifiable through SMS from 1166 and foreign nationals will be exempted from this stipulation.

The Pakistani nationals having documentary proof of vaccination administered abroad, patients clinically advised against vaccination owing to risk factors and those holding a doctor's certificate to this effect will also be exempted.

A spokesman for the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Abdullah Hafeez, said the national flag carrier started verification of vaccination certificates of passengers prior to the boarding process on all flights from Sunday.

He said the PIA had been informing all passengers about the standard operating procedures and the NCOC's guidelines through its call centres.

The spokesman confirmed that a total of eight passengers were stopped from

boarding flights for failing to produce vaccination certificates. Of the eight, four were PIA passengers.

Meanwhile, the PIA and Shifa International Hospital (SIH), Islamabad, inked a Memorandum of Understanding as part of collaboration on the 'Safe Skies' Initiatives undertaken by both the organisations for wellness of the passengers during their air travel.

A PIA press release said on Sunday that the MOU was signed by PIA's Chief Supply Officer Air Commodore Jibran Saleem Butt and SIH Chief Medical Officer Dr Zeeshan Bin Ishtiaque at the airlines offices in Islamabad.

Under this initiative, both will collaborate with each other to develop products for the health and wellness of the PIA customers. As a first step, Shifa International Hospitals will provide sanitisation kits for all passengers on the PIA flights.

PIA Chief Executive Officer Air Marshal Arshad Malik was also present on the occasion.

## No plan to privatise PIA: Sarwar



*Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said Pakistan aviation industry was lucky as its losses during pandemic were much lower than other countries.*

Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan recently put to rest all rumours about privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), saying the government had no plan to sell it off.

He rather said four new aircraft would be added to the PIA fleet this year.

Speaking at a press conference at PTI Public Secretariat here, the minister said Pakistan aviation industry was lucky as its losses during pandemic were much lower than other countries where, according to International Air Transport Association reports, the losses were \$400 billion.

## LHC allows flying activities at Walton Airport

The Lahore High Court on Friday 9 July allowed flying activities at Walton Airport initially for eight weeks.

Justice Ali Baqar Najafi was hearing several petitions against taking over of the airport by the Punjab government and hindrance in the lawful business of Lahore Flying Club.

The judge asked a counsel for the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) how long it would take to set up an alternate venue for Walton Airport.

The counsel said it would take eight to 22 weeks for the shifting of the infrastructure to a new place.

At this, Justice Najafi directed the CAA that all flying activities be restored for a minimum period of eight weeks, after which the court would see if the alternative provided was suitable or not.

The judge will resume further hearing on Sept 9.

The petitions were filed by Lahore Flying Club, flight instructors at Walton Airport and others.

The petitioners contended that the government promulgated the Lahore Central Business District Development Authority Ordinance 2021 on Feb 4 in violation of the due process of law to close down abruptly the operations of the flying club.

They said the club's predecessor, Northern India Flying Club, was duly incorporated in 1932 under the Indian Companies Act 1913 (current regime is Companies Ordinance 1984). However, after the Partition, the name of Northern India Flying Club was changed to the Lahore Flying Club in 1954.

The petitioners submitted that Walton Airport was also an ideal location for air ambulances in case of any emergency or disaster in the province and within a few minutes travel to major hospitals in Lahore and any unwanted and disastrous situation can be mitigated through the use of above mentioned land.

They asked the court to set aside the impugned ordinance for taking over the airport being illegal. However, during the pendency of the petitions, the ordinance was converted into an Act after an approval by the provincial assembly.

## Small is Sexy: Which airlines operate the Embraer ERJ135?

The ERJ series started Embraer's successful run with regional jets. The new E-Jets have taken capacity higher, but the original ERJ aircraft had much smaller options. With a capacity of up to only 37, the ERJ135 was the smallest variant offered. Many aircraft are aging but remain in service with a few regional airlines worldwide and plenty of private operators.



US regional airlines Contour Airlines and JSX Air still operate the smallest ERJ135.

### The Embraer ERJ series

Embraer launched the ERJ (Embraer Regional Jet) series in 1995, with the first flight of the EMB145. This was turbofan stretched version of the EMB120 turboprop. The updated ERJ145 followed this in 1997, with its two engines moved to the rear fuselage.

The mid-sized ERJ145 was followed by the smaller ERJ135 and ERJ140 in 1999. The ERJ series has been very successful for Embraer, taking it to a leading position in the regional jet market. The ERJ series remained in production until 2020, with over 1,200 aircraft produced in total. Embraer moved on to develop the clean sheet E-Jet series, which first flew in 2002 and entered service in 2004. It has been even more successful, and the larger variants take capacity even further.



The ERJ135 and the larger ERJ145.

### The smallest variant ERJ135

The ERJ135 is the smallest jet Embraer has produced. It offers a cabin capacity of up to only 37, usually in a 2-1 seating configuration. Now that it is out of production, the smallest aircraft in the E-Jet series is the E-170, with a typical two-class capacity of 66 and a single class capacity of up to 78.

It was, in fact, offered as two variants. The ERJ135ER (extended range) is the baseline model, developed as a shortened version of the ERJ145. The ERJ135LR (long-range) variant offers increased fuel capacity and improved engines.

In total, Embraer produced 1,231 ERJ135/140/145 aircraft. As of July 2021 (according to data from ch-aviation.com), 325 ERJ135 aircraft remain in active service. Only 12 airlines, however, operate ERJ135 fleets the other operators are charter, government, or private operators. The largest operator of the type is German charter operator Air Hamburg, with 21 aircraft.

### Airlink (South Africa) top airline operator

Airlink, formerly working in a close strategic alliance with South African Airways as South African Airlink, is a regional African airline based in Johannesburg. It is a major Embraer operator, with the ERJ135 and ERJ140 and the E170 and E190. Out of its fleet of 51 aircraft, 45 are Embraer jets (the other six are BAe Jetstream 41 turboprops).



Airlink is currently the largest operator of the ERJ135.

Airlink operates 16 ERJ135LR and one ERJ135ER aircraft. It took its first aircraft in 2000, and all were delivered by 2003. It has only retired one aircraft to date.

### JSX Air in second place

The second-largest operator of the ERJ135 is the US regional airline JSX Air, with a fleet of 16 ERJ135s. This is not an airline we often discuss it started operations only in 2016 as JetSuiteX and rebranded in 2019.

It sits somewhere between a scheduled airline and a private charter, offering scheduled flights but usually out of smaller airports or private terminals and with a business market focus. This semi-private market is growing currently, and Embraer has responded to this with a business-class cabin configuration of 1-1 for the ERJ145 at least.

JSX Air operates an all Embraer fleet, with 16 ERJ135 (14 of these are the ERJ135LR variant) and seven ERJ145 aircraft. These fly regional routes between several southern states.

**Contour Aviation / Contour Airlines**  
Contour Aviation operates both charter flights and scheduled flights (through its subsidiary Contour Airlines). Like JSX Air, it is an independent US regional airline. It has a slightly smaller fleet, with just 18 aircraft. 10 of these are ERJ135s (six ERJ135ER and four ERJ135LR). It also operates the ERJ145 and competitor aircraft CRJ200.



Loganair's passenger fleet includes the ERJ135.

### Loganair

UK-based Loganair operates four ERJ135ER aircraft out of a diverse fleet of 40 aircraft. The ERJ145 makes up the largest part of this, with 13 aircraft. The ATR 42 and ATR 72 feature as well, as do aging Saab 340 aircraft.

### OTT Airlines

OTT Airlines is a subsidiary of China Eastern Airlines set up only in 2020. It is set to become the first operator of the Chinese-built COMAC C919 and will



operate Chinese-built aircraft for the airline. OTT Airlines already operates the Chinese-built ARJ21, with five in service and 30 more on order.

It also operates business configuration jets, including the Embraer Legacy 650 it operates just two of these aircraft. The Legacy 600/650 was launched in 2002 as a lower-capacity business jet version of the ERJ135. This is the version that Air Hamburg operates, as do many other smaller private operators.



*The Legacy 600/650 is based on the ERJ135.*

#### **Six airlines with one or two aircraft**

Six more regional airlines currently operate just one or two ERJ135 aircraft (based on ch-aviaiton.com data). Cameroon airline Cronos Regional, Angolan airline SJL Aeronáutica, and Slovenia-based Amelia International operate two ERJ135 aircraft.

