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Pakistan bans domestic inflight meals as a result of Omicron spread

Passengers flying domestically in Pakistan will not be served inflight meals from January 17 as part of protocols to contain COVID spread. The decision was announced by Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) on Saturday 15 Jan. following a dramatic surge of COVID infections in the country.



Pakistan's aviation authority announced a meal ban on all domestic flights amid a COVID surge.

No meals on domestic flights

The recent surge in COVID cases in Pakistan has led the country's COVID-19 task force to take action to contain the spread of the virus. On Saturday 15 Jan., the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) met with various stakeholders and spoke about the COVID situation in the country.

Among other directives, it was decided that a complete ban on inflight snacks and meals would be implemented from January 17. The decision was conveyed to the aviation authority, which then announced it on its Twitter account. The CAA was also directed to ensure that other standard operating procedures such as wearing masks were followed at all airports in the country.

Planning Minister Asad Umar had been keeping a close eye on the Omicron situation in Pakistan and warned about a rapid surge in cases. Umar, who is also the NCOC chief, stressed the importance of following COVID protocols, among other practices, to contain the virus.

Meals in domestic flights have been banned to discourage passengers from taking off their masks while eating and minimize contact between passengers and cabin crew.

New COVID wave in Pakistan

Like the rest of the world, Pakistan, too, is battling a dramatic rise in COVID cases led by the latest Omicron variant. The latest COVID wave is the country's fifth after cases began to rise earlier this month. On Saturday, the country recorded a total of 4,286 cases in 24 hours, its

highest since August last year. As one of the measures to curb the situation, a ban on snacks and meals was put not just on flights but on all public transport.

This isn't the first time COVID has disrupted inflight services in Pakistani flights. During an infection surge in March last year, the CAA had decided to ban the serving of drinking water on domestic flights. Passengers were provided with disposable water bottles placed on their seats before boarding.

International flights not affected

Pakistan's inflight meal ban does not extend to international flights because of the longer duration of the flights. While many of its long-haul flights to Europe and the US have not yet resumed, the situation is likely to change in the coming months.

The ICAO completed its audit recently, and a letter officially declaring the satisfactory results was signed earlier this month. This paves the way for Pakistani airlines to initiate a return to Europe and the US after nearly a year and a half.



The inflight meal ban does not extend to Pakistan's international flights.



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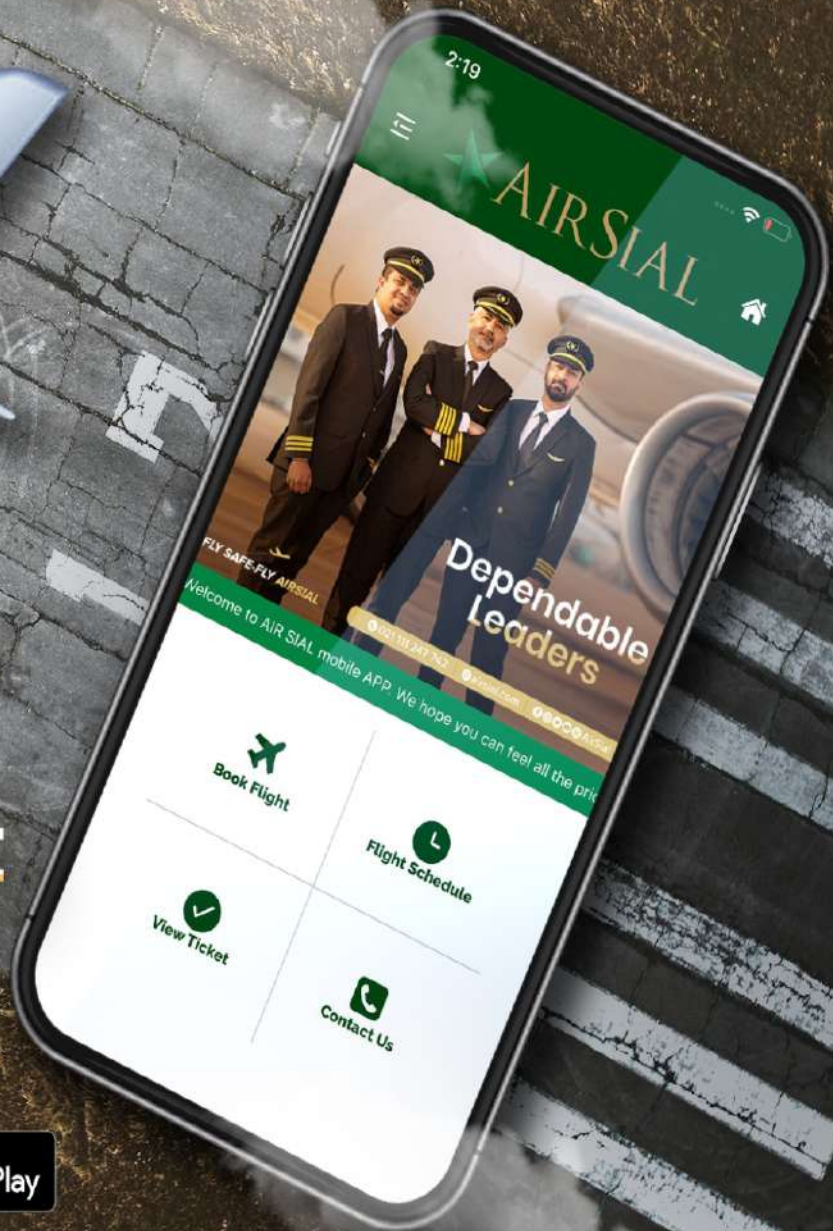
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ICAO withdraws safety concerns on Pakistan

The global aviation watchdog has cleared the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) from its significant safety concerns, paving the way for lifting restrictions on Pakistani-registered aircraft by the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In a Jan 4 letter addressed to PCAA director general Khaqan Murtaza, International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) official Denis Guindon stated that a validation committee "reviewed the actions and relevant evidence validated in Pakistan" and it determined that the action "taken by Pakistan had successfully resolved" the concerns.

The restrictions were imposed on Pakistan on Sept 18, 2020. A nine-member ICAO committee then carried out a 10-day audit in the country last year, which was concluded in early December.

The letter, a copy of which is provided to media, reads: "During the audit, the ICAO team reviewed the corrective actions taken and related evidence presented by Pakistan to address the [concerns] regarding the licensing system of the state, specifically in relation to the examinations conducted by the PCAA and by delegated or designated training organisations prior to the issuance of licences and ratings."

A CAA spokesperson told media that the authority had started contacting UK Civil Aviation Authority and the European Commission to convey the resolution of safety concerns by ICAO.

"It will be emphasised to permit operations of Pakistani-registered airlines to the UK and Europe at the earliest," he said, adding: "It is expected that the UK and EU will issue permissions on a fast-track basis."

About pilots' exams, the spokesperson said the CAA would start their examinations by the end of March followed by the issuance of licences.

In July 2020, the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) suspended the third country operator authorisation of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to operate flights in the EU member states due to safety concerns against the backdrop of the May 22, 2020 Karachi plane crash and the subsequent

damning statement of Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan that 40 per cent of Pakistani pilots had dubious licences.

The US Department of Transportation, while expressing concerns over flight safety, also revoked the special permission granted to PIA in July 2020 to operate special flights to and from the United States.

Pakistan International Airlines seeks permission to restart europe routes

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is targeting the restart of flights to Europe by March.

PIA flights to Europe were banned in 2020 by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), citing serious safety concerns following the fatal crash of a PIA Airbus A320 in Karachi. The UK Civil Aviation Authority followed suit. The US FAA also downgraded Pakistan's aviation safety status.

Pakistan aviation minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan said during a recent press conference in Islamabad that an ICAO team had cleared the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority in a safety audit conducted late last year. "PIA has applied for a resumption of European operations. We are hoping that in February or March, operations to Europe will begin again," Khan said. EASA has not indicated when the ban could be lifted.

More On Pakistan

Hong Kong Bans Flights From Eight Countries for two weeks.

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Analysis: Pakistan's room to grow.

PIA CEO Arshad Malik has told Pakistani media he anticipates the suspension will be lifted in the first quarter of this year.

According to PIA, before the ban it operated to: Barcelona (BCN); Birmingham

In December 2020, the EASA extended the ban and made it clear that the restrictions would not be lifted without the safety audit of the CAA by ICAO.

Meanwhile, CAA chief Khaqan Murtaza termed the ICAO validation a huge success that was possible because of the regulatory team.

According to Reuters, PIA issued a statement citing chief executive Arshad Malik as welcoming the ICAO conclusion as a positive development for aviation in Pakistan, which would pave the way for the resumption of PIA flights to Britain and the rest of Europe.

(BHX), London Heathrow (LHR) and Manchester (MAN) in England; Copenhagen (CPH); Milan (MXP); Oslo (OSL); and Paris de Gaulle (CDG).

Linus Bauer, MD of the Dubai-based consultancy Bauer Aviation Advisory, told the Aviation Week Network that PIA would be returning to changed market. "The planned comeback of PIA on routes between Pakistan and the UK can be described as challenging, as the market has changed with the entrance of Virgin Atlantic and British Airways and the dominance of Gulf carriers in Pakistan," he said.

After the PIA A320 crash, a scandal involving fraudulent pilot licenses emerged. In June 2020, Khan told Pakistan's parliament that 262 of the country's commercial pilots had paid others to take licensing tests in their stead.

According to PIA's website, the airline's fleet comprises 13 Airbus A320s, four ATR 42s, four ATR 72s, six Boeing 777-200ERs, two 777-200LRs and four 777-300ERs.



PIA acquires A320 flight simulator

The Pakistan International Airline (PIA) has acquired Airbus A320 flight simulator that will be used for training of more than 400 pilots, proficiency checks and will reduce the cost of training of pilots.

According to sources, a simple ceremony of acquiring the flight simulator was held in Islamabad on Monday 13 Dec. which was attended by the United Kingdom's ambassador in Pakistan, regional director of L3 company and secretary aviation.

The PIA had signed an agreement with L-3 UK Ltd to provide an A320 flight simulator for pilots' training. Currently the national flag carrier operates 11 Airbus A 320 aircraft, while that number of A320 aircraft is expected to increase to 15 by April 2022.

The usage of a simulator for Pakistani airline pilots would result in safer training and cost savings for the operators, as the airlines had to spend a significant amount of money to train their pilots overseas.

When a pilot was sent abroad for training, a representative from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) accompanied him, which cost the airline.

However, after the acquisition of a simulator by the airline, it will be able to save a large amount of money.

The multimillion-dollar of A320 simulator will also assist the PIA in imparting training to pilots from other countries. It is most likely to be installed at PIA's training centre Jinnah International Airport.

The purchase of a simulator, according to sources, will be a landmark achievement for the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA).

A senior aviation official of aviation said that flight simulators were so accurate that a student pilot can learn to fly from scratch in the virtual world.

It makes the training of pilots efficient and affordable and important to train student pilots.

He said that training pilots is costly and time consuming, so a simulator would be an efficient and affordable solution to the looming pilot shortage and training.

PIA begins international flight operations from Quetta, Sialkot



Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) began its international flight operations from Quetta and Sialkot on Monday 3 Jan.

The first Sialkot-Dubai flight, with 165 passengers on board, took off from the Sialkot International Airport on Sunday night 2 Jan.

A PIA spokesman said that a simple ceremony was held at the Sialkot International Airport for the PK179. The national flag carrier is operating twice a week flights from Sialkot to Dubai.

On the other hand, the Quetta-Dubai flight PK232 took off from Karachi due to heavy rains and snowfall in Quetta.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, National Assembly Deputy Speaker Qasim Khan Suri said that the federal government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan was paying special attention to the development of the province, which was ignored by the past governments.

The flight operation from Quetta to Dubai was a longstanding demand of the people, he said, adding that the first right over the resources of Balochistan was of the people of the province.

Mr Suri stressed that the federation had no intention of usurping the rights of anyone, including Balochistan. "Resources belong to Balochistan and it is the right of the people of the province to be benefited first," he said, adding that developing the province was the top priority of the incumbent government.

On the Reko Diq gold and copper mine, he said an in-camera briefing of Balochistan Assembly members on the

mine was a good step by the provincial government. PIA Balochistan General Manager Bilal Afzal and other company officials and business leaders attended the inaugural ceremony.

Sialkot-Dubai flight

The PIA inaugural ceremony in Sialkot was attended by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Usman Dar, Punjab's Minister of Special Education Chaudhry Ikhlaq and Sialkot International Airport chairman Khawaja Masood.

Passengers were welcomed and seen off by guests along with PIA's General Manager of Passenger Sales, Mohammad Shafique; Deputy GM of Passenger Sales, Ahmed Faraz, and other airline officials. A cake-cutting ceremony was also held at the airport and passengers were presented with flowers, the PIA spokesman said.

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The additional baggage allowance is only applicable on gulf Air operated flights and not on codeshare flights.

PM inaugurates Skardu International Airport

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday 16 Dec. inaugurated the Skardu International Airport and Jaglot-Skardu road during a day-long visit to the region.

