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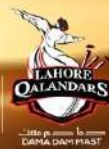


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08



20



One to one meeting Mian Naeem Javed with honourable president of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi to discuss current affairs of politics, local Government and overall exports improvement in Pakistan.

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ICAO touts new digital air cargo specs



The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) announced they have completed new digital air cargo technical specifications guidance that they say will help accelerate the transition toward safer and more resilient supply chains, while making important contributions to COVID-19 response and recovery efforts.

The digital innovations will permit the air transport sector to transition away from long-standing paper-based documents used to facilitate the movement of global air freight, promoting a contactless air cargo environment and greater cross-border trade resilience in the face of future pandemic threats. In line with the recommendations of the ICAO Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART), the specifications will help reduce physical contact among international trade and transport professionals, and in so doing better protect the fluidity of cross-border trade and international transport operations from pandemic-related restrictions.

ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar.

"The latest innovations reflect ICAO's integrated, collaborative, and multilateral approach to transport policies encompassing air cargo and mail supply chains, and will play an important part in addressing both current and future pandemic risks," said ICAO Secretary General Juan Carlos Salazar. "It's our expectation that they will help address the tremendous double strain now being placed on global supply chains, whether by the COVID-19 pandemic itself, or the incredible surge in international e-commerce which has accompanied it," Salazar said.

"The pandemic has clearly demonstrated the value of harmonised approaches to ensure resilient transport connectivity across all modes, and has further underscored the critical role of accelerated digitalisation. I am proud of the contribution of the practical tools developed with the support of UNECE's United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT). UNECE looks forward to building on this successful cooperation with ICAO for seamless multimodal

transport and trade to drive countries' sustainable socioeconomic recovery efforts," said UNECE Executive Secretary Olga Algayerova.

ICAO's collaboration with UNECE on supply chain digitalisation is an



Changi remains a key cargo transshipment point for Asia.

outcome of the Joint Statement on the Contribution of International Trade and Supply Chains to a Sustainable Socioeconomic Recovery in COVID-19 Times, which was signed by eight UN agencies in September 2020. These latest results will see digital specifications replacing the formerly paper-based Air Waybill (AWB), Dangerous Goods

Declaration (DGD), and the Consignment Security Declaration (CSD). These in turn form part of a broader suite of deliverables for multimodal transport data sharing, applicable to air, road, rail, maritime, and inland water transport. The specifications and supporting materials are available free of charge to regulators, businesses, and other interested stakeholders through the UNDA COVID-19 Trade and Transport Project website, and ICAO and the UNECE will now turn their focus to assisting countries with implementing them.



Carriers like Korean Air are relying on cargo to help them survive the pandemic.



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New business plan envisages PIA's revenue growth to \$1.7bn by 2026

A business plan has been developed with the assistance of the world's premier aviation organisation, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), to help Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) return to profitability.

"The comprehensive business plan for PIA for year 2022 to 2026 was presented to Minister of Finance Shaukat Tareen and Minister of Aviation Sarwar Khan recently," said a spokesman for the national flag carrier.

The business plan preparation was commissioned by Ministry of Finance last year consequent to a report by former special assistant to the prime minister on public enterprises and reforms Dr Ishrat Hussain.

Dr Ishrat's report, termed a complete restructuring plan for PIA with the objective to not only make it profitable but also convert it into an agile business unit, focused on its core operations.

As the plan involved financial restructuring to the tune of hundreds of billions of rupees, officials at the helms of finance ministry and the planning commission demanded a business plan prepared by an international consultant for PIA before committing to the huge amounts.

IATA's consultancy services were hired for that purpose which after one year of spade work has developed a five-year corporate business transformation plan with 2022 as the base year and going all the way to 2026, he said.

The key postulates of the business plan encompass financial restructuring, independent decision making, re-organisation of company structure, restrictions to core business, financial discipline, HR rationalisation, cost controls, review destinations, a fleet planning exercise and network expansion thereby increasing PIA's network spread and passenger uplift.

The spokesman said PIA's fleet was expected to grow from current 29 to 49 by 2026, comprising 16 wide body, 27 narrow body and six turbo propeller aircraft.

The fleet will be used to expand on current productive routes of UK, KSA, UAE and Gulf sectors as well as will be operated on identified markets of Baku, Hong Kong, Istanbul, Kuwait, Tehran, Urumqi and Singapore. Resultantly, PIA's passengers would grow from 5.2 million per annum to 9.0 million per annum and revenues to \$1.7 billion per annum by

2026. The assets of PIA will also increase from current \$1.196 billion to \$2.183 billion.

PIA, which is currently operating 359 round trip flights per week, will be operating 581 round trip flights at the end of the programme.

