

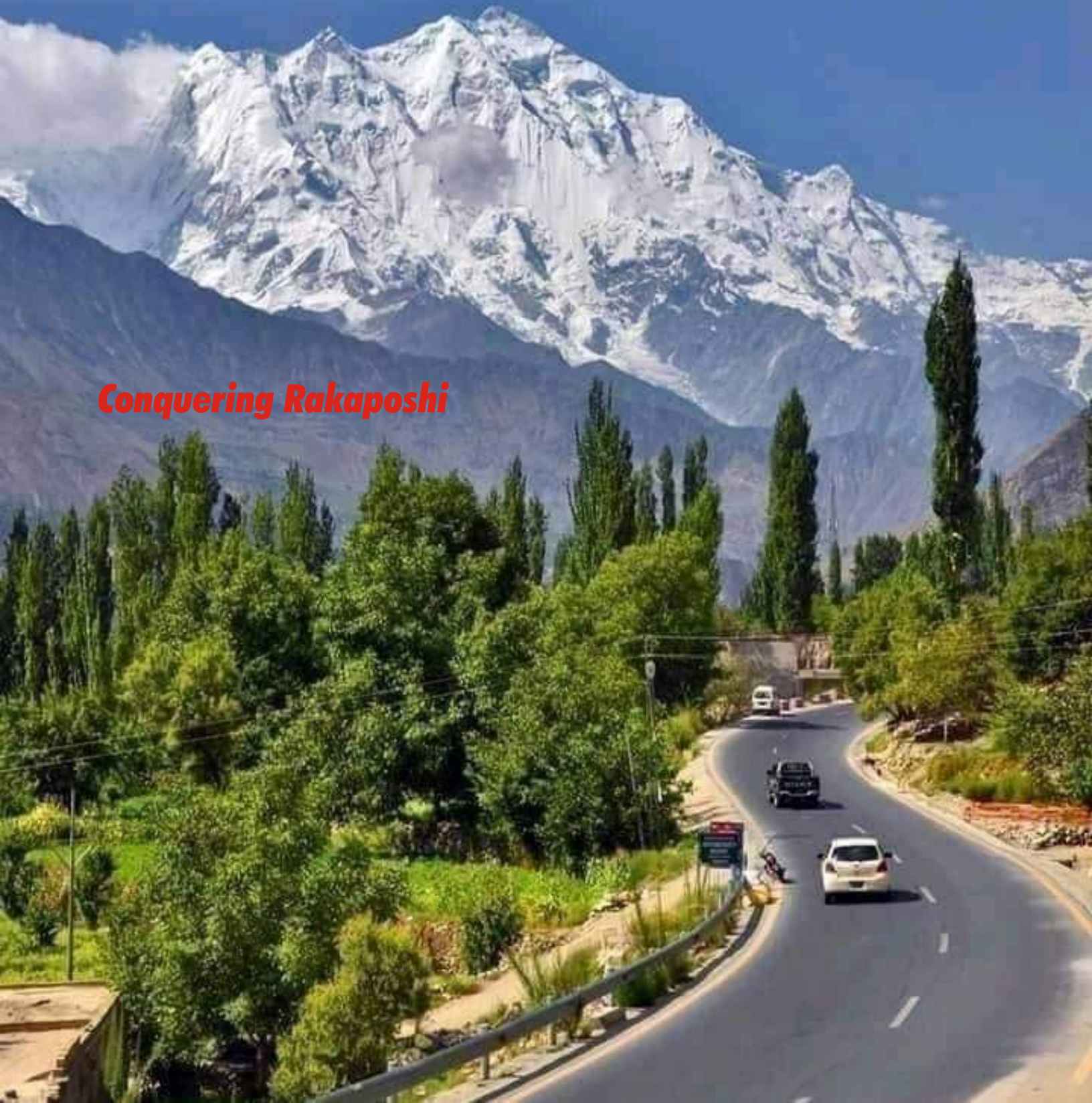
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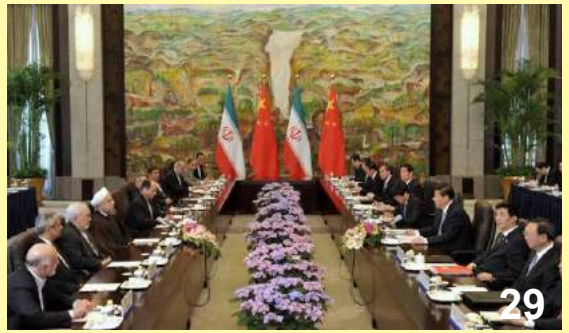
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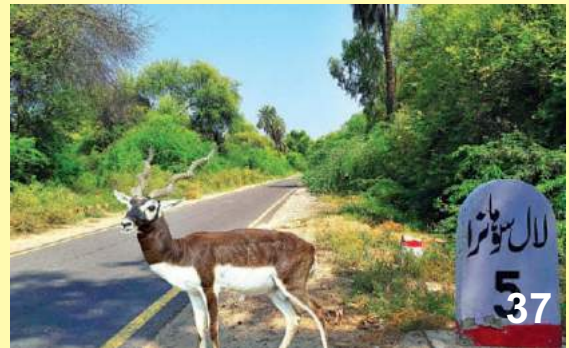
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Licence granted to operate budget airline

After approval from federal government, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority has granted a Regular Public Transport (RPT) licence to operate Fly Jinnah, a budget airline that will initially ply domestic routes.

The Lakson Group, one of Pakistan's leading business conglomerates, and the Air Arabia Group, operator of the first and largest low-cost carrier of the Middle East and North Africa, announced their decision recently to form a joint venture to launch Fly Jinnah.

After Serene Air and Air Sial, Fly Jinnah will be the latest airline to enter the country's growing aviation market and will operate both nationally and internationally.

The director general of Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority, Khaqan Mirza, told media that Fly Jinnah had been granted an RPT licence about two months ago and within two years they had to make all arrangements to operate an airline, including providing aircraft for the purpose.

He said a memorandum of understanding had been signed between the new airline (Fly Jinnah) and the Air Arabia group, after which they would complete the remaining process before operating flights.

Details about the launch date, fleet and destination network would be announced in due course of time, he added.

In a statement, Air Arabia announced that it was collaborating with one of Pakistan's leading business conglomerates (the Lakson Group) to launch a low-cost airline called Fly Jinnah.

The airline would initially be based in Karachi and ply a host of domestic routes across Pakistan. Later on, it would expand its network by including various destinations abroad.

The statement issued by Air Arabia's chairman Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-Thani said: "We are delighted at Air Arabia group to partner with Lakson Group on this joint venture to launch Pakistan's new low-cost carrier. We are confident that 'Fly Jinnah' will add value to the air transport sector of Pakistan and directly contribute to the local economy through job creation and the development of the travel and tourism sector."

Chairman of the Lakson Group Iqbal Ali Lakhani said: "We are excited to partner with Air Arabia in launching Pakistan's new low-cost carrier. 'Fly

Jinnah' will serve Pakistan's travel and tourism sector and will play a constructive role in contributing to the nation's economic growth."

Air Arabia enjoyed a track-record of reliable and efficient operations, Mr Lakhani added.

Meanwhile, chairman of Air Arabia Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammad Al-Thani met Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad recently. Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan and federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry were also present.

Mr Khan on the occasion said his government had been facilitating foreign investors, adding that it particularly welcomed investments in the aviation sector because it wanted to promote tourism in the country.

In a tweet, the prime minister said: "I welcome @airarabiagroup to Pakistan & wish them success in their partnership with local investors to establish a new Pakistani airline, Fly Jinnah. My government is committed to attracting investment in Pakistan's burgeoning travel & tourism sector which offers immense opportunities."

Lufthansa to resume flight to Pakistan

German Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Bernhard Stephen Schlagheck called on Board of Investment (BOI) Secretary Fareena Mazhar here on Wednesday, September 8, in Islamabad. They discussed matters related to mutual interests and the promotion of trade and business activities between Pakistan and Germany in the meeting. The meeting also discussed the upcoming visit of German investors to Pakistan including the delegation of Lufthansa airline which is keen to resume its operations for Pakistan. Lufthansa is also a part of the delegation and is keen on starting operations in Pakistan, the German ambassador said while talking to the BOI secretary. He further shared that the business delegation would be visiting Karachi and Islamabad and would be interacting with Lufthansa, a member of the Star Alliance Network, resumed its operations in Pakistan in 2007 after it rolled back its operations from the country in 1998. Just one year later in October 2008, the German flag carrier announced that it would stop all its flight operations in Karachi and Lahore for unspecified commercial reasons.

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PIA runs first flight to Kabul after Taliban takeover



In its first passenger flight to Kabul since the Taliban reclaimed power last month, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Monday 13 Sept. took journalists to Afghanistan before bringing back those belonging to World Bank and international news agencies to Islamabad.

Air Commodore Jawad Zafar, who heads PIA operations, was present on board when the plane touched down in Kabul. PIA flight PK6249 departed from Islamabad International Airport and touched down at the Kabul airport at 9.45am local time, said PIA spokesperson Abdullah Hafeez Khan.

At Kabul airport, special arrangements had been made by the Afghan Civil Aviation and local PIA staff to restore the services. At Kabul airport, the PIA's logo and flight number were posted after trained airport staff joined their duty and handled the flight.

The spokesman said Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan and other diplomatic staff had made efforts in this regard. This was the first international passenger flight to Kabul by PIA since the Taliban took control.

PIA Chief Executive Officer Arshad Malik said: "The aim of the flight to operate was to promote goodwill between Pakistan and Afghanistan and to strengthen the operation on the basis of humanitarian sympathy."

He said this flight operation was very important for PIA and the whole world. "Everyone is looking at us, and contacts should be restored," he said.

"Hopefully soon we will be able to fully restore the operation," said CEO Malik.

The Boeing 777 flight later departed from Kabul at 11.12am local time and landed at Islamabad international airport at about 1.20pm.

The Kabul airport was left trashed



Passengers queue up to board a PIA plane, which is the first international commercial flight since the Taliban retook power in Afghanistan, on Monday 13 Sept.

after US-led forces finished a chaotic evacuation of over 120,000 people, and the Taliban have since scrambled to get it operational with technical assistance from Qatar and other nations, adds AFP.

Around 70 people were on the PIA flight to Islamabad, mostly Afghans who were relatives of staffers with international organisations such as the World Bank, according to airport ground staff.

"I am being evacuated. My final destination is Tajikistan," said a 35-year-old World Bank evacuee, who did not want to give her name. "I will come back here only if the situation allows women to work and move freely."

A 22-year-old university student said he was taking a one-month trip to Pakistan. "It's like a vacation. I am sad and happy. Sad about the country, but happy to leave for some time," he added.

Qatar Airways is the first plane to land and depart from Kabul after US exit

Around 200 foreigners, most of them Americans, were flown out of Kabul to Doha by Qatar Airways on September 9, 2021. This is the first large-scale departure out of the Afghanistan capital since the United States' last military planes departed on August 31, 2021.

The United States Department of State confirmed in an online statement that a Qatar Airways charter flight departed from Kabul with U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents onboard.

They also acknowledged that they were able to facilitate this flight with the cooperation of Taliban officials, whom they have been in regular contact with in recent days.

U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Emily Horne told Associated Press that the flight was a result of "careful and hard diplomacy and

engagement", and that the Taliban "have shown flexibility and they have been business-like and professional in our dealings with them in this effort."

Several countries, including the U.K. and the U.S. have relocated their embassies to Doha from Kabul after the Taliban took over Afghanistan.

The U.S. Department of State also said on their site that, "Our message to those who remain in Afghanistan is simple: If you wish to depart Afghanistan, we will help you to do so."

CAA renews licence for Saindak project airstrip



Civil Aviation Authority Director General Khaqan Murtaza presents the licence for Juzzak Airstrip to the chairman of Chinese firm M/s MCC Resource Development Limited at a ceremony held at the authority's headquarters here on Tuesday 31 August.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Tuesday 31 August renewed the licence for an airstrip in Balochistan to revive air connectivity with the Saindak project.

CAA Director General Khaqan Murtaza presented the licence for Juzzak Airstrip, located a few kilometres north of Taftan in Chagai district, to the chairman of Chinese firm M/s MCC Resource Development Limited, at a ceremony held at the authority's headquarters here on Tuesday 31 August. A CAA spokesperson said that the license for Juzzak Airstrip got expired in 2004 and the strip was abandoned for operational use.

The airstrip was built as a mud strip in the 1980s and was licensed by the CAA in 1996. "The purpose was to facilitate national, international workers travelling by small-sized chartered planes for the development of Saindak copper and gold mines in Balochistan," he said.

Earlier this year, the CAA allowed the upgradation of the airstrip to make it operational for secure travel of local and foreign workers for further development of the project. The MRDL asked the CAA to renew its licence on Aug 20 and within a short span of over a week the CAA's directorate of aerodrome and airspace regulations undertook the inspection and completed all regulatory formalities in this regard, the spokesperson claimed.

Gulf Air appoints AirLog Pakistan as Cargo GSA in Pakistan

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, has appointed AirLog Pakistan - a part of the Air Logistics Group - as Cargo GSA for Gulf Air Cargo in Pakistan.

Pakistan-based customers will have one-stop access to a wide range of air cargo transportation services to the extensive network of destinations served by Gulf Air.

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Gulf Air operates a fleet of 33 aircraft and can carry a wide variety of products, ranging from perishables & oversized freight to dangerous goods & valuable cargo as well as live animals. The airline

operates direct flights from 7 cities across Pakistan; Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Sialkot, Faisalabad, Peshawar and Multan to Bahrain and beyond to the Middle East Africa and Europe.



Afghan police return to work alongside Taliban at airport

Afghan police at Kabul airport have returned to work manning checkpoints alongside Taliban security for the first time since the group seized power, officers said on Sunday 12 Sept.

When the Taliban swept into Kabul last month ousting the government, police abandoned their posts, fearful of what the incoming group would do.

But two officers said they had returned to work on Saturday 11 Sept. after receiving calls from Afghan Taliban commanders.

On Sunday 12 Sept. , an media correspondent at the airport saw border police members deployed at several checkpoints outside the main buildings of the airport, including the domestic terminal.

"I came back to work yesterday more than two weeks after being sent home," one of the police force members told media, speaking on condition of anonymity.

"I received a call from a senior Taliban commander who asked me to come back," another officer said.

"Yesterday was great, so happy to serve again."

The Taliban say they have granted a general amnesty to everyone who worked for the former government including the army, police and other security branches.