And with just one ERJ135 in service, we have UK regional airlines Eastern Airways, Nigerian airlines MaxAir, and Sudanese operator Tarco Aviation



*Many more ERJ135 aircraft remain in charter, VIP, or private use, such as this one with the Belgian Air Force.*

The Embraer ERJ135 is one of the smallest jets in commercial service closer to many private jets in size. It is aging now in many fleets and will continue to disappear from use. Feel free to discuss your opinions or experiences flying this aircraft in the comments.

## **Seven killed as desperate Afghans cling to plane**

**T**housands of Afghans rushed onto the tarmac of Kabul's international airport on Monday 16 August, some so desperate to escape the Taliban capture of their country that they held onto an American military jet as it took off and plunged to death in chaos that killed seven people.

The crowds rushing to the airport came as the Taliban enforced their rule over the capital after a lightning advance across the country that took just over a week to dethrone the country's Western-backed government. While there were no major reports of abuses, many stayed at home and remained fearful as the advance saw prisons emptied and armouries looted.

Residents raced to Kabul's international airport, where the civilian side was closed until further notice. The US military and other Western forces continued to organise evacuations.

Videos circulating on social media showed hundreds of people running across the tarmac as US troops fired warning shots in the air. One showed a crowd pushing and shoving its way up a staircase, trying to board a plane, with some people hanging off the railings.

In another video, hundreds of people could be seen running alongside a US Air Force C-17 transport plane as it moved down a runway. Some clung to the side of the jet just before takeoff. Another video showed several falling through the air as the aeroplane rapidly gained altitude over the city.

Senior military officials said the chaos left seven dead, including several who fell from the flight.

The storming of the airport, seen from space by passing satellites, raised questions about how much longer aircraft would be able to safely take off and land.

Shafi Arifi, who had a ticket to travel to Uzbekistan on Sunday, was unable to board his plane because it was packed with people who had raced across the tarmac and climbed aboard, with no police or airport staff in sight.

"There was no room for us to stand," said the 24-year-old. "Children were crying, women were shouting, young and old men were so angry and upset, no one could hear each other. There was no oxygen to breathe."

After a woman fainted and was carried off the plane, Arifi gave up and went back home.

## **Teenager takes to the skies on round-the-world record bid**



*ZARA Rutherford waves as she departs for the round-the-world trip in a light aircraft.*

Teenage pilot Zara Rutherford took her ultralight sports plane into the skies on Wednesday 18 August on the first leg of a 52-country, five-continent flight around the world.

The intrepid 19-year-old British-Belgian dreams one day of becoming an astronaut, but for now her goal is to become the youngest woman to circumnavigate the planet flying solo. The first leg was a short hop across the Channel from her Belgian home town of Kortrijk to England. Her three-month voyage will then take her over oceans, deserts and the vast Siberian wilderness.

She will try to avoid daunting main air hubs apart from New York's busy JFK airport in her tiny 325-kilogramme Shark UL prop plane, and touch down instead on smaller airports and airfields for overnight rests and refuelling.

She will be on her own for flights lasting five to six hours. She has secured permission to visit countries including Greenland, Honduras, Saudi Arabia and Myanmar.

While not the youngest pilot to fly around the world solo an 18-year-old Briton, Travis Ludlow, completed the trip in July Rutherford is the youngest woman to attempt the feat.

"I'm really hoping to encourage girls and young women to go into aviation and STEM science, technology, engineering and mathematics," she said before takeoff.

"Growing up, I didn't see many women in those fields and it was quite discouraging. So I'm hoping to change that." Her aerial odyssey can be followed on Rutherford's website, FlyZolo.com, and on the TikTok social media app.

Rutherford has a satellite telephone and a radio to communicate with air traffic control in all the countries on her route, but in the cockpit she will be alone with her music and her podcasts.

## Punjab govt to launch air ambulance service

**P**assing-out parade of rescuers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Koh-e-Suleman area of Dera Ghazi Khan at the Emergency Services Academy, Thokar Niaz Beg. White Star

Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Monday 16 August announced launching an air ambulance service, saying Punjab would be the first province to start the service.

He said the budget had been allocated for the air rescue service in the current financial year.

He was speaking at the passing-out of 393 rescuers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 73 of Koh-e-Suleman area of DG Khan at Emergency Services Academy, Thokar Niaz Beg, on Monday. Mr Buzdar assured the rescuers that the government would review approval of risk allowance for them on the pattern of Punjab Police and the work would start for restoration of frozen allowance from 2017 onwards.

He said the government had also expanded the scope of rescue service to 86 tehsils while motorbike ambulance service had been extended to 27 districts. He lauded the Rescue 1122 for rescuing the people in more than 9.6m emergencies.

The chief minister said more than 20,000 rescuers of Punjab and other federating units had completed their training from the academy.

Mr Buzdar said the rescuers service structure had been implemented to generate promotion opportunities and the government had given the status of an administrative department to Rescue 1122 while giving the powers of a secretary to its director general.

He also lauded the rescuers for shifting thousands of coronavirus patients to hospitals and quarantine centres during the pandemic. KP's special assistant on information Kamran Bangash and Rescue 1122 DG Dr Rizwan Naseer also spoke.

CM Buzdar witnessed the rescuers' performance appreciated their skills. He inspected the parade and distributed shields among the best performers. He was also presented a shield by Kamran Bangash on behalf of the KP government.

Meanwhile, CM Buzdar has directed to ensure observance of Covid-19 SOPs in

Muharram processions and Majalis.

In a statement, he appealed to the participants to wear facemasks as it was in their interest to observe precautions in the wake of the fourth wave of the coronavirus.

**BARYAR:** Newly-elected MPA from Sialkot Ahsan Saleem Baryar called on CM Buzdar in his office along with senior PTI leader Saleem Baryar.

Principal Secretary to CM Tahir Khurshid was also present.

The CM congratulated Ahsan Saleem Baryar and Saleem Baryar on the victory in PP-38, saying the people had defeated the anti-state narrative and chosen an honest and trustworthy candidate to represent them.

Ahsan Baryar invited the CM to visit Sialkot. Passing-out parade of rescuers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Koh-e-Suleman area of Dera Ghazi Khan at the Emergency Services Academy, Thokar Niaz Beg.

## More PIA flights bring Pakistanis, foreigners stranded in Kabul

**P**akistan International Airlines operated two more special flights to bring Pakistani nationals and foreigners stranded in Afghanistan to Pakistan on Friday 20 August. The PIA's Chief Executive Officer, Arshad Malik, left with the first flight to encourage the crew.

The PIA CEO will hold meetings with Afghan Civil Aviation and Nato officials at Kabul airport and review administrative matters and operation with Pakistani Ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Khan.

A spokesman for PIA said: "Two more special PIA flights left for Kabul to bring back Pakistanis and foreigners stranded in Kabul to Pakistan."

Airbus 320 and Boeing 777 were used in the two flights. According to the PIA spokesman, Minister for Aviation Sarwar Khan said the situation was being reviewed for operating more flights to other cities of Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, a special flight of PIA which was stuck at the Kabul airport on Wednesday 18 August arrived at Islamabad International Airport on Thursday 19 August morning with Pakistanis, staff of foreign diplomatic missions and people from international organisations onboard.

The national flag carrier's Boeing 777 flight PK-6249 the first international flight since the formation of new government in Afghanistan could not fly back to Islamabad on Wednesday night to repatriate Pakistanis and staff of foreign diplomatic missions stranded in Kabul due to security situation.

The PIA spokesman said: "This was the first international flight since the new government was formed in Afghanistan by the Taliban."

He said the PIA's special flight carrying passengers from Kabul returned

to Pakistan safely and landed at Islamabad International Airport at 7am on Thursday.

The spokesman said that information regarding delayed return of the special flight was kept secret due to security reasons on Wednesday.

"The PIA administration had been in constant touch with the new Afghan government, civil aviation and Nato officials for the return flight," the spokesman said, adding that CEO Arshad Malik was overseeing the operation directly from PIA's exchange room.

PIA had been in contact with the new Afghan administration staff and on-site security agencies, the spokesman said, adding that Prime Minister Imran Khan and other senior government officials were also kept informed about the arrival of the plane.

He said that Pakistanis, staff of foreign diplomatic missions and people from major international organisations were rescued during the special flight as passengers were facilitated by PIA's ground staff in Kabul.