However, the plan has been made conditional to certain factors, most important of which is the commitment by the government to undertake the financial restructuring of PIA for the legacy debt on its balance sheets and which are beyond the serviceable capacity of the airline, he said.

Business plan for PIA unveiled

A proposed five-year business plan to turn around Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) suggests financial restructuring, independent decision making, re-organisation of company structure, restrictions to core business, financial discipline and human resource (HR) rationalisation cost controls.

The proposed plan also calls for reviewing destinations, fleet planning exercises and network expansion thereby increasing PIA's network spread and passenger uplift.

The comprehensive business plan for the national flag carrier covering 2022 as the base year and going all the way to 2026 was presented by IATA Consultancy to the Minister of Finance Shaukat Tarin and

Federal Minister of Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan on Tuesday 1st Feb.

The business plan preparation was commissioned by the Ministry of Finance last year consequent to the report by former special assistant to the prime minister on public enterprises reforms Dr Ishrat Hussain, a statement said.

Dr Husain's report was termed as a complete restructuring plan for PIA with the objective to not only turn around PIA towards profitability, but also converting it into an agile business unit, focused on its core operations.

The International Air Transport Agency (IATA) consultancy services were hired for the purpose, which after one year developed a five-year corporate business transformation plan.

Saudi Arabia eases travel restrictions for pilgrims

While Pakistan achieved another milestone in the fight against coronavirus by vaccinating over two million people in a day, Saudi Arabia has eased travel restrictions for the pilgrims from Pakistan intending to perform Umrah by revising the Covid-19 guidelines.

The development coincided with the national positivity rate dropping to 5.34 per cent across the country, where less than 3,000 cases were reported in a day after a one-month hiatus.

According to the fresh guidelines for pilgrims from Pakistan intending to perform Umrah, at the time of departure the travellers will be required to submit only a negative PCR test report that should not be more than 48 hours old.



Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin chairs a meeting on PIA's corporate business plan in Islamabad on Tuesday 1st Feb.

Qatar Airways resumes flights from Doha to Multan



Service from Doha to Pakistan's seventh largest city will restart later this month after a hiatus of almost two years.

Qatar Airways is resuming flights to Multan International (MUX) in Pakistan from Feb. 22, increasing its network to six destinations in the South Asian country.

The airline halted service to the city in March 2020 at the onset of the pandemic and operations from Doha have remained suspended ever since.

However, the oneworld alliance member will return to Multan with three flights per week later this month, increasing to 4X-weekly from March 27. The route will be served using Airbus A320s.

Following the restart, Qatar Airways will operate 66 weekly flights to six airports in Pakistan. The flag-carrier flies nonstop to Islamabad (ISB), Karachi (KHI), Lahore (LHE), Peshawar (PEW) and Sialkot (SKT).

Flight QR616 will depart from Doha's Hamad International (DOH) on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8.45 p.m., arriving in Multan at 2 a.m. the following day. The return service leaves on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays at 3.25 a.m. and arrives in Doha at 5.15

a.m. More Route Analysis

Route Analysis: Sohar-Shiraz

Route Analysis: Mumbai-Chengdu

Route Analysis: Istanbul-Yerevan

According to data provided by OAG Schedules Analyser for the week commencing Feb. 7, 2022, Qatar Airways offers 63 weekly flights to destinations in Pakistan, providing almost 36,500 two-way seats. This compares with 63 flights and 32,000 seats during the same week in 2019.

Analysis of Sabre Market Intelligence figures for 2019 shows that 79.9% of passengers flying from Multan to Doha traveled beyond Qatar's capital to reach their final destination. Local traffic totaled 20% and behind traffic was 0.1%.

Multan is currently linked nonstop to seven destinations in the Middle East, including connections to Dubai International (DXB) on board Airblue, flydubai and Pakistan International Airlines.

DOH-MUX

Carrier:	Qatar Airways
Aircraft:	Airbus A320
Frequency:	3X-weekly
Resumption date:	Feb. 22, 2022
Distance:	2,021 km
O&D traffic demand (2019):	13,991



Annual growth
(2019 vs 2018): 27.2%
Average base fare (2019): \$150.47
More from Qatar Airways

Routes In Brief: Rolling Daily Updates (W/C Jan. 17) Posted 21 January 2022 12:00

Qatar Airways To Serve Two More Nigerian Destinations Posted 12 January 2022 13:24

50 New Routes Starting In January 2022 Posted 5 January 2022 12:35

Emirates SkyCargo connects US Midwest



Emirates SkyCargo has announced that it commenced freighter flights to Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD) from February 1.

Emirates SkyCargo will operate scheduled and ad-hoc flights to Chicago Rockford on a combination of Boeing 777-F and Boeing 777-300ER mini freighter aircraft.