The airport in Skardu was previously only operational for domestic flights. However, its status was elevated on December 2 as it began welcoming international flights as well.

While addressing a large crowd at Municipal Stadium Skardu, the prime minister said the facility's elevation to an international airport would bring untold changes for the locals.

The premier said that GB had the "most beautiful mountain scenery in the world" but lamented that people did not know enough about it because travel was difficult.

He predicted that tourists, including overseas Pakistanis and domestic tourists, would arrive in large numbers after the upgrade to the airport as well as the road.

"Tourism can become a big asset of Pakistan," he said, adding that if Switzerland could generate \$70 billion from tourism then Pakistan could also generate substantial income from tourism all year long. "We can make at least \$30-\$40 billion from tourism just in GB," he said.

The prime minister also highlighted religious tourism and the potential of untapped coastal belt. "We have not taken benefit of the blessings that God has granted us," he said.

He added the locals would benefit the most from the surge in tourism as they would no longer have to venture far to seek jobs. Instead, people would come to their area to find jobs, he said.

Explaining his vision, the prime minister said that no country can truly develop until it elevates its poor and improves its backward and neglected areas.

"It is my [desire] that by the time our five years are complete, the life in backward areas is better and the lives of people below the poverty line are improved."

According to the Prime Minister's Office, during his Skardu visit, PM Imran was also scheduled to preside over various meetings on multiple

development schemes and review the one-year performance of the Gilgit-Baltistan government.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the National Highway Authority said the road was a gift for the locals by the democratic government. He added that the 167-kilometre road is the "main strategic road" that connects GB with the Karakoram Highway at Jaglot.

Fresh guidelines issued for inbound airline passengers

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) on Tuesday 4 Jan. issued fresh guidelines for inbound airline passengers, abolishing categories 'B' and 'C' with immediate effect.

However, vaccination will be mandatory for all inbound passengers of over 15 years of age with a negative PCR report before boarding (maximum 48 hours old).

According to the guidelines, 100 per cent Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) will be mandatory for all the passengers arriving from Europe and minimum 50pc for the passengers coming from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

According to PCAA, the countries included in the category 'A' are: Australia, Bhutan, China, Fiji, Japan, Kazakhstan, Laos, Mongolia, Mauritania, Morocco, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Trinidad and Tobago and Vietnam.

The countries included in the category 'C' are: South Africa, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Comoros, Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Chile, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Malawi, Seychelles, Somalia, Suriname, Uruguay, Venezuela and India.

The countries not specified in categories 'A' and 'C' fall in the category 'B'.

A spokesman for the PCAA said that the RAT test had been made mandatory for the passengers arriving from Europe because of emerging cases of Omicron, whereas such cases were less reported in the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

NCOC allows Pakistanis to return from Category C countries

The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Tuesday 14 Dec. allowed all Pakistanis stranded in Category C countries to return to the country until December 31 without requiring any exemption.

Category C is a list of countries from which travel is banned, except under certain conditions. The countries currently on the list are Croatia, Hungary, Netherlands, Ukraine, Ireland, Slovenia, Vietnam, Poland, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Lesotho, Eswatini, Mozambique, Botswana and Namibia.

The statement from the NCOC, the country's nerve centre for Covid-19 response, said that individuals with a valid National Identity Card for Overseas Pakistanis or Pakistan Origin Card would be allowed to return as well.

It added that proof of vaccination and a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test report maximum 48 hours old would be required prior to boarding. Mandatory quarantine will also remain in place for travellers from countries struck by the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

The statement also noted that since vaccinations for ages 15 to 18 had not started in some countries, the condition of mandatory full vaccination for that age group was being delayed to January 31 from Dec 1.

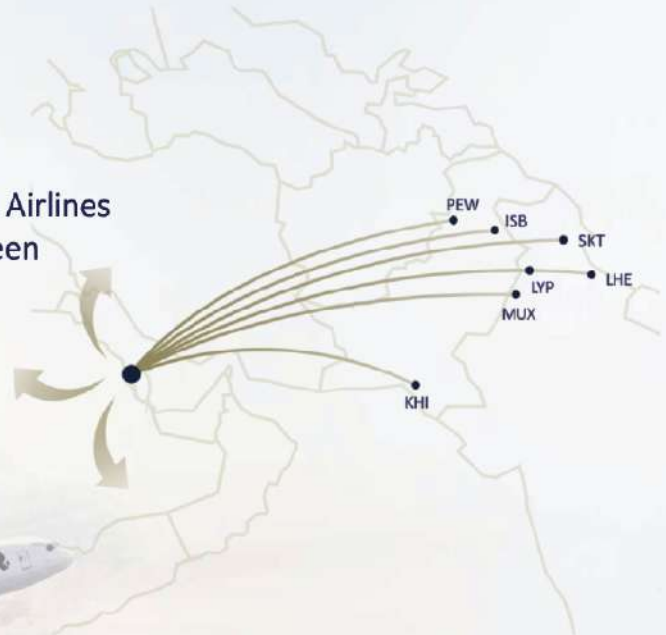
Last days, the NCOC had added nine more countries to Category C while reviewing the global Covid-19 situation amid Omicron's spread. It had allowed stranded Pakistanis to return till Dec 15.

The review had come after a travel ban was placed on six countries and Hong Kong in November due to the new strain.

Omicron has been classified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a "highly transmissible" variant the same category that includes the predominant Delta variant.



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EU ban on PIA flights may be lifted soon

The ban imposed by the European Union on Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight operations is expected to be lifted soon, as the International Civil Aviation Organisation's (ICAO) validation committee has cleared a safety audit report after which the Significant Safety Concerns (SSC) will be gradually eased out.

“Yes, the ICAO has informed the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) that the safety audit conducted by its team recently was presented before its validation committee, which cleared it after which the SSC will be removed and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency will lift the ban,” CAA Director General Khaqan Murtaza told the participants of a meeting of the Senate Sub-Committee on Aviation on Wednesday 22 Dec.

He further said that until the CAA received the approval, the PIA would not be able to resume flight operations to the EU.

An ICAO audit team that had visited Pakistan to undertake a safety audit of the aviation authority completed the process on Dec 10; however, its final report will be released in a few weeks and shared publicly.

The meeting of the sub-committee on aviation was held at Parliament Lodges, Islamabad on Wednesday 22 Dec. and convened by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla. It was attended by MNA Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Senator Afnanullah Khan, Senator Aon Abbas, the aviation secretary, Mr Murtaza and other relevant persons.

Mr Abbasi, who was especially invited to the meeting, called for a review of and discussion on amendments to the Civil Aviation Rules of 1994 and National Aviation Policy of 2019.

He said the current aviation policy had nothing to do with aviation as the entire draft lacked points about engineering and how the CAA supported Regular Public Transport (RPT) operations, which was a basic aspect of aviation.

The former prime minister said the CAA land was most expensive in the country due to which it was difficult to install a simulator for training pilots as compared to the UAE where its cost was half of that in Pakistan. He also suggested enhancing the qualification level of new pilots to graduation and that they must possess some experience. He also suggested a separate chapter about RPT in the aviation policy, if the sector was to grow.

The participants of the meeting also discussed the shortcomings in the existing policy and proposed some suggestions regarding customs duties on aircraft parts and reducing the very high operational cost. The unavailability of qualified engineers was also discussed in the

meeting.

The CAA director general said aviation policies were being devised, but hardly implemented.

Senator Mandviwalla suggested including facilities for aircrafts on ground and also discussed the issue of the Airport Security Force that, he said, claims to lack security gadgets and other equipment supposed to be provided by the CAA.

Freight train launched to link Istanbul with Tehran, Islamabad

A freight train service was inaugurated on Tuesday 21 Dec. with an aim to boost trade between Pakistan, Iran and Turkey.

Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati, along with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, inaugurated the Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul (ITI) freight train at Margalla railway station. Ambassadors of Turkey, Iran, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were also present on the occasion.

The freight train service will play a vital role in improving the economies and lives of citizens of ECO member states by maximising economic efficiency and reducing the cost of doing business.

Railways Minister Swati highlighted the importance of ITI freight train and said this service would open doors for business and connectivity in the region. “The passenger train service will also start soon,” he said, adding: “We have opened our trade routes and it is a great opportunity for importers and exporters.”

Terming the ITI freight train an important milestone in Pakistan's history, the minister said that business-to-business contact among the business community would further enhance through this train. He said the service would further strengthen relations between the three countries.

Razak Dawood said regional connectivity was one of very important pillars of Pakistan's strategic trade policy framework and it was heartening to witness the resumption of operations of ITI freight train.

Foreign Minister Qureshi appreciated the resumption of ITI freight train and said the service would play an important role in

regional connectivity and promoting economic activity in the region.

Turkish Ambassador Mustafa Yurdakul expressed the hope that the train service would not stop at Istanbul only but go all the way to Europe which would benefit all regional countries as the economies bounced back in the post-Covid era.

According to Pakistan Railways, the first train from Islamabad to Istanbul was inaugurated on August 14, 2009. Similarly, the first train from Istanbul reached the Islamabad dry port on August 13, 2010.

So far eight trains have been dispatched from Pakistan to Turkey, with the last leaving the Lahore dry port on November 5, 2011. Since the launch of the service in 2009, Turkey has sent six trains to Pakistan, with the last one reaching here on December 9, 2011.

ITI freight train will be operated regularly on Tuesday 21 Dec. of every week. The freight train had nine wagons initially, said a senior railway official.

As per present arrangement to start the train and the schedule agreed jointly by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, the running time between Drence-Kapikoy (Istanbul) and Zahidan-Tabraiz (Iran) will be 90 hours each. From Zahidan to Islamabad, the train would take 135.5 hours.



The Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul freight train stands at Margalla Railway Station in the federal capital during the inauguration ceremony.

Emirates and Air New Zealand top world's safest airline list for 2022

Now that travel numbers are slowly returning to pre-COVID-19 levels and countries are gradually easing travel restrictions, it's time to see which airlines are the safest to fly in 2022.

Airline safety and product review website AirlineRatings.com has created its annual list of the world's safest airlines with Air New Zealand coming out on top.

In its deliberation, AirlineRatings had the following consideration in choosing the safest airline for the year: airline's crash over five years and serious incident record over two years, audits from aviation's governing and industry bodies, government audits, industry-leading safety initiatives, fleet age, and COVID-19 safety protocols.

"Air New Zealand is a stand-out airline with a firm focus on safety and its customers and over the past 18 months, COVID-19 has brought another new dimension to the challenges the industry faces," Airlineratings.com Editor-in-Chief Geoffrey Thomas said.

"Air New Zealand has excelled across the broad safety spectrum never losing sight of the smallest detail while caring for its flight crews who have worked under significant stress."

In selecting Air New Zealand as the world's safest airline for 2022, AirlineRatings noted that the carrier operates in some of the most challenging weather conditions and remote environments. Air New Zealand is also leading the way with technical innovation and has a very young fleet with an average age of just 6.8 years.

"Air New Zealand is very humbled to

receive this recognition, particularly given the high safety standards the airline industry holds itself to. We're in good company and a big congratulations to all airlines on the list," Air New Zealand's chief executive Greg Foran said.

"The Air New Zealand promise is to take manaaki (care) further. To do that we have to take our approach to safety further. For us, it's not about safety first it's about safety always. We want everyone to go home safely every day."

Iraqi Airways receives its first Airbus A220

Iraqi Airways is preparing to take delivery of its first Airbus A220 aircraft, which left the A220 production facility at Mirabel Airport (YMX), Canada. This is the first out of five A220s headed to the carrier.

Iraqi Airways' A220-300 jet, registered as YI-ARE, is on its way to its new home at Baghdad International Airport (BGW). According to Flightradar24.com, the aircraft currently stands at Manchester Airport (MAN), the United Kingdom.

Iraq's flag carrier will become one of the first A220 operators in the Middle East.

Iraqi Airways' A220-300 is capable of accommodating up to 132 passengers in a two-class seating: 12 in business class and 120 in economy class.

The Airbus A220 family aircraft, including the A220-100 and A220-300 variants, is tailored to serve the 100-150 seat market. The A220-100 has a maximum range of 6,390 kilometers and the A220-300 has 6,297 kilometers. The aircraft family has only one engine option, Pratt & Whitney's latest-generation PW1500G geared turbofan engine.

According to Airbus, over 180 Airbus A220s have been delivered to 13 customers across the world as of November 2021.



France to lift ban on UK travellers



The French government's official spokesman, Gabriel Attal, said after a weekly cabinet meeting on Wednesday 12 Jan. that Paris would ease travel restrictions from the UK to France in the next few days.

"I confirm that a further easing of the restrictions with the UK will be announced in the coming days," Gabriel Attal told reporters. "Work is continuing. I hope that the announcement can be made by the end of the week."

Vaccinated travellers will no longer need a compelling reason to enter France, and will not have to self-isolate when they arrive.

France dramatically tightened restrictions on travel from and to Britain on 18 December in an attempt to curb the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, effectively banning all non-essential journeys by requiring vaccinated and unvaccinated travellers to show a "compelling reason" for travel.