A day after the Taliban took control of Kabul, the flight operation to Kabul was suspended by PIA. PIA's special flight PK-6249 was the first flight to land at the Kabul airport after temporary suspension of international flights.

One of the two special flights of the national flag carrier, which departed for Kabul to evacuate Pakistanis, foreigners and Afghans, arrived in Islamabad on Friday evening, while the second flight is likely to reach Islamabad in the night.

Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan, said in a tweet: "Pakistan embassy in Kabul is arranging evacuation of 350 foreign nationals, Pakistanis & Afghans on two special flights by PIA. The Embassy has made arrangements in its own compound."



Passing-out parade of rescuers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Koh-e-Suleman area of Dera Ghazi Khan at the Emergency Services Academy, Thokar Niaz Beg.



## ACAAP hosts reception in honour of its Chairman



Mr. Muhammad Yousaf Chairman ACAAP (Air Cargo Agents Association) being presented a bouquet by members of ACAAP at a reception held in Lahore.



A Group photo with ACAAP Chairman Mr. Muhammad Yousaf taken on the occasion.



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## Pakistan becomes smartphone exporter

**P**akistan has become exporter of 4G smartphones by sending first-ever shipment tagged 'Manufactured in Pakistan' to the United Arab Emirates.

The first consignment of 5,500 mobile sets of 4G smartphones manufactured by Inovi Telecom was exported to the UAE on Friday 13 August.

However, the local manufacturers of mobile phone sets have stressed the need for an export supportive policy, allowing Pakistan to beat competitors in the Middle East region.

The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority on Saturday congratulated the company for the achievement and hoped the exports of smart phones would increase further. "This is the result of concerted efforts for the development of mobile device manufacturing ecosystem in the country," said the regulator in a statement.

First consignment of 5,500 4G sets shipped to UAE.

Inovi Telecom Pvt Ltd was issued authorisation for mobile device manufacturing in April and it has managed to fulfill its first export order within four months. Chief Executive Zeeshan MianNoor said that their main target was to penetrate in low-end markets of Middle East including Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan.

"We are manufacturing the Chinese brands and there are a large number of expat workers in the Gulf countries," he said, adding the hi-end consumers of Gulf countries prefer top world class mobile brands and we should not even try to get involved in that market."

He said that the mass market of Gulf countries was their primary target, while the ordinary citizens of Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan too preferred mobile sets up to \$100 each.

IT and Telecom Minister Syed Amin ul Haque told media that favourable government policies have helped achieve the milestone of transforming Pakistan from a net mobile phone importer to an exporting country.

He added that conducive environment was being provided to the local mobile device manufacturing companies and the smuggling of mobile phones has been stopped through Device Identification Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS).

The minister added that the local manufacturers would eventually start moving towards assembling of high-end phones too after the production of spare parts for mobile sets commence next year.

On the other hand a senior player in the field has said that the government's approach towards enhancing export markets was slow, keeping in view the changing scenario.

Transsion Tecno Electronics CEO Amir Allahwala said that overall exports of mobile set by China is over \$140bn, but that was only due to low labour cost, which has now increased significantly.

"The Chinese are moving towards high-tech items and shifting their mobile

set manufacturing to countries like India, Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh," he said.

He added that labour cost was very high in Vietnam and Indonesia and Chinese businesses are not expanding in India anymore due to mounting political tensions.

"Now Pakistan is the only player left to compete with Bangladesh, but is the government ready to provide same level of facilities to us too?" he asked. "We have proved that investors can meet the targets but the future of mobile set exports depends on the government policies," he remarked.

## 11 firms likely to win tenders for 2,500 PR freight wagons

**E**leven companies interested in the commercial operation of freight wagons are likely to win tenders after they, through financial bids, cumulatively offered about Rs13 billionn per annum to the Pakistan Railways (PR) for using 2,500 high and low capacity wagons.

"Eleven of the 13 firms have offered Rs13bn per annum to the PR for using 2,500 freight wagons. Since their bid seems feasible, the PR is likely to accept it. Though the financial bids of the two firms were also feasible, they couldn't be entertained due to some issuesone forgot to append the one percent earnest money pay order and the other didn't mention the destinations mistakenly," one of the potential bidders told media.

"The financial bids were opened on Aug 12 at the PR Lahore headquarters," he added.

According to an internal document, 13 companies were declared technically qualified for the bids for outsourcing of freight trains. They were Bilal Associates, Fatima Fertilizers, Maple Leaf Power Ltd, Indus Steel Mills, Premier Mercantile, Chishtian Logistic, IMGS Pakistan, Lucky Commodity, Mughal Steel, Irfanullah & Co, Maple Leaf Cement, Imlak Private Ltd and Awan Trading.

Under the plan, the PR wants to use 75pc of its 12,000 available goods' rolling stock in order to double its freight

business. Of the 12,000 goods' wagons of all kinds, 2,500 are fit for operation and almost 5,000 may be utilised after some repair. The remaining 4,500 require complete rehabilitation. The 2,150 wagons are currently under use of the PR for coal, containers and the general cargo transportation.

By June 2021, the PR's total freight business, including the Yousafwala (Sahiwal)-Karachi coal transportation, crossed Rs20bn. An amount of Rs18bn includes Rs12bn through coal transportation and the rest (Rs6bn) earned through other cargo/freight business.

"Despite having 2,500 fit wagons of high and low capacity, the PR is earning just Rs8bn per annum. The offers of Rs13bnmore than doubleis a good omen for the department," the bidder said, adding that the PR is likely to touch a figure of Rs25bn freight revenue this year (Rs12bn from the dedicated coal transportation and Rs13bn from the other freight/cargo business through outsourcing of coaches).

When contacted, PR Chief Marketing Manager Kashif Yousfani told media he was unable to quote the exact figure of the offers mentioned in the financial bids.

"I cannot confirm to you the amount of total offers since the evaluation of bids is under way at the moment. This process may take a week more or so," he added.





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## Pakistan, Uzbekistan pledge to boost ties in all sectors

Pakistan and Uzbekistan on Thursday 15 July vowed to expand multifaceted bilateral cooperation to all areas of mutual interest and stressed the need for resolution of the Afghanistan conflict through internal political process imperative for peace and progress of the whole region.

The two countries made these commitments on the first day of Prime Minister Imran Khan's two-day official visit to Uzbekistan where they jointly hosted Uzbekistan-Pakistan Business Forum on 'Central and South Asia 2021: Regional Connectivity Challenges and Opportunities', in the Uzbek capital.

PM Khan, while addressing the business forum, expressed the hope that Pakistan's connectivity (through rail, road and aviation) with Uzbekistan in trade and bilateral spheres would open up new avenues of prosperity in the region. "Pakistan has immense potential to connect Central Asia with the rest of the world and become a hub of trade," he added.

Several MoUs and agreements were signed to strengthen cooperation between the two sides in diverse areas. These include a protocol on exchange of pre-arrival information on goods moved across the state border, an agreement on transit trade, cooperation in the field of military education and an agreement on simplification of visa procedures for businessmen and tourist groups. An MoU between Pakistan's Foreign Service Academy and the University of World Economy and Diplomacy of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan was also signed, in addition to a cultural exchange programme 2021-2026 and an MoU on tourism.

Two states sign several agreements to strengthen cooperation; Imran says Pakistan has immense potential to connect Central Asia with rest of world

Prime Minister was received by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev at Koksaray presidential palace and given a guard of honour. National anthems of the two countries were played on the occasion.

Mr Khan laid a wreath at Independence and Humanism Monument of Uzbekistan as a gesture of respect to the history and culture of the Uzbek people. Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov accompanied Mr Khan.

The business forum was attended by a large number of businessmen from Pakistan and Uzbekistan, besides the prime minister's delegation, including Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Information Minister Fawad



*Prime Minister Imran Khan addressing a meeting of the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Business Forum.*

Chaudhry, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi, National Security Adviser Dr Moeed Yusuf and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Information Technology Atif Khan.

Speaking at the forum, Prime Minister Khan assured the businessmen and traders of Uzbekistan that Pakistan would extend them every possible facility in promotion of trade. "I want to assure the business community of Uzbekistan that this relationship is just the beginning of the journey of development and prosperity."

He said the railway project between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan would prove to be a revolution of development, adding that peace and security in the neighbourhood was essential to exploit the region's potential.