The air cargo carrier's new service will complement the cargo connectivity it offers in the US Midwest region through O'Hare International Airport, Chicago (ORD) and Rickenbacker International Airport, Columbus (LCK).

Nabil Sultan, Emirates divisional senior vice president said: "Emirates SkyCargo is delighted to commence operations to Chicago Rockford International Airport, adding yet more connectivity to further boost trade between the US Midwest and the rest of the world. We would like to thank the RFD airport team and other local partners for their support in gearing up for our freighter operations."

Mike Dunn, executive director of Chicago Rockford International Airport, said: "This exciting new air cargo service will provide added choice for importers and exporters looking to ship into and out of the Chicago Midwest market and wider catchment area, where this new network combination of Emirates and RFD can play a vital role in providing the flexibility, cost savings and efficiencies air cargo shippers are looking for as we enter a new era of air cargo operations."

Gulf Air increases flights to London during the Formula One

Gulf Air Adds Extra Flights to London Heathrow During the Formula One Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix Weekend

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, announces that it has added an additional daily flight from London Heathrow to Bahrain on March 16, 17, 21 and 22 to operate three daily services during the Formula One Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix weekend taking place on March 18 - 20. Gulf Air currently operates double daily flights to London Heathrow, a direct route that has been part of the airlines network since 1970 and these additional special flights will take off from London Heathrow at 1510 local and land in the Bahrain at 0050 local, and the flight from Bahrain will take off at 0830 local and land in London Heathrow at 1255 local. Passengers with a valid Formula One ticket and flying on Gulf Air flights to Bahrain from London Heathrow during this period will receive free lounge access at London Heathrow and at Bahrain International Airport.

On this occasion, Captain Waleed Abdulhameed AlAlawi, Gulf Air's Acting Chief Executive Officer commented: "The demand for attendance to the season opener has definitely been significant and we are excited to welcome our global visitors to the Kingdom of Bahrain to witness the Formula One Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix race. The race has always been an important global event for the Kingdom of Bahrain, Gulf Air and our partners the Bahrain International Circuit and adding an extra flight with our Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner to match the demand for the race as spectators prepare their visits to attend."

On behalf of the Bahrain Tourism & Exhibition Authority, Dr Nasser Qaedi, Chief Executive Officer commented: "2022 is proving to be an exciting year for tourism in Bahrain and the great reception we have been receiving from international travelers who are travelling to Bahrain to watch the season opener of the Formula One race is a testament to that. We are excited to welcome more tourists from the United Kingdom to enjoy both the race and the other activities and attractions happening on our island in March."

On behalf of the Bahrain International Circuit, Shaikh Salman bin Isa AlKhalifa, Chief Executive commented: "In recent weeks we have seen great demand for tickets and travel packages from international fans,

including from the UK. We are thankful to our partners at Gulf Air for adding to their capacity and we look forward to fans joining us from all over the world to celebrate the beginning of this great new era for the sport."

The 2022 race will usher in a new era for F1, following possibly the biggest revolution of rules in the history of the sport. As the opening race of the season, it



will be the first opportunity for F1 fans around the world to witness the new cars in action. It also follows the incredible excitement of the 2021 season, which was the closest in living memory.

Grammy Award-winning DJ and producer Afrojack was also recently announced as the first megastar concert act of the weekend. He is the first internationally renowned artist to be announced for this year's F1 weekend at BIC and will be lighting up the stage at the F1 Village vending area on the Friday evening. All Bahrain Grand Prix ticket-holders will be able to attend the concerts at no extra cost. Further details on concerts and entertainment will be announced in the lead up to the event. Amongst the other attractions at BIC over the race weekend are stage acts and roaming performers, such as renowned street performer Abraham Thill, a life-sized Toy Brigade, Funky Style Band from Italy, Jam Batucada musical show from Spain, and plenty of other entertainment. Tickets can be bought online at BIC's official website www.bahraingp.com

Recently, Gulf Air announced the return of its exclusive Formula One Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix packages on gulfair.com for passengers visiting Bahrain in coordination with Bahrain Tourism and Exhibition Authority and the Bahrain International Circuit. This would

allow eligible visitors to book a flight, accommodation, a 3-day race pass along with transport to and from the race, more information is available on gulfair.com/f1 and visit gulfair.com/covid19 for entry requirements. Learn more about the experiences Bahrain has to offer by visiting bahrain.com.