Officials say they want to integrate the opposing forces, but have not spelled



Afghan policemen walk past a Taliban fighter (R) outside the airport in Kabul on Sunday 12 Sept.

out how this will happen or how they will sustain a security apparatus made up of around 600,000 people.

Kabul airport was severely damaged during the chaotic evacuation of over 120,000 people that ended with the withdrawal of United States forces on Aug 30.

The Taliban, who swept into Kabul after routing government forces on August 15, have been scrambling to get the capital's airport operating again with Qatari technical assistance.

The United Arab Emirates has set up

an air bridge to deliver tons of aid to Afghanistan, with aircraft bringing in hundreds of tonnes of medical and food supplies.

An airport employee who handles security for a private company confirmed that the border police had been deployed around the airport since Saturday 11 Sept, "They are sharing the security with the Taliban," he told media.

Qatar Airways has operated charter flights out of Kabul in recent days, carrying mostly foreigners and Afghans who missed being taken out during the evacuation.

Afghan woman gives birth on military plane



MEDICAL support personnel help an Afghan woman off a US Air Force C-17 moments after she delivered a baby aboard the aircraft upon landing at Ramstein air base in Germany.

An Afghan woman gave birth to a baby girl on a US military plane shortly after arriving on an evacuation flight to Germany, the US Air Force tweeted on Sunday 22 August.

During the flight from a staging base in the Middle East, the woman went into labour and began to experience complications, it said.

"The aircraft commander decided to descend in altitude to increase air pressure in the aircraft, which helped stabilise and save the mother's life," the US Air Mobility Command said later on Twitter.

Immediately on landing at the Ramstein base, US military medics helped the woman deliver her baby in the cargo hold of the plane.

Mother and child were then transferred to a nearby medical facility "and are in good condition", it said.

Footage released by the US military showed the mother lying on a stretcher being carried off the plane by US soldiers at the base in southwest Germany.

A week after the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, evacuation operations from foreign countries continue under extreme conditions marked by scenes of panic and desperation at Kabul airport.

Since 14 August, about 17,000 people have been evacuated by the US, including 2,500 Americans, the US government said earlier.

The US got the green light from Berlin for some of the evacuees to be directed to Germany, where it has a number of bases.

About 1,150 people landed at the Ramstein base on Saturday, from where they are expected to depart for the United States within days, a base spokesman said.

Long range twin-engine jet inducted into Pak Navy

The induction ceremony of Pakistan Navy's first modern long range maritime patrol twin-engine jet aircraft was held at PNS Mehran on Thursday 2 September.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Mohammed Amjad Khan Niazi was the chief guest.

Upon arrival at Mehran base, the chief guest was received by Commander of Pakistan Fleet Rear Admiral Naveed Ashraf.

The aircraft is a variant of the Brazilian-built state of the art Embraer Jet aircraft globally utilised in air operations. Two more aircraft of the series have also been contracted by Pakistan Navy. These aircraft will be equipped with the latest weapons and sensors to undertake maritime air operations.

Later, the naval chief commended the remarkable transition of the Pakistan Navy Air Arm from prop to jet age of long range maritime patrol operations.

He said that Pakistan Navy was fully cognizant of prevailing challenges and was committed to upgrading its combat inventory to generate swift response.

He said that Pakistan Navy was effectively contributing towards the government's policy of promoting peace and stability in the region as a responsible maritime nation.

Kabul Airport reopens for domestic flights and to receive aid

Kabul Airport is now open again for domestic flights and to receive aid, a few days after a team of Qatari engineers repaired parts of the airport traffic control system and its assessed operability.

Afghanistan's flag carrier, Ariana Afghan Airlines, announced on their Facebook page that flights have restarted between Kabul and three major provincial cities in the country: Kandahar in the south, Mazar-i-Sharif in the north, and Herat in the west.

However, Kabul Airport is not ready yet for international civilian flights, as the airport is operating without radar or navigation systems.

"There's no radar, no navigational systems in place," said Ghirlandaio Jailani Wafa, a top aviation official at Kabul Airport to Washington Post.

Wafa said that after Qatari engineers set up temporary radio communications systems between air traffic controllers and pilots recently, a few domestic flights were able to resume. Pilots, however, have to visually navigate flights' landings and take-offs.

Wafa said that international commercial flights will not likely resume before radar and navigation systems are fully operational.



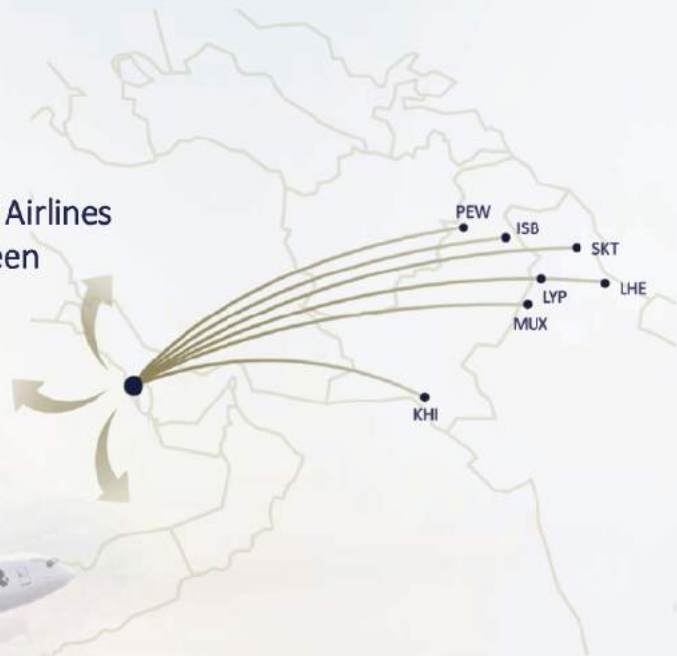
This screengrab shows the Pakistan Navy's first modern long range maritime patrol twin-engine jet aircraft.



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Saudia to bring back direct route from Manchester to Jeddah



Saudia will return to Manchester Airport in December for the first time in 21 months as it relaunches its direct service to Jeddah.

The first flight is set to depart on Wednesday 15 December from the recently reopened Terminal Two, which has been expanded and modernised as part of a £1bn transformation programme. The service will run three times per week on the iconic Boeing-787 Dreamliner, with the frequency of flights then subject to review dependent on demand.

Saudi Arabian flag carrier Saudia began operating the Manchester Jeddah route in 2014, and prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, it had steadily grown to become one of Manchester Airport's most important routes to the Middle East. In 2019, more than 97,000 passengers used the service, which remains the only direct route to Saudi Arabia offered by a UK airport outside of London.

Jeddah is a popular gateway for those travelling to Mecca for Umrah pilgrimage, and the return of this route will be particularly welcome news for the Muslim community in Manchester Airport's wider catchment area, which numbers more than 700,000. It will also allow the 2,500 or so Saudi Arabian students at universities across the North to travel home via Manchester at the end of the winter term.

Manchester Airport managing director Karen Smart said: "The return of Saudia to Manchester Airport is wonderful news and demonstrates the renewed confidence amongst passengers and airlines as we begin to emerge from the pandemic.

"This is a route that is hugely

important to communities across the North, given it is the only direct service to Saudi Arabia outside London.

"It also has substantial economic benefits for our region, given the ever-growing trade and investment partnership between the UK and Saudi Arabia.

"We are thrilled to welcome Saudia back to Manchester and hope to see this service becoming a permanent fixture in 2022."

Gerry's dnata wins Gulf Air contract



Gerry's dnata, Pakistan's leading ground services provider, has been awarded a multi-year contract by Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain.

The partnership will see Gerry's dnata provide quality and safe ground, passenger and cargo handling services to the airline at six airports in Pakistan, including Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Multan and Faisalabad.

Syed Haris Raza, CEO of Gerry's dnata, said: "We are proud to be the ground handler of choice for Gulf Air in Pakistan. We consistently invest in infrastructure, cutting-edge technologies and training to deliver the best possible services for our customers. Our new contract is a vote of confidence in our quality offering, and a testament to our team's hard work and commitment to safety and service excellence. We look forward to a long-standing partnership with the airline."

In recent years Gerry's dnata has significantly invested in facilities, equipment, training and technology, while continually expanding its operations in Pakistan. Gerry's dnata's investments include a state-of-the-art import cargo centre at Jinnah International Airport (KHI) in Karachi.

The 72,000 square feet facility is equipped with the latest technologies ensuring safe and efficient handling and storage of all types of cargo. Offering uncompromised temperature-controlled handling and storage solutions to airline customers, the GDP-certified facility has

played a key role in the safe handling of COVID-19 vaccines, rapid test kits and other essential goods.

Gerry's dnata also expanded its operations at Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore (LHE) and opened a new export cargo terminal. The expansion nearly tripled the company's cargo handling capacity in Lahore, supporting customers and their customers in increasing fruit export from the region.

Emirates continues to rebuild global network



Emirates has announced that it will be restarting services to Saudi Arabia, with St Petersburg to follow on October 8th.

Flights between Dubai and St Petersburg will operate four times a week, and the airline will increase its services to daily flights from October 21st.

All flights will operate on the Boeing 777-300ER in a three-class configuration.

Emirates flight EK 173 and 174 will operate on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, while EK 175 and 176 will operate on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturday and Sundays.

EK 173 departs Dubai at 09:10, arriving at St Petersburg Pulkovo Airport at 14:15.

EK 174 leaves St Petersburg at 16:45, arriving back in Dubai at 23:45.

EK 175 takes off from Dubai at 15:45, arriving in St Petersburg at 20:50 and EK176 leaves Pulkovo Airport at 23:15, landing in Dubai at 06:15 the next day.

Emirates is also now operating 24 weekly flights to Saudi Arabia, including daily flights to the capital Riyadh, daily A380 flights to Jeddah, daily flights to Dammam and three weekly flights to Medina.

Flights to Riyadh will increase to double daily from September 16th, and plans are underway to boost frequencies across the other gateways by the end of September.

Emirates to restart St Petersburg, increase Saudi Arabia operations

The service increases to Russia and Saudi Arabia follow additions made to the airline's South Africa network.



Emirates will reinstate flights to St Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport (LED) in October after an 18-month hiatus.

The resumption, alongside frequency increases to Moscow Domodedovo (DME), will see the carrier's Russian network return to pre-pandemic levels.

Service between Dubai International (DXB) and St Petersburg will begin on Oct. 8, initially operating four times per week using Boeing 777-300ERs in a three-class configuration. The route will become daily from Oct. 21.

Emirates also intends to add a second daily DXB-DME flight from Oct. 1, data provided by OAG Schedules Analyser shows, meaning the carrier will be offering 21X-weekly flights between the United Arab Emirates and Russia by late October the same number as before the COVID-19 crisis.

In addition, the Gulf carrier has announced plans to expand service to Saudi Arabia from Sept. 11, including daily flights to the capital Riyadh (RUH), daily Airbus A380 flights to Jeddah (JED), daily flights to Dammam (DMM) and 3X-weekly flights to Medina (MED).

Flights to Riyadh will increase to double daily from Sept. 16, and plans are underway to boost frequencies across the other gateways by the end of the month.

The latest network additions come after Emirates said it would be expanding its operations in and out of South Africa, boosting its schedule to 28X-weekly flights by October. This is the airline's largest weekly schedule to the country since the start of the pandemic.

The ramp up of operations will see double-daily flights to Johannesburg (JNB), including the introduction of A380 service on one of the daily flights. This is in addition to daily services to both Cape Town (CPT) and Durban (DUR). The

frequency and capacity increases are effective from Oct. 31.

From Jan. 1, 2022, Emirates will also serve JNB with double-daily A380 flights.

Etihad upgrades Verified to Fly programme



Etihad Airways has upgraded its innovative Verified to Fly service to offer a more streamlined and personalised service through its website, etihad.com. This upgrade makes the process quicker and easier for Etihad's guests to ensure they have all the required COVID-related documents before leaving for the airport. Seven days ahead of travel, all guests will receive a personalised email informing them of the documents required for their destination. These travel documents can now be uploaded directly to the 'Manage my Booking' page of etihad.com, up to 72 hours before departure. The new website functionality replaces the email upload system which was launched by the airline in May 2021. The new upload process guides travellers through the process of uploading and shows the specific documents needed to get verified for their chosen destination.

Once uploaded, the documents will be checked and guests will receive an email confirming they have met all requirements for their flight. Additionally, travellers can check the status of their submission at any time by logging onto Manage my Booking at etihad.com. As a result, they can begin their journey with complete peace of mind and will also benefit from a significantly faster check-in at the airport.

John Wright, vice president of Airports and Network Operations, Etihad Airways, said: "Etihad's hugely popular Verified to Fly service has been used by more than 110,000 guests already and has now been further improved and streamlined. The service has significantly reduced airport check-in times, and provided much-needed reassurance to our guests that they have already met all COVID-19 travel requirements before they reach the airport."

Etihad requires 100 percent of its passengers to show a negative PCR test to protect the inflight environment. More information on the stringent measures being taken by Etihad to provide a healthy and hygienic travel experience is available at [etihad.com/wellness](https://www.etihad.com/wellness). As a precautionary measure, guests travelling on Etihad Airways flights are required to wear a face mask throughout their journey. Those wishing to book with Etihad are advised to visit [etihad.com](https://www.etihad.com) to view their options and to remain informed of the appropriate entry requirements for Abu Dhabi.

Turkish Aerospace awarded two major contracts



Turkish Aerospace (TUSAS) has been awarded two contracts by Spirit AeroSystems. Turkish Aerospace will manufacture and supply Section 48 Tail Feather for Boeing 737 MAX-8 and over 400 parts and sub-assemblies for various Boeing platforms.

With experience and know-how gained from previous aerostructure programs, Turkish Aerospace will manufacture Section 48 Tail Feather for Boeing 737 MAX-8.

Further to the contracts, ongoing work packages with Spirit AeroSystems for manufacturing and supplying 2125 parts and sub-assemblies for various platforms including 737, 747 and 777 has been extended to 2028.

Temel Kotil, President & CEO, Turkish Aerospace, evaluated about the agreement and said, "Our company continues to be among the manufacturers that have proven in the field of aerostructure with its half a century of experience. In this context, while we continue to produce indigenous and national projects in the field of aviation industry in our country, we also carry out high-quality crucial productions for the world's leading aerial platform manufacturers. We are delighted for the agreement including work packages of B737 MAX-8 Section 48 Tail Feather and various other sub-assemblies for Spirit AeroSystems which will be used Boeing platforms. I congratulate all my colleagues and Spirit authorities who contributed to this cooperation."

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Bahraini carrier Gulf Air to enter Israel market

The planned service comes nearly a year after the two countries normalized their diplomatic relations.