Mr Khan said peace in Afghanistan was important to ensure materialisation of development projects in Central Asia. "Pakistan is keen for peace in Afghanistan and considers it vital for trade connectivity among the regional countries," he said, adding such trade linkages helped in raising the living standards of citizens.

Mr Khan referred to the cooperation among neighbouring countries of the European Union that focused on bilateral trade arrangements for the benefit of their peoples. "With the support and will of the regional states, the situation in Afghanistan would lead to improvement," he hoped.

Speaking to the media, Foreign Minister Qureshi said Pakistan and Uzbekistan had vast potential to explore the opportunities of bilateral trade and investment for their mutual interest.

He said the Pak-Uzbek business forum was attended by around 130 representatives of leading companies and business houses from Pakistan. The activity resulted in signing of agreements worth \$453 million, he said.

Fawad Chaudhry said two important objectives of the prime minister's visit were to ensure travel facilities between Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and deliberate upon ways to ensure peace in Afghanistan. "We want an effective

transportation infrastructure so that the goods loaded from Pakistan's Karachi and Gwadar seaports could reach Uzbekistan's Tashkent," he said in a video message from the Uzbek capital.

### Joint declaration

A joint declaration, issued at the conclusion of the business forum, said Prime Minister Khan and Uzbek President Mirziyoyev agreed to strengthen their multifaceted ties in political, trade and economic, energy, communication, science and technology, education and cultural spheres, and fighting Covid-19.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction at the continued progress in bilateral relations and announced the establishment of a strategic partnership for mutual benefit of the two countries.

Noting that Pakistan was among the first countries to recognise the independence of Republic of Uzbekistan in 1991, the leaders congratulated each other on approaching the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two brotherly countries and agreed to celebrate it in a befitting manner.

They agreed on the regular exchange of parliamentary delegations to deepen bilateral ties. The Uzbek side confirmed the invitation to Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani to pay a visit to Uzbekistan.

The leaders expressed satisfaction at the level of bilateral cooperation within the framework of international organisations and reaffirmed their commitment to continue supporting each other in the UN, SCO, OIC, ECO and other international and regional forums on issues of mutual interest.

The Uzbek president highly appreciated the role of Pakistan in promoting the peace process in Afghanistan and its contribution to socioeconomic development of Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Khan hailed Uzbekistan's efforts for socioeconomic reconstruction of Afghanistan through the implementation of a number of significant projects.

Both leaders expressed readiness to maintain a regular dialogue and build constructive cooperation in the field of security and defence and to expand cooperation between law enforcement agencies of the two countries, particularly in the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking.

The two leaders welcomed the signing of the agreement on transit trade as an important tool for expanding bilateral trade. They reiterated their support for the Termez-Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar



railway project as an important initiative to create a rail link from Central Asia to the Arabian Sea through Afghanistan and Pakistani seaports of Karachi, Gwadar and Bin Qasim.

The two leaders also recognised immense potential of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor for the benefit of the entire Central Asian region and beyond entailing greater connectivity and trade linkages through a network of transport, fibre optic cable, energy pipelines, and investment opportunities in its SEZs.

The two leaders welcomed resumption of direct regular flights between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.

Both leaders welcomed the declaration of March 15 as International Day to combat Islamophobia, and agreed to work towards the designation of this day by the UN General Assembly.

The forum was attended by more than 100 top Pakistani businessmen and investors representing major export sectors and logistic services and Uzbek businessmen from corresponding sectors.

#### **Interaction with Pakistani businessmen**

In an interactive session with Pakistani businessmen, Prime Minister Khan said the government was committed to removing impediments in the way of various businesses and industries, including the pharmaceutical industry.

The prime minister said unnecessary regulations were being done away with to encourage and promote the Small and Medium Enterprises.

He said Pakistan and Uzbekistan had a lot of potential for joint ventures between their private sectors for mutual benefit.

Foreign Minister Qureshi and Adviser on Commerce Razak Dawood were also present on the occasion.

The prime minister told the entrepreneurs that the government was working to change the NAB (National Accountability Bureau) Law.

Prime Minister Khan, who gave a patient hearing to the proposals of Pakistani businessmen and entrepreneurs, agreed with a businessman that Pakistan had enormous potential in the pharmaceutical industry, which was not being tapped due to problems in the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan.

The prime minister also mentioned the NAB law and its fear as one of the impediments in attracting quality professionals required to head various institutions in the country.

He assured the Pakistani entrepreneurs that they would also be consulted before signing the Free Trade and Preferential Trade Agreements.

## **Dawood urges increase in regional trade**



*COMMERCE Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood is addressing businessmen at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry recently.*

**A**dviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood recently said Pakistan must focus on enhancing regional trade which remains very low and must be exploited.

Addressing a meeting of exporters at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), he said the government had successfully completed its agenda of economic stability. Calling for increase in regional trade, he gave the example of the European Union where regional trade was 90 per cent.

The meeting was presided over by SCCI president Qaisar Iqbal Baryar. Senior vice president Khurram Aslam Butt and former presidents of the chamber also attended the meeting.

Mr Dawood shared details of the agreements and MoUs concluded during Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to Uzbekistan, saying it was a successful visit. He informed the meeting that 71 agreements were signed between the two countries.

Invites exporters to take part in the single-country exhibition to be held in Tashkent soon

The adviser said that a single-country exhibition would be held in Tashkent soon and urged the Sialkot exporters to participate in it. Uzbekistan has good relations with CIS countries and this opportunity must be availed, he added.

On the occasion, Mr Dawood said DLTL issues will be resolved. "I have a one-point agenda meeting with the PM to set export target for the next year. Three members from each chamber of commerce will attend the meeting," he said. The adviser added that he will discuss issues regarding Exim Bank with the finance minister.

He congratulated Sialkot exporters for increasing their exports during the past few years and further appreciated the e-commerce trainings in the area.

He added that economic and industrial boost was on government's top agenda. He assured Sialkot exporters that all problems of the industrial sector would be resolved amicably. "The Commerce Ministry is actively engaging with all relevant stakeholders to understand the issues related to trade and investment in current challenging situation," he added.

## **25 textile firms contribute 21pc to \$25bn exports**

**T**he top 25 textile companies have alone contributed over \$5.361 billion, or 21 per cent, to the country's overall exports of \$25bn in 2020-21.

"It is a matter of great pleasure that the exports of the textile sector alone soared by 19.23pc to \$15.5bn in 2020-21 compared to \$13bn the preceding year," Aptma (North Zone) Chairman Abdul Rahim Nasir told media recently. "It is really unprecedented," he added.

According to a list shared by trade bodies, Style Textile (Pvt) Ltd exports remained \$428.76 million in 2020-21, followed by Interloop Ltd with \$331.54m, Artistic Milliners (Pvt) Ltd \$329.63m, Yunus Textile Mills Ltd \$311.92m, Nishat Mills Ltd \$307.32m, Gul Ahmad Textile Mills Ltd \$284.25m, Feroze 1888 Mills Ltd \$273.04m, Soorty Enterprises Ltd \$268.14m, Artistic Fabric & Garment Industries (Pvt) Ltd-\$226.42m, Liberty Mills \$216.33m, Masood Textile Mills Ltd \$213.05m, Sadaqat Ltd \$209.22m, US Apparel & Textiles Ltd \$197.50m, Al-Karam Textile Mills Ltd \$185.25m, Nishat (Chunian) Ltd \$169.70m, Novatex Ltd \$167.49m, Lucky Textile Mills Ltd \$165.79m, Garibsons Ltd \$165.65m, Denim Clothing Company \$148.58m, Klash Ltd \$139.16m, Sapphire Finishing Mills Ltd \$137.35m, Gohar Textile Mills Ltd \$126.78m, Kamal Ltd \$125.75m, Riaz Textile Mills Ltd \$121.09m and Sapphire Fibres Ltd \$111.87m.

He said keeping in view the rapid expansion in the textile exports owing to increasing investments, Aptma has decided to take all those textile exports companies making \$40m to 50m per annum to achieve the figure of \$100m each. "If we succeed in doing so, our textile exports alone may jump from \$15.5bn to \$25bn in next couple of years," he added.

## Chinese ban on nine firms hits Pakistan's fish exports

A number of Pakistani companies have been facing a temporary ban on exports of fish and fish preparations to China since January after detection of coronavirus in their shipments.