The rule, which effectively limited entry from the UK to France and EU nationals and British citizens resident in France, was later eased to allow people in "for the pursuit of an economic activity requiring an on-site presence that cannot be postponed."

The rules also require all arrivals from the UK to present a negative PCR or antigen test taken within the previous 24 hours, rather than 48 hours, and to quarantine in France for seven days reduced to 48 hours if they can produce a new negative test.

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Sabre Safe Point adds travel restriction tracking



Sabre announced the expansion of SafePoint, a travel risk management product, to include global travel restriction tracking. While the solution is not limited to a singular event, it provides information regarding the spread of COVID-19 and new variants as well as destination entry restrictions imposed by countries including masks, vaccinations, health documentation and quarantine requirements.

SafePoint monitors world events in near real-time, 24/7. It utilises hundreds of data sources for events and restrictions that may impact travel arrangements and/or traveler safety. It helps Sabre's travel agencies and corporate customers make more informed decisions and enhance the safety of their travelers by alerting them to restrictions that may impact their itinerary. Travelers will then be able to use the information to take action at any stage of their trip.

"As travel rebounds, we believe a duty-of-care and crisis alerting solution is imperative to any travel business, especially in a world where travel advisories can change rapidly. SafePoint is designed to keep travelers and corporate travel managers apprised of critical events in a fast-moving world," said Saunvit Pandya, senior director of Product Management, Sabre. "We are delighted to work with customers to provide them duty-of-care products to better service their travelers".

"In the current travel landscape, having instant access to travel restriction information is critical to making the right travel-related decisions. Sabre's SafePoint provides us timely information to help us better serve our customers. It is a trusted source of information from a trusted partner," said Anna McGurk, Operations Director, Norad Travel UK.

Strange behaviour of BA passenger accused of assaulting flight attendants



A court has heard of the bizarre antics of a British Airways passenger accused of assaulting five flight attendants.

William Clegg, 31, is accused of assault during a BA flight from San Jose, CA to Heathrow in August 2019.

The jury was told that Clegg suffered from epilepsy and insomnia, and consumed alcohol with his medication.

"This led to him acting bizarrely," the prosecutor said.

"He was walking up and down the flight in business class while shouting. He went to the galley and started throwing chocolate bars."

He then tried to head-butt a flight attendant and assaulted others.

Clegg, from Notting Hill, London, denies the five counts of assault by beating.

PIA looking to save Rs8bn by reducing number of employees

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) plans to bring down its ratio of employees per aircraft in a bid to save billions over the coming year.

The national flag carrier has cut the number of personnel with access to planes from 550 to 260, as part of ongoing reforms.

A PIA spokesperson said that the

airline would aim to bring this number down to 220 per aircraft this year.

According to PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik, the reduction in the number of employees will save the airline up to Rs 8 billion per year, adding that the restructuring process would not compromise their productivity and standards.

According to the spokesperson, this move would bring the airline at par with international aviation standards.

The reduction in workforce was down to the initiation of the Voluntary Separation Scheme (VSS), as well as the weeding out of fake degree holders and employees terminated on disciplinary grounds.

While 1,900 employees opted for VSS, 837 individuals were terminated for possessing fake degrees and 1,100 on disciplinary grounds, the spokesperson said. In 2020, PIA had set itself a target of reducing the number of employees to 7,508,000 for 29 aircraft over half of the total strength through the VSS programme and a segregation of core and non-core functions.

In a report submitted before the Supreme Court, the management had stated that it had 14,500 employees for a fleet of 29 planes, compared to 31,000 employees working for a fleet of 329 aircraft at Turkish Airlines.

According to figures of aircraft-to-employees ratio submitted to the court at that time, Qatar Airways had 46,000 employees for a fleet of 240 aircraft, Emirates had 62,356 employees for 269 aircraft, Etihad Airways employed 21,530 people for 102 aircraft while PIA had 14,500 personnel for 29 aircraft.

The PIA CEO further said that the airline also planned to induct the latest fuel-efficient aircraft in its fleet in the coming years, hoping that they would increase the airline's productivity and efficiency.

During a recent press conference, Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan had said that while the Covid-19 pandemic had taken its toll on airlines across the globe, PIA had increased its revenue and decreased operational expenditures

He said PIA had inducted two new A320 aircraft in its fleet last year and four new A320s would be added to the fleet in mid-2022.

He had also revealed that six planes, including two 777s and four A320s, whose leases were set to expire, have been reacquired on ownership basis.

World's largest carrier American Airlines returns to Sydney

American Airlines has resumed operations in Australia for the first time since August, with the first LA-Sydney flight touching down on Thursday 6 Jan. morning.

Flight AA73 departed from LAX at 11:02pm on Tuesday, 4 January local time, as the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner began its 14.5-hour journey across the Pacific Ocean for the first time in 128 days.

The aircraft, registration N835AN, then touched down at Sydney Kingsford Smith International slightly ahead of schedule, at 8:40am on Thursday 6 Jan.

The return leg, flight AA72 from Sydney to LAX, departed Sydney at 11:43am, and is expected to land in California around 5:40am, also on Thursday 6 January.

The airline will maintain a schedule of one return service between LAX and Sydney scheduled per day for now.

The carrier, considered the world's largest in both passenger carriage and fleet size, pulled out of the Australian market entirely at the end of August, after the Australian government slashed arrival caps by half, in order to gain control of its then-raging COVID-19 outbreak.

PROMOTED CONTENT

In July, when American made the call to halt operations into its sole Australian destination, Sydney, the airline said it was forced to send empty or near-empty planes across the Pacific in order to meet changing Australian health guidelines.

"On certain days in July and August, the Australian government has advised that we're not able to transport customers on the route due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic," an American spokeswoman said at the time.

The airline later confirmed it would suspend all Australian flights for at least two months, from 1 September until 31 October, "due to the ongoing travel restrictions surrounding the coronavirus".

Give the gift of aviation this Christmas

Give the perfect stocking filler to an aviator and sign them up to the Australian Aviation digital and print magazine for high-quality news and features.

Then, in September, the airline placed its LAX-Sydney route back on the schedule for 6 January and chose not to pull this date forward.

However, American customers have been able to travel to and from Australia via its codeshare agreement with Qantas.

The return of American Airlines to Australian shores highlights the increasing confidence of foreign airlines in the Australian market, despite the fact that currently, tourists are not yet being welcomed.

It comes after numerous warnings that foreign airlines may opt not to return to Australia in the short-to-medium term, given the uncertainty posed by the confusing and ever-changing nature of travel restrictions.

In September, the Australian Airports Association (AAA) flagged serious concerns over the industry's inability to adequately prepare for the restart of international flights, given that airlines need to prepare schedules well in advance.

"Some international carriers are either already drawing down capacity or preparing to withdraw from Australian ports altogether," the association said, noting this could have a "significant" impact on Australia's reopening plans.

"Given the aviation industry has long [six to 12 months] lead times for carriers and airports to re-establish international routes, significant planning will need to occur now to ensure airports and airlines are ready."

AAA chief executive James Goodwin said, "If [airlines] don't know what the rules or protocols will be for Australia eight or nine months from now, we could lose them for 2022. Then we're looking at 2023."

"The reality is, when we are ready to open up, we may not have as many airlines as we were used to. We may find airfares will be more expensive and we may find we have difficulty getting tourists into Australia."

Aeroflot introduces new inflight entertainment programme concept

Aeroflot has introduced a new concept of its multimedia inflight entertainment (IFE) programme with an increased variety of choices and frequency of content catalogue update.

From January 2022, at least 60 Russian and international film premieres and 40 new movie releases with an IMDb rating of 6 and up will be added to the IFE monthly. About half of most recent film releases will be supplied by the Hollywood studios and biggest rights holders. This serves as a guarantee of high quality, premium level and relevance of content. Aeroflot passengers will be among the first to see the best and most anticipated new films.

The IFE system will soon feature new trending genres: newms (short educational animated videos), podcasts, video interviews with celebs. The selection of award-winning movies and array of festival films available to passengers will expand. The catalogue section of Russian and Soviet films will be enhanced. Passengers with disabilities will be offered a wider choice of content with captions and audio descriptions.

The IFE system will deliver at least 220 movies and 200 episodes of TV series and shows. A new catalogue rubricator enhanced with an intuitive search function currently developed will improve usability for travellers.

Aeroflot's IFE system is a cutting-edge multimedia portal containing about 5,000 items of video, audio, educational,

infotainment and game content. Almost all Western-built aircraft in the airline's fleet are equipped with IFE system. IFE programme is available in all classes of service on Airbus A350, Airbus A330, Boeing 777, Boeing 737, Airbus A320/A321NEO and most of Airbus A320/A321 aircraft.



CAPA World Aviation Summit headed to Gibraltar

Gibraltar has been confirmed as host the CAPA World Aviation Summit in December.

Returning after three years of absence due to the coronavirus pandemic, the two-day summit will draw hundreds of aviation and travel representatives from around the world, supported with a live stream of the event available to those unable to attend in-person.

CAPA content and marketing director, Marco Navarra, said: "We enjoyed our first foray back into in-person events at the end of 2021 and it's clear that nothing can truly replace the buzz inside a CAPA Summit room created by hundreds of travel industry representatives connecting face-to-face, so we are eager to continue to deliver in-person events in this new year."

With the world still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic, the summit will tap into the post Covid-19 aviation industry and address the latest developments, challenges and strategic issues.

Gibraltar minister for commercial aviation, Vijay Daryanani, said: "I am delighted to see the CAPA World Aviation Summit being held in Gibraltar.

"This is an extremely prestigious event in the world's aviation calendar.

"We will see the top airline executives visiting Gibraltar and this will certainly put our brand in the upper echelons of this industry.

"I look forward to welcoming delegates from all over the world and working with CAPA to make this summit a huge success."



December was aviation's top month in 2021 despite Omicron

Despite the rapid spread of the Omicron variant around the world throughout the last month and a half, the aviation industry experienced its busiest month of the year in December 2021. And while tens of thousands of flights were canceled, data provided by Cirium showed that 2.43 million flights took place worldwide.

The spread of Omicron resulted in thousands of flight cancellations, either from government precautions or airline staffing shortages. However, the industry's recovery has been swift over the course of 2021.

The best month of 2021

Cirium data for flight traffic showed that December was the best month for global air travel in 2021. This achievement consisted of 2.43 million flights taking place.

The fact that the end of December experienced significant headwinds is a testament to how much the public still wants to travel- and that governments around the world are allowing it to happen. Of course, during normal times, December is naturally a busy month for air travel, given the holiday season for much of the world.

Headwinds primarily consisted of Omicron-related flight cancellations. Indeed, between December 24th, 2021, and January 3rd, 2022, 59,240 flights were canceled.

United Airlines was one of the hardest hit by the crew shortages. Photo: Vincenzo Pace | Simple Flying

Record flights, record cancellations

December was the best month for flights in 2021. However, it was also the worst December in the past decade in terms of flight cancellations. This was in part due to airlines facing operational challenges as much of their workforce was

forced to stay home due to positive test results. Extreme winter weather across the United States and Canada was also to blame for the cancellation of thousands of flights.

Indeed, when comparing December 2021 to "Decembers" of previous years, it

experienced six times more cancellations than in 2019 and two and half times more than 2020. January 2022 might be on track to set a similar record for "worst Januarys." That's because 20,500 flights were canceled in the first three days of the new year alone.

Southwest Airlines canceled all of its Chicago flights (both O'Hare and Midway) across January 1st and 2nd due to extreme winter weather. Photo: Southwest Airlines

The big four US airlines American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Southwest Airlines, and United Airlines collectively canceled 7,040 flights between December 24th and January 3rd.

Other standout stats of 2021

Looking at all flights in 2021, US heavyweight American Airlines operated the most flights over the course of the year at around 1,850,050. Despite this achievement, it wasn't an American Airlines hub that took the title of the busiest airport. Instead, it was Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport crowned as 2021's most active global airport having had 336,890 departing flights over the course of the year. The major Delta Air Lines hub also ranked 15th in the Top 20 Global Airports for on-time performance.

Atlanta's success was due to its large number of domestic services. However, when considering international flights alone, it was KLM hub Amsterdam Schiphol that was the busiest airport in 2021. The Dutch airport had a total of 123,070 departing flights.

With Omicron spreading so quickly and health agencies like the US CDC shortening self-isolation periods for those who test positive, it would appear that the world is quickly becoming accustomed to living with COVID-19 while still making efforts to "return to normal."



Amsterdam Schiphol was the busiest airport for international flights in 2021



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First flight of Cham Wings Airlines lands in Karachi



Another international airline has started its operations for Pakistan and its first flight landed at Karachi's Quaid-i-Azam International Airport on Wednesday 15 Dec.

The plane was presented a water salute after landing at the Karachi Airport at 3:00 pm.

Cham Wings Airlines is a private Syrian airline with its head office in Damascus. The company slogan is Fly Beyond The Limits.

At the start the Cham Wings Airlines will operate a weekly flight between Damascus and Karachi.