Bahrain's Gulf Air plans to launch its inaugural route to Israel before the end of the month almost a year after the two countries formally established diplomatic relations.

The airline will begin scheduled operations from Sept. 30, flying twice a week between Bahrain International (BAH) and Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport (TLV). Service will be on Mondays and Thursdays using Airbus A320neo aircraft.

"As the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, we take great pride in supporting our leadership and Kingdom in their role of preserving peace and prosperity in the region," Gulf Air acting CEO Waleed AlAlawi said. "We hope this is merely the beginning of developing further opportunities."

Israel and Bahrain formally established diplomatic ties in October 2020 in a deal brokered by the US. The agreement came shortly after the United Arab Emirates also normalized relations with Israel. Bahrain has since appointed Khaled Yousif al-Jalalma as its first ambassador to Israel, while Eitan Na'eh has been nominated as Israel's first



ambassador to Bahrain.

Israel's foreign minister Yair Lapid described the recent appointments as "another step towards true peace in the Middle East."

Data provided by OAG Schedules Analyser shows that Gulf Air's flights will depart Bahrain's capital Manama at 9 a.m. and arrive in Tel Aviv at 11.50 a.m. The return service leaves the Israeli city at 3.20 p.m. before arriving back in Bahrain at 5.55 p.m.

The planned launch comes nine months after Gulf Air signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with El Al Israel Airlines that "sets the

foundation" to discuss potential joint codeshare operations on BAH-TLV flights, as well as on the respective carriers' wider networks.

The MOU also contains plans for greater commercial cooperation in the fields of loyalty, cargo, engineering and travel technology.

Gulf Air currently serves 41 destinations from BAH, offering about 43,000 weekly seats from the airport. This compares with 49 destinations and 82,000 seats during the same week in 2019. Recent route resumptions include Moscow Domodedovo (DME) and Buraidah (ELQ).

SITA takes steps to reduce carbon emissions

SITA has achieved CarbonNeutral company certification. This milestone resulted from decisive actions to significantly reduce emissions associated with its business operations in 2020.

SITA has reduced its overall emissions of greenhouse gases by 48% between 2019 and 2020. SITA's UN recognised carbon neutrality Planet+ program has been key to lowering the company's emissions with initiatives designed to create sustainable and energy-efficient workplaces and reduce internal business travel.

SITA also compensates 100% of any carbon emissions that it has been unable to reduce or eliminate by financing projects that help cut and negate existing and future carbon emissions while supporting multiple United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

SITA's journey to achieving carbon neutrality and formal accreditation has involved working with several independent expert environmental

bodies. To develop a credible carbon neutral program, the organization has followed The CarbonNeutral Protocol's rigorous framework, which is managed by Natural Capital Partners, the leading experts on carbon neutrality and climate finance. Working with independent emissions assessor RSK Group, a comprehensive review of emissions relating to operations and business travel was undertaken to calculate SITA's carbon footprint. In 2020, this was extended to include many more indirect emissions generated from activities such as homeworking, which was commonplace for SITA employees during the pandemic. The decrease in SITA's carbon footprint reflects its actions since 2018 to reduce, eliminate and offset its emissions to achieve certification.

Barbara Dalibard, CEO of SITA, said: Following the organisation's carbon neutrality achievement, the company is firmly committed to further decrease emissions and achieve its challenging reduction targets for the years to come. In

parallel, SITA is turning its attention to developing new technology to help its customers and the wider aviation industry reduce its carbon footprint. This work is predominately focused on streamlining aircraft operations and reducing fuel burn, with a clear and measurable reduction in carbon emissions."

The company's recent acquisition of Safety Line was designed to strengthen the organisation's portfolio to help drive greater operational efficiencies around fuel consumption and limiting aircraft CO2 emissions at key flight stages.

Dalibard, said: "We are delighted to have achieved our carbon neutral goal as part of our ongoing sustainability journey. I want to thank our employees who have been critical in reaching this ambitious milestone, one year ahead of our original deadline. Being a trusted partner to the air transport industry, we are firmly committed to helping aviation reduce its emissions and achieve its carbon reduction objectives."

Biman Bangladesh Airlines adopts comprehensive suite of Sabre solutions

Bangladesh's national carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines will leverage Sabre's Passenger Service System (PSS) and Global Distribution System (GDS) as well as a broad range of additional Sabre technology solutions to support recovery and future growth in a competitive market.

A leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, recently announced a new strategic partnership with Bangladesh's national flag carrier, Biman Bangladesh Airlines (Biman).

Under the new agreement, Biman will adopt the SabreSonic Passenger Service System (PSS) to power digital transformation, drive revenue growth and improve the passenger experience. Biman has also selected a further set of Sabre solutions as well as renewing its global distribution agreement with Sabre to help meet the demands of modern-day travellers, ensure availability across all points of sale, maximize customer acquisition, leverage its loyalty program and stimulate demand as industry recovery gains momentum.

"We're thrilled to embark on a new relationship with Sabre during this critical time for the travel industry," said Dr Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, Managing Director and CEO, Biman. "It is more important now than ever that we have agile and advanced solutions to empower us to improve operational efficiencies, boost revenue as we move into recovery, and to create a differentiated brand experience in the competitive Bangladeshi market and beyond. We look forward to flying our nation's bi-coloured flag domestically, regionally and internationally as borders re-open, with support from Sabre's robust technology."

The Sabre Commercial Platform, the platform within which SabreSonic PSS is housed, is positioned to help empower airlines to drive revenue maximization and a differentiated brand experience. It meets airlines where they are and takes them where they want to go through flexible, open, and intelligent technology, delivering end-to-end personalized retailing from commercial optimization through order fulfilment; enabling enhanced travel experiences for the airline's customers and helping the airline to increase revenue opportunities.

SabreSonic PSS is designed to automate and streamline sales and reservations processes, helping airlines maximize revenue opportunities, save costs, enhance inventory revenue

optimization, extend their reach through partnerships and maximize efficiency and effectiveness of airline offerings. This latest deal further expands Sabre's global PSS footprint, with the company having announced SabreSonic PSS wins, during its most recent earnings call, expected to bring more than 40 million incremental passengers boarded to the platform.

As well as Sabre's comprehensive, passenger-centric PSS, Dhaka-headquartered Biman will also be utilizing Sabre's:

Global Distribution System (GDS) in a long-term renewal agreement to distribute its fares and offers to hundreds of thousands of travel agents worldwide;

- **Departure Control Suite** to help Biman deliver a seamless and efficient airport experience with a robust solution for passenger reaccommodation. The suite will help in enabling a true walk-through experience at the airport through automation and self-service capabilities.
- **SabreSonic Digital Experience** a highly-extensible user interface framework that provides access to robust, end-to-end retail capabilities, enabling shop and book, ancillaries, payments and fulfilment all through self-service capabilities, helping the airline to develop a fully-responsive and configurable eCommerce website and mobile app in-line with Biman's digital transformation.
- **SabreSonic® CSS Digital Workspace** with flexible mobile-ready workflows designed to improve agent productivity and enable them to deliver personalized customer service at the airport and call centre.
- **SabreSonic® Direct Connect Platform** to deliver a suite of shopping, booking, and fulfilment web services as well as a GUI to their travel agency or third-party partners, helping the airline deliver omni-channel travel experiences through capabilities that are built once, deployed many times.



- **Sabre Application Programming Interface (API) Hub** which provides a portfolio of comprehensive APIs that support a broad range of the Sabre Commercial Platform functionality, enabling speed-to-market and control over distribution across all channels.

- **Data and Analytics/ Business Intelligence** which delivers a layer of connected enterprise data by providing Biman with meaningful data and actionable intelligence for the entire airline enterprise; and.

- **Loyalty Management System** to enable Biman to recognize, track and reward their most loyal customers across all touchpoints during their journeys, providing an improved customer experience and increased customer loyalty that results in repeat revenue and increased share of wallet.

"We know how difficult the current climate continues to be for the airline, and wider travel industry said Rakesh Narayanan, Vice President, Regional General Manager, Asia Pacific, Travel Solutions, Airline Sales. "However, we also know that our travel partners are seizing this opportunity to take a fresh look at their technology strategy to ensure they are in a position of competitive strength going forward. We're delighted to be partnering Biman on their digital transformation journey with a comprehensive suite of Sabre retailing, distribution and fulfilment solutions."

Mohammed Salahuddin-General Manager-Marketing, Biman Bangladesh Airlines added: "We are delighted to work together with leading global airline solution provider, Sabre, that allow Biman to access all the services we require through one single platform, supporting us on our digital transformation journey and enabling Biman to be more competitive in the local, regional and international airline markets."

Weak rupee, costly freight make finished goods more expensive

The massive rupee devaluation amid the highest-ever freight charges have substantially increased the landed cost of raw materials causing supply chain disruptions, hurting industrial production and turning finished goods more expensive.

The rupee-dollar exchange rate that had attained stability at Rs152-153 in May from an all-time high of Rs168.40 in August 2020 has now again risen to Rs167 in the interbank market.

In addition to this the soaring freight charges on account of port congestion, shortage of ships and containers resulting in long delays in arrival of goods from abroad have pushed up the cost of production.

Mashood Ali Khan, a manufacturer-cum-exporter of auto parts, said shipment delays and an increase in freight charges have drastically increased the production cost, thus affecting supply chain of auto parts manufacturers while additional freight prices would be passed on to the customers.

Earlier a shipment from Qingdao port took 25 days with freight charge at \$2,000 per 20-foot container; now it takes almost 60 days and \$9,000 per box, he said.

From Thailand now it takes 35 days against 25 and freight cost increased to \$4,500 from \$800 per 20-foot container. The freight price from an Indonesian container was \$3,200 and now it is \$11,000 and the shipping time was 35 days; now it takes 50 days, he added.

Mr Khan said this is just a small glimpse of the bottlenecks the supply chain for any industry is facing. The biggest dilemma is that the entrepreneur cannot forecast what would happen in the next six months.

He said increase in sheet metal price by Rs98 per kg from January 2020 till to date coupled with rupee devaluation and rising freight charges has pushed up manufacturing cost by 15-20 per cent in the one year.

I.H. Qamar, former chairman of Pakistan International Freight Forwarders Association, said freight rate for a 20-foot container from China is now \$4,000 versus \$600-700 a year back while a 40-foot container now costs \$6,500 as against \$1,500.

Giving an example on exports, he said freight charges for Pakistani products to the USA are \$8,000 as compared to \$2,000 while for the UK they are \$6,500 as compared to \$1,000 a year back.

Commodity expert and Convener Pulses Standing Committee of the FPCCI Anis Majeed said the rupee devaluation

since May has pushed up the landed price of imported commodities. Pulses rates have crawled up \$50-75 dollar in the world market in the last three months whose impact of Rs10-70 per kg in wholesale rates have been passed on to the consumers.

He said container shortage, enforcement of standard operating procedures at various ports followed by quarantine of ships' crew at few Chinese

ports earlier this month are causing shipment delays of 15-20 days all over the world. A year back, container ships used to get clear in two to three days.

Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association Chief Coordinator Jawed Bilwani said textile exporters are flooded with orders till March/April, but shipping issues and higher freight charges are creating problems.

Emirates SkyCargo launches CargoWise

Emirates SkyCargo is launching a new technical solution for its customers that will enhance user experience and the efficiency of the booking process for cargo shipments.

Working with WiseTech Global, a leading provider of software solutions to the logistics industry, Emirates SkyCargo will be providing direct access to its flights and inventory for cargo customers through the CargoWise platform. Customers will now be able to make cargo bookings direct on the platform for a majority of their cargo requirements after completing a short registration process.

“At Emirates SkyCargo, we are always looking at ways to make every stage of the transportation process more efficient from the time of booking the shipment to the delivery of the cargo to the consignee. We are delighted to work with WiseTech to connect the CargoWise platform to our own Emirates SkyChain system, allowing customers enhanced direct access to search for flights and make bookings directly with Emirates SkyCargo without requiring any other touchpoints. This will save time and effort for our customers and for our global teams and at the same time help avoid any unnecessary confusion and inefficiencies in the booking process,” said Nabil Sultan, Emirates divisional senior vice



president, cargo.

Scott McCorquodale, chief automation officer, air cargo at WiseTech, said: “As the platform of choice for many of Emirates SkyCargo's major customers, this connection is a testament to CargoWise's penetration in the market. Adding to our growing number of airline-direct ebooking connections on the CargoWise platform, over time, all CargoWise users will have access to Emirates SkyCargo's flight schedules, rates, availability and real-time eBooking functions. Working together, this connection provides ease of access to timely data at the user's fingertips, translating to increased efficiencies and productivity, and importantly, informed decision making.”

Emirates SkyCargo has commenced roll out of customer access to the CargoWise platform in a phased manner from September 1 2021. By the end of September, the majority of Emirates SkyCargo's global customers using CargoWise will be able to make bookings on Emirates SkyCargo through the platform.



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Relief as UK takes Pakistan off travel red list

The United Kingdom on Friday Sept 17 announced that Pakistan is being removed from its Covid-19 red list for travel.

Pakistan is among the eight countries that would come off the red list from Wednesday (Sept 22). The other countries are Turkey, Egypt, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Oman, Bangladesh and Kenya.

"EIGHT countries and territories will come off the red list from Weds 22 Sept at 4am, incl. TURKEY, PAKISTAN and MALDIVES," UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps tweeted.

British High Commissioner to Pakistan Christian Turner also tweeted that Pakistan would be off the red list. "I know how difficult the last 5 months were for so many who rely on close links between United Kingdom and Pakistan," he further said.

Pakistan had been on red list since April due to concerns over the Delta variant of Covid-19. UK, moreover, had reservations about Pakistan's data of Covid-19 cases in the country and low vaccination rates. Its inclusion in the list meant that it was mandatory for anyone arriving in UK from Pakistan to quarantine for ten days at a designated hotel.

Additionally, the arriving travellers were required to undertake pre-departure testing and mandatory PCR testing on day two and eight of their arrival.

This made travel to UK highly expensive as the travellers had to pay a minimum of £2,285 per adult for hotel quarantine in addition to costly Covid-19 tests.

At the time of Pakistan's inclusion in red list Naz Shah, a member of UK Parliament for Bradford West, had protested the British government's decision in a letter to Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab alleging that the government was consciously discriminating against Pakistan and the Pakistani diaspora community.

The lawmaker had claimed that the move was "led by politics and not data".

There is high passenger traffic between Britain and Pakistan, primarily because of the large Pakistani-British diaspora living in the UK. British-Pakistanis now make the second largest ethnic minority group in the UK. They are estimated to be around 1.5 million.