The airline currently operates its flights to over 80% of its pre-pandemic network; as Gulf Air continuously works closely with government authorities throughout destinations on its network to resume operations to those destinations. Gulf Air boasts a flexible and agile network by immediately adapting to government orders and civil aviation directives around its network and has been responsive to continuous changes and updates regarding operations to and from its network destinations. Recently, Gulf Air has received APEX's Five Star Major Official Airline Rating; an award based solely on certified passengers' feedback. In addition, Gulf Air has also received the Skytrax Five Star COVID-19 Airline Safety Rating after a vigorous audit by Skytrax Research that took place between November and December 2021. The rating comes as a testament to the success of Gulf Air's operations in flying safely throughout the pandemic and enhancing its airport and onboard protocols to combat the spread of COVID-19. The airline receives this recognition by providing the highest standards to customers and staff whilst maintaining its boutique strategy to deliver its renowned Arabian hospitality.

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Cham Wings Airlines may soon increase flights to Pakistan

“The initial response of Cham Wings Airlines turnaround flights from Damascus to Karachi and back has been very encouraging. We are confident that the airline will soon increase its flights to Pakistan. A proposal will be submitted to our principals in this regard.”

This was stated by Shabbir Ali Dharsi, the Chairman of KN Aviation (Pvt) Limited, the passenger and cargo GSA of Cham Wings Airlines in Pakistan, while speaking to this correspondent in Karachi recently. It may be pointed out Shabbir Ali Dharsi currently also holds the position of Adviser to CEO Iraqi Airways for commercial and financial matters. “Every month I will spend 20 days in Baghdad and 10 days in Pakistan,” he said.

Elaborating his point of increase in flights of Cham Wings he said, “For passenger traffic from Pakistan to Syria and the neighboring region there is lot of movement of pilgrims who go to Damascus, Najaf, Baghdad, Erbil,



Mr. Shabbir Ali Chairman KN Aviation GSA Cham Wings Airlines

Mashad and Tehran etc. Cargo traffic too can be increased due to our growing network in the Gulf, Middle East and elsewhere. With our direct flights and

connections available this existing potential can be easily tapped.”

The privately owned airline of Syria, Cham Wings commenced operations to Pakistan on December 15, 2021 with once a week A320 aircraft turnaround flight from Damascus to Karachi and back. Besides the Chairman, the GSA's Board of Directors includes an experienced team led by Sajjad Dharsi CEO, Director Commercial Mohsin A. Dharsi and Country Head Tariq Salimullah. The GSA has offices at Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Sialkot, Faisalabad and Multan.

Commenting on facilitating the passengers he said that one month visa was conveniently available for pilgrims and tourists. He emphasized that the airline had an excellent safety record and reputation of good passenger and cargo services.

The ground handling agent of Cham Wings Airlines in Pakistan is Shaheen Airport Services who are equipped with the largest and most refined equipment.



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IATA welcomes ICAO Health Master List

The International Air Transport Association welcomed the creation by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) of a global directory of public keys required for authentication of health credentials. The directory called the Health Master List (HML) will make a significant contribution to the global recognition and verification (interoperability) of government issued health credentials.

A public key enables third parties to verify that a QR code displayed on a health credential is authentic and valid. The HML is a compilation of public key certificates signed by ICAO and regularly updated as more health proofs are issued and new public keys are required. Its implementation will ease the global recognition of health credentials outside of the jurisdiction in which they were issued.

“For international travel today, it is critical that COVID-19 health passes can be efficiently verified outside of their country of issuance. While the keys for verification are available individually, the creation of a directory will significantly cut complexity, simplify operations and improve trust in the verification process. We encourage all states to submit their public health keys to the HML,” said Willie Walsh, IATA’s Director General.

The sharing of public keys used to perform this verification does not involve any exchange of or access to personal information.

The HML is available on the ICAO website. All states can upload their public keys and download those of other governments.

Through a pilot project associated with the HML, private sector providers of solutions for governments to verify health credentials will also be able access these keys. This will help facilitate the broadest coverage of health certificates in their offerings as international travel continues to ramp-up. IATA will participate in this pilot program to support the deployment of the IATA Travel Pass.

A Step Forward for One ID

The air transport industry’s interest in this type of directory goes beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

“COVID-19 Health Certificates must be removed as we progress towards overall travel normalization and industry recovery. But we must retain and build on



the operational experience of verifying certificates globally. That includes securely sharing access to public keys with private sector solution providers. This will help to drive progress for contactless verification of traveler identities for which similar keys are needed. We cannot under-estimate how

important this will be for the implementation of One ID which has the potential to dramatically simplify travel,” said Walsh.

One ID uses digital identity management and biometric technologies to streamline travel by eliminating repetitive checks of paper documents. The contactless checking of travel health credentials is advancing the experience needed to operationalize One ID. The challenge is the same: universal recognition of verified digital credentials irrespective of the jurisdiction in which they were issued, or the standard used. The successful sharing of public keys to verify COVID-19 health certificates will demonstrate that similar keys for digital identity documents can also be securely and efficiently be collected and shared, including with private sector solution providers.