The airline, however, has plans to also start flights from Islamabad and Lahore.

Teenaged pilot takes a step closer to fly solo around the globe

Teenager Zara Rutherford, bidding to become the youngest woman to fly solo around the globe, recalled the challenges involved in crossing a deserted and icebound Siberia on Wednesday 22 Dec. after landing in Jakarta.

The 19-year-old Belgian-British pilot, who left Belgium in August, hopes to complete her 51,000-kilometre (32,000 mile) trip across five continents and 52 countries by mid-January 2022. The toughest leg so far was flying across northern Russia, she told reporters in the Indonesian capital, because if anything went wrong, help in sub-zero temperatures would likely be hours away.

"If for any reason the engine stops I think I could survive. I could either land on the land or (use) the parachute or ditch in the water. I'll be ok," she said.

"The problem is if I'm in minus 35 degree Celsius, once I'm on the ground and I'm three hours away from the closest human, ...I actually don't know how long I can survive."

Khaqan wants airports declared duty-free zones

Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi recently proposed to declare the country's airports as duty-free zones, similar to those in Dubai, so that operators could import aircraft components and keep them in the airport area.

Attending a meeting of the Senate's subcommittee on aviation as a special invitee, Mr Abbasi said the world was changing and 'we have to simplify things in order to compete with the world, and not to make things more difficult.

The meeting, chaired by Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, reviewed and discussed amendments to the Civil Aviation Rules 1994 and National Aviation Policy 2019.

The committee was informed by the RPT operators that the airlines had to face a delay of two to three years in getting fresh licences for domestic and international flights.

The CAA explained to the committee that fresh licences for domestic and international flights were approved by the federal cabinet and the delay was due to clearance from security agencies. enactor Afnan Ullah Khan said these security clearance protocols were the real hindrance to the economy.

The Regular Public Transport (RPT) operators suggested that the power to issue fresh licences for domestic flights should be given to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) director general and those for international flights to the Ministry of Aviation.

The committee lamented the rules regarding renewal of licence. 'Why do we need a renewal of licence?' Mr Mandviwalla asked, terming the idea absurd. He wondered why students needed a licence approved by the CAA

whose only work was to monitor private flying schools, and not students.

Mr Abbasi wondered when the licence of an operator expired in two years how could he acquire an aircraft on lease for seven years.

Senator Aon Abbas suggested that a timeline should be also fixed for the issuance of licences which might not be exceeded from 45 to 60 days and the ministries concerned should finish their queries by that time.

The RPT operators also conveyed their concerns to the committee about the cumbersome procedure they have to go through for importing spare parts of aircraft.

Mr Mandviwalla said this issue was of prime importance and rules should be drawn to provide facilities to the RPT operators and not problems.

On the issue of private plane licence, the committee asked the CAA officials why a person needed a renewal of licence after five years. Mr Mandviwalla said the validity of the licence for private planes should be subject only to medical fitness and recency of flights.

The committee lamented the intrusion by the FAA Inspector in the simulation of pilots. Mr Mandviwalla wondered when the simulation of pilots was a facility recognised by the CAA then why do 'we need an inspection from the FAA Inspector?' The committee prohibited the fasting by pilots and directed the CAA officials to take this into consideration while amending the rules.

CAA Director General Khaqan Murtaza sought two months to prepare the draft inculcating there in all the amendments proposed by the RPT operators for further deliberations by the committee.



Tourists walk on a snow-covered road in Muree recently. A large number of people are visiting the hill station from various parts of the country to enjoy the weather. According to the Met Office, Muree has received 15 inches of snow, with more snowfall predicted during this season.

AirSial operates 1st international chartered flight



Mr. Fazal Jilani Chairman flanked by Mr. Tariq Amin COO (left), Mr. Ameen Ahsan CEO (right), also seen in the picture are Mr. Qaiser Iqbal Baryar Sr. Vice Chairman, Mr. Muhammad Umer Mir Vice Chairman AirSial and others.



AirSial crew photographed before to board on 1st international chartered flight from Lahore to Dubai



Mr. Fazal Jilani Chairman AirSial along with Mr. Ameen Ahsan CEO, Mr. Qaiser Iqbal Baryar Sr. Vice Chairman, Mr. Umer Mir Vice Chairman, Mr. Tariq Amin COO, AirSial and others cutting the cake to celebrate 1st international chartered flight from Lahore to Dubai.

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4N 5D	635 USD	582 USD	550 USD
5N 6D	720 USD	653 USD	614 USD
6N 7D	805 USD	725 USD	678 USD
7N 8D	890 USD	797 USD	741 USD
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Wizz Air Abu Dhabi turns 1: A look at the Airline's first year

Growth and expansion into new markets can be risky, especially during the uncertain times we are currently facing. However, with a solid track record of expansion in Europe, the setting up of a subsidiary carrier in the Middle East must have been well-calculated for budget airline Wizz Air. On January 15, the airline celebrated the first birthday of its Abu Dhabi subsidiary. Let's look at all that was accomplished in this period.



Wizz Air Abu Dhabi's fleet consists of just four Airbus A321neos.

37 destinations to be served using just four aircraft

In December 2021 we took a look back at how Wizz Air Abu Dhabi handled 2021. A few weeks short of a full year, the carrier had at that point served 34 destinations. Amazingly, it hasn't even been a full month and the airline has already announced further expansion with the addition of three new destinations.

The addition of service to Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), Yerevan (Armenia), and Krasnodar (Russia) from February 2022 will push Wizz Air Abu Dhabi's route network up to 37 destinations. Service to Nur-Sultan was to begin in May 2021 but this appears to have been pushed far back.

Choosing more destinations over higher frequency service, the airline is managing to operate its long list of routes using just a handful of aircraft- four Airbus A321neos to be precise. The carrier makes this work by flying to each destination two to three times per week. This is something that is less than ideal for business travelers but acceptable for leisure customers and those visiting friends and relatives.

"We are ambitious and want to continue expanding our network to encourage tourism with affordable packages for all, and delighted to be announcing an additional three new routes. After a challenging and uncertain period, we look forward to connecting people to create great memories. We are also proud to have been the latest UAE national airline to launch, creating an exciting new travel segment for the UAE and wider region." -Kees Van Schaick, Managing Director, Wizz Air Abu Dhabi

From January 2021 to January 2022

So much has been achieved since Wizz Air Abu Dhabi began operations on



Wizz Air Abu Dhabi's small stable of Airbus A321neos have seen more than their fair share of water canon salutes over the course of 2021.

January 15th, 2021. However, looking back to the airline's launch, we can see that it operated its inaugural flight from Abu Dhabi to Athens a year ago. The following month, the carrier would then launch service from Abu Dhabi to Thessaloniki- another Greek city.

Over the course of 2021, it added many destinations including Alexandria (Egypt), Athens (Greece), Baku (Azerbaijan), Bahrain, Belgrade (Serbia), Kutaisi (Georgia), Kyiv (Ukraine), Odesa (Ukraine), Sarajevo (Bosnia), Sohag (Egypt), Tel-Aviv (Israel), Tirana (Albania) and Yerevan (Armenia), among many others.

The airline's more recent route launches include service to Muscat in Oman (October 31st) and service to Moscow Vnukovo (December 15th).

What to expect in 2022

While it's difficult to predict what will take place in 2022, it's likely that Wizz Air Abu Dhabi will continue on its aggressive path of expansion across the region- something we see quite regularly with its European counterpart. India is on the airline's wish list, although this may depend on travel restrictions. Again, it's all about forging new routes and establishing new connections, even if frequencies are low.

"To encourage travel in 2022", Wizz



2022 will likely see more aggressive expansion from Wizz Air Abu Dhabi

Air Abu Dhabi is reminding its customers that the purchase of Wizz Flex will allow customers to cancel their flight up to three hours before departure for free and have 100% of the fare immediately reimbursed in airline credit. While this is an add-on, the optional feature appears to be quite affordable with the airline's website noting that the cost ranges between €5.00€36.00 (\$6.00\$42.00) per passenger per flight. Although it would be preferable if this flexibility was "built-in" to every ticket, it does seem to be a worthwhile expense- especially given the uncertainty of the global health crisis.

Have you flown with Wizz Air Abu Dhabi yet? And where do you think the carrier will fly to next? Let us know by leaving a comment.

Airlines cancel over 2,700 flights as winter storm hits US east coast



United Airlines planes are parked at their gates at O'Hare International Airport ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday in Chicago, Illinois, US.

Airlines canceled over 2,700 US flights on Sunday 16 Jan. As a winter storm combining high winds and ice was poised to hit the US East Coast over the holiday weekend.

The flights canceled by 12:30pm ET on Sunday 16 Jan. included over 2,700 entering, departing from or within the United States, according to flight tracking website FlightAware.com. Over 1,500 flights were delayed, the data showed.

American Airlines Group Inc had over 600 flight cancellations. Almost 95pc of the flights out of Charlotte Douglas International Airport in North Carolina, an American Airlines hub, were canceled, the FlightAware website showed.

American Airlines is allowing customers affected by the weather to rebook flights without a fee.

Bruce Chan, vice-president of the transportation and logistics sector at the Stifel investment bank, concurs that rates have begun to cool as air cargo enters the latest seasonal first-quarter airfreight trough, with 2021 seeing a much higher and more pronounced peak than in any of

the three previous years.

“As expected, peak season demand exacerbated [existing] supply constraints in an already congested market, leading to prices that averaged 2.5 to four times those typically experienced at this time of year prior to the pandemic,” he notes.

their 'WeQare' initiative.” said Brendan Sullivan, IATA's Global Head of Cargo.

The certification applies at Qatar Airways' Doha headquarters and the QAS Cargo Doha hub, and covers all animals (amphibians, birds, crustaceans, fish, invertebrates, mammals, or reptiles) that Qatar Airways Cargo is authorised to carry as per each respective relevant procedure.

Today, around 9% of all live animals transported globally by air, travel on board a Qatar Airways flight. The cargo airline runs a 4,200 m², air-conditioned, state-of-the-art Live Animal Centre at Hamad International Airport, Doha, which includes dedicated holding areas for animals, horse stalls, pet kennels, access to 24/7 dedicated expert animal health care services, and a large 300 m² paddock. Trained staff and pilots make every effort to ensure that the animals experience as stress-free a journey as possible, by arranging the shortest transit times from origin airport to the final destination, and adapting the relevant temperature and cabin pressure whilst on board.

Qatar Airways Cargo is awarded IATA CEIV Live Animals



Following six months of intense process and product audits, Qatar Airways Cargo has announced that its strict adherence to the highest standards and relevant regulations has been accredited CEIV Live Animals certification by IATA.

“We are the fourth airline worldwide to become CEIV Live Animals certified, and the first in the Middle East. This certification is testament to the dedication and detail that we put into transporting the many different live animals that are placed in our custody. Whether they are horses, household pets, livestock, or exotic animals transported on our scheduled and charter flights or wild animals being flown under our WeQare Rewild the Planet initiative, we go beyond the required regulatory standards, to ensure that the animals are given the utmost care and comfort for the entire duration of the journey,” Miguel Rodriguez Moreno, senior manager cargo climate control products, explains.

He continues: “The CEIV Live Animals certification depicts that our handling, infrastructure, quality management, and training framework are in line with industry standards. It highlights our compliance with the IATA Live Animal Regulations alongside the Transportation of Wildlife and Animal Welfare (TAW) Group Policy, and it shows that we have a robust supplier management system in place, allowing our principles to be implemented globally. Further, it illustrates our commitment to continuously improving

industry standards when it comes to the transportation of live animals, and we thank the IATA auditors for their constructive contribution in this regard.”

“Having Qatar Airways, one of the largest transporters of live animals, achieve CEIV Live Animals certification is a significant boost not only for the airline's customers, who can be confident that their precious cargo will arrive safely, but also the region. We congratulate them on their achievement and their pioneering efforts in the safe transportation of live animals including wild animals through

Sabre announces leadership changes to accelerate execution of its strategy



Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), the leading software and technology company that powers the global travel industry, has announced that it has appointed industry veteran Kurt Ekert President of Sabre, separating the roles of president and chief executive officer as part of the company's ongoing efforts to build a leadership team for the future of Sabre. The appointment will take effect January 3, 2022. Ekert will oversee all aspects of the company's business and technology operations, including the company's technology transformation. He will report to Sean Menke, who will continue to serve as CEO with a focus on accelerating the execution of the company's strategic plans to focus and strengthen its business, achieve its vision and deliver long-term value to its stakeholders.

Sean Menke, Sabre's chief executive officer stated, “We are thrilled to have Kurt join Sabre as President during this pivotal phase in our transformation journey. He brings extensive global operating leadership and a deep understanding of the travel technology ecosystem. Kurt's disciplined and accountable approach coupled with his understanding of what our customers need in an evolving marketplace make him an ideal individual to step into this leadership role.

Menke continued, “We firmly believe in a broad, global recovery, across both corporate and leisure travel. We are focusing our strategic efforts to capitalize on post-pandemic opportunities and unlock shareholder value all with an eye toward achieving our bold vision to create a new marketplace for personalized travel. The appointment of Kurt as President with his extensive industry experience, especially in corporate travel management and global distribution is a critical step toward achieving that goal.”