According to travel agents, there were nearly 95,000 trips from Pakistan to UK in 2019.

Pakistan was expected to be moved from red list to amber list at the last review three weeks back. However, it was

retained on the pretext that Pakistan had limited capacity and capability to detect variants of concern. The decision was strongly resented by Pakistani leaders.

UK leaders of Pakistani origin too had expressed disappointment on that occasion.

Labour MP for Manchester Gorton and Shadow Deputy Leader of the House of Commons Afzal Khan had then tweeted: "Completely disappointed by the government's decision to keep Pakistan on the red list. With the crisis in Afghanistan underway, Pakistan can play a huge role in delivering key humanitarian aid. The decision will upset many and cause major disruption."

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan later extensively engaged with British authorities to address their concerns, particularly with regards to Covid-19 testing mechanism.

"Great news for those waiting to travel. I am grateful to @CTurnerFCDO and others in the UK gov who engaged with our team for an in depth understanding of our epidemic response and systems as well as the ongoing sharing of data and information to enable disease security," Dr Sultan tweeted while hailing UK decision to remove Pakistan from red list.

Pakistan's removal from the red list came at a time when UK announced major changes in Covid-19 rules for international travellers to boost travel.

UK has changed the previous 'traffic light system' that had green, amber and red categories.

Secretary Shapps said there would just be a red list from Oct 4 and simplified procedure would be followed for the rest of the world.

"We're making testing easier for travel. From Mon 4 Oct, if you're fully vax you won't need a pre-departure test before arrival into England from a non-red country and from later in Oct, will be able to replace the day 2 PCR test with a cheaper lateral flow," he tweeted.

Afghan woman gives birth on flight to Britain

An Afghan woman on board an evacuation flight to Britain gave birth to a baby girl early on Saturday 28 August with assistance



Afghan evacuee Soman Noori, accompanied by her husband Taj Moh Hammat and their sons, holds her newborn baby girl named Havva on board an evacuation flight operated by Turkish Airlines from Dubai to Birmingham, on Saturday 28 August.

from the cabin crew, Turkish Airlines said in a statement.

Soman Noori, 26, started having contractions during the Turkish Airlines flight from Dubai to Birmingham, and gave birth as the plane flew at an altitude of 10,000 metres (33,000 feet) in Kuwaiti airspace.

Noori and her baby, who was named Havva, were both in good health, the statement said. The plane, which was carrying Afghan citizens who had worked with Britain in Afghanistan, landed in Kuwait as a precaution but later continued on to its destination, Turkish Airlines said.

PIA posts Rs25bn loss in 1HCY21

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) released accounts for the six months ended June 30, 2021, posting loss for the period at Rs25 billion and loss per share at Rs4.78. The loss decreased 31.5pc from the loss of Rs36.5bn and loss per share at Rs6.98 suffered in the same period of 2020.

Indus Motor profit surges 151pc Indus Motor Company Ltd announced profit-after-tax (PAT) at Rs12.8bn converting into earnings per share (EPS) at Rs163.21 for the year ended June 30, 2021. The PAT showed growth of 151pc from Rs5.1bn and EPS at Rs64.66 earned in the previous year. The board declared final cash dividend at Rs36.50 per share.

Standard Chartered earns Rs6.7bn Standard Chartered Bank (Pakistan) declared PAT at Rs6.78bn and EPS at Rs1.75 for the 1HFY21 against the PAT at Rs9.85bn and EPS at Rs2.54 in 1HFY20. The bank announced dividend at Rs1.25 per share.



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FROM	DESTINATION	FLIGHT
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KHI-KMG	CAN	Daily
KHI-KMG	XMN	Daily
KHI-KMG	TAO	Daily
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IATA names new Asia-Pacific head



The International Air Transport Association (IATA) announced the appointment of Philip Goh as its regional vice president for Asia-Pacific. Goh succeeds Conrad Clifford, who has been IATA's deputy director general since 1 July 2021. Goh is a 34-year veteran of the airline industry. He has held various senior management roles at Singapore Airlines in Singapore and overseas, at Virgin Atlantic Airways in London, and has extensive experience working throughout the Asia-Pacific region. Most recently, he was regional vice president for the southwest Pacific for Singapore Airlines (2017 to 2021), based in Sydney.

Reporting to the IATA deputy director general, Goh will lead IATA's activities across Asia-Pacific, a region covering 37 countries and territories and home to 45 IATA member airlines. He is based in Singapore, where IATA's regional office is located.

"I am delighted to have Philip succeed me as regional vice president. His extensive airline experience and deep knowledge of the region will be particularly valuable in delivering IATA's priorities across Asia-Pacific. He is well-prepared to lead IATA's efforts on safety, sustainability, and recovery of international travel from COVID-19. Air transport is critically important to Asia-Pacific and I am confident that Philip will be both a passionate advocate for our members' needs and a solid partner for governments," said Clifford.

"I am deeply passionate about the aviation industry and have been associated with its growth and development throughout my professional life. I am humbled to be leading the IATA Asia-Pacific team at the most challenging time in our industry's history. Foremost among our immediate priorities are engaging governments to safely re-open borders, reviving the travel and tourism economy, and restoring the people-to-people connections that travel facilitates. International aviation can then return to its crucial role as an engine to deliver social and economic benefits to countries and communities in Asia-Pacific," said Goh.

How much does it cost to lease a Boeing 747-400 monthly?

With 694 examples produced, the Boeing 747-400 was the most popular variant of the 747 series. Flown by airlines around the world, this Queen of the Skies model has been increasingly rare in terms of active service. But if one were to lease the jumbo jet, how much would it cost per month? Let's find out.



The first 747-400 rolled out of Boeing's Everett facilities in 1988.

Few 747-400s operating at the moment

According to data from aviation.com, there are currently just 30 747-400s across 16 operators listed as active in the world at the moment. This figure excludes freighters and inactive aircraft, which may, in the future, return to service.

At the same time, the list of 30 does include two testbeds, one operated by General Electric and the other by Rolls-Royce, as well as a number of VIP jets operated by groups like the Dubai Air Wing and Bahrain Royal Flight.

However, if we look at standard commercial passenger 747-400s, we can see that Russian carrier Rossiya is among the few carriers actively operating their fleet of jumbo jets. For our hunt for estimated leasing costs, we'll take a look at some of these jets, as well as a few inactive aircraft.

Naturally, the value and cost of the aircraft will vary depending on factors such as:

- Age
- Flight cycles
- Flight hours

Without inspecting each 747 individually, the costs presented assume that each individual aircraft is "certified, maintained, and operated under U.S. Federal Aviation Regulation Part 91."

Finally, it's stated that the rates provided "represent the current market

operating lease rate being paid on a monthly basis by good credits based on the typical lease terms for the aircraft type and do not include any type of maintenance reserves."



Rossiya seems to be one of the most active operators of the 747-400 at the moment.

Sample estimations

With the above criteria and limitations stated, let's look at individual jets and what Collateral Verifications has estimated.

D-ABVW: Although listed as parked, this Lufthansa-operated aircraft has an estimated monthly lease rate of \$105,000 per month. As of June 30th, it has accumulated 105,279 flight hours and 12,486 flight cycles.

EI-XLE: This active Rossiya aircraft is also estimated at \$105,000 per month. With the latest data on flight hours and flight cycles being six years old, the jet is likely worth less now.

EP-MNB: This 32-year-old 747-400 operated by Iran's Mahan Air could be leased for as little as \$55,000 per month! Unfortunately, its flight hours and cycles are unavailable, potentially further lowering its value.

YI-AQQ: This 27-year-old Iraqi Airways jumbo jet could be leased for \$80,000. Its flight hours and cycles are unavailable.

N322SG: One of the 'most expensive' 747-400s we found, this 21-year-old Atlas Air passenger jumbo could lease for as much as \$110,000 per month. As of June 2021, it has 46,264 flight hours and 6,162 flight cycles. Its youthful age and low usage figures earn it that extra \$5,000 per month over the Lufthansa jumbo first mentioned.

Emirates relaunches Saudi Arabia flights

Some of Emirates' shortest flights are once again operating as the airline relaunches services to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This restart is set to take place, September 11th, with service to the cities of Riyadh, Dammam, Jeddah, and Medina. For those interested in these services and potentially flying on them, let's take a closer look at the flight details.



Emirates will operate the Airbus A380 on its flights to Jeddah.

The resumption of service to Saudi Arabia comes shortly before the UAE is set to host the Dubai Expo 2020 trade fair. According to Bloomberg, Saudi Arabia's decision to allow its citizens to travel to the UAE comes a day after Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met with UAE leader Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed.

Saudi travelers typically mean big business for Dubai and the other emirates of the UAE. Unfortunately, Saudi Arabia's travel ban had been in place since July, which cut off this source of revenue. Thankfully, that's all set to change.

24 weekly flights

Starting on Saturday, September 11th, Emirates will operate 24 weekly flights to Saudi Arabia. This will see the airline fly daily flights to Riyadh, daily A380 flights to Jeddah, daily flights to Dammam, and three weekly flights to Medina.



Emirates will begin the service from September 11th with hopes of capitalizing the traffic.

The airline adds that its flights to Riyadh will increase to twice daily from September 16th. While plans are also underway to "boost frequencies across other gateways" by the end of September, no other specifics were released. Here are the following flight details as provided by an Emirates statement:

- * Riyadh: Flight EK2817 will operate daily, departing Dubai at 16:40, landing at King Khalid International Airport at 17:40. For the return to Dubai, EK2818 leaves Riyadh at 20:10 and arrives back in Dubai at 23:20.
- * Jeddah: Emirates will operate EK2803 daily, departing Dubai at 16:00. Flights will land at King Abdulaziz International Airport at 18:00 local time. EK2804 departs Jeddah at 20:00 and lands in Dubai at 01:00hrs the next day.
- * Dammam: EK2821 will be a daily service, leaving Dubai at 20:50 and arriving at King Fahd International Airport at 21:20. Returning to Dubai, EK2822 leaves Dammam at 22:45, arriving at its destination at 01:00 the next day.
- * Medina: The least frequent service of the group, EK2809 to Medina, will fly just three times weekly. This flight departs from Dubai at 16:30, arriving at Prince Mohammad Bin Abdulaziz Airport at 18:00. EK2810 leaves Medina at 20:00, arriving back in Dubai at 23:40.
- * All times listed above are local.

Travel and entry requirements

Although flights are resuming, things are still far from going "back to normal." Indeed, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE require preflight COVID testing.



Except for Jeddah, the airline's 777s will be tasked with operating many of the resumed services.

For those heading to Saudi Arabia, all non-Saudi nationals (except children eight years old and below) must present a negative COVID-19 PCR test completed not later than 72 hours before the scheduled departure for the Kingdom.

Heading to Dubai from Saudi Arabia? All passengers traveling to the emirate from any point of origin must hold a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR test certificate for a test taken no more than 72 hours before departure. This includes Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries.

With the resumption of these flights, will you be flying to or from Saudi Arabia with Emirates any time soon? Share your plans with us by leaving a comment!

Airblue Launches Lahore to Al Khaimah flights

Airblue has launched a new service from Ras Al Khaimah to Lahore as demand from the passengers surged after visa and travel restrictions eased by the UAE authorities. The airline's first flight from Lahore to Ras Al Khaimah landed on Sunday 5th Sept night and returned to the historical city early Monday, September 6. "We have planned flights twice a week on the Lahore-RAK-Lahore sector initially as passengers demand is picking up," Sohail Sheikh, Airblue's country manager for the UAE, told media. Amer Al Azaiza, head of Commercial Department at Ras Al Khaimah Airport, welcomed the inaugural flight from Lahore at Ras Al Khaimah Airport on Sunday 5 Sept evening. Chandrashekhar Deshmukh, chief financial officer at Ras Al Khaimah Airport; Vishwajeet Thanik, head of Cargo at Ras Al Khaimah Airport, and other senior officials were also present on the occasion. Airblue has been operating more than 40 weekly flights to major cities of Pakistan from Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah. It also plans to expand its UAE network once travel returns to normalcy. "We are planning to launch another service from Al Ain to Peshawar. The proposal is still under consideration and will be finalised in coming days," Sheikh said. The Islamabad-based carrier operates all-Airbus fleet comprising of nine aircraft including A320-200 and A321-200. It has also placed orders for two A321neo aircraft.

United reveals partnership with sustainable fuel business venture

The aviation industry is often misportrayed as a major contributor to air pollution, although global travel contributes approximately 2% of CO2 emissions, but is still defined as not environmentally friendly or sustainable, within itself.

The largest, prominent issue facing airlines right now is the continuation of using traditional fossil fuels, which can be costly for the carrier and the environment. However, technological advancements and scientific research trends are causing the industry to undertake a huge transformation and shift towards an auspicious direction, where several major airlines drafted and adapted ambitious sustainability goals and net-zero carbon emission practices. For United, this means an investment for agreements with partners who produce an alternative to traditional fossil fuels.

The notable Star Alliance carrier plans to enter a joint agreement with Honeywell to support and invest in Alder Fuels a major producer and business venture of sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) on a large industrial scale through the conversion of plant and crop matter. Within the investment, United intends to purchase 1.5 billion gallons of SAF over the time frame of 20 years.

“Since announcing our 100% green commitment in 2020, United has stayed focused on decarbonizing without relying on the use of traditional carbon offsets. Part of that commitment means increasing SAF usage and availability since it's the fastest way to reduce emissions across our fleet. However, to scale SAF as quickly as necessary, we need to look beyond existing solutions and invest in research and development for new pathways like the one Alder is developing,” Scott Kirby, CEO, United said. Our leadership gives customers confidence that they are flying with an airline that recognizes the responsibility we have to help solve climate change.”

In late December 2020, the carrier announced its pledge and commitment to reducing carbon emissions by 100 percent by 2050 through the use of SAF, its involvement in technology capturing carbon emissions and purchasing carbon offsets. The carrier remains active in attempting to mitigate the climate risks and cut emissions as part of its Eco-Skies initiative.

Industry-Wide Quest For Sustainability

The ongoing COVID-19 predicament continues to present obstacles and be a hurdle for carriers like United as they



A United Eco-Skies 737 on approach into Las Vegas.

continue to navigate and adapt to the fluctuating passenger travel demand and travel restrictions. Nonetheless, United joins the race along with other carriers towards the ongoing trend to become carbon neutral and operate a fuel-efficient, sustainable fleet.