Metro bus service for airport to start on March 23

The commission tasked with revising the master plan of Islamabad was informed on Friday 21 Jan. that the Capital Development Authority (CDA) will launch the metro bus service from Peshawar Mor to Islamabad International Airport (IIA) under interim arrangements on March 23.

The commission held a meeting with CDA Chairman Amer Ali Ahmed in the chair. The meeting was informed that the CDA had already placed orders with an international company which will provide the buses in March.

The automated security and command and control system for ticketing will be made operational after six months. However, the commission was told that through a manual security and ticketing system the CDA will start the service on March 23. The CDA will soon open bids for awarding contract for the IT and security system.

Meanwhile, a press release issued by the CDA said besides members of the commission, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on CDA Affairs Ali Nawaz Awan also attended the meeting. It was decided that Mr Awan would be the permanent member of the commission from now.

The CDA management also presented a traffic management plan for Islamabad.

The commission was informed that under the smart traffic management system, non-motorised transport would be

promoted in the city. Under this plan, cycling lanes would be provided along all highways to make Islamabad a cycling- and pedestrian-friendly city.

Walkways will be completed and crossings along highways will be marked in addition to elimination of encroachments from roadsides.

In addition to ensuring the installation of road furniture, places will be marked on all highways for road signs for pedestrians. A consultant for the smart traffic management system is also being engaged.

The use of carpool and public transport service would be promoted under the smart traffic management system.

The meeting was informed that two parking plazas will be constructed in Blue Area and one each in F-8 Markaz, F-10 Markaz, G-9 Markaz and in I-8 Markaz for which sites have been allotted.

In addition, spaces will be allocated in the city to further improve the parking system. In addition, an efficient parking system and culture will be promoted in Islamabad.

The meeting was also informed that work on a bus service in the capital had been started and in the pilot phase the service would be launched on three routes - Soan Garden to Faisal Masjid, Bhara Kahu to Faiz Ahmed Faiz Metro Station and Tarnol Railway Station to N5 Metro Bus Station.

Emirates signs MoU for Spanish tourism push



The agreement comes as Spain seeks to revive its travel and tourism industry, which represented about 14% of the country's GDP before the pandemic.

Dubai-based Emirates has partnered with the Spanish tourism institute Turespaña to help drive trade and tourism to Spain.

The two parties signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to develop closer ties and explore the potential for further connectivity. The agreement includes trade familiarization trips, workshops and marketing campaigns.

Emirates began serving Madrid (MAD) in 2010 and Barcelona (BCN) two years later. The carrier also added a Dubai-Mexico City (MEX) route in 2019, flying via Barcelona.

"Emirates launched operations to Spain more than 12 years ago and the country remains an important market in our global network," Emirates divisional SVP of international affairs Majid Al Mualla said.

"We're very happy to be exploring mutually beneficial initiatives that will drive tourism to Spain, and also offer Emirates more opportunities to serve the market."

Emirates currently offers 10 flights per week to Barcelona, five of which continue to Mexico City and nine services per week to Madrid using Airbus A380 aircraft. The airline also has interline agreements in place with Air Europa, Iberia and Vueling for onward connections within Spain.

Spain's travel and tourism industry was worth \$200 billion in 2019, equivalent to about 14.3% of the national GDP. However, the country has been hit hard by the pandemic, with the annual number of tourists falling from almost 84 million in 2019 to 18.9 million in 2020.

Although the sector fared better last year with 31.1 million arrivals, the figure nevertheless represents a drop of 63% compared with pre-pandemic levels. Spain's government had previously hoped to see 45 million foreign visitors in 2021.

"We are happy to sign this MoU between Emirates and Turespaña to further collaborate on improving the connectivity with Spain," said Daniel

Rosado Bayon, director of Spanish tourism in the GCC and Iran. "We are starting to see a recovery of the routes to Spain and we have agreed to work closer to promote our outstanding destination."

Meanwhile, Emirates has confirmed it will make a full return of passenger services to and from Casablanca (CMN)

from Feb. 8. The return of the Moroccan city marks a full restoration of the carrier's pre-pandemic African network, including 21 cities spread across the continent.

Flights between Dubai (DXB) and Casablanca will operate daily using Boeing 777-300ERs, departing from the emirate at 7.30 a.m. and arriving in Casablanca at 1.15 p.m. The return service departs at 3.05 p.m. and returns to Dubai at 1.30 a.m. the following day.

Etihaad receives IATA IEnvA stage 2 accreditation

Etihaad Airways successfully completed IATA's Environmental Assessment stage 2 and received accreditation in four key operational areas. The areas include facilities management, flight operations, Etihad technical division and Etihad Catering Services.

The IATA Environmental Assessment (IEnvA) program is a blueprint for airlines to achieve sustainability in all air and ground operations. It is an evaluation system designed to independently assess and improve the environmental management of an airline.