About Kurt Ekert

Ekert has recently served five years as president and CEO of Carlson Worldwide Travel (CWT). There, he engineered a

digital transformation and delivered material growth, highlighted by \$7 billion in new business wins. Ekert brings a deep background in distribution, including as Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer at Travelport Worldwide, Ltd, where he led the operational turnaround that enabled a successful IPO in 2014. He also previously held executive roles at Gulliver's Travel Associates (GTA), Orbitz Worldwide, Cendant and Continental Airlines, and multiple board roles including at eNett and Carlson Travel Inc.

Commenting on his appointment, Ekert stated, "Sabre's people and its compelling product offerings and customer relationships position the business well for the dynamic changes ahead in the travel sector. I am excited to partner with Sean and the global team to drive world-class innovation and performance."

At Sabre, Ekert will have direct responsibility for the company's travel solutions and hospitality solutions businesses, technology engineering and operations and Sabre Labs. Along with Ekert, the company's finance, legal, human resources and communications functions will report to Menke.

Dave Shirk Moving into Senior Advisory Role

The company also announced that effective January 1, 2022, Dave Shirk has elected to step down as President of Travel Solutions. Shirk will serve as a senior advisor to Menke and Ekert through 2022.

Menke continued, "The travel ecosystem looks very different than it did 20 months ago, and while it presented challenges for many, including Sabre, we believe the time has also proven valuable in other ways giving us the opportunity to accelerate our technology transformation and deliver industry-first capabilities that our customers truly value. We appreciate Dave's contributions to our achievements and his leadership over the years. We head into 2022 emboldened in our belief that Sabre will continue to be a driving force for change in travel and we remain steadfast in our commitment to helping our customers operate more efficiently, drive revenue and deliver travel experiences that benefit travelers, travel suppliers, and agencies."

PIA flight diverted twice, scaring passengers

More than 140 passengers refused to travel by a Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) Karachi-bound flight on Sunday 12 Dec. after its pilot made two attempts to continue the journey but was forced to return to Islamabad owing to a technical fault with the aircraft.

Finally, the national flag carrier's flight PK-301, an Airbus A320, took off for Karachi for the third time at around 5.30pm with only 17 passengers on board.

The passengers had an exchange of words with the crew members and a Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) provincial leader onboard, and criticised the government and the airline management for causing inconvenience to them.

Passengers were nervous and furious while the PIA staff kept insisting there was nothing wrong with the aircraft.

According to sources, Captain Amjad Malik operating the plane from Islamabad to Karachi took off at the scheduled time of 12.30pm on Sunday with 160 passengers on board, but he was forced to return after half an hour when the plane's inertial navigation system a device that can precisely guide an aircraft without any reference to the ground developed some problem.

Unconfirmed sources said that the plane had to return to Islamabad after developing "a trouble in the engine".

The captain safely landed the plane at the Islamabad International Airport, where engineers tried to rectify the problem. However, an interesting situation developed when the captain disappeared after disembarking. After some time, he was located by the airline's officials. The captain then made another attempt to take off the plane at around 4pm.

Again, the flight was diverted back to Islamabad as the fault could not be removed. It created panic among the passengers who demanded the crew members to open the doors to disembark them, as most of them were not willing to continue their journey.

At this stage, the passengers protested and had an exchange of words with the crew members and the PTI leader. They forced the crew members to open the doors to allow them to disembark.

The engineers were again called to recheck the problem, but they insisted that the issue had been rectified and the captain was in stress.

A video posted on social media showed some passengers arguing with crew members and thanking God for a safe landing. "We thanked God for blessing us with new life," said the passengers.

A spokesman for PIA, Abdullah Hafeez Khan, said the flight had landed at Islamabad airport for the second time because the captain decided to return back due to safety concerns. "We apologise for the inconvenience caused to the passengers," he said. "There is no compromise on precautionary measures."

After maintenance, the plane departed for its destination and safely landed at Jinnah International Airport at around 7.15pm.

PIA to go paperless

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) have signed a memorandum of understanding to implement an e-filing and office automation system (e-FOAS) for the national flag carrier.

The initiative allows departmental workflow automation, receipt and issuance management, e-noting and e-letter management using digital signatures, electronic record room, and meeting scheduler. The system ensures efficiency, transparency and security while reducing administrative costs. The MoU was signed by PITB Chairman Azfar Manzoor and PIA CEO retired Air Marshal Arshad Malik in a ceremony held at Arfa Software Technology Park here on Wednesday 29 Dec.

"e-FOAS will help in improving organisational efficiency through digitization of workflows leading to better communication and informed decision-making," said the PIA chief.

The PITB chairman said: "e-FOAS is playing a vital role in performance improvement through digitisation of work processes for both the public sector and semi-government organizations. It aims at strengthening the organisations by supporting prompt internal and external communication, eliminating ambiguities and miscommunication ensuring smoother workflows and greater transparency."

The PITB has also developed e-FOAS applications to access files on the go helping the management to stay connected and interactive in workflow processes. The integrated SMS and email gateways facilitate the users to send alerts and notifications instantly.

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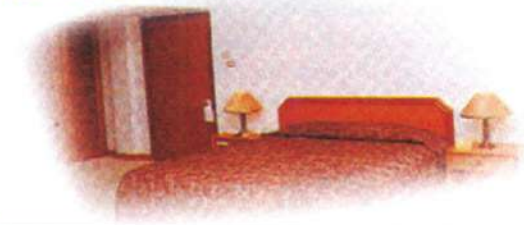
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British Airways to end Lahore flights

British Airways will stop serving Lahore on February 27th, less than a year and a half after it began, although it'll still serve Islamabad. Pakistan has been a part of BA's network on various occasions. For example, it served Islamabad from Gatwick (typically via Manchester) using B747-400s, and then non-stop from Heathrow between 2003 and 2008. It returned to the country over a decade later.

BA to halve its Pakistan network



Despite BA exiting the market, two airlines will still operate Heathrow-Lahore next summer

BA added Heathrow to Lahore on October 12th, 2020, followed two months later by Virgin Atlantic. BA's Lahore service came 16 months after it inaugurated Islamabad, although it was halted between March and August 2020. Virgin then added Heathrow-Islamabad.

BA ending Lahore comes as the carrier shifts Islamabad from Heathrow to Gatwick on March 27th, although it'll operate once-daily more often than from Heathrow. BA will use high-capacity Gatwick-based B777-200ERs, well suited to the higher volume but lower yields to Pakistan.

Heathrow to Lahore operates outbound on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays, and inbound on Mondays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. It uses 214-seat B787-8s, especially good for lower-premium routes, and has the following schedule (all times are local). It competes head-to-head with a four-weekly Virgin Atlantic offering.

BA259: Heathrow-Lahore, 18:05-06:55+1 the next day

BA258: Lahore-Heathrow, 09:05-13:00

Across all airlines (including transit),



Heathrow to Lahore (LHE) had 178,000 round-trip point-to-point passengers in 2019. That was less than Islamabad (ISB; 244,000) but more than Karachi

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The recent appeal of Pakistan

BA and Virgin's interest in Pakistan is for various reasons, including enduringly strong point-to-point demand, generally robust freight demand, and significantly recently a large and clear opportunity following Pakistan International's ban from the UK, US, and EU. In 2019, PIA had 95% of the non-stop UK-Pakistan market, according to OAG schedules data.

As the UK to Pakistan is so heavily driven by visiting friends and relatives (VFR) demand, fares are not particularly high. VFR markets are renowned for being the lowest of the low for yields, reflecting a high proportion of economy passengers. To make such high-volume markets work, airlines need low seat-mile costs. BA switching Islamabad to Gatwick indicates this in action.

According to booking data, Heathrow to Lahore had an average one-way fare of USD\$260 in 2019, excluding a 20-30% fuel surcharge (kept by the airline) and taxes. In contrast, Heathrow to Delhi is 7% farther yet achieved a 21% higher average fare from a stronger traffic mix. Of course, freight demand would somewhat boost revenue.

Pakistan International back to the UK

To circumvent the ban, PIA has wet-leased JY-JVB from Jordan Aviation. It's a 14.8-year-old A330-200 with 326 seats, and it's deployed from Islamabad to Birmingham, Heathrow, Manchester, Paris, and more.

However, following the completion of ICAO's safety audit of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority, PIA itself is expected to return to the UK on a regular and consistent basis from May. It anticipates five non-stop routes.



Despite COVID, the VFR market has remained buoyant. Along with PIA's ban and restricted markets elsewhere, this helped Virgin to launch Pakistan in late 2020.

Tourists to Murree asked to check travel advisories



Tourists travelling to Murree have been advised to keep checking traffic advisories as 50,000 vehicles was already entered the town against the capacity to park only 4,000 cars on December 27.

On the other hand, cold and dry weather is likely to persist in most parts of the country for the couple of weeks.

Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi Mohammad Ali Randhawa said tourists should get weather updates and traffic-related information by calling on 051-9269019 prior to travelling to Murree.

They should check air pressure in their vehicles and avoid stopping their cars in the middle of the road to take photographs, he said.

The deputy commissioner further said a number of vehicles, illegally parked on either side of the road reduced space available for other vehicles to move forward.

Traffic wardens under the supervision of inspectors have been deployed at all important points of the area.

All restaurants are jam packed with tourists and the demand for dry fruit also goes up as the mercury falls below the freezing point, he said, adding that the district administration and traffic police were striving hard to provide the best facilities to tourists coming to Murree.

The traffic police have also requested drivers to remain in their lanes if there was some blockage on the road to avoid traffic jams.



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Pakistan, China vow to tap full potential of Gwadar port, free zone



A screenshot from meetings of the two Joint Working Groups on Gwadar and Socio-Economic Development.

Pakistan and China resolved on December 30 Thursday to redouble efforts to tap full potential of the Gwadar port and free zone and to ensure that the local population fully benefits from the projects launched in various sectors.

Pakistani and Chinese officials held meetings of the two Joint Working Groups on Gwadar and Socio-Economic Development through video conferencing equipment, said a press release issued by the planning ministry.

One of the meetings underlined the need for finalising the Marketing and Investment Plan for Free Zone along with its implementation strategy. The meeting was informed that the plan would soon be submitted for consideration to the Cabinet Committee on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The sixth session of the Joint Working Group on Gwadar was co-chaired by secretary for planning, development and special initiatives Abdul Aziz Uqaili and Ying Xiong, the director general of the National Development and Reforms Commission of China.

The meeting reviewed the implementation of the CPEC projects in Gwadar and deliberated upon the future course of action with regard to development of Gwadar city, port and the free zone, said the press release.

Both the sides expressed satisfaction over steady progress made on various projects, including full operationalisation of the Gwadar port and its inclusion in the Afghan Transit Trade route; finalisation of the Smart Port City Master Plan; completion of the Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute; substantial progress on Eastbay Expressway;

commencement of work on New Gwadar International Airport and the Pak-China Friendship Hospital.

The meeting noted that the project called Gwadar Free Zone Phase-I had been successfully completed, while work on the bigger Phase-II, covering an area of 2,221

acres, had been started.

Representatives of several Chinese enterprises, including Zhejiang DRC, China Communication Construction Company, Zhejiang Seaport and Huazhang Technology, made presentations during the meeting on their planned investments in the Low Carbon Recycling Park, within the Gwadar Free Zone.

The Pakistani side assured the potential investors of full support and cooperation for their ventures.

The session noted that despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting travel restrictions, the projects in Gwadar were implemented at a steady pace.

The meeting also took note of various operational issues faced by the projects during the course of the year. It was noted that several issues had been resolved through intervention of relevant authorities. Both sides resolved to address any remaining issues on a priority basis.

The meeting was also apprised that the government of Pakistan was actively implementing various projects, in close collaboration with the provincial government, to ensure provision of all the necessary facilities in Gwadar. Such projects include linking Gwadar to the national electricity grid; provision of water to Gwadar city from nearby dams; establishment of the University of Gwadar and Gwadar Safe City project and certain other projects in the socio-economic domain.

Group on socioeconomic uplift

The third meeting of the Joint Working Group on Socio-Economic Development under CPEC was held under

the co-chairmanship of Mr Uqaili and Deng Boqing, chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency, to review the progress made in current projects.

The meeting also deliberated on the potential new projects that could be launched to enhance cooperation in the areas concerned. Both the sides expressed satisfaction over steady progress made with regard to the first and second batches of projects despite the Covid-19 pandemic.

The convener on the Pakistani side thanked the government and people of China for their generous support to Pakistan for tackling the Covid-19 pandemic, especially the timely supply of vaccines. He also thanked the Chinese counterparts for their support and assistance for socioeconomic development.

The convener on the Chinese side reiterated China's strong support for the people and government of Pakistan and stated that the "two iron brothers" had always helped and supported each other.

The Pakistani side shared the proposed third batch of projects for consideration of Chinese counterparts. The projects were finalised after due consultations with stakeholders, including all the provinces, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan.