Simultaneously, Delta one of the three legacy carriers in the U.S. recently announced its new carbon emissions target. The Atlanta-based carrier intends to eventually replace 10% of its fossil fuel supply with SAF by 2030 and plans to work with the Scientific Based Target Initiative (SBTI), which will certainly create a level, competitive field for flight operations against United and other carriers.

The SkyTeam carrier's partnership in the SBTI includes goals that align with the Paris Agreement and will possibly encourage the carrier to renew its fleet while focusing on using more SAF for its aircrafts' operational efficiencies.

Clearly, the airline industry is redefining itself and shift towards more sustainable, eco-friendly practices that will hopefully become long-term. United and one of its cutthroat rivals, Delta, are preparing to shift towards the new changes. However, with the new technology and research, both carriers should be aware of the costs that come from moving away from traditional practices, especially during the surges in passenger demand.

Benjamin has had a love for aviation since a young age, growing up in Tampa with a strong interest in airplane models and playing with them. When he moved to the Washington, D.C. area, Benjamin took part in aviation photography for a couple of years at Gravelly Point and Dulles Airport, before dedicating planespotting to only when he traveled to the other airports.

He is an avid, world traveler, having been able to reach 32 countries, yearning to explore and understand more cultures soon. Currently, Benjamin is an Air Transportation Management student at Arizona State University. He hopes to enter the airline industry to improve the passenger experience and loyalty programs while keeping up to how technology is being integrated into airports.

Embraer delivers its 1,500th Business Jet



Embraer's handover recently of a Phenom 300E to a Switzerland-based Haute Aviation marks its 1,500th business jet delivery, the Brazilian airframer announced on Sept. 4. This milestone was accomplished in just two decades, besting the industry average of 34 years, according to the OEM, which assembles its Phenom light jets at a facility in Melbourne, Florida.

In all, Embraer has more than 950 customers operating its business jets in more than 80 countries. Its business jet unit has had an annual growth rate of 22 percent since the delivery of its first business jet in 2002. The company estimated that one in every four light and midsize business jet deliveries is an Embraer Phenom or Praetor.

Haute Aviation charters, brokers, and manages business jets and is based at Saanen-Gstaad Airport. "For Haute Aviation, the new Phenom 300E is the best product on the market to complete the range of our fleet," said Haute head of marketing and communication Catherine Tamagni. "We believe the aircraft's two engines will suit our passengers who prefer not to fly in a single-engine aircraft, as this allows for uncompromised range and payload performance."

Qatar Airways plans for new distribution agreement with Sabre

The leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, and Qatar Airways, the award-winning international airline, are now finalizing a new distribution deal that will provide long-term access to the airline's content through the Sabre travel marketplace.

Qatar Airways intends to strengthen its partnership with Sabre to take advantage of Sabre's global reach and leading position in corporate travel for the distribution of Qatar Airways' products to travelers worldwide. Implementation work is starting to enable unique NDC offers created by Qatar Airways to be distributed through Sabre's new distribution capability (NDC), which provides a consistent end-to-end workflow that integrates within well-established agency operations.

"A new approach to retailing is required in order to respond to the personalized service and enhanced flexibility that travelers expect," said Roshan Mendis, Chief Commercial Officer, Sabre Travel Solutions. "Sabre is committed to supporting Qatar Airways in enhancing its retailing capabilities by enabling the airline to distribute personalized offers through our marketplace to corporations and travel agencies around the world. Collaboration will be crucial in travel's recovery, so I'm proud that we are now finalizing a long-term, sustainable agreement with Qatar Airways that is beneficial for all parties in the travel ecosystem."

Sabre's technology enables Qatar Airways to effectively market and sell its expansive roster of fares globally through the Sabre marketplace. Reaching a network of more than 425,000 travel agents, it is one of the world's largest marketplaces, processing over US \$120 billion in estimated travel spend.

Thierry Antinori, Chief Commercial Officer, Qatar Airways, said: "Working collaboratively is pivotal to our reputation as a trusted and reliable business partner for both customers flying Qatar Airways, and the travel agencies that serve them. As international travel recovers, the landscape has become extremely complex, and we don't want to add additional obstacles such as surcharges, restrictions or inefficient technical solutions, as we deploy new NDC-based product offerings.

"We are therefore cocused on providing a consistent shopping parent

airline's standard rates. The reduction is possible "due to increased the expectations of our travelers and promote the success of our agency partners. With Sabre, we see great potential to shape the future of modern airline retailing."

Operating consistent schedules through the pandemic, Qatar Airways'

Uzbekistan Express yet another LCC brand in the CIS



Uzbekistan's national airline launches low fare travel on all-economy Airbus A320s. Yet another low-cost brand has sprung on the vast territories of the former Soviet Union. Uzbekistan Express is the LCC division of Uzbekistan's national carrier Uzbekistan Airways, which launched operations in late August.

Uzbekistan Airways has thus embarked on a practical realization of its plan, which it call 'transition to hybrid model'. The plan is to add low fare offering to its regular full-service product. At present, Uzbekistan Express disposes of two Airbus A320neos, which have been reconfigured to single economy-class cabins for 174 passengers and sourced from its parent company. In Uzbekistan Airways' standard configurations these aircraft are equipped with 12 business class and 138 economy seats. Two more aircraft will have their cabins reconfigured in the coming months, the airline said.

Uzbekistan Express will operate on domestic routes, but the LCC offering will also be available on a number of routes to Russia (Moscow, Novosibirsk, Kazan, Rostov-on-Don, Krasnodar, Sochi, MineralnyeVody, Yekaterinburg) and Kazakhstan (Aktau and Aktobe). All flights are part of Uzbekistan Airways' existing route network, but will be offered at 20 per cent discount compared to the

network has now rebuilt to more than 140 destinations. This management approach has seen the airline receive accolades from trade partners, media, and industry awards, including Airline of the Year 2021 from Airline Ratings, while its home airport, Hamad International in Doha was recently crowned Best Airport in the World at Skytrax' 2021 World Airport Awards. Indeed, Qatar Airways and Hamad International are the only airline and hub airport combination to receive 5-star ratings from Skytrax for both quality COVID-19 safety measures.

aircraft capacity", the airline said.

Uzbekistan Express will face competition not only from foreign LCCs, but also from the recently launched private Uzbek carrier QanotSharq, which also operates two A320neos.

Similarly to FlyArystan, the LCC division of Kazakhstan's national airline Air Astana, Uzbekistan Express doesn't have its own Air Operator Certificate. It is also selling tickets through its parent airline's web-site. But eventually low fare offering may grow into a separate airline. A 51 per cent share in the LCC division may be offered to an outside investor, according to Uzbekistan Airways' presentation to the country's president ShavkatMirziyoyev in April 2021.

Saudi Arabia extends residence permits Validity

The Saudi General Directorate of Passports has begun automatically extending the validity of residence permits for expatriates outside the kingdom in addition to visit visas and exit and re-entry visas without any fees or extra charges for all expatriates until November 30, reported the Saudi Press Agency. This extension, which comes as per the directives of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, falls within the continuing efforts of the Saudi government to deal with the repercussions of Covid-19 pandemic and ensure the safety of Saudi citizens and residents, it stated. The directorate indicated that the extension will be carried out electronically in cooperation with the National Information Centre without the need to visit the departments of passports, it added.

DC Sialkot lauds the services of SIAL and assures his support

Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Tahir Farooq has said that the business community of Sialkot has done a great deed by constructing Sialkot International Airport on self-help bases. The government has already played a key role in resolving its problems and will continue to do so. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation led by Chairman SIAL Masood Akhtar Khawaja (SI). The delegation included Vice Chairman SIAL Chaudhry Muhammad Sarfraz Bhatti, President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chaudhry Qaiser Iqbal Baryar, Convener Land Acquisition Committee Mian Naeem Javed, Chief Executive Officer Amjad Ali Toor and Public Relations Advisor SIAL Abdul Shakoor Mirza. Deputy Commissioner Sialkot Tahir Farooq said that the Sialkot administration is well aware of the valuable services rendered by Sialkot Airport in a successful manner. Responding very enthusiastically to the request for land acquisition, the airport management suggested further clarification of its position in this regard so that the case could be prepared effectively. He also assured that the matter would be resolved soon. Chairman SIAL Masood Akhtar Khawaja invited Deputy Commissioner Tahir Farooq to visit Sialkot Airport which he gladly accepted.

ACAAP announces election results for the year 2021-2022



Mr. Mohsin A Dharsi new Chairman ACAAP

The elections of Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan for the year 2021 - 2022 were held according to its Election Schedule prepared under TO-Rules2QI3.

The followings have been elected as Office Bearers and Members of Executive Committee of Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan.

OFFICE BEARERS

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mohsin A. Dharsi

SENIOR VICE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Irfan Younas

VICE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Khurram Ashraf

MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mr. Shujaat Ali, M/s. Inter-Fret

Consolidators (Pvt) Ltd.,
Mr. Reham Ali Ratnani, M/s. Xpress (Pvt) Ltd.,
Mr. Amer Majeed Sheikh, M/s. Rapid Cargo (Pvt) Ltd.,
Mr. Irfan Zahid, M/s. Logistics Mode (Pvt) Ltd.,
Mr. Mansoor Shahid Kashmirwala, M/s. Eastern Cargo Centre,
Mr. Shamshad Ahmed Khan, M/s. Skynet Worldwide Express,
Mr. Humayun Qamar Alam, M/s. Air Cargo Services,
Mr. S. M. Shafique M/s. Matrix Logistics,
Mirza Ayaz Baig, M/s. International Combine Cargo,



Photo taken on the occasion shows from (R-L) Mr. Tahir Farooq DC Sialkot, Mr. Masood Akhtar Khawaja Chairman SIAL, Ch. Qaiser Iqbal Baryar President SCCI, Mian Naeem Javed immediate past Chairman SIAL, Chaudhry Muhammad Sarfraz Bhatti Vice Chairman and Mr. Amjad Ali Toor CEO SIAL.

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China - Iran - Afghanistan - Pakistan ties

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)



Last year, 'New York Times' magazine highlighted Sino-Iran "comprehensive strategic partnership", based upon the leaked out draft of 18 page's agreement, concluding that it is expected that China is going to invest \$400bn in Iran in seventeen different projects, covering several fields of nuclear energy, port, trade and transport. Both countries have also agreed to build a 'joint bank' that would help Iran to avoid degradation of its currency due US sanctions, (42105.00 Iranian Riyalequivalents to 1 USD) and the continued US financial embargoes apart. In response to it, China will build 'free trade zones' across Iran and in return Iran will allow China an access to its oil and gassupplies, at a lower than market price, for a period of 25 years.

Despite acquiring the goal to boost its economy, China would also get a foothold in the Middle East in order to eliminate there, the hegemony of the unilateral power USA. The 'Wall Street Journal' mentioned that the economic and security agreement between the two, would ensure China's supremacy in the region and undermine US efforts to prevent Iran from its assumed, suspicious nuclear-development- activities which will be downsized. China would not only get foothold in the Middle East but will also get an important transit route-access, to Central Asian and Caucasian states, including the Black Sea port of Georgia. China's foreign ministry spokesman Yi Wang's visit to six Middle Eastern countries in March 2021 described the increasing thirst of China for its increasing influence of the region with an easy access to fuel. China is expanding its hegemony in neighboring countries to create a multi- polar dimension of power and economy through the BRI project which is inter-related with the CPEC project passing through Parisian, culminating at its deepest port Gwadar a charm of centuries for Russia and China and through this to create a multi-polar dimension of power and economy by the BRI project connecting different continents of the world.

China would enhance major influence in the world's most vital chokepoint: the Strait of Hormuz through which 21 million barrels of oil, estimated worth of \$1.2 billion will pass through, on daily basis. Twin sister ports Gwadar (Pakistan) and Chabahar (Iran) = 172 km apart from each other may change the game of geopolitical strategies of the regional countries. China-Iran ties will have an adverse implication on Indo-Iran relations too. India had already and viciously inaugurated trade of millions of dollars in the development of



Chabahar port, as considered an alternative trade route to approach Central Asian markets bypassing the Pakistani Gwadar and its affluent economy base. India has invested \$13.4 million in various projects including building of Chabahar-Zahidan railway line but which could not materialize due to the pressure from Trump's administration on Modi government, for containing China. The new US administration is however, showing little interest in the sanctions on Iran. Because of the US's existing pressure on India for containing China, the scenario is becoming a big hurdle for India

to perform well in Iran. Finally, she may lose its influence in Iran and get only a little bit of access to the Central Asian energy markets of oil and gas; also owing to its quieted relations with Afghanistan for having connived with the ran-away Ghani government.

The said Afghan President Ashraf Ghani had several times called upon Pakistan to give transit access to India to boost trade in their three-some countries. Pakistan's refusal had been logical given the hitherto inimical history of both these neighbours. The refusal had urged India to use the Chabahar route instead, but what has followed is that China has gained a strong position as a multinational rival to India in Iran. India has miserably failed in its strategy in Iran, due to the entry of China in an Iranian multi-faceted project. India's much less advanced or inferior technology as compared to China's, has also been another strong reason for Iran to have opted for China, which is a renowned and a world class architect.

Within August 2021, the West including America, has created a power vacuum by ending its so called longest war, which is going to be filled by regional nations, namely China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Russia and the states of Central Asian Region' (CARs) in Afghanistan. A similar pattern is emerging with China in the lead and Russia, Iran and Pakistan very likely to accelerate the regime's competence, followed by its much needed international recognition. For China, having good relations with the fresh Afghan Government is vital for the BRI project. Besides, China is obviously not concerned about promoting western type of democracy; instead an authoritarian government on its own pattern which has worked well and quite justifiably, it considers this to be an internal matter.



Conclusively, the aforementioned regional countries must help Afghanistan to acquire recognition from the western world as well as to run the country smoothly to recover the seizure of its reserves by western countries and its institutions. The Biden administration froze about \$9.5 billion of the Afghan government's reserves in US banks along with the World Bank and the IMF which has halted aid and held SDR reserves of \$440 million. The Doha based Taliban office led by Bradar has requested the world community including USA to reopen their embassies in Kabul to obtain a smooth sailing of the legitimate government. It is obviously a humane request and a passionate desire despite the past bitter history. The United States of America was undoubtedly defeated directly in Afghanistan, but indirectly it can still be a hardline player and can go to any extent to quench the thirst of its foreign policy objectives to subdue the Islamic world in general. One of its modus operandi has been to destabilize the Asian region to prevent China in completing its grand projects namely BRI and CEPEC and scurrilous India is there to assist American its un-called for geo-political designs. As the stability of Afghanistan is directly proportional to the regional stability which is mandatory for interconnectivity through BRI, exempting India's negative role ; India will not step-back in its nefarious attempts to destabilize Afghanistan and the region, as it will continue its adherence to 'Hindutava' and its version of the ISIS in Afghanistan. The recent huge blast at Kabul airport indicated India behind it, which surely will be explicated in the upcoming days. The next turn will be India itself, as proactively claimed by Taliban. Pakistan, on the other hand, will not only have to look after the refugee influx and the due international acknowledgment; it already has provided shelter to 4.5 million Afghan refugees.