Qadri Noori Enterprise chief executive officer Manzar Alam told media that around 50 companies have been exporting fish to China. Out of top 15 exporters, some nine firms are now temporarily banned by the Chinese authorities.

Giving details of the ban, he said in case the coronavirus is detected in one shipment, the exporter faces a one-week ban and in case of four cases, then the exporter cannot send the shipment for eight weeks, he said.

He said Pakistan's seafood exports have since been in crisis as 60 per cent out of the country's total fish exports are destined for China.

Mr Alam said coronavirus had been detected in outer cartons and the Chinese authorities instead of destroying the infected consignment or sending it into quarantine for 15 days had suspended the shipping company.

"The rejected consignments then arrived back in Pakistan and exporters are facing Rs2 million per container as demurrage and detention and taxes," he added.

"Exporters have taken up the matter with Commerce Adviser Abdul Razak Dawood who had constituted a committee, but no headway has been made so far," he added.

One container with 26 tonnes of fish carries a price between Rs7m and Rs10m, he said.

Pakistan has been exporting seafood at an average unit price (AUP) of less than \$2.5 per kg from FY18 to FY21 as compared to AUP of \$5 to 8 per kg earned by regional competitors.

"We have been exporting small fish which earn low prices for the last four years," Deep Blue Seafood Ltd CEO M. Faisal Iftikhar Ali said, adding that fish meal is being exported in bulk quantities which is used in poultry feed.

He said India is fetching an AUP of \$5-7 per kg followed by over \$5 by Bangladesh and \$7-8 per kg by China. The average global AUP comes to \$5 per kg.

Pakistan's fish and fish preparation exports in FY21 stood slightly higher at 184,396 tonnes fetching \$414m but AUP came to \$2.25 per kg compared with exports of 171,704 tonnes valuing \$406m with AUP of \$2.35 per kg in FY20.

Pakistan had seen the highest-ever



*THIS combo picture shows seafood (clockwise) ribbon fish, eels, Japanese thread fin bream also known as JTB octopus and shrimps in baskets. Workers at a seafood processing unit arrange boxes of fish and shrimps.*

exports of 198,420 tonnes in FY18 which earned \$451m but the AUP was \$2.27 per kg, while in FY19 exports were 195,523 tonnes fetching \$438m with AUP at \$2.24, PBS data showed.

Fish exports had managed to get \$2.58 per kg value with export of 152,858 tonnes worth \$394m in 2016-2017 and AUP of \$2.54 per kg in 2015-2016 with export of 127,910 tonnes fetching \$325m.

According to the Economic Survey FY21, Pakistan's main buyers of fish products are China, Thailand, Malaysia, the Middle East, Sri Lanka and Japan. The survey said since resumption of exports to the European Union (EU), several consignments of fish, cuttlefish and shrimps had been sent by two exporters who were cleared after 100 per cent laboratory tests at the EU borders. Six more fish processing plants are in the pipeline and their cases for approval are under process with the EU authorities.

Belgium, Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom had imported 3,285 tonnes of fish, squid shrimps and crabs valuing \$13mn during July-March FY21 on which the AUP comes to \$395 per tonne, the survey said.

Mr Faisal said India as well as other countries are giving a tough time to Pakistan as these competitors have adopted shrimp farming, while in Pakistan there is negligible marine farming.

Pakistan has been facing a problem of overfishing of juvenile fish causing persistent drop in landing of high value fish, he said, adding that a joint study by Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and Marine Fisheries Department (MFD) of the Federal Government had undertaken a comprehensive assessment of Pakistan's Marine Fisheries Resources 2015 and revealed massive fish stocks depletion in Pakistan's seas.

Technical Adviser (Marine Fisheries), WWF-Pakistan, Mohammad Moazam Khan said fish production in Pakistan in 2020 was observed to be 619,000 tonnes of

which inland fish contributed 250,000 tonnes, whereas marine production was 369,741 tonnes. The landing of fish in Sindh was 208,001 tonnes whereas Balochistan production is 161,740 tonnes.

The export is increasing mainly because of rising export of fish meal. The production mainly of marine fish in Sindh has been decreasing since 1999 because of over fishing and an increased fishing fleet, he said.

Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations has warned in 2016 to reduce fishing fleet by 50pc or else major fisheries resources may collapse, however, no heed was paid by the fishermen and authorities concerned and no control on the fleet is in place, he said.

WWF-Pakistan has shown its concern that about 200 tonnes of tuna being smuggled to Iran daily. If this illegal trade is controlled Pakistani exports may reach a level of at least \$550m. There is immediate need to reducing fishing fleet both Sindh and Balochistan else the fisheries may collapse, he stressed.

### Karachi businessmen urged to invest in Gwadar, CPEC projects



*Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani is addressing businessmen at the KCCI headquarters on Friday 9 July.*

Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani on Friday 9 July urged Karachi's business community to expand their activities by setting up industrial export units in Gwadar as well as other parts of Balochistan.

Addressing the business community at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Senate chairman said Gwadar is fast becoming a trading hub as development work in the port city had picked up pace. He asked Karachi businessmen to invest in Gwadar and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects. Chinese investors are





Higher than the himalayyas, Deeper than the sea, Sweeter than honey,  
Across cloud, **Pakistan-China friendship**  
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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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continuously arriving at Gwadar for setting up industrial units, he highlighted. The issue of water scarcity in Gwadar has been resolved and desalination plants have been installed, he added.

“Gwadar, being the only city after Islamabad, is being developed under a master plan aimed at providing all basic facilities. Power supply in the town would be linked with national grid in this fiscal year while development work at Gwadar Port is at advanced stage followed by fast pace development in industrial area,” Senator Sanjarani said. Besides Gwadar, basic infrastructure of overall Balochistan province is being developed which include construction of a number of roads to boost industrial and trading activities, he added.

Sanjarani says water problem in port city has been resolved

On a delicate prevailing situation in Afghanistan, Senator Sanjarani said Pakistan is looking forward for peace in Afghanistan which is necessary for the entire region. All the state institutions look forward to see a peaceful and progressive Afghanistan, he added.

He said he would discuss the issues of Karachi in the Senate as the city is the backbone of country's economy and sets the direction of country's economic progress. He urged businessmen to send their proposals so that it could be debated in the Senate sessions and replies would be sought from the concerned ministries.

He added that he would ask the Senate standing committees on commerce, industry and finance to visit KCCI and hold meetings with the businessmen. “I will support the business community of Karachi,” he added.

On the occasion, Chairman Businessmen Group Zubair Motiwala highlighted that Karachi was in a pathetic condition in terms of poor infrastructure. “KCCI wants to give a presentation on Karachi as other cities of the country are prospering while Karachi is suffering. The share of Karachi in country's exports is 52 per cent while it pays more than 60pc taxes to the national kitty but the port city continues to face severe hardships and injustices. There is a need to provide more funds for Karachi's development and resolving its pending issues,” he added.

## Iran president has decided to open six more border trade routes, says Sanjarani



*Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjarani has said the newly-elected Iranian president has announced opening of six more trade corridors along the Pakistan-Iran border in Balochistan.*

Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjarani has said the newly-elected Iranian president has announced opening of six more trade corridors along the Pakistan-Iran border in Balochistan.

He was speaking at a public meeting in his hometown of Nokkundi after arriving in Chagai on a two-day visit on 10 August.

Speaking about his recent visit to Iran where he attended the oath-taking ceremony of President Ebrahim Raisi, Mr Sanjarani said that he informed the president of the desire of the Baloch living along the border to see more trade routes opened. The Iranian president accepted the proposal.

He said more job opportunities would be created after the opening of the trade corridors as the people living in the districts of Balochistan along the border were largely dependent on border trade.

He also said that the home minister of Balochistan and the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan would be approached to reopen the recently closed border trade corridor at Taftan.

Mr Sanjarani thanked the Iranian president for announcing the reopening of new trade corridors and termed the decision a good gesture.

Earlier, Mr Sanjarani was received by tribal elders, political figures and government officials on his arrival at Dalbandin airport.

The Senate chairman laid down the foundation-stone of 103-kilometre-long Nokkundi-Mashkel road and inaugurated the Ghat Water Supply Scheme before addressing the public gathering.

Talking about development projects, Mr Sanjarani said that roads would be constructed between Dalbandin and Ziarat Balanosh. Washuk would also be connected with Gwadar a road.