It was decided that the bilateral cooperation and implementation mechanism would be enhanced by constituting sub-committees on both the sides.

Kinno exports to Kenya anticipated

Patron-in-Chief All Pakistan Fruits and Vegetable Exporters Association Waheed Ahmed has anticipated kinno exports to Kenya during the current season following the visit of Kenyan quarantine experts. 'Kenya may become a promising international market of 40,000-50,000 tonnes of Pakistani Kinno,' he said in a statement.

Quarantine experts from Kenya visited Pakistan from Jan 2-8 to inspect hot water/vapour heat treatment plants and cold sterilisation facilities. They also evaluated imports of Pakistani kinno and mango to Kenya and expressed satisfaction on the standards of quarantine facilities, standard of kinno processing plants and quarantine procedures, he added.

Brexit: One year on, new challenges

This time last year, the logistics industry was facing one of the most significant changes to its operations in working memory. Brexit had introduced fundamental changes which many feared would dampen UK trade. One year on and we are entering stage two of the phased approach, with 2022 marking the introduction of full customs control on goods moving between the EU and the UK.

On the face of it, these latest regulations should not be too arduous for importers as the new process is, in principle, reasonably straightforward; however, it adds to the list of additional declarations and increases the amount of supporting paperwork required. The biggest customs changes happened at the beginning of 2021 and we already have a year's experience to draw on, so there is at least now some familiarity with the processes.

The industry was hopeful that the GVMS system already in use for transit would facilitate the smooth transition of goods through UK ports of entry in this latest development. However ready 'we' were, the system and some shippers and carriers were not and administrative problems brought GVMS issues on day one, causing congestion, delays and an acute need for Inland Border Facilities to be utilised.

In situations such as this, the advantages of using a 4PL provider become more pronounced. With a sole provider handling the goods' preparation, documentation, and transport from door-to-door, the process is seamless and gives the customer greater visibility throughout the shipment. It also alleviates the administrative burden on the customer and, in many cases, can even expedite the shipment where the provider has Authorised Economic Operator Full (AEOF) and/or 'Clearance on Wheels' status.

Those who submit the vast majority of customs declarations are the businesses that historically process huge volumes day-in-day-out, many of whom did not use the easement process that has now ended and declared goods as they went. Those who fail to navigate the new system successfully will be businesses that have relied on the 175-day supplementary declaration window or did not train staff and scrutinise their supply chain ahead of the new year.

Priority Freight is licensed to manage both the physical movement of the goods and the customs obligations around it, dependant on the customer supplying the relevant information. To handle the new customs process, the engaged haulier needs to hold a GB EORI (Economic Operators Registration and Identification number) and be registered for GVMS. This complete end-to-end solution will quickly become the panacea for customers who entrust their shipments to experts proficient in the new procedures and able to ensure goods are in circulation quickly irrespective of rule changes.

Whatever teething problems arise, the ultimate aim should be to keep customers happy by keeping their supply chains moving. The logistics sector has a critical role in ensuring that the UK continues to trade with the EU successfully and, if we embrace the new regulations from a position of knowledge and positivity, it will ultimately benefit us all.

Afghanistan slashes levy on Pakistani kinno

The Afghan government has reduced import tax on Pakistani kinno from Rs1.3 million to Rs0.5m per container, a Commerce Ministry official said on Thursday 16 Dec.

The issue had been taken up with the Afghan government after it was raised by kinno exporters, particularly members of the Sargodha Chambers of Commerce & Industry (SCCI), the official said.

Kabul agreed to cut the levy by over 60 per cent, he added.

SCCI president Shoaib Ahmad Basra hoped that kinno export to Afghanistan will cross the 100,000 tonnes mark earning foreign exchange for the national exchequer and boosting agricultural economy.

Last season, kinno exports to Afghanistan remained at 85,000 tonnes.

There was a nominal import tax on kinno imports in Afghanistan before the Ashraf Ghani government imposed Rs3.5 per kg levy on it last season.

The Taliban government exorbitantly raised the tax to Rs33 per kg or Rs1.3m per container.

Effort under way to boost shipping fleet, says minister

Pakistan is working to boost the capacity of its shipping fleet to draw on its strategic geographical position and help tackle the effects of a global supply chain crisis, federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Haider Zaidi told media.

Pakistan has a coastline of over 1,000 kilometres and three major ports, including Karachi. It is two days sailing time from destinations in Africa and the Middle East and its western shoreline is close to the Strait of Hormuz oil chokepoint.

A surge in demand for retail goods from people stuck at home under pandemic-related lockdowns and logjams impacting the supply of container ships and boxes to transport cargo have led to bottlenecks around the globe, which are set to continue into 2022.

Mr Zaidi said the country is in negotiations 'through a public-private mechanism to create joint ventures to expand into container shipping' 'The supply chain problems are faced by everyone and Pakistanis also affected.

There are issues everywhere and this is one of the ways we are trying to deal with this longer term,' he said on a visit to London.

The state-controlled Pakistan National Shipping Corporation has a fleet of 11 ships, including oil tankers and dry bulkers, and has issued a tender for another four ships, he said.

Pakistan would initially charter space on container ships 'and test the market before we start discussion on how many (container ships) we acquire', he added.

Pakistan was also seeking to develop as a port hub for landlocked central Asian countries, Mr Zaidi said.

Pakistan & Sri Lanka to promote reciprocal tourism

The Travel Agents Association of Pakistan (TAAP) and the SriLankan Consul General H.E. Mr. Jagath Abeywarna during his visit to TAAP Head office agreed on joint efforts to promote reciprocal tourism between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The meeting was attended by Mr. Muhammad Nadeem Sharif, Chairman TAAP, Mr. Muhammad Hanif Dossani, Vice Chairman South zone, Mr. Muhammad Yahya Polani, Former Chairman TAAP and Members Executive & Travel/Tourism committee.

Before the start of meeting TAAP chairman expressed his heart felt condolence and solidarity on behalf of Travel & tourism fraternity of Pakistan on tragic incident of Sialkot where Mr. Priyantha Kumara, a Sri Lankan National was killed and brutally set on fire. One Minute silence was observed for the departed soul.

The Chairman TAAP apprised His Excellency the Consul General about the role of TAAP to promote travel and tourism industry in the country and elsewhere. He articulated since establishing diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and Pakistan, the bonds of friendship and cordiality between these two countries, propelled by understanding and cooperation. The state of bilateral relations is based on goodwill, mutual cooperation and friendship.

TAAP suggested the Excellency for effective liaison between the Travel

Agents Association of both the countries to bridge together for joint efforts for promoting tourism. TAAP emphasised on opportunities for Sri Lankan people to visit holy places of Buddhism in various parts of Pakistan.

Excellency articulated that people of Sri Lanka and Pakistan enjoy close and friendly relations nurtured by friendship, cooperation and mutual respect. There exist great potentials for promoting tourism between Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Before Covid-19 a good number of Pakistani people visited Sri Lanka and realized that efforts were required to promote Sri Lanka tourism in Pakistan. He also endeavored for effective liaison and meaningful activation of tourism between the two countries and he will forward TAAP proposals to tourism authorities of Sri Lanka.

TAAP and the Consul General agreed to arrange promotional event in Pakistan & Sri Lanka to provide an interactive forum to Pakistani and Sri Lankan Travel and Tours Operators to explore partnership opportunities and find new business prospects.

TAAP members present also participated and exchanged views and proposals with the Consul General. After the vote of thanks by TAAP and H. Excellency, the Mementos was presented to the distinguished guest H.E. Mr. Jagath Abeywarna, the Consul General for gracing the occasion.

GB announces Rs3m reward for illegal hunting information

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid Khan has announced Rs3 million reward for information about illegal wildlife hunting in the region.

He made the announcement during a cheque distribution ceremony regarding 80 per cent community share of trophy hunting fee among conservation committees representatives here at the CM Secretariat on Thursday 6 Jan.

The event was attended by GB forest and wildlife secretary Sumair Ahmed Syed, Gilgit division commissioner Waqar Mir and other relevant officials.

The chief minister appreciated the region's forest and wildlife department over efforts for wildlife protection and public participation for the purpose.

He said the GB hunting trophy programme was a model for the rest of the world.

Mr Khalid said the role of community conservation committees produced very positive results for the conservation of wildlife.

He ordered stricter punishments for poachers and said such people should be fined at least Rs2-3 million.

The chief minister said the government was formulating policies for better resource management at grassroots level in the region through public-private partnerships.

He said wildlife species and their habitats were the biggest asset for GB and a major source of its revenue.

Mr Khalid said Hungary gave away hundreds of hunting licences to protect wildlife and forest.

"We are committing the crime of do away with our wildlife and forests," he said.

The chief minister said natural resources were imperative for man's own survival. He said villagers in Astore cut down the entire local forest, so they couldn't live there anymore.

"We [government] have to protect wildlife and forest for next generations and create such an environment, where all should live without fear of natural catastrophes," he said.

Forest and wildlife secretary Sumair Syed briefed participants about the department's efforts to protect wildlife, forest and environment in the region. He said strict action was being taken against poachers and those illegally felling trees.



H.E. Jagath Abeywarna, Consul General of Sri Lanka visited TAAP Head Office Karachi. Muhammad Nadeem Sharif Chairman TAAP presenting TAAP's memento. Muhammad Hanif Dossani Vice Chairman (South), Muhammad Yahya Polani, Muhammad Khalil Raja, Fazal Mahmood Members Executive Committee, Muhammad Naveed Zameer Ex-Member Executive Committee and Amanullah Suleman Secretary General also present on the occasion.

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The seaboard Makran

For long, images of the golden, unspoiled beaches of the Makran coast had “captured the imagination of the romantically inclined” as a place where one could “actually be away from the madding crowd.”

Other images, showing hills in “crumpled disorderly piles devoid of every shred of vegetation”, would tempt the wilderness enthusiast. But reaching the coast was not easy and, hence, the place remained unexplored.

However, things are changing fast and Gwadar on the Makran coastline is poised to become a bustling seaport and industrial city, mostly because of the much-celebrated China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ever since Gwadar became easily accessible by road from Karachi, via the Makran Coastal Highway, there has been a regular inflow of tourists to the city, though foreign tourists are still to discover it.

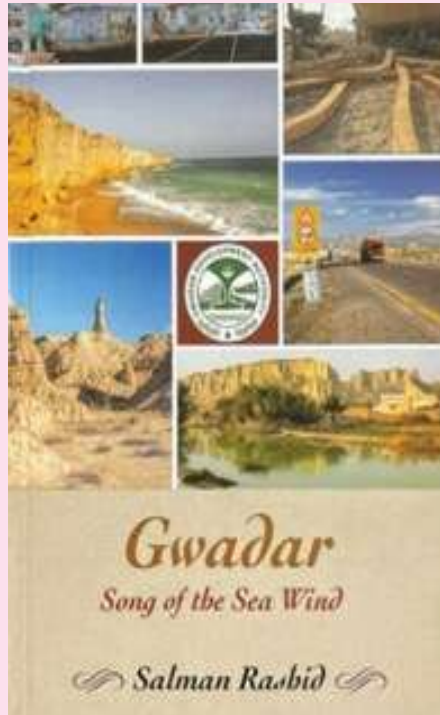
With the growing importance of, and government attention on, Gwadar in mind, Shahzeb Khan Kakar, Director General of the Gwadar Development Authority (GDA), came up with the idea of preparing a document that presents an introduction to Gwadar and its promise of being a city of the 21st century. Well-known travel writer and fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, Salman Rashid, undertook the task of writing the book.

Salman Rashid's lovingly written and beautifully produced treatise is a perfect travel companion to those who wish to visit Gwadar

The book, *Gwadar: Song of the Sea Wind*, tells the story of not only Gwadar, but the entire coast from Sonmiani all the way to the last outpost Jivani, about 60 kilometres from Gwadar in the east and 115km from the Iranian port of Chabahar in the west.

Rashid chose to follow the route taken by Nearchus, a general in Alexander the Great's army during his invasion of India. On retreat from India, Nearchus commanded a fleet of ships and war galleys and sailed to the Indian Ocean for the westward journey to Babylon from the Makran coast.

The book uncovers the history as well as the geographical details of the Makran coast in an engaging manner. Readers also learn about the origins of the names of the places when the Greeks



travelled through, as Rashid has used the nomenclature of the Greeks, those given locally in the Baloch and Persian languages, and corresponding names with which the places are known today, justifying them by geographical location.

Contrary to popular belief, Makran is a melting pot of ethnicities. People from various origins live here, such as the Baloch, Jats, Africans, Brahuis and Gichkis. Some arrived in the area as traders and seafarers centuries ago, while others fled trouble in their native lands, mostly during the 16th century. We read of the myths and legends related to the Makran coast, especially about the origins of people with blue, green and pale yellow eyes and fair skin and hair, but whether they are descendants of the crew of the Greek ship that sank centuries ago, or of Turkish sailors who availed of the hospitality at Gwadar while fleeing Muscat when threatened by the Portuguese, will always remain a mystery.