I have happened to hear from some Afghan refugees that in the past history, they used to come to our land through invading armies; now they come here through invading refugees claiming equal rightful living; only the patterns of their march into this country have changed. I could hardly digest an Afghan refugee in Sialkot: telling me, 'ye sab humara mulk hai'. Okay brother-invaders, you may be semi-right in view of past history!! But please do think to go back to your birth-place home-country which is more preferable for us. We are not as rich as Scandinavian countries and therefore are not a 'welfare state' either; the dream of any country to be. Our incumbent government though has been sloganeering yet to be one (Medina state), like our predecessor governments have been claiming of becoming a 'tiger economy'.

Journalists protest against govt's PMDA move

Protesting against the government's plan to bulldoze the Pakistan Media Development Authority (PMDA) legislation through a joint sitting of parliament, the journalist fraternity began a sit-in outside the Parliament House here on Sunday 12 Sept. evening.

The protesting journalists marched from the National Press Club and reached outside the Parliament House where they planned to stay overnight, as they said the sit-in would continue till President Dr Arif Alvi's address to the joint session of parliament, which is scheduled to assemble at 4pm on Monday 13 Sept.

Addressing the protesters, senior journalists representing various associations of media workers vowed to resist the government move to enforce the PMDA, terming it an effort to gag the press.

The protest call was given by various journalist bodies, headed by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ).

Fraternity members continue to hold sit-in outside Parliament House overnight

PFUJ general secretary Nasir Zaidi in his speech said the journalist community had rejected the proposed PMDA because it was meant to stifle the voice of media.

Senior journalist Afzal Butt said many attempts had been made in the past too to silence the media by dictators, but journalists successfully fought for their rights and this time too, the journalist community would protect freedom of the press.

The government through the PMDA was trying to impose 'media martial law', said senior journalist Imtiaz Alam. He reminded the relevant authorities that in digital age one could not stop fake news until journalists were allowed to work independently and speak the truth.

The protesting journalists were of the opinion that the government through the proposed media authority was attempting to abolish the Newspapers Employees Act as well.

Solidarity with journalists

Several politicians, including former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, PML-N information secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb and MNA Mohsin Dawar, visited the

protesting camp and expressed solidarity with journalists.

Just a day ago, the Parliamentary Reporters Association had announced that reporters would boycott the presidential address in protest against the proposed media authority.

Also, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) had recently announced its support for journalists in their fight against the proposed media authority. SCBA president Latif Afridi was of the opinion that 'power brokers' were striving to enslave the media and judiciary in Pakistan and the proposed PMDA was one of the channels to achieve this nefarious design. Similarly, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has expressed serious concern over the proposed authority.

Former information minister Marriyum Aurangzeb in a series of tweets said Imran Khan had abused the state machinery to block democratic and peaceful protest by journalists across the country against the PMDA black law. She reminded the nation that the same PTI had staged a 120-day sit-in at D-Chowk, attacked, battered and wounded policemen, hung dirty laundry on the august building of the Supreme Court, cursed parliament, attacked the Prime Minister House, gave a call for civil disobedience and asked people to reject formal banking channels and conduct financial transactions through hundi to sabotage national economy.

However, she added, the same PTI did not allow journalists their right to peaceful protest and deployed scores of security personnel and put up barricades to prevent protests against the tyrannical media development authority legislation that seeks to gag news media and silence the truth.



JOURNALISTS raise slogans during their sit-in outside the Parliament House on Sunday 12 Sept.



- * AIR FREIGHT
- * OCEAN FREIGHT
- * ROAD FREIGHT
- * WAREHOUSING
- * CUSTOMS BROKERAGE
- * AFGHAN TRANSIT



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Punjab to showcase trade, culture, tourism at Dubai Expo: Buzdar

The Punjab government has decided to showcase the culture, trade and tourism of the province at the upcoming Dubai Expo to be held in November this year.

Presiding over a meeting at his office held on Sunday to finalise the plans for joining the Dubai Expo, Chief Minister Usman Buzdar said the Punjab government would fully participate in the show, giving due representation to south, central and Pothohar regions.

The meeting also decided in principle to give representation to the Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry and private sector in the expo as well.

Mr Buzdar said culture, trade, tourism, and other salient features of Punjab's glorious traditions would be highlighted at the Dubai Expo. "The purpose of participating in the Dubai Expo is to promote a softer image of Pakistan," he said and added that foreign investors would also be offered the opportunities in business and tourism sectors in Punjab.

He stressed the need for creating awareness about the business-friendly environment of Punjab.

The industries minister, principal secretary to the CM, secretaries of



CPWB special coordinator Sara Ahmad presents performance report to the chief minister.

planning & development, finance, industries and other officials concerned attended the meeting.

AIR AMBULANCE: Mr Buzdar has directed the civil administration to finalise all matters regarding the launch of the Rescue Air Ambulance Service as soon as possible.

At a meeting at his office on Sunday, the chief minister said the start of air ambulance would give a new identity to the Rescue services.

Mr Buzdar said Punjab would be the first province in the region to have such facility that would extend the scope of rescue work to the remote areas of the province.

"The air ambulance service is a prime need of the time," he added. The additional chief secretary, principal secretary to the

CM and DG Rescue Services attended the meeting.

CPWB: The chief minister has said the scope of the Child Protection Bureau will be extended to every district of the province to safeguard the rights of the children.

He said the CPWB had been turned into a vibrant institute by his government, while the previous one did not hold a single board meeting of the bureau during the last 12 years.

He said this during a meeting with his Special Coordinator Sara Ahmad who called on him at his office and presented him the three years' performance report of the CPWB.

Mr Buzdar said the government was providing all resources to the bureau to safeguard the rights of destitute and helpless children.

He ordered indiscriminate action against the gangs involved in child beggary.

Upon invitation from the special coordinator, Mr Buzdar said he would inaugurate the Faisalabad chapter of the CPWB during his visit to the city.

Ms Ahmad apprised the chief minister of the measures taken by the bureau to prevent the incidents of torture and forced child beggary.

Taliban's desire for inclusion in CPEC termed encouraging

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Monday 6 Sept. welcomed the Taliban's desire for Afghanistan's inclusion in China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects and termed it an encouraging sign.

"It is good if Taliban's views about China are similar to that of Pakistan," he told a press conference.

Mr Rashid said CPEC was an economic lifeline for the country.

"Pakistan is proud of its friendship with China and if Taliban hold similar views, then it is really good," he said.

Taliban had described China as their "most important partner", saying Kabul looked to Beijing to rebuild the country and exploit its rich copper deposits as the war-ravaged country faced widespread hunger and economic collapse.

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid had said the group supported China's One Belt, One Road initiative that sought to link China with Africa, Asia and Europe through an enormous network of

ports, railways, roads and industrial parks.

Referring to suicide bombing on Aug 20 in Gwadar and another one targeting the FC convoy on Mastung Road in Quetta on Sunday, the minister said that suicide bombers of these two acts of terror had been identified and they had come from Afghanistan.

Two boys were killed and four others, including a Chinese national, were injured when a suicide bomber blew himself up near a vehicle carrying Chinese nationals in Gwadar on Aug 20, while four people lost their lives and 20 were injured on Sunday in a suicide attack near a check-post on Mastung Road in Quetta.

Mr Rashid claimed that India had 68 training camps in Afghanistan, which were now dysfunctional.

The minister said that Pakistan supported peace, development and prosperity in Afghanistan, adding that "peace in the two countries is interlinked".

In reply to a question, the minister said Pakistan would take decisions about its

side of Torkham and Chaman borders while Taliban would take decisions about their side.

He, however, made it clear that the Pakistan government would decide about those who were entering the country without documents.

He said that Taliban had assured Pakistan that the Afghan territory would not be allowed to be used against Pakistan and the latter had also given assurance to its neighbours. "However, in Pakistan, there are BLA, Daesh and other terrorist organisations, but our army has the capacity to deal with them effectively," the minister said.

When asked about the visit of the ISI chief to Kabul, Mr Rashid said Gen Faiz Hameed dominated Indian media for two days. "It seemed as if he visited Delhi instead of Kabul," he said.

The minister said that India had been defeated in Afghanistan and it was the "only country in the region that has repeatedly faced humiliation".

First CPEC power transmission project gets under way



PAK Matiari-Lahore Transmission Line Company CEO Zhang Lei (left) and National Transmission and Despatch Company Managing Director Azaz Ahmad attend a ceremony at Wapda House in Lahore to mark the launch of commercial operations of the 660kV High-Voltage Direct Current transmission line on Wednesday 1st Sep.

The first China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project in the power evacuation and transmission sector, the 660kV High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Matiari-Lahore transmission line, started commercial operations on Wednesday on its scheduled date.

On the first day, the project saved the country from a major breakdown by protecting the transmission, dispatch and distribution systems from a possible cascading effect due to tripping at Jamshoro.

“It is a matter of great importance that the country finally succeeded in having the first and the biggest HVDC transmission line to evacuate 4,000 megawatts from power plants in the south in direct current (DC) mode, transport and transmit it to Lahore after converting it into alternate current (AC) mode and finally feed it to the distribution systems in the load centres in Punjab,” National Transmission and Despatch Company Managing Director Azaz Ahmad explained to media. “With the provision of the HVDC line, there are now meagre chances of blackouts, breakdowns etc due to system constraints since the entire NTDC transmission and dispatch system has attained stability.”

He said an example of stability was that the system tripped on Wednesday 1st Sept. for a while due to a technical fault in Jamshoro (Sindh), leading to power failure in various service areas of K-Electric and Hyderabad Electric Supply Company. “But this Matiari-Lahore HVDC line helped keep the system stable and saved it from a cascading affect to other parts of the country.”

According to a spokesman, the flagship HVDC line project achieved its commercial operation date (COD) successfully as per the timeline agreed between the NTDC and Pak Matiari-Lahore Transmission Line Company (PMLTC). Prior to its COD, eight power

tests on different voltage levels were performed successfully.

“The power tests included commissioning tests (DC station tests) Lahore and Matiari, Mono-pole Low Power System Tests (up to 400MW each pole), Bi-pole Low Power System Tests (up to 800MW bi-pole), Mono-pole High Power Tests (2,200MW each pole), Bi-pole High Power Tests at Maximum Available Power, Special Optional Tests. The last test -- trial operation (168hrs) and Capability Demonstration Test (6hrs) was completed on Aug 18,” he said in a press release.



A COD ceremony was held here at Wapda House attended by NTDC MD Ahmad, PMLTC chief Zhang Lei and others concerned.

“We appreciate the Chinese company for completion of the project on time,” the MD said on the occasion. He said the line would bring stability to the NTDC transmission network.

The 878-kilometre 4,000MW project has been completed by PMLTC (Pvt) Limited on Built-Own-Operate-Transfer basis for 25 years. The project will evacuate power from the new generating units located in the south, including Thar coal projects.

On July 25, 2017, the Economic Coordination Committee had approved the security package documents -- implementation agreement and transmission services agreement that were subsequently executed on May 14, 2018. The NTDC will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the transmission line.

The HVDC technology is a maiden addition to the national grid though it's been widely used for a long time around the world. It fulfils the need for long-distance high-power transmission from generating stations in far-flung areas to densely located load centres.

Lab-grown fish fingers: firms team up to explore cell-cultured seafood



An undated handout picture shows a battered BlueNalu cell-cultured fish

Europe's largest frozen food group and the maker of Bird's Eye fish fingers has teamed-up with US company BlueNalu to develop seafood products grown from cells in a laboratory rather than harvested from the oceans.

Nomad Foods, which also owns the Findus, Iglo, La Cocinera and Green Cuisine brands, said recently it aimed to commercialise cell-cultured seafood to help meet rising demand and to support efforts to safeguard the long-term sustainability of the planet's fish stocks.

Through the tie-up, Nomad and BlueNalu will collaborate on market research and consumer insights, assess what is needed to gain the approval of regulators and explore new business and product opportunities for European markets.

Europe is the largest importer of seafood in the world, with its citizens consuming more than three times as much as they produce, according to the European Union's Blue Economy Report.

“The importance of sustainability has never been more apparent, and the role of technology in delivering these needs is accelerating,” said Nomad Foods Chief Executive Stfan Descheemaeker.

The process developed by San Diego, California-based BlueNalu sees living fish cells, isolated from the muscle, fat and connective tissue of a fish, fed the nutrition and care they need to multiply. They are then shaped into portions of seafood using practices commonly utilised in the food industry. There is no genetic modification.

Pakistan ports' cargo handling posts double-digit growth in FY21

Cargo handling activities at Karachi Port Trust (KPT) and Port Qasim Authority (PQA) recorded an impressive growth of 25 per cent and 13.72pc in FY21 owing to 18pc and 26pc rise in the country's exports and imports, respectively.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), exports in FY21 soared to \$25.3 billion from \$22bn in FY20 while imports stood at \$56bn as against \$44.5bn in FY20, thus keeping goods movement at twin ports alive amid issues like lockdown, port congestion, higher freight charges, etc all over the world.

A senior maritime official said despite Covid-related challenges, Pakistan's trade remained progressive on the back of their achievement with an initiative of imposing smart lockdowns and keeping logistics moving.

On the other hand, all Pakistani ports ensured business continuity and alleviate the pandemic impact on the maritime sector. However, the downside was the traditional ports facing congestion and efficiency issues in delivery service to the end-users and increase cost to shipping lines, whereas Hutchison Ports Pakistan (HPP), the only deep water container port, remained productive with its cutting-edge technology and modern infrastructure.

Smart lockdowns help boost country's external trade

This has helped other terminals and trade in reducing congestion impact by handling the extra vessel calls at HPP.

He said soaring freights were related more to logistics imbalance due to container shortages, skip port calls by the shipping lines, reduction of vessel capacity and partial closure of major ports around the world. This has ultimately increased trade due to increase in exports from Pakistan on the back of importing raw material, machinery items etc to meet the demand.

He said till 3QFY21 the country was also affected by lockdowns, but port cargo handling picked up momentum from the fourth quarter after local situation improved and exports to the US, EU and China had recorded significant increases, he added.