Stage 2 represents the highest level of IEnvA compliance and requires an airline to demonstrate ongoing environmental performance improvement. Etihad has committed to achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 and halving its 2019 emission levels by 2035.

Mariam Al Qubaisi, Head of Sustainability and Excellence Division, Etihad Airways, said, "Our world is becoming more environmentally conscious by the day. Etihad is proud to play a major part in reducing the carbon impact of the aviation industry, in the UAE and around the world. We have recorded many great achievements, from our first ecoFlight from Abu Dhabi to Brisbane in 2019, to the recent launch of our Sustainability-focused loyalty program, Conscious Choices, to reward guests for making sustainable choices when they travel and in their everyday life."

CEIV Certification

The United Arab Emirates' national carrier is also received IATA's CEIV Live Animals, CEIV Fresh and CEIV Pharma certifications.

The certification was awarded following an IATA-led assessment of Etihad Cargo's dedicated Live Animals program for animal transportation, SkyStables, equine transportation, products and its logistics' audit checklist to ensure compliance with standards,



Etihad's 787 Greenliner sitting on the ramp prior to the 2021 Dubai Airshow

requirements, and Live Animals Regulations (LAR).

In addition, the certification endorses and accredits Etihad's services for the transportation of live animals reinforcing its position as a prominent international air cargo carrier and reaffirming its commitment to animal welfare.

The key benefits of CEIV Live Animals certification include improving animal welfare and safety through appropriate quality and risk management and enhancing standardization and professionalism in the handling and transportation of live animals in a multimodal environment. The certification also enforces compliance with the IATA LAR, elevating staff competency through efficient and robust training programs, and enabling increased collaboration among stakeholders and certified trade lanes.

Brendan Sullivan, IATA's Global Head of Cargo, said, "Handling and transporting live animals is challenging. Each type of animal has its own specific requirements. Achieving CEIV Live Animals certification means Etihad Cargo's customers can benefit from extra assurance that their precious cargo is in safe hands. We congratulate the airline on becoming the first in the Middle East to complete the suite of CEIV certifications Pharma, Fresh and Live Animals."

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Saudia launches direct flight from AIUla to Paris



SAUDIA Launched Direct Flight from Paris to AIUla, Adding Uganda and Thailand

Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAUDIA) has launched a direct non-stop flight linking Europe with the historical city of AIUla in Saudi Arabia. The flight marked the first direct flight from Europe to the Saudi tourist destination, dubbed 'the world's largest living museum'.

The first direct flight by Saudi Arabia's national airline from Paris to the historical AIUla city touched down on Friday night 28 January with 75 passengers on board.

SAUDIA's Boeing 787 Dreamliner departed from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport and arrived at AIUla International Airport at 10:30pm, with flying time of 4 hours 42 minutes.



Guests onboard the Saudia flight included ex-Olympic Champion show-jumper Pierre Durand; Phillip Jones, chief destination management and marketing Officer, Royal Commission for AIUla; and Gerard Mestrallet, executive chairman of the French Agency for AIUla Development. They were welcomed at the AIUla airport by Saudi officials including AIUla airport director Abdulwahab Bokhari.

Hazem Sonbol, VP of Sales, inaugurated the first flight from #Paris to #AIUla in the presence of #SAUDIA representatives Alaa Al-Jafri and Osama Al-Balushi in #France pic.twitter.com/6vAEB5sPhA

The weekly non-stop flights will operate until March 27, when the ongoing Winter at Tantora festival comes to an

end. The winter Tantora festival features an array of offerings spanning music, arts, fashion, food and wellness.

AIUla has been establishing itself not only as a historical destination in recent years, but also a cultural one, with a host of international artists performing at outdoor concerts and at the majestic

mirrored Maraya Concert Hall.

United States to deploy 5th generation fighter jets to UAE



The United States will deploy 5th generation fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates to assist against Houthi attacks.

Following a discussion with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin condemned the recent Houthi attacks against the UAE. The attacks resulted in civilian casualties and threatened US forces stationed at Al Dhafra Air Base.

The Pentagon chief did not specify whether the fighters would be F-35 Lightning IIs or F-22 Raptors but said they would be "a clear signal that the United States stands with the UAE as a long-standing strategic partner". In addition, the US Navy guided missile destroyer USS Cole will also be sent into the region.

On January 17, 2022, a drone attack carried out by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi movement near Abu Dhabi International Airport (AUH) killed three civilians. On January 30, 2022, a ballistic missile was intercepted by UAE forces while Israeli President Isaac Herzog was on an official visit to Abu Dhabi.

Pilots at Qatar Airways say the airline is under-counting their work hours and ignoring complaints of fatigue



Pilots at Qatar Airways say the state-owned airline is under-counting their work hours and ignoring complaints of fatigue a safety breach that hurts staff health and risks passenger lives.