In his captivating manner, Rashid tells readers about Astola Island, believed according to Greek mythology to have been claimed by the sun god, the myth about the daughter of the sun god and the superstition that anyone who went there was never seen again; hence, it being enchanted. The myth gained weight after an unnamed Greek ship manned by an Egyptian crew disappeared near the island.

The legend continued even in the 19th century, as British engineers laying down

telegraph lines had been warned that it was dangerous to land on the enchanted island. The British believed Gwadar to be “suitable as the headquarters for the management of the telegraph” as it was situated midway between Karachi and the Iranian port town of Bander Abbas.

Travelling through, the Greeks discovered Makran to be a place of hardy people, where everyday life was a struggle because of its climate. While other towns were smaller and undeveloped, Pasni and Gwadar were much richer and civilised, with parks full of flowerbeds and trees.

In 1294, Venetian explorer Marco Polo passed through, and noted that the people of Makran were “professed traders” who took their business “by the sea and land in all direction.” Polo noted: “the staple in Makran was no longer fish as it had been at the time of Alexander” there was a plentiful supply of rice, corn, meat and milk. As trading grew manifold, fishing was relegated to a secondary position, though as Rashid points out all this could only have been possible by a substantial increase in maritime trade.



Gwadar Beach below the Hammerhead

Rashid reminds us that many of the world's islands were not always islands, but were probably created when the Ice Age ended and floods from the melting ice raised sea levels by up to 30 metres. It is believed that Astola was connected to the mainland until the rising waters cut it off, turning it into an island. Whatever wildlife existed there mostly perished because of food scarcity, except for rats, snakes and lizards. Today, however, its sandy beach provides nesting grounds for many species of birds and the endangered green and hawksbill turtles, as in the British time, and its waters are home to several species of fish and dolphin.

There are reminders of historical events that influenced the region. For instance, how Gwadar's ownership went from the Khan of Kalat to Oman, from which it was bought back by the Pakistan Government in 1958; or the plundering of Gwadar and Pasni by the Portuguese in the

16th century after they had driven the Turks from Muscat, which the Portuguese laid claim to and where the Turks were gaining a foothold.

The construction of the Makran Coastal Highway is not only opening opportunities for tourists, but also helping local fishing communities; they no longer have to salt and dry their catch and wait for Sri Lankan boats, as they did in the past. Now, refrigerated lorries wait to collect the fish and transport them to Karachi and onward to other parts of the country.

There are interesting descriptions of the architecture of Shahi Bazaar, which gained its character from the abundant use of timber, the graceful two-storeyed houses that memorialise Gwadar's past affluence and of the gold-mining that continued through the 1990s. The various ancient buildings and the stories behind them are described in a manner that lets readers feel as though they're travelling with the writer. It is heartening to learn that the GDA has taken note of the crumbling Shahi Bazaar and adjacent residential lanes and has plans to restore and preserve them.

The book is important since, after work done by British explorers and geographers in the 19th century, no such study had been carried out in the area. With Gwadar poised to receive world attention, Song of the Sea Wind is a treatise to be read and cherished. Printed on glossy paper with beautiful photographs, it will serve as a perfect travel companion to those who wish to visit the place.

While the entire Makran coast is a delight for the traveller, explorer, tourist and naturalist, in Rashid's words, "It is Gwadar, the headquarters of seaboard Makran, that promises to be the gem." He sees Gwadar not merely as a place of fun and frolic, focused only on tourism, but as a city of port and industry. There are also plans to establish an "Educational City" with all facilities such as a university, vocational training centre, medical college and nursing school.

The future envisaged for Gwadar is of a city drawing businesspeople from across Pakistan and abroad. It is to be a city with glittering malls, brightly lit streets and factories, all powered by electricity generated from wind, sun and coal.

One wishes that the plans for Gwadar's development soon materialise, as this will not only be development of the region, but of the whole country.

Next mayor to prepare Karachi's master plan: Wahab



Citizens visit the Karachi Zoo Mughal Garden recently. They appreciated the beauty of thousands of marigolds and other seasonal flowers tastefully arranged at the picturesque point.

Administrator Barrister Murtaza Wahab has recently said that the master plan of the city would be prepared by the next elected mayor and City Council.

"The elected mayor will carry out long-term uplift projects as I have been made administrator for a short period of time so I am carrying out short-term and immediate work," he said while inaugurating the three-day Marigold Festival at Karachi Zoo. Thousands of two varieties of marigold along with eight other species of winter seasonal flowers in over 10,000 plants added colour to the zoo. Besides the yellow and white varieties of marigold, plants of Stock, Petunia, Pansy, Antrimum, Dianthus, Calandola, Dahalia, Impetanis and Crysanthemum were also on display.

Barrister Wahab, who is also the provincial government's spokesman and chief minister's adviser on law, said that thousands of people were witnessing flower show at Mughal Garden.

"The doors of Mughal Garden of Karachi Zoo will remain open to the public till Sunday for Marigold Festival," he added. He said that the municipal administration wanted to decorate the whole city with flowers. "The purpose of this festival at Karachi Zoo is to hold flower display for nearby areas," he added.

The administrator said that the Karachi Zoo was the cheapest zoo in the country where the entrance fee was Rs15 for children and Rs30 rupees for adults.

"The purpose is to provide relief to the citizens. In a month, Rs10 million has been collected from the zoo, which will be spent on maintenance and development of the zoo," he added.

He said that the private organisations and corporate companies should come and organise their programmes in Mughal Garden of Karachi Zoo so that they could benefit from the facility of the historical garden, adding that it would also increase the revenue of the zoo. Replying to a question, he said that KMC hospitals were handed over to the provincial government

and not to the Pakistan Peoples Party.

"Abbasi Shaheed Hospital was built by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and we are going to improve it. The hospital was run in the wrong way which is why it has been ruined," he added.

He said that a letter had been written to the administration of Askari Park for taking over its possession, adding that KMC would get possession of Askari Park soon.

Barrister Wahab said that Gutter Bagheecha covered an area of 1,016 acres and 162 acres had been allotted for the park.

Indian Punjabi film actors visit Kartarpur



A delegation of Indian film actors visited the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib on Monday 10 Jan.

The delegation, including Harby Sangha, Anita Devgan and Hardeep Gill, arrived at the gurdwara through the Kartarpur Corridor.

The film stars reached the gurdwara through Kartarpur Corridor where they were welcomed by Pakistani film and stage actors, including Iftikhar Thakur and Qaiser Pia, who presented flowers and garlands to the guests. Muhammad Latif, the chief executive officer Kartarpur Management Unit, was also present.

The artistes working in Punjabi film Chal Mera Putt 2 hugged each other warmly. The Indian guests were briefed about the corridor and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib. They visited various parts of the gurdwara, the museum, Kunwan Sahib, Missil Sahib and other parts. The actors had langar and the gurdwara administration presented them with special gifts.

The Indian film stars expressed joy at seeing the corridor project and termed it a means of bringing prosperity about in both the countries. They thanked the government of Pakistan for launching the mega project for the Sikh nation.



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Murad unveils plan for major research institute, conference on Sindh heritage preservation



GROUNDBREAKING of Sehwan Fort preservation work being performed by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah along with several PPP ministers and lawmakers on Saturday 15 Jan.

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that Sindh has a centuries-old history yet to be studied and great archaeological treasures that need to be explored. The gigantic task requires enormous funds and availability of a research institute of international standards within the province. Research scholars of international repute have to be invited and authentic reference documents made available to local archaeologists to undertake the research and exploration work in the province.

The CM was speaking at a ceremony held at the Sehwan Fort for the groundbreaking of its preservation work, assigned to the Endowment Fund Trust (EFT), on Saturday 15 Jan.

He said he was fully satisfied with the work carried out by the EFT for the preservation and restoration of Naukot Fort in Tharparkar district and Ranikot in Jamshoro district. Appreciating the EFT for accomplishing the extremely tricky task, he expressed his confidence that the preservation work of Sehwan Fort would also be done as per the international standards and with required care.

Tracing history of Sindh, the chief minister said "it's spread over centuries, much before Alexander the Great came to this region". He regretted that due attention had never been paid to Sindh's heritage in the past few decades. But following transfer of the heritage portfolio to the provincial government under the devolution plan, the Sindh government had been taking measures to ensure preservation of the treasure, he said.

While the government was in a constant touch with foreign experts in this regard, local archaeologists, historians, scholars and literati as well as all those having interest in the field should come forward with their proposals and plans to help restore and preserve each and every historical site in the province, he said.

"It's time to preserve the research

work and information about the art, history and culture of Sindh region," he said.

CM Shah advised the EFT to establish a 'conservation lab' somewhere in Dadu and also impart training to youths in collaboration with the culture and antiquities department, besides honing skills of such professionals.

He also pledged his government's full support in the establishment of a research institute to be named as 'Trans-Indus Research Institute' under the EFT in Karachi.

He announced that an international conference on Alexander the Great and Sehwan would be held next year and asked the EFT to propose names for a committee and prepare a plan for the event.

Foreigners hunt highest-rated markhors in GB



American hunter James Kevin with his trophy in Jutial Conservancy, Gilgit.

Two foreign nationals on Wednesday 19 Jan. hunted two highest-rated Astore markhors in Gilgit-Baltistan region under the 2021-22 trophy hunting programme.

According to the GB wildlife department, James Kevin of the United States hunted the markhor in Jutial Conservancy area in Gilgit district after paying \$131,000 for trophy permit and Viejo Gonzalez Jesus of Mexico in Bunji of Astore district for \$136,000 fee.

Also in the day, the wildlife department and Central Karakoram National Park personnel held a man for illegally hunting Himalayan ibex in Askoli village of Shigar district.

They said Mohammad Taha was trying to transport the ibex meat from Shigar to Skardu district.

The officials said 80 per cent of the hunting trophy amount went to the community for wildlife conservation, while the remaining was deposited in the exchequer.

The GB wildlife department had auctioned four hunting licences for Astore markhor, 14 for blue sheep and 85 for Himalayan ibex under the 2021-22 trophy hunting programme.

Sri Lanka shows off giant natural blue sapphire



AMAN takes pictures of the world's largest natural corundum blue sapphire, weighing 310 kilograms and found in a gem pit.

Sri Lankan authorities on Sunday 12 Dec. put on show what they said was the world's largest natural corundum blue sapphire, weighing 310 kilograms, which was found in a gem pit about three months ago.

Local gemologists, who have examined the sapphire, said it was one of the rarest gems in the world as it weighed more than 300 kilograms. International organisations are yet to certify the precious stone.

The sapphire was put on display at the home of one of the gem pit owners in Horana, 65 kilometres (40 miles) south of Colombo. A group of Buddhist monks chanted blessings for the gemstone before it was unveiled.

The stone was found in the gem-rich Ratnapura area where local people had previously found the world's largest star sapphire cluster in a backyard by accident. Ratnapura is known as the gem capital of the South Asian country, which is a leading exporter of sapphires and other precious gems.

The country earned around half a billion dollars through the export of gems, diamonds and other jewellery last year, the local gems and jewellery industry body has reported.

161 Hindu devotees come to Pakistan

At least 161 Hindu devotees, who reached Wagah border from New Delhi, India, on Saturday 1st Jan., were flown to Peshawar on special planes of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA).

Earlier, MNA Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, PIA Chief Executive Officer Arshad Malik and Lahore District Manager Abdul Qayyum Khan received the devotees at Wagah border. The devotees were then taken to the Lahore airport from where they departed for Peshawar through special PIA flights.

Talking to the media, MNA Vankwani said it was an ideal start of the new year that Hindu devotees from India came to Pakistan to promote religious harmony. The devotees were going to the Teri temple in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Karak district to perform religious rites over four days. For the first time, religious tourism has been started on a monthly basis, he added.

He further said Hindu devotees from other countries had already reached Peshawar by various flights where they will visit four places to perform their religious rites.

He also told the media that a delegation from Pakistan would visit Ajmer Sharif this month.

The MNA further maintained that the Pakistani devotees will fly through PIA and Indians travel through Air India. He hoped the religious tours will further improve bilateral ties in trade and other fields.

The Hindu devotees thanked Mr Vankwani for hosting them and ensuring the environment was peaceful and conducive for minorities. They also expressed their gratitude for arranging a special flight to Peshawar for the devotees and said hatred between the two countries will definitely vanish after such efforts.

The PIA chief also said the government was promoting religious tourism in the country and would extend PIA operations to northern areas of the country. He said the Hindu devotees would be especially facilitated and the government was planning to extend the operations to Sikh and Buddhist places, too, and devise a package for them.

He said they would continue to facilitate people without any discrimination.

550,000 people visited Pakistan Pavilion at Dubai Expo, says govt



View of the Pakistan Pavilion at the Dubai Expo.

The Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai received 550,000 visitors in only 82 days since its opening.

An official announcement said that over this time period, the pavilion received visits not only from the Pakistani community but many United Arab Emirates residents and foreign nationals.