Since then, he said, Pakistan has started receiving substantial orders of textile and other value-added items, whereas other regional countries notably India, Bangladesh, Thailand and Sri Lanka were endeavouring to curb Covid infection rate by strict lock downs.

A KPT official said the total cargo handling grew substantially to 52.279 million tonnes in FY21 from 41.840m tonnes in FY20.

In imports, total volume stood at 36.469m tonnes in FY21 as compared to 27.206m tonnes in FY20. The share of total dry cargo went up by 36.53pc to 24.670m tonnes in FY21 from 18.069m tonnes in FY20 in which dry general cargo and dry bulk cargo volume stood at 18.170mn tonnes and 6.5m tonnes as compared to 15.358m tonnes and 2.711m tonnes, up by 18pc and 140pc over FY20. Total liquid bulk import cargo handling grew by 29pc to 11.799m tonnes from 9.137m tonnes in 2019-20.

In exports, KPT's total cargo volume improved by 8pc to 15.810m tonnes from 14.634m tonnes which included 9.689m tonnes of dry general cargo and 5.584m tonnes of dry bulk cargo during 2020-21 as compared to 8.841m tonnes and 5.130m tonnes in 2019-20. The volume of liquid bulk export cargo fell by 19pc to 0.537m tonnes from 0.663m tonnes.

A 15.34pc rise was registered in container handling in twenty-foot equivalents (TEUs) to 2.988m tonnes from 1.992m tonnes. Out of the above figures, the number of import TEUs was 1.155m in 2020-21 as against 1.001m TEUs in 2019-20. Export TEUs stood at 1.142m versus 0.991m in 2019-20.

Arrival of ships at the KPT increased by 21.5pc to 1,813 ship from 1,492 in FY20. Out of total ship movement, number of container ship rose by 17pc to 869 from 743 followed by 61.5pc rise in bulk cargo ship to 281 from 174, five per cent rise in general cargo ship to 169 from 161 and 19pc hike in oil tankers to 494 from 414 ship in FY20.

Meanwhile, cargo handling activities at the Port Qasim also swelled to 58m tonnes in 2020-21 versus 51m tonnes in 2019-20. In 2016-17, total cargo handling was 37.3m tonnes. As per data available at PQA's website, arrival of ships at the PQA rose to 1,709 in FY21 from 1,520.

With increasing exports orders, improving economic indicators, imports of automotive, spare parts, machinery, food items and raw material, Pakistani port handling improved significantly. During FY21, Pakistan was also able to achieve its largest ever exports of \$25bn largely contributed by value-added items to US, EU, UK and China, he said.

Surging imports

Pakistan exports during the first month of FY22 posted a year-on-year highest-ever growth of 17.3pc to \$2.34 billion. Considering this achievement along with an ambitious plan of achieving \$38.7bn to \$40bn exports during FY22, the government has extended the duty-free import regime to more raw materials.

Imports also swelled during past couple of months, which although put a

negative mark on current account, however this has increased port handling. Land route trade agreements with CARs is also expected to increase Pakistan ports cargoes, he hoped.

"With these developments, Pakistani port handling during FY22 is expected to remain brisk," the maritime official added. Pakistan's import in July went up by a whopping 52pc to \$5.6bn from \$3.67bn in July 2020.

Textile exports rise 15pc in July

Pakistan's textile and clothing exports posted double-digit growth in the first month of this fiscal year increasing by 15.61 per cent to \$1.471 billion compared to \$1.272bn in July 2020, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed on Thursday 26 August.

The easing of lockdown in North American and European countries top markets for Pakistani textile goods will help boost the exports.

The demand for textiles collapsed during the first wave of Covid-19, but it recovered in the outgoing fiscal year.

The government has drastically reduced duty and taxes on imports of several hundred raw materials to bring down the input cost of exportable products. Moreover, the liquidity issues are also resolved to a large extent by timely releasing refunds. In the outgoing fiscal year, the commerce ministry released a total of Rs6bn under DLTL schemes. This included Rs5.6bn for textile and Rs400m for non-textile sectors.

The ministry believes it will contribute to improving the liquidity issues of exporters and enable them to enhance Pakistan's exports.

Details showed ready-made garments exports jumped by 9.83pc in value and in quantity by 8.23pc during July, while those of knitwear edged up 24.4pc in value and 54.66pc in quantity, bed wear posted positive growth of 8pc in value and it drifted in quantity by 1.10pc.

Towel exports dipped by 0.01pc in value and 10.10pc in quantity, whereas those of cotton cloth rose 20.12pc in value and dipped by 81.03pc in quantity.

Among primary commodities, cotton yarn exports surged by 48.49pc, while yarn other than cotton by 61.11pc.

The export of made-up articles excluding towels rose by 10.33pc, and

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tents, canvas and tarpaulin dipped by a massive 44.94pc during the month under review. The export of raw cotton declined by 100pc during the month under review.

The import of textile machinery increased by 96.95pc in July a sign that expansion or modernisation projects were taken up by the textile industry during the month.

To bridge the shortfall in the domestic sector, the industry imported 49,170 tonnes of raw cotton in July against 32,825 tonnes last year, an increase of 49.79pc. Similarly, the import of synthetic fibre posts growth of 48.90pc as industry imports 53,352 tonnes this year as against 35,831 tonnes. The import of synthetic and artificial silk yarn stood at 45,726 tonnes

this year as against 22,968 tonnes last year, a rise of 99pc. The import of worn clothing recorded a growth of 257pc to 90,390 tonnes this year as against 25,270 tonnes last year.

The overall country's exports posted a growth of over 16.94pc year-on-year to \$2.728bn in July compared to \$2bn in the corresponding period last year.

Beached Heng Tong finally refloated after 48 days at Karachi



The vessel makes its way into the open sea on Tuesday Sept. 7.

Following a successful refloating operation, the beached cargo ship MV Heng Tong 77 was pulled back to deep waters at high tide on Tuesday Sept 7.

The refloating team rejoiced as the ship, beached off Seaview since July 21, slowly turned its nose towards the deep waters while being pulled by a barge and two tugboats up ahead. It was being dragged at first. Sometimes the waves also threw it back a few metres towards the beach. But the tugs and the rope tied to the barge kept on pulling. Finally, Heng Tong's nose bobbed followed by its tail doing the same and everyone could see that it was finally afloat and completely off the sandy surface of the beach.



Citizens watch as the beached cargo ship MV Heng Tong 77 is freed at Karachi's Seaview beach.

Still not forgetting how the ship had returned to another part of the Seaview beach after an almost successful operation on Aug 24, the team was still watching the ship's progress carefully. It crossed 300 metres and the frowns eased. It crossed 1,000m and there were smiles all around. Then when it had gone out about 2,500 to 3,000m there were sighs of relief and celebration.

Altaf Ghanchi, owner of Ayan Ship-Breakers, hired by the shipowners to salvage the ship and carry out the

refloating operation, was so happy that he could be seen embracing all his ground staff and divers. He even hugged the police constables keeping picnickers at bay during the lengthy refloating operation of about one-and-a-half months. "I thank God Almighty Who helped us free this ship from the sand and help it get back to the deep sea," he said.

"Basically, we did the opposite of what we do at the Gadani ship-breaking yard for scrapping ships. There we brought ships to the beach before anchoring them and here we pushed it back into the sea by dropping the same anchors into the water and pulling the ship outward with the help of winches," explained Ghanchi.

"There were three other ships that had got beached earlier of which two had been stuck at Clifton and one at Manora. All three had to be scrapped. But this is the first ship that has been refloated in Pakistan. So it will not be wrong to say that we created maritime history here today," Ghanchi claimed.



Refloating team celebrates as the beached cargo ship MV Heng Tong 77 is freed at Karachi's Seaview beach.

This time the ship had been given two new anchors, which it dropped as soon as it reached the outer anchorage in the harbour area. "We waited for high tide as we started pulling the vessel towards the deeper side. We only had about one hour or so after high tide during the lull period when the depth of water stays the same," said Captain Asim Iqbal, the shipping agent involved in the operation.

Another expert at the spot, the anti-pollution officer of Karachi Port Trust's (KPT) Marine Pollution Control Department, Salis Younis, said that although the KPT and Pakistan Navy had defueled the ship soon after its getting

beached at Seaview in order to prevent any leakage or danger to marine life, they had still left some fuel in its tanks for its engines and power generation during refloating.

"Sometimes the weather conditions didn't suit Heng Tong's refloating and sometimes the tide levels were not according to the desired need but we are also glad that the ship is finally afloat and off to the harbour now on its own engine power. It was all a team effort that has shown us all success today," he said.

Arif Shaikh, director of Sea Max Marine Services, the company hired by the ship's owners to organise the refloating team, said that he is most thankful to the Pakistan Navy, KPT and all the other agencies and institutions that made the operation successful. "Everyone went [out of] their way to make this happen and it is the fruit of their labour which you can see today," he said.



Two men walk at Karachi's Seaview beach as cargo ship MV Heng Tong 77 leaves.

While refraining from sharing the exact cost of the operation, he said that had any international company been hired to oversee the refloating of the ship, they would have charged at least \$200 million. "We have not taken even a quarter of it using all local resources," he smiled.

Earlier on Aug 11, MV Heng Tong 77 had been declared "unseaworthy" and detained by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs under Section 394 of the Pakistan Merchant Ordinance 2001. Now as it finds a berth at the KPT, it will undergo repairs including getting new rudders, before it is examined again to be allowed to leave the port.

Conquering Rakaposhi:

Operation to rescue climbers

Bad weather recently hindered operations to rescue the three climbers who have been stuck on Rakaposhi for the conquering it, according to the Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP).

Czech climbers Jakub Vicek, Peter Macek and local climber Wajidullah Nagri have been stranded in Camp III on the 7,788-metre-high peak in the Karakoram mountain range of Gilgit-Baltistan, said ACP Secretary Karrar Haidri.

Pakistan Army (Aviation) helicopters will resume the rescue mission.

According to the army's aviation officials, two helicopters took off from Skardu and landed at Gilgit airport and flew to Rakaposhi to search for the climbers and observed the surrounding areas.

Sources said during the first round of the rescue operation, pilots flew flights above an altitude of 6,000m but the mountain was wrapped in clouds and winds were too strong. The helicopters returned to Gilgit for refueling.

The second round was also not successful due to bad weather conditions on the peak. The stranded climbers are in touch with their families through satellite communication.

The climbers have expressed the hope about being rescued despite losing their strength. One of the climbers is suffering from high altitude sickness, including depletion of energy.

“Camped at 6,900 metres, the



Group photo of the missing climbers.

climbers have already been stuck for two days. While Nagri is in good shape and keeping in touch with us, one of the Czech climbers is suffering from frostbite and the other is sick,” Mr Haidri told media.

Two army helicopters that were on standby were unable to fly to pick up the rescue team, including professional climber Abdul Joshi and two others from Hunza. Both helicopters remained grounded at the Gilgit airbase as the mountain was wrapped in low level clouds. Aviation helicopters will pick up the rescue team.

“As soon as the weather permits, the two army helicopters are due to pick up the rescue team and then head to Rakaposhi,” Mr Haidri added.

Furthermore, the two Czech

mountaineers were climbing without permits and this has intensified their problems.

“Climbing without permits complicates the protocols of the bureaucracy for rescue operations,” Mr Haidri said, adding in any case it was unlikely that the helicopters could reach a height of 6,900 metres.

“The stranded climbers will probably need to descend at least as far as Camp II or a ground team will need to go up and try to reach them. It is also not clear which route the stranded climbers took on ascent. It is believed that they established a new route to the top. This presents yet another problem. There is no information on ropes, camps or the precise condition of the stranded climbers.”

After the successful summit, Nagri has become the second Pakistani climber to summit Rakaposhi after Sher Khan over 40 years ago. According to ACP, Rakaposhi is the only mountain in the world whose climb involves gaining over 5,000 vertical metres from the base camp to the summit.

Deputy Commissioner Nagar Zulqarnain Khan said the climbers had scaled Rakaposhi and began their descent on the same day.

They had begun ascent of the peak on Sept 1 from the South Ridge. Joshi, a professional climber from Shimshal valley to lead the ground rescue. They rescued by helicopter.

Lal Sohanra to dispose of over 100 blackbucks

The administration of National Park Lal Sohanra has recommended to the Punjab Wildlife Department to dispose of more than 100 surplus and aged blackbucks to rationalise their number at the park, while it may also fetch a sum of around Rs5 million for the forest department.

The step is being taken to reduce overcrowding of aged male blackbucks at the park's enclosures.

Divisional Forest Officer Ijaz Ahmed Tabbasum told media that presently the surplus stock of some 120 blackbucks were kept in the park's two enclosures RD-25 and RD -65, and the number of these animals was needed to be rationalised in accordance with the international standards to maintain health of the remaining stock.

He said the presently the park housed total 477 blackbucks, including 153 males, 129 females and 195 fawns. The present male to female ratio of the animals

in the enclosures was 0.8, while the international standard required it to be 0.5, he added.

He said due to such a large number of aged male blackbucks in the park, fights occurred between them over female partners for mating which harmed the stock's breeding and health in the enclosures.

To resolve the issue, he said it had been decided to rationalise their number and dispose of the aged blackbucks so that their population in the enclosures could be maintained as per the international standards.

He said the proposal had been forwarded to the provincial government and if approved, it was expected to fetch



an income of some Rs5 million to the forest department.

He said the animals could be offered for open auction or a price might be fixed for the interested buyers.

He said as per the PM's vision, the park administration had organised a tree planting campaign in the park.

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Nation observes Quaid's death anniversary



The 73rd death anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah observed on Saturday 11th Sept. throughout the country with reverence and solemnity.

To mark the day, various programmes have been planned to shed light on the leadership and personality of the Father of the Nation.

Born on Dec 25, 1876, Mr Jinnah served as leader of the All India Muslim League from 1913 until Pakistan's creation. He served as the country's first governor general until his death.

The Quaid-i-Azam passed away on Sept 11, 1948, just a year after achieving a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Sub-continent.

Legend Hotels Signs MoU with FetchSky bringing more discounts

Legend Hotels and Resorts is the fastest growing hotel chain in Pakistan with 4 hotels opened within a short span of eight months at Islamabad, Chitral, Hunza and Skardu. Legend Hotel Management Company has partnered with leaders of various industries, like Banks, Food Deliveries, and E-commerce to facilitate enthusiastic domestic travelers. In this

connection, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Legend Hotel Management Company and FetchSky (Visa) at Karachi Tuesday, 7th September. At the launching ceremony, the Managing Director, Legend Hotel Management Company, Abdul

AzeemQureashi said, "With Visa being the global leader in the electronic payment industry, we are pleased to join hands with them to bring exclusive offers and discounts at Legend Hotels and Resorts, with the unrivaled service that has become our hallmark.