The testimony demonstrates how worker abuse extends even to the Gulf nation's high-skill industries, as Qatar Airways tries to minimise crew downtime.

"I fell asleep during the descent with 400 passengers on board," recalled Erik of one such 20-hour flight that he landed safely at the carrier's Doha base.

"You can't do anything. Your body is just screaming for rest. You feel the pain inside of your chest, and you're unable to keep your eyes open," the first officer told the Thomson Reuters Foundation, using a pseudonym so he could speak more freely.

Erik and six other flight crew members said the airline's work hours were driving them into exhaustion and that managers were refusing to give them enough rest.

Many did not even file fatigue reports, fearing additional scrutiny from an airline that made thousands of staff redundant in the pandemic. Others said their reports were ignored or didn't get rest to match the shift worked.

A spokesperson said the company was engaging with employees "to ensure that the rest time and rostering needs of our Flight Crew team are strictly balanced with the airline's operational requirements, especially given the unique challenges facing the global commercial aviation sector."

The airline said it was working to put "the most rigorous fatigue risk management programme in place."

British Airways to resume Sydney-London route in March

An artist's impression of a Boeing 777-9X in British Airways livery. (Boeing)

British Airways will be kickstarting its Sydney to London route again from March, after a two-year pause due to the pandemic.

The news comes only days after the Australian federal government announced it would reopen to fully vaccinated tourists and visa holders from 21 February.

It will mark the first time the country has fully eased its international border restrictions since these were introduced in March 2020.

The first flight, BA15, is scheduled to land in Sydney on 29 March at 6:10am local time, after departing from London Heathrow on 27 March at 9:25pm.

The returning flight, BA16, will leave Sydney at 3:50pm on 29 March and land in London Heathrow on 30 March at 5:10am.

According to data from ch-aviation, this schedule will operate five times weekly between London Heathrow, Singapore and Sydney, and will increase to a daily service from 1 April.

All services will be operated on a Boeing 787-9 aircraft, or a Boeing 777-300(ER), according to the schedule.

PROMOTED CONTENT

"We can't wait to welcome our customers back on board our Sydney to London flights and we will be honoured to play our part in reuniting families and friends with their loved ones after such a long time apart," said Noella Ferns, British Airways head of sales, Asia-Pacific.

"The safety of our customers and colleagues has always been at the heart of everything we do. We know some customers won't have flown for a long time, and we can assure them we have a range of COVID-19 measures in place to provide stress and hassle-free travel."

While British Airways returns one of its most popular routes in Australia, Qantas is still weighing on whether the flag carrier will be able to begin its popular Perth-London route soon.

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CEO Alan Joyce said the Perth to London route was supposed to kickstart again early this year but is now unsure as Premier Mark McGowan is keeping the

borders shut until further notice.

Western Australia introduced a slew of new COVID-19 protocols, including cutting the quarantine length for international and interstate arrivals to seven days, and increasing its arrivals cap.

Emirates bolsters A380 capacity to Australia as reopened for tourists

An Emirates A380-861, A6-EDE, as shot by Victor Pody.

Emirates has announced that it will double its capacity on its Dubai-Sydney route, increasing to two return services per day on its iconic Airbus A380 aircraft.

From 1 March, the Dubai-based airline will increase its number of return services from seven to 14 per week, in light of the Australian government's announcement to reopen its international borders to tourists.

The new additional flights mean Emirates can fly over 1,000 people into the NSW capital per day.

It comes after Prime Minister Scott Morrison this week announced Australia's borders are set to finally reopen to fully vaccinated tourists and visa holders from 21 February, marking the first time the country has fully eased its international border restrictions since these were introduced in March 2020.

Flight EK412 will depart Dubai daily at 10:15am local time, arriving in Sydney the following day at 7am, while EK414 departs Dubai daily at 2am local time, and lands in Sydney at 10:30pm.

The return flight from Sydney to Dubai is EK415, which departs Sydney at 6am local time, and lands in Dubai at 1 : 2 0 p m .

Earlier this month, Emirates announced it had also resumed A380 services to and from Melbourne, replacing its Boeing 777-300ER on daily flights between Melbourne and Dubai, after first reinstating its daily A380 services to Sydney in December.

PROMOTED CONTENT

Emirates said its ever-popular flagship A380 now services a total of 28

global destinations and offers an additional 50 per cent capacity over its 777.

In Australia, on top of its daily Sydney and Melbourne services, Emirates is also currently performing five services per week to Brisbane and three services per week to Perth, both on its Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

Barry Brown, Emirates divisional vice-president for Australasia last week highlighted that 2022 marks Emirates' 25th year of service to Australia, following its first flight between Melbourne and Dubai in 1996.