Since its opening, the Pakistan Pavilion has kept the momentum at the Expo 2020 in being an engaging, enlightening, and enjoyable experience for visitors and has been amongst the most visited pavilions at the expo.

“Located in the heart of Opportunity District, the pavilion's theme aims at informing, inspiring, and igniting more conversations about the country's 'Hidden Treasures.' The pavilion has been attracting thousands of people from various nationalities daily is promoting the country's tolerant, inclusive and progressive image by featuring the past, present, and future. It also highlights the beautiful landscapes, tourism, and trade & investment opportunities,” it said.

Commerce Adviser Razak Dawood said that in December, the Pakistan Pavilion launched a new tourism campaign through an engaging AI interactive screen for interested visitors to connect with tour operators in Pakistan to plan their visits to the country. Pakistan has immense potential for tourism.

Inaugurating the Skardu Airport, Prime Minister Imran Khan remarked that Pakistan can attract at least \$30-40 billion from tourism just in Gilgit-Baltistan. With the government's focus on the development of tourism infrastructure in the country and promotional efforts at the Pakistan Pavilion Expo 2020 Dubai, the number of foreign tourists to Pakistan is expected to rise significantly in the coming years.

Adventure tourism hit hard this winter

Adventure tourism seems to have lost its charm this year with only one expedition coming to Pakistan to try to summit K2 in the winter season.

“After a team of 10 Nepali Sherpas conquered K2, which is only 200 metres shorter than Mount Everest, not many climbers are drawn towards K2 or any of the other four peaks above 8,000 metres this winter season,” said tour operator Sakhawat Hussain, who is managing the only expedition that was expected to arrive in Pakistan in mid-December to summit K2 in the winter of 2022.

However, that expedition too has been delayed after the Taiwanese team leader, Tseng Ko Erh, ran into visa issues. Tseng Ko Erh has engaged seven Nepali Sherpas to assist him.

“I have already transported climbing gear of the entire team to the base camp and has been waiting for the eight-man team that was scheduled to reach Pakistan on Dec 14,” Sakhawat Hussain told media.

While even a successful spring or summer climb of K2 is rare, there had been six prior winter attempts over the years. In the winters of 2013-14, the 14-member Russian expedition failed to summit the mountain after losing a team mate. Another case of failure was that of the Polish expedition in 2018. In February last year, Pakistani mountaineer Ali Sadpara and his two companions from Iceland John Snorri and Chile's Juan Pablo Mohr died on K2, which is regarded by many as a 'savage mountain' due to its difficult topography and unpredictable weather.

Until last year, the once insurmountable K2, part of the Karakoram Range that straddles on the Pakistan and China border, was the only 8,000er left out of the 14 peaks that has never been conquered during the winter season.

According to Alpine Club of Pakistan (ACP) Secretary Karrar Haidri, adventure tourism had been on a decline due to Covid-19, and now with the emergence of the Omicron variant, it had been further affected.

According to the official, unlike last year, not a single expedition from Spain, Poland, Italy, the United Kingdom and the US had applied for a permit to climb any of the five peaks above 8,000 metres - K2, Nanga Parbat, Broad Peak and Gasherbrum I and II.

Cave exploration in Pakistan: Past and Present

The Union of International Speleology (UIS) in its 14th ICS General Assembly meeting held in Athens, Greece in 2005 made Pakistan as its member.

The 39 countries present in the general assembly voted for making Pakistan the member of the UIS and recognized Hayatullah Khan Durrani as the country delegate in IUS for Pakistan.

But this feat was not easy to achieve as Hayatullah Khan Durrani has spent a major part of his life in this field. The journey started when Pakistan's first caving and Balochistan's first mountaineering organization 'Chiltan Adventurers Association' was established by him in 1984.

Since its establishment, the organization has made an international record for initial exploration of 139 caves in Pakistan. The figure has reached 144 caves now.

Hayatullah as the founder of the organization has played a significant role in the promotion of Caving (Speleology) and mountaineering adventure sports including Canoe, Kayak, Rowing and rock climbing in Pakistan.

Being the first and only caving adventure sports/speleological rescue organization in Pakistan and the first mountaineering adventure sports organization, the organization introduced the great tradition of hoisting the national flag of Pakistan on different mountains.

Also, the organization has been celebrating since 1984 every national day by organizing mountaineering and caving events and championships.

Later, he established "Pakistan Cave Research and Caving Federation" in 1997. On 14 August 1994, Pakistan Cave Research & Caving Federation for caving and Speleology was established.

At the same time, Derbyshire based Orpheus Caving Club unit of the British Cave Research Association and British Caving Association invited Hayatullah Durrani to complete a caving and rock-climbing advanced course under the supervision of famous British Caver and speleologist, Simon James Brooks.

This proved quite beneficial for both the Chiltan Adventurers Association and Pakistan as Hayatullah achieved his first major Caving success in 1992 Pak-UK Caving Expedition.

As a leader of Pakistan's national caving team he made the first international expedition of the initial exploration of Pir Ghaib Cave in Bolan Mountains which later proved Pakistan's longest Cave.



In 1997, Chiltan Adventurers Association organized Pak-UK and Germany International Caving Expedition in collaboration with Orpheus Caving Club of Great Britain.

The expedition was launched for complete exploration of "Pir Ghaib" Cave to celebrate the Golden Jubilee year of Pakistan's independence.

The expedition was successfully completed and the 1273-meter longest cave of Pakistan was discovered and the Man of the Expedition Award was given to Hayatullah Khan Durrani.

The same year, Murgha Ghull Cave (Bats valley) was explored in Harnai Balochistan and this is the largest single chamber and 2nd longest cave of Pakistan.

In 1998, the initial exploration of Juniper Shaft Cave in the Limestone Mountains of Kach Valley was done and the cave is the first ever most difficult deep descending vertical shaft cave in Pakistan.

In 1999, Pakistan's Longest Stalagmite Stalactite cave 'Mughal Saa' was explored in Harnai District of Balochistan.

In 2000, the complete exploration of Pid-da-ti-Marran (natural decorated cave of Pakistan) in Kalat District of Balochistan was explored.

In 1999/2000, various attempts on exploration of Juniper Shaft and Pid-da-ti-Marran caves were made and the organization continued with the caving and speleological activities including 'search and caving attempts' for finding and exploration of new hidden caves in Pakistan.

Recently, the re-exploration of Juniper Hidden Cave of Angel Pool was conducted in the west base of Zarghoon mountain range.

This is Pakistan's 4th cave with water

and has been included in the Natural history museum of Pakistan.

The cave has a single chamber with four small and one large live water pools. The cave's second chamber is linked with a large pool and narrow passage of the cave.

The cave was first discovered and explored in April 2010 but the exploration details were kept classified for the sake of the protection of the formations inside the cave.

The cave will be fully explored on the arrival of Simon James Brooks of Orpheus CC from Great Britain as part of 13th Pak-UK joint Cave Exploration and Friendship Expedition (Pak).

The 31st year of Pak-Britain joint friendship cooperation and partnership in cave exploration, rock-climbing training expeditions held in Pakistan and Great Britain since 1990 will be celebrated soon.

On the international front, Hayatullah participated in caving and climbed various mountains in the United Kingdom as leader of Pakistan National Caving team in company of famous British Cavers Simon James Brooks in 1994, 1999, 2016, and 2018.

In 1999, Hayatullah was the first Pakistani who along with his caving team visited the "Shatter Cave" the most beautiful cave in the United Kingdom.

In recognition of his lifelong services devoted to caving and mountaineering adventure sports in Pakistan, he was conferred in 2005 with the Pride-of-Performance award by the President of Pakistan.

Hayatullah Khan Durrani also received an international caving legend award in Great Britain in 2018. He also represents Pakistan in Asian Federation of Speleology.

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The Taj Mahal's Macabre Myth

Bharatiya Janata Party leaders and a pro-Modi media have drawn a contrast between the popularised myth of Shah Jahan's brutal act of chopping off the hands of Taj Mahal workers after the completion of the monument and Narendra Modi's act of showering flower petals on sanitation workers as a gesture of gratitude on the inauguration of the first phase of the Kashi Vishwanath corridor [a project in Varanasi aimed at transforming pilgrims' experience by connecting the temple there with the ghats along the Ganga].

Shah Jahan is supposed to have committed this ungrateful act so that the workers would not be able to build another monument like the Taj Mahal.

As the Alt News article has made it clear, there appears to be no evidence for this claim that Shah Jahan chopped off the hands of workers and as such it appears to be a tale that has been spun at some point of time in history.

Further, assuming for the sake of argument, that Shah Jahan's purpose was that he did not want any other similar monument to come up, it does not make sense that such an act serves his presumed purpose. Why?

It is because the beauty and grandeur of the Taj Mahal are the outer manifestation of the architect's conception, imagination and aesthetic sense. Therefore, his target should have been the architect.

The ingenuity of the architect lies in the originality of the plan, design and how much aesthetic sense coupled with imagination he can express through his plan and design. Once this is concretised as a structure of the Taj Mahal, a first of its kind, it is not difficult for other planners and designers with no such skill to bring about similar structures. Masons, artisans, craftsmen and others go by the plan of the architect (though this is not to marginalise the contribution of these workmen, as there are certain intricate skills required for workmanship).

Unesco also mentions that “the uniqueness of Taj Mahal lies in some truly remarkable innovations carried out by the horticulture planners and architects of Shah Jahan.” The arches and domes that are captured by the imagination of the architects enhance aesthetic sense. In fact, the Taj Mahal project had a board of architects, led by the chief architect Ustad Ahmad Lahuri.

If Shah Jahan wanted that a similar monument should not come up, his brutality would have been directed toward the architects as well.



Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan's most famed legacy, The Taj Mahal

Myths around monuments

Ebba Koch, the Austrian art and architecture historian and a leading authority on Mughal architecture, terms this story, “guides' tales”, in her book *The Complete Taj Mahal and the Riverfront Gardens of Agra*. Further, she compares this story with similar myths that are classified by Stith Thompson who has authored the *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*.

She mentions three similar myths (different from Shah Jahan's) drawing upon Thompson's work as follows:

- 1- “King kills architect after completion of a great building, so that he may never again build one so great.”
- 2- “Artisan who has built palace blinded so that he cannot build another like it.”
- 3- “Masons who build mausoleum of princess lose their right hand so they may never again construct so fine a building.”

A similar story is also associated with St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow's Red Square. It was built to commemorate the fall of Kazan to Tsar Ivan the Terrible of Russia.

“Legend has it that Ivan the Terrible blinded the architect Posnik Yakovlev to prevent him from building another church as grand as this, although this is not confirmed by historians.”

Now the question is, did Shah Jahan extend the brutal act to the architects?

This would have been more important for him if he really did not want another similar structure to come up because it is the architect who has the primary role in the conception and design of the structure.

However, modern writers have done that job of extending the brutal act of Shah Jahan to include the architects also.

The initial story of brutality that was restricted to workers was further spiced up to include the chief architect, recently, lest some people start thinking why the architect had been left out of the act of Shah Jahan.

Justin Huggler [in his 2004 article for *The Independent*] makes the claim that

Lahuri was blinded after the Taj's completion.

As Koch rightly remarks, these were “presented as historical facts” and by including the architect the “journalists of renowned newspapers... garnish...” their reports.

The Hindutva leaders and their supporters' proclivities for Muslim- and Christian-bashing in their thoughts and acts have become increasingly pronounced. They look for such apocryphal tales to depict a certain monstrosity in the kings from these communities.

Meanwhile, a similar unproven legend is associated with the Konark temple. A brutal condition was apparently laid by its builder, the Eastern Ganga dynasty king Narasimhadeva I. He “had set a deadline for the completion of the temple and had threatened to behead all the workers if the deadline [were] not met.”

One would also be curious to know the right-wing Hindutva groups' response to the Ekalavya story in the Mahabharata where Dronacharya demanded the right thumb of Ekalavya as a guru dakshina (a Hindu tradition of paying an honorarium to the teacher for having imparted knowledge), even though he never formally taught Ekalavya. He was worried that his disciple Arjun would lose the status of the supreme archer if Ekalavya came into prominence. His intention of extracting his dakshina in a cruel form was to make him (Ekalavya) incapable of exercising self-acquired archery skills.

Mythical tales and legends of brutal deeds of Hindu characters are not convenient. But tales like Shah Jahan chopping hands serves a communal purpose.



Saint Basil's Cathedral in Moscow



Pakistan Chamber of Commerce (Houston) USA welcome former governor State Bank of Pakistan group photo taken with the officials.



Mr. Qamar Parvez Shaikh with the former governor State Bank of Pakistan at Pakistan Chamber of Commerce (Houston) USA.



Istahkam-e-Pakistan Foundation Organized a ceremony to award gold medals to some personalities for their services. Photo taken on the occasion shows the chief guest Chairman complaint cell of Punjab Minister Mr. Zubair Khan Niazi presenting a gold medal to Mr. Abdul Shakoor Mirza (Media Consultant SIAL) for his services in Journalism and Qaid-e-Azam gold medal to his wife Zahida Perveen former Dy District Education Officer Sambrial (Sialkot) for her services in education.



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