“At the moment development projects worth Rs20 billion are being

undertaken in Chagai and these projects would provide a lot of job opportunities to the masses in near future,” he said.

A modern Mineral Research University would also be constructed in Nokkundi area of Chagai, he said, adding that more development schemes worth Rs5bn would be included in the next Public Sector Development Programme.

## Exports to UK up 33pc

Pakistan's exports to the United Kingdom posted a 33 per cent growth when it reached \$2.025 billion in the fiscal year 2021 (FY21) against \$1.522bn over FY20, mainly led by textile products.

Pakistan's exports to the UK primarily consist of textile and leather-related products, according to data compiled by the Ministry to Commerce.

Over the years, the UK has emerged Pakistan's third largest export destination, second largest source of foreign direct investment and third largest source of remittances after Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE).

As a result, total bilateral trade between the two countries has reached over \$2.648bn during FY21 against \$2.122bn in the previous year, reflecting an increase of 25pc.

Britain mainly buys textile and leather products from Pakistan

The top export products to the UK in FY21 was home textile, which grew 42pc to \$648 million from \$456m in the previous year, followed by an increase of 57pc in apparel and clothing knitted or crocheted to \$625m from \$397m over the previous year, and increase of 5pc in apparel and clothing not knitted or crocheted to \$304m against \$2.88m in previous year.

The export of five products posted a growth but its exports in value term remain very less. The exports of surgical instruments posted a growth of 22pc on a year-on-year terms to \$36m followed by 48pc in edible fruit and nuts, peel of citrus fruits to \$31m, 55pc in furniture, bedding, mattresses, mattress to \$30m and 241pc in beverages, spirits and vinegar to \$20m, respectively.

However, the exports of cereals dipped by 2pc, cotton 4pc and article of leather 1pc during the year under review.

The main reason for the increase in



textile products of Pakistan is due to the market diversification drive by the UK companies in the aftermath of the Covid-19 induced crisis. The companies have realised their vulnerability due to over-reliance on Bangladesh, India, and China.

Besides, Pakistan was among the first textile-producing countries to reopen the manufacturing facilities after lockdown, which gave the country a significant head-start over the competitors.

Contrary to this, Pakistan's imports

from the UK increased by 4pc to \$623m in FY21 against \$600m in FY20.

The top-ten import products include iron & steel (scrap and flat-rolled) \$343m, machinery and mechanical \$62m, chemicals \$33m, medical apparatus \$18m, respectively.

During 2020-21, remittances from the UK to Pakistan increased by 58 from \$2.569bn in FY20 to \$4.067bn. The remittances from the UK to Pakistan during this financial year have seen a

robust increase, which is a good sign for the economy.

The UK is the fifth largest national economy in the world measured by nominal gross domestic product (GDP) comprising 3pc of world GDP. The size of GDP is \$2.7 trillion, whereas per capita income is \$40,406. The UK is the ninth largest exporter and the fourth largest importer in the world. It possesses the second-largest stocks of inward and outward foreign direct investment.

## Bidder made CEO of railway freight company

In a surprising development, the federal government has appointed a chief operating officer of a private firm as chief executive officer (CEO) of the Pakistan Railways Freight Transportation Company (PRFTC) despite knowing the fact that he, very recently on behalf of his company, prepared and submitted bids for getting the project on outsourcing of the railways' freight wagons, business.

"He was also among various participants who attended pre-bid meetings on behalf of his companies. The recent one he attended was held on July 2," an official said.

The appointment of Mr Jawaid Siddiqui as the CEO was approved in the meeting of the cabinet. He was associated with various subsidiaries of the group for over a decade in top managerial positions.

The PR is privatising its freight business to increase competition and make the loss-making state-owned enterprise financially viable.

"It seems that through induction of Mr Siddiqui in the PRFTC, monopoly of certain business groups is being surfaced in the Pakistan Railways a strategically important department," apprehended another source.

"It is a clear case of conflict of interest," he said.

The source said the foreign investors were said that there won't be a level playing field available for them after this appointment.

"The simple way to avert a conflict of interest and uphold the merit is to privatise the PRFTC as a public limited company, list/float its shares in the stock exchange and give equal opportunity to all."

After this development, he said, the PRFTC people may throw any company 'technically out of the race' on the day when technical bids of all prequalified would be opened," he maintained.

Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati defended the appointment of Mr Siddiqui.

"I own Jawaaid Siddiqui, as we selected him after interviewing many candidates. We have found him one of the best for this position," he said, confirming that his appointment letter would be issued very soon since the cabinet has approved his appointment.

Mr Swati said there was no issue related to conflict of interest since he is watching all things.

He said if the company where he (Siddiqui) has worked already, doesn't give PR a suitable offer through competitive bidding, that will be out from the race.

"But if its bids are the highest, we will have no option but to award the project to them under the law," the minister clarified.

About the possibility of monopoly, Mr Swati said: "We have 12,000 freight wagons. These all would not be given to one company alone, as we will distribute it among the winners/firms without any discrimination," the minister maintained.

## Jubilation as Keti Bandar gets water supply scheme after 40 years

**T**HATTA: Rehabilitation of a water supply scheme after four decades in coastal town Keti Bandar had brought smiles to the faces of residents of the town and its adjoining settlements.

The Rs187.219 million worth scheme would cater to needs of 10,653 population of the town and a number of scattered settlements of fishing communities, peasants and labourers along deltaic belt, said PPP MPA Haji Ali Hassan Zardari on Thursday 8 July.

He said that for years the fishing communities did not have any source of safe water and they were forced to buy potable water at exorbitant price supplied through water tankers.

He said that he was also striving hard to provide additional water reservoirs by the newly rehabilitated water supply system to keep the facility running throughout the year and also supply water to nearby villages through 21,000-foot-



*THE reservoir built to store sweet water in Keti Bandar. Solar panels have been installed next to it to run the supply system.*

long pipeline in near future.

Hameed Panhwar, a local PPP leader from PS 78, played a pivotal role in the approval and execution of the scheme, besides road and other schemes.

Sajid Hussain Mallah, an official of public health engineering department, said that three reservoirs having capacity of more than 4.5m gallons would provide water to people through 41,000-foot-long and 10-inch diameter pipeline.

The reservoirs were being filled with water lifted from Joohu Minor a water tributary and an offshoot of Udoro Lal canal and made operational with 89,529 watts solar system after chlorination process, he said.

Villagers Sattar Themor, Ghani Katiyar, Hassan Dablo and a number of social activists believed that availability of sweet water would prove to be a strong incentive for those who had left Keti Bandar to return to their town.

The rehabilitated scheme had been executed in 1974 but high oceanic currents frequently gushing into Keti Bandar and its suburbs had washed it away. Now, the banks of the reservoirs have been raised reasonably and strengthened properly to save it from the oceanic currents and ensure prompt water facility to locals.

The jubilation was writ large on the faces of local population for whom it was a dream come true.

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## **S. Arabia to open doors for tourists after 17-month closure**

**S**audi Arabia announced on Friday 30 July it would reopen its borders to fully vaccinated foreign tourists after a 17-month closure due to the coronavirus pandemic, the state news agency said.

However, Riyadh did not announce any lifting of restrictions on Umra, which usually attracts millions of Muslims from across the globe each year. "The Ministry of Tourism announced that the Kingdom will open its doors to foreign tourists, and lift... the suspension of entry for tourist visa holders, starting from August 1," the Saudi Press Agency reported.

It said travellers fully vaccinated with Saudi-approved jabs Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson will be able to enter the kingdom "without the need for an institutional quarantine period", provided they also have proof of a negative PCR Covid-19 test taken within the last 72 hours and register their details with health authorities.

Riyadh has spent billions trying to build a tourism industry from scratch, as part of efforts to diversify its oil-reliant economy. The once-reclusive kingdom began issuing tourist visas for the first time in 2019, part of an ambitious push to revamp its global image and draw visitors.

Between September 2019 and March 2020, it issued 400,000 only for the pandemic to crush that momentum as borders were closed. Covid-19 also hugely disrupted the Haj and Umra pilgrimages, usually a key revenue earner for the kingdom in normal times, they together rake in some \$12 billion annually.

Currently only immunised pilgrims resident in Saudi Arabia are eligible for Umra permits.