A woman claims she has been raped in business class on an United Airlines flight to Heathrow



A woman was allegedly raped on board a flight from the US to the UK, leading to the arrest of another passenger.

The man allegedly sexually assaulted the woman in business class while other passengers were sleeping on the flight from Newark, New Jersey to Heathrow, London on January 31.

They were seated in separate rows on the flight.

The woman reported the incident to cabin crew, who then called police ahead of the plane's landing.

The 40-year-old man was led off the plane and arrested upon landing.

"Police at Heathrow Airport were alerted to an incident on an inbound flight," a Metropolitan Police spokesperson said.

"Officers met the aircraft on arrival and arrested a 40-year-old man on suspicion of rape."

The man was later released pending further investigations.

It's understood the pair were unknown to each other but had been seen talking and drinking together in the lounge area.

The woman, also aged 40, is being supported by specialist officers.

Lufthansa Cargo continues its support of Cargo Human Care



CHC was founded in May 2007 by Lufthansa Cargo staff members and doctors from Germany / Unbureaucratic and on-going help for people in need in Kenya.

Cargo Human Care (CHC) was founded 10 years ago by employees of Lufthansa Cargo and doctors in Germany with the aim of providing unbureaucratic and ongoing help for the poorest parts of the population in Kenya. Medical care and education are the pillars of its commitment. Today the organization runs a children's home for 120 orphans, a medical centre where 50 German doctors work on a regular basis, and a young people's home that offers vocational training for school-leavers of the children's home. Lufthansa Cargo has supported this project right from the start and provides flight tickets for doctors and free transport capacities for medical equipment among other things.

CHC's commitment at a glance

CHC's hitherto over 200



sponsorships are one of the most important pillars of its development work. Through their regular donations the sponsors enable solid, reliable school and career training and medical care for the children, teenagers and young people in CHC's environment. In 2016, the sponsors gave a total of €108,000. Over the past ten years their donations totaled €3.5m. This ensures educational institutions with good quality standards, extracurricular assistance and support by social workers, as well as medical care for those with chronic illnesses.

The Mothers' Mercy Home (MMH) is a children's home for orphans in the north of Nairobi. It was founded in 2001 by women of the Anglican Church, and CHC

added a new building in 2008. There Cargo Human Care provides a home for 120 orphans with the help of donations and sponsorships.

During their career training, up to 24 young people live in the John Kaheni



Manchester Airport unveils new aviation education center for future generations

Manchester Airport (MAN) in the UK has unveiled a new interactive education center aimed at inspiring future generations about a career in aviation.

Called AeroZone, the center is part of the airport's £1 billion (\$1.3 billion) transformation program and will offer curriculum-linked sessions focused on the wide range of careers available in aviation for students between the ages of four and 18. It is expected to welcome more than 5,000 students each year.

AeroZone was unveiled on February 7, 2022 by Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham and Manchester Airport's managing director Karen Smart. They were joined by 15 schoolchildren from Outwood Primary School in Heald Green, who were then treated to a tour of the new facility.

AeroZone forms part of the education program at Manchester Airport, as outlined in the airport's corporate social responsibility strategy. According to the airport, it has committed to ensuring "opportunity for all" as one of the strategy's key objectives, with a pledge to support the education of at least 60,000 young people over the next five years.

Inside AeroZone, a careers wall showcases the wide range of jobs available in the aviation industry as well as advice about how to access them. Manchester Airport crew will also appear as guest speakers, giving students the chance to ask

Residence community, named after an MMH orphan who passed away. All CHC career training activities outside the MMH are coordinated there by CHC social workers and external trainers. The development of personal skills, communication coaching, career orientation and interview training, coordination of internships and IT knowledge are important elements.

The Cargo Human Care Medical Centre was opened in 2009 to provide a medical care service to people in need in the vicinity of the orphanage. In addition to treatment rooms, it has a laboratory and pharmacy. 50 Specialist doctors from Germany regularly volunteer their services at the clinic for approximately one week at a time supporting a local team of twelve people. In 2016, they helped around 7,000 destitute patients by providing over 25,000 treatments.

CHC also continues to help around 6,000 people in four villages of the Marsabit region in the north of Kenya by raising funds and providing aid in the fight against hunger.



questions. The design of the center, which includes a mix of classroom space and interactive zones, looks like the inside of an airplane, and includes a cabin with seats, a cockpit and a flight simulator.

"Providing clear paths for young people to get into our brilliant aviation industry is absolutely crucial as it bounces back from the pandemic and faces up to the challenges of climate change. We want the next wave of talent to think big and the Aerozone at Manchester Airport gives pupils of all ages the chance to do that," UK Aviation minister Robert Courts said in a statement.