Venice marks restoration of 16th century bridge with live music



PICTURE shows the iconic Rialto Bridge in Venice, which was officially unveiled recently after completion of the restoration work started in 2012.

Venice celebrated the completion of full restoration of its Rialto Bridge recently, with tenor Andrea Bocelli singing opera atop the gem of Renaissance art spanning the Grand Canal.

With its elegant low arch and distinctive arcades, the gleaming white bridge spanning the Grand Canal at its narrowest point is one of Venice's most photographed tourist attractions and until the mid-19th century, the only way to cross besides by boat.

The five-million-euro (\$6 million) head-to-toe restoration of the bridge, funded by Diesel founder Renzo Rosso, was completed in 2019 after beginning in 2015, organisers said. But a planned inauguration ceremony twice had to be delayed because of Covid-19.

"This bridge is the bridge of Venice," Luca Zaia, president of the Veneto region of which Venice is the capitol, told invited guests at the bridge's apex.

"It's a piece of history, it's an open-air museum." Bocelli sang the famous Puccini aria "Nessun Dorma" during a brief ribbon-cutting ceremony, as the Grand Canal's stream of gondolas, water taxis and barges passed underneath.

"It's been 450 years since it was built. It required meticulous work," Rosso told

media.

The bridge with three walkways and a 6.5-metre high arch is the oldest that currently crosses the Grand Canal, connecting the district of San Marco to the Rialto, the city's commercial centre and famous Rialto market.

It is considered an architectural masterpiece for its two arcades of shops and pedestrian walkways with balustrades facing the water all supported by 6,000 wooden piles.

Built between 1588 and 1591, for centuries its shops were exclusively the domain of goldsmiths.

But over 400 years of wind, water and pollution and the modern-day influx of tourists had taken their toll on the bright white Istrian stone.

The bridge's entire 5,000 square metre surface area was restored, including its decorative bas-reliefs.

The restoration also involved the flooring, the roofs of the shops lining the bridge and the balustrades.

Millions of tourists visit the Unesco heritage site of Venice each year, and in July, Venice narrowly avoided being placed on Unesco's endangered list.

The UN body warned of the need for a sustainable tourism management plan.

Gurdwara Punja Sahib comes alive with Raksha Bandhan festivities



Devotees visit Gurdwara Punja Sahib to celebrate Raksha Bandhan festival on Sunday 22 August. In the other picture, a girl ties rakhi on the wrist of her brother.



The bond between a brother and sister is as sacred in Hinduism as it is in any other religion, said Danesh Kumar, senator from Balochistan at a function, held to observe Raksha Bandhan at Gurdwara Punja Sahib in Hassanabdal on Sunday 22 August.

The festival, which dates back to the Vedic period, is observed by Hindus every year to mark the bond of love between a brother and sister.

The Sanskrit phrase Raksha Bandhan means the bond of protection, obligation or care. Young girls and elderly women from the Hindu and Sikh communities mostly from rural Sindh and various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa thronged the temple to buy holy bands (rakhis) so they could tie them around their brothers' wrists and exchange greetings. After the rakhis are tied and prayers (pooja) are offered, the brothers give presents to their sisters. As there is no major Hindu temple in the Potohar region, this festival is celebrated in Punja Sahib.

Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee along with the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) had made elaborate arrangements to ensure enforcement of Covid-19 precautionary measures.

"It celebrates the love and duty between brothers and sisters and gives them an opportunity to strengthen their bond," Mr Kumar said.

Speaking on the occasion, the first Sikh senator of Pakistan, Gurdeep Singh, said the government had taken a number of steps for the welfare and betterment of minorities and protection of their worship places.

According to Sardar Gubeer Singh, garanthi at Punja, the festival takes place on a full moon or poornima day in the holy month of Shravan every year.

Mr Singh said as per the tradition, sisters tie a rakhi around the wrist of either their brother or someone they regard as a brother, and in return, brothers give back a

token as a promise to the sister, to protect her from problems.

"Hindu women also fasten rakhis on the wrists of members of other faiths, whom they consider as their brothers," Gopal Singh Chawla, chairman of Sikh Punjabi Sangat, told journalists, adding that, "Sikhs and Christians come to attend our religious gatherings, and we attend their religious gatherings as participation from three different religions in this festival helps promote interfaith harmony in the country."

Mohan Kumar, a native of Jacobabad, told media that he came to Punja Sahib with his family to celebrate the event and was impressed to see the gathering.

Anjali Lal, a devotee from Sukkur, said she had attended rakhi celebrations organised at such a mass level for the first time.

"We used to celebrate such festivities at our homes. I am very happy to see that people from other religions, including the Sikh and Christian community are celebrating with us," he added.

Priyanka Aakesh, a medical student from Kohat, said as there was no major temple in her area, all Hindus living in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa gathered at Gurdwara Punja Sahib to celebrate the festival.

Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee General Secretary Sardar Ameer Singh, while rejecting Indian propaganda regarding closure of Kartarpur Corridor, said it was actually India which was not opening the corridor.

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has allowed Indian Sikh pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur next month amid strict implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) to contain further spread of Covid-19.

He said Kartarpur Corridor had never been closed for Indian yatrees, adding that Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee extended special invitation to Indian yatrees for the anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak, which is scheduled on Sept 22.

Mr Singh added that the Kartarpur Corridor which was closed due to the pandemic on March 16, 2020, was reopened by Pakistan on Oct 2, 2020.

He said the Indian government should desist from its bigotry and reopen Kartarpur Corridor and appreciated the government of Pakistan for placing Sikh yatrees from India in Category-B on humanitarian grounds and opening the Wagah border for them.

UAE to resume issuing visas to vaccinated tourists

The United Arab Emirates announced it will resume issuing visas to all tourists fully vaccinated against Covid from Monday, a month before Dubai hosts the delayed Expo 2020 trade fair.

The move comes amid a drop in coronavirus infections in the oil-rich Gulf country, after it reported less than 1,000 cases per day last week for the first time in months.

The UAE's decision to reopen its doors to tourists from all countries was taken in order "to achieve sustainable recovery and economic growth", the official WAM news agency reported.

Those eligible would have to be fully inoculated with one of the Covid-19 vaccines approved by the World Health Organisation, which include AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, Pfizer/BioNTech, Sinopharm and Sinovac.

"The decision applies to citizens of all countries, including those arriving from previously banned countries," WAM said.

"Passengers arriving on tourist visas must take a mandatory PCR test at the airport," it added. The UAE is made up of seven emirates including the capital Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

While life in the country has largely returned to normal amid the Covid pandemic, it continues to enforce strict rules on wearing masks and social distancing. Dubai was last year counting on the six-month Dubai Expo 2020 delayed a year by the health crisis and now set to open in October to attract millions of visitors and boost the economy.

Heavily reliant on tourism, the emirate was one of the first destinations to open its doors to travellers, accepting tourists in July last year, just a few months after the pandemic took hold. Abu Dhabi, meanwhile, has been more cautious, opening up to some visitors only in December.

The UAE has so far recorded more than 715,000 cases of Covid-19 infection, including 2,036 deaths.

Nasa's rover gets its first piece of Martian rock

Nasa has confirmed that its Perseverance rover has succeeded in collecting its first rock sample on Mars.

"I've got it!" the space agency tweeted in the early hours of Monday 30 August, alongside a photograph of a rock core slightly thicker than a pencil inside a sample tube.

Nasa said it thought it had accomplished the feat, but poorly-lit photographs taken by the rover meant that the team operating the mission were not certain whether the sample had stayed inside its tube. It had to retake the pictures in better lighting, but sending back the data can take several days.

"With better lighting down the sample tube, you can see the rock core I collected is still in there," said Nasa in the new tweet, adding that the next stage would be sealing this tube and storing it.

The target was a briefcase-sized rock nicknamed "Rochette" from a ridgeline that is half a mile (900 meters) long.

Perseverance uses a drill and a hollow coring bit at the end of its 7-foot-long (2-meter-long) robotic arm to extract samples. After coring the rock, the rover vibrated the drill bit and tube for one second, five separate times.

This procedure is called "percuss to ingest" and is meant to clear the lip of the tube of residual material, and cause the sample to slide down the tube.

Perseverance landed on an ancient lake bed called the Jezero Crater in February, on a mission to search for signs of ancient microbial life using a suite of sophisticated instruments mounted on its turret. It is also trying to better characterize the Red Planet's geology and past climate.

Eventually Nasa wants to collect samples taken by the rover in a joint

mission with the European Space Agency, sometime in the 2030s.

Its first attempt at taking a sample in August failed after the rock was too crumbly to withstand the robot's drill.

NCOC opens Kartarpur Darbar to Sikh pilgrims

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Saturday 21 Aug. allowed Sikh pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur to perform rituals in connection with the death anniversary of Baba Guru Nanak Dev Ji next month.

The NCOC meeting unanimously decided to allow Sikh pilgrims to visit Kartarpur next month under strict Covid-19 protocols.

It is worth mentioning here that due to the Delta variant, India had been in category C from May 22 till Aug 12, and special approval was required for people coming from the country, including Sikh pilgrims. However, now fully vaccinated persons with certificates will be allowed to enter Pakistan provided they show real-time polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) test reports which should not be more than 72 hours old.

Apart from this, Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) will also be conducted at airports and in case of a positive result, the individual will not be allowed to enter Pakistan. Besides, as per non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs), a maximum of 300 people will be permitted to assemble at a time at the darbar.

According to an official of the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS), Pakistan had introduced three categories to deal with coronavirus.

"Countries in category A are exempted from the mandatory Covid-19

test, travellers from areas falling in category B are required to present a negative PCR test that must be taken within 72 hours of the travel date while visitors from nations in category C are restricted and can travel only under specific NCOC guidelines," the official said.

The tourism game changer Chakdara

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) of Pakistan in its recent meeting approved three major development projects worth Rs. 339 billion. Among the projects approved is Dir Motorway, a much-needed connectivity project in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and a real tourism game changer, which will definitely boost the regional tourism and trade activities throughout the region. Apparently, this is a 29.4 km long, four-lane highway, which begins and ends in the Lower Dir district of KP, but in a larger context, the project will bring development and prosperity to the region. "The Dir Motorway, starting from Chakdara, is both part of the tourism route to the north, and will ultimately connect to Chitral, Gilgit, and transform trade with China," according to Taimur Khan Jhagra, Finance and Health Minister KP. Dir Motorway will be constructed with an estimated cost of Rs. 40 billion. The four-lane motorway will be constructed between Chakdara and Rabat town of Dir Lower. The Government of KP is sponsoring the project that will be executed by Pakhtunkhwa Highway Authority. The projects include construction of bridges, underpasses, flyovers and tunnels. Dir Motorway, which will start from Chakdara, will end at Rabat town, which is located close to the border of Upper Dir district. Upper Dir touches Chitral district, which shares borders with Gilgit Baltistan. The Government of KP wants the inclusion of Chitral-Chakdara Motorway (M-1) project in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). If approved, the project will connect Chitral, the northernmost district of KP, with Chakdara Lower Dir. The length of the proposed Motorway is 214 kilometers. The Chitral Motorway will join Swat Expressway at Chakdara to reach Islamabad-Peshawar Motorway (M1) at Karnal Sher Khan Interchange close to Rashakai Special Economic Zone.



A combo of two images taken on Sept 1 by one of the rover's navigation cameras shows a drill hole from the second sample-collection attempt.

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Ukraine stresses Nato, EU ties on independence day



Women wearing Ukraine's traditional dresses march during a military parade on Tuesday 24 August to mark the country's 30th independence.

Ukraine's president on Tuesday 24 August urged closer ties between the ex-Soviet nation and Nato and the European Union in a speech marking the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence.

Ukraine celebrated its independence day on Tuesday 24 August with a military parade and massive festivities in the capital Kiev. Opening the parade, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said that a strong Ukraine is a country that dreams ambitiously and acts decisively.

Such a country becomes Nato's Enhanced Opportunities Partner; such a country is officially supported by others when it applies to join the European Union," Zelenskyy said.

Ukraine didn't officially become independent until the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991. But like most of the 15 former Soviet republics, it declared its sovereignty immediately after the failed hard-line coup against reformist Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev.

On Aug 24, 1991, the Ukrainian parliament adopted the Act of Declaration of Independence of Ukraine, reestablishing the country's independence after more than 70 years of being part of the Soviet Union. Less than four months later, Boris Yeltsin and leaders of other Soviet republics declared the Soviet Union defunct and Gorbachev stepped down on Dec 25, 1991.

The 30th anniversary of Ukraine's independence came as the country is locked in a bitter tug-of-war with Russia, which in 2014 annexed Crimea and has since been backing a separatist insurgency in eastern Ukraine, and Kiev's efforts to shore up support among Western nations.

Guru Nanak's followers can observe rituals at Swaminarayan temple, rules SHC

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday 25 August ruled that there would be no restriction on the followers of Baba Guru Nanak to carry out their religious rituals at the allocated premises in the Swaminarayan temple.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Irfan Saadat Khan, also ordered that the affairs of the Guru Nanak Darbar would be run/regulated by a nine-member managing committee already appointed by the court.

The court said it had been agreed that no special religious functions/gatherings in the Guru Nanak Darbar would be carried out without taking prior permission from the managing committee.

The bench passed these directives while disposing of a petition filed by the Swaminarayan Temple Residents' Welfare Association against some members of the trust's managing committee and provincial authorities concerned.

The court was informed that the trust was set up for the purpose of promotion and preaching of the Swaminarayan sect that follows the teachings of its founder Shri Swaminarayan, and facilitate and accommodate its followers known as

Satsangis. It was further informed that the trust was set up to manage properties of the Swaminarayan sect located on MA Jinnah Road in Karachi.

The court was informed that in 1994 the SHC had appointed a nine-member committee to manage the Swaminarayan Temple Estate Trust.

However, some members of the managing committee, who were not followers of the Swaminarayan sect, had set up a shrine of Baba Guru Nanak on the premises of the trust property, the trust's counsel submitted.

Those members of the managing committee were also using the revenue generated from religious functions and events of the Swaminarayan sect, for the promotion of Baba Guru Nanak sect, in an unauthorised manner, the counsel said.

The court was asked to direct the managing committee to strictly comply with the relevant laws, rules and regulations while discharging its duties.

They also sought a direction for the managing committee to remove the structures allegedly raised or erected by the respondents in violation of the relevant laws.



This file photo shows the communal area in front of the Shri Swaminarayan temple in Karachi.



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