The government has accelerated a nationwide vaccination drive as it moves to revive tourism and host sports and entertainment extravaganzas, all pandemic-hit sectors.

So far, 26 million jabs have been administered to the population of 35 million, and the kingdom has said that from August 1, vaccinations will be mandatory to enter government and private establishments, including education institutions and entertainment venues, as well as to use public transport.

Saudi Arabia has registered more than 523,000 coronavirus cases, with 8,213 deaths.

## **Saudi Arabia to reopen borders for vaccinated Umrah pilgrims**

**S**audi Arabia will begin accepting vaccinated foreigners wanting to make the Umrah pilgrimage, authorities said on Sunday 8 August, a move that will boost an economy hit by the Covid pandemic.

Nearly 18 months after it closed its borders to battle coronavirus, Saudi Arabia would from Monday begin "gradually receiving Umrah requests from various countries", the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) reported.

The Umrah can be undertaken at any time, unlike the annual Haj. The Covid-19 pandemic hugely disrupted both the pilgrimages, which are usually key revenue earners for the kingdom that rake in a combined \$12 billion annually.

Before Sunday's announcement, only immunised pilgrims residing in Saudi Arabia were eligible for Umrah permits.

And last month only around 60,000 inoculated residents were allowed to take part in a scaled down form of Haj. But the kingdom is slowly opening up, and has started welcoming vaccinated foreign tourists since August 1.

Foreign pilgrims must be immunised with a Saudi-recognised vaccine Pfizer-BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna or Johnson & Johnson and agree to undergo quarantine if necessary, the SPA said quoting Deputy Haj Minister Abdulfattah bin Sulaiman Mashat. He added that the kingdom was working on determining the destinations from which pilgrims could come and their numbers on a "periodic basis according to the classification of preventive measures" in those countries.

Barring overseas pilgrims has caused deep disappointment among Muslims worldwide, who typically save for years to take part.

"I feel relieved about the resumption of the Umrah pilgrimage," Ahmed Hamadna, 33, a sales manager in Egypt, said. But he added that he was "concerned about the complex procedures and measures during the pandemic".

Engineer Mohamad Ragab, an Australian resident, said he too was still "hesitant" to perform the Umrah pilgrimage. "There will likely be crowds in Makkah and the chances of infection are high," he said.

According to the SPA report, Saudi Arabia will allow 60,000 pilgrims to perform Umrah each month, and gradually increase that to reach two million worshippers per month.

Hosting the pilgrimages is a matter of prestige for Saudi rulers, for whom the custodianship of Islam's holiest sites is

their most powerful source of political legitimacy. Riyadh has spent billions trying to build a tourism industry from scratch, as part of efforts to diversify its oil-reliant economy.

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The government has accelerated a nationwide vaccination drive as it moves to revive tourism and other pandemic-hit sectors, such as sport competitions and entertainment extravaganzas.

## **Shaukat Hayat passes away**



An industrialist of Sialkot, Director, Falcon Surgical Co., Pvt Ltd., and Director SIAL Mr. Shaukat Hayat passed away on August 8 in Sialkot. He was the elder brother of Mr. Fazal Jilani Chairman AirSial and

Director SIAL, Mr. Khizar Hayat, and Younger Brother of Mr. Sikandar Hayat CE Star Medical Instruments, and cousin of Mr. Babar Iqbal former Charmian SIAL and President SCCI.

His funeral prayer was offered in Sialkot which was attended by a large number of businessmen of Sialkot, directors of SIAL, and his relatives and friends.

He is survived by a wife, four daughters and a son.

He was a veteran industrialist, initially, his factory was located at Khadim Ali road, and after some time, he expanded his business in many folds and shifted it to Wazir Abad Road at new building Sialkot. He was very generous and always ready to help the needy. He will be remembered by his heirs and friends.

He was a well-known personality in the social and business community of Sialkot and was one of the Flyer's contributors. His death is also Flyer's loss.

The Flyer International and its staff also express their deep sorrow and grief over the demise of Shaukat Hayat. The Flyer prays and requests to all to pray and make dua for the departed soul.

## Students below 18 travelling abroad allowed Moderna vaccine

**S**tudents below the age of 18 who are intending to travel abroad have been allowed to get Moderna vaccine.

On the other hand, former Senate chairman Mian Raza Rabbani condemned the United Kingdom's decision to keep Pakistan on the Covid-19 red list and removing India and several other countries from it. In a tweet, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) recently said: "Vaccination is open to all above 18 years of age. However, students aged 16-18 years, who need to go abroad for study to universities requiring mandatory vaccination will be administered Moderna vaccine. (to be administered on checking valid visa / university documents)."

According to an NCOC official, students under 18 would have to follow the same registration process of sending an SMS on the helpline 1166, and wait for information about the health centre.

As the vaccination drive intensifies in the wake of the fourth wave of the deadly virus, the Ministry of National Health Services, in a tweet, said more doses had been purchased and centres were being restocked.

"There is no shortage of Covid-19 vaccines," the ministry added.

Meanwhile, former Senate chairman Mian Raza Rabbani said the British government's latest quarantine traffic light system update was politically motivated and not based on scientific data.

He condemned the continued placement of Pakistan on the red list, urging the government to take up the issue with the UK authorities and also restrict movement of British nationals in the country.

"This is not the first time the Tory government has shown such a callous behaviour while dealing with the quarantine traffic light system," Mr Rabbani said, adding that India, which has

been moved to the amber list, has a seven-day infection rate of 20 per 100,000 people while Pakistan's rate during the same period is just 14 per 100,000.

"This is well below the vast majority of countries who are on the amber list," he said.

The former Senate chairman said the last time the UK government made

## US eases travel restrictions for Pakistan

**T**he US State Department has revised its travel advisory for Pakistan, upgrading it from "no travel" to "avoid unnecessary travels".

The revision from level four to level three although not a major change, is still a notable improvement.

"Pakistan's security environment has improved since 2014 when Pakistani security forces undertook concerted counter terrorist and counter militant operations," the latest travel advisory noted.

"There are greater security resources and infrastructure in major cities, particularly Islamabad, and security forces in these areas may be more readily able to respond to an emergency compared to other areas of the country."

Foreign Office welcomes Washington's decision to revise its travel advisory

The advisory pointed out that "while threats still exist, terrorist attacks are rare in Islamabad".

The notification, however, urged US citizens to "reconsider travel to Pakistan due to terrorism and sectarian violence" and suggested additional caution due to Covid-19, as "some areas have increased risk".

The US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention has issued a Level 2 Travel Health Notice for Pakistan, indicating a moderate level of Covid-19 in the country.

"Your risk of contracting Covid-19

political choices and failed to put India on the red list led to the Delta variant becoming the most prominent strain in the Britain.

"Pakistan should reciprocate this political choosing by subjecting all British passport holders, excluding those of Pakistan origin, to undergo quarantine of 10 days before coming to Pakistan," he said, adding that movement of British nationals residing in Pakistan should be confined to their residences as they were potential carriers of the Delta variant.

and developing severe symptoms may be lower if you are fully vaccinated with a US-authorized vaccine," it added.

The State Department still urged US citizens not to travel to Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, including the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas, due to terrorism and kidnapping. It also advised against travelling to the immediate vicinity of the Line of Control due to terrorism and the potential for armed conflict.

The change in US advisory followed a visit to the United States by Pakistan's National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf and Director General of the Inter-Services Intelligence Faiz Hameed, although the development may or may not be related to the visit.

On his Twitter handle, FO spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri said the revised travel advisory showed the United States acknowledged the improved security environment in Pakistan and effective handling of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"We welcome the recent revision of travel advisory by the US which has upgraded Pakistan to Level-3. The upward revision is an acknowledgement of the improved security environment in Pakistan and effective handling of the Covid-19 pandemic," the spokesperson said in his tweet.



## Ban on people's entry to Neelum angers tourism industry

In view of reported spike in Covid-19 cases as well as decisions of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) and the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government, the administration in Neelum valley has slapped a ban on the entry of tourists from July 19 to July 29.

A notification to this effect, issued by Deputy Commissioner of Neelum recently, however, triggered strong anger among the people affiliated with the tourism industry in the picturesque valley, who said it was the "worst manifestation" of the AJK government's "double standards".

The notification said the ban would apply to the whole of AJK but in particular to Neelum valley where the number of visitors from across the country surpasses the rest of the territory owing to its breathtakingly beautiful tourist locations.

The notification, which was addressed to the officials concerned and

the presidents of guesthouses association and transport union, said that in keeping with the ban no bookings in the guesthouses and of the vehicles should be made after July 18 and the already made bookings should be cancelled.

It warned that legal action would be taken in the event of violation of the ban.

Interestingly, the order was issued less than 48 hours after two huge political gatherings held in Neelum valley under the aegis of AJK's ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

In their reaction to the ban, people affiliated with the tourism industry announced that they would stage a protest demonstration on July 15.

"If hundreds of activists can visit Neelum for political events while brazenly disregarding the so-called precautionary measures regarding Covid-19 right under the nose of the entire government and no one in the

administration bothers about it, why they are banning private visitors who mostly are the families and observe precautions," said a guesthouse owner.

He told media that he and other hoteliers had received advance money for bookings during this period and spent the same on different heads, such as salary payments, rent and other purchases.

"Where from will we return the amount that we have already spent to the persons whose bookings you ask us to cancel?" he asked.

The guesthouse owner who did not want to be identified maintained that long holidays helped his community earn as much amount as could meet their recurring expenditures during the lean period.

He said if the government was bent upon stopping tourists it should offer a package to the tourism industry people so that they could meet their unavoidable expenses.

## SOPs tightened for tourists amid virus surge

While the highest number of new Covid-19 cases since June 2 has been reported and situation may worsen by Eidul Azha, head of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) Asad Umar has said that in Pakistan 27 million people, over the age of 50, are the most vulnerable to serious effects of the infection but only 20 per cent of them have received at least one shot of vaccine.

The NCOC has amended standard operating procedures (SOPs) for some of the sectors, including tourism, and it has been decided that the SOPs would be strictly implemented to avoid chances of a complete lockdown. People lacking vaccination certificates will not be allowed to enter tourist spots in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

"Pakistan has 2 crore 72 lakh people who are 50 years or older. This age group is most vulnerable to serious health effect of Covid. So far 56 lakh or 20.6% of these have gotten at least 1 dose of vaccine. Please encourage all in this age group to vaccinate as soon as possible," federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar tweeted recently.

The data of the NCOC showed that as many as 27 deaths and 1,980 new cases were reported in a single day. Earlier 2,028 cases were reported on June 2 and since then fewer number of cases were being reported. The lowest number of cases was reported on June 21 when only 663 persons were infected.

The data further showed that there were 37,499 active cases as of July 11, out of which 2,390 patients were admitted to hospitals. The number of active cases was around 31,000 last month but it started increasing in last week of June.

Meanwhile, the NCOC has warned that there are high chances of virus spread on the occasion of Eidul Azha as the people are violating the SOPs.

"There are a number of variants of the Covid-19 so there is more need to ensure implementation of the SOPs in high-risk sectors. All provinces have been directed to take steps to curtail spread of the virus and establish teams to ensure that people wear masks and maintain social distancing," the NCOC said.

The provinces have been advised to ensure that people strictly adhere to the SOPs in the cattle markets.

Hotels of Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and AJK have been directed not to provide rooms to those people who have not been vaccinated. Moreover, special teams will be deployed to stop such people from entering tourist destinations.

The provinces have been further directed to ensure that non-vaccinated people do not enter restaurants, gymnasiums, cinemas and wedding halls. Moreover, it will also be verified whether vaccination certificates are genuine.

An official of Ministry of the National Health Services, requesting not to be named, said that bus stops, railway stations, cattle markets, intercity transport terminals, markets and mosques were major source of virus spread.

"NCOC has issued a checklist for district administrations and they have been directed to take strict action against the violators," he said.

"We appeal to the masses to get themselves vaccinated so that they are protected and do not become sources of virus spread," he said.

According to data of the NCOC, 19,883,900 doses of vaccines have been administered to people so far.



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## Pakistanies celebrate Independence Day with national zeal

Pakistan's 75th Independence Day celebrations in the city began with 31 gun salutes in capital, Islamabad and 21 in Provincial Capitals. In Karachi a smart change of guard ceremony at the Mazar-i-Quaid here on Saturday 14 August also held. Alongside gun salutes, there were flag hoisting, singing of the national anthem and national songs, walks, races, rallies, etc.

A smartly turned out contingent of the Pakistan Naval Academy in ceremonial attire assumed guard duties at Mazar-i-Quaid early in the morning. Commandant Pakistan Naval Academy Commodore Sohail Ahmed Azmie graced the occasion as the chief guest and reviewed the guard. The chief guest and the Pakistan Navy contingent presented the qaumi salam to the Father of the Nation, Quaid-i-Azam Mohammed Ali Jinnah. This was followed by the laying of a wreath on behalf of the chief of the naval staff, and the officers and men of the Pakistan Navy. The chief guest also offered fateha and recorded his remarks in the visitor's book by paying rich tributes to the beloved Quaid.

The day dawned with a gun salute by the Pakistan Navy and special prayers in all mosques and other places of worship for the solidarity and progress of the country. Pakistan Navy Ships and establishments were illuminated in a traditional manner. Flag hoisting ceremonies were held at various units of the Pakistan Navy in Karachi, Gwadar and Ormara, Lahore and Islamabad along with numerous other events, including a graceful display of the Pakistan Navy band.

Pakistan Navy also organised a mangroves plantation exercise as part of its 'Own a Tree' campaign in collaboration with the Sindh forest department at Satawa Creeks and Shah Bandar. The mangroves plantation campaign will continue till August 20 and about 100,000 mangroves/saplings will be planted at Shah Bandar to provide a safe and healthy environment for the future generations.

There were also boat rallies held at Gwadar and Ormara.

On the occasion of Independence Day 2021, the president of Pakistan also approved military and civil awards to officers and civilians of the Pakistan armed forces.

There were flag hoisting ceremonies



*GOVERNOR Imran Ismail and Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah hoist the national flag at the Quaid's mausoleum on Saturday 14th August 2021.*

at many landmarks and official buildings of the city. Many schools in the city also remained open to celebrate Independence Day with singing and performing tableaux by the children. VIPs planted saplings at parks and gardens, too.

### Aazadi Run and Freedom Drive

This year, the trend seemed to be of big Pakistan flags. The bigger they were in size, the better. The running group Born2Run Pakistan (B2RP) also brought with them a huge flag that they call grabbed the edges of and spread out in DHA Phase-8, where the runners had gathered at 5.50am for their 5km Aazadi Run.

As many as 300 runners of all ages had registered for the run for which the ribbon was cut by a senior traffic police constable, Jahanzaib, who had come to control traffic and keep the cars away from the runners' route.

Sohail Sardar, the founder of the B2RP movement, said that a healthy lifestyle was his gift for the country. "And we are all here today to convey this positive message," he

said. Since there were many runners, the race had to be held in batches with the B2RP volunteers keeping time for all.

The morning also belonged to the Motor Club of Pakistan. More than 25 lovers of classic and rare and exquisite cars and other vehicles, including motorcycles, reached the Frere Hall for their 6th Freedom Drive to the Mazar-i-Quaid. The drive was smaller and more selective this year due to the pandemic.

Leading the group was its founder Razi Nayyar's pride and joy, his 1972 deep green (matching the green of the Pakistan flag) Jaguar XJ6 Series-1. "My green Jaguar has always led this rally since the formulation of our Motor Club of Pakistan in 2015," he said. The car originally belonged to the former prime minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

The motorcade left for the Mazar-i-Quaid carrying the Pakistan flags. The vehicles that took part in the drive included Mercedes, Ford Thunderbird, Volkswagen Beetle, Mazda, Toyota, Chevrolet Caprice and Corvette, Triumph TR2, Rolls Royce and several heavy bikes.

Earlier, on the eve of Independence Day, the Karachi Press Club held a very special cake cutting ceremony. The cake on the occasion, a 74-pound (to signify the 74th anniversary of the country's independence) green and white flag replica that was as big as the table it was placed on, was cut by the provincial minister for information, labour and human resources, Saeed Ghani.

On the occasion Dr Huma also presented national songs as her audience joined in with her.



*Pakistan Rangers' Wing Commander Hassan presents sweets to Indian Border Security Force Commandant Jasbir Singh during a ceremony held to celebrate Pakistan's Independence Day at the Wagah border post near Lahore.*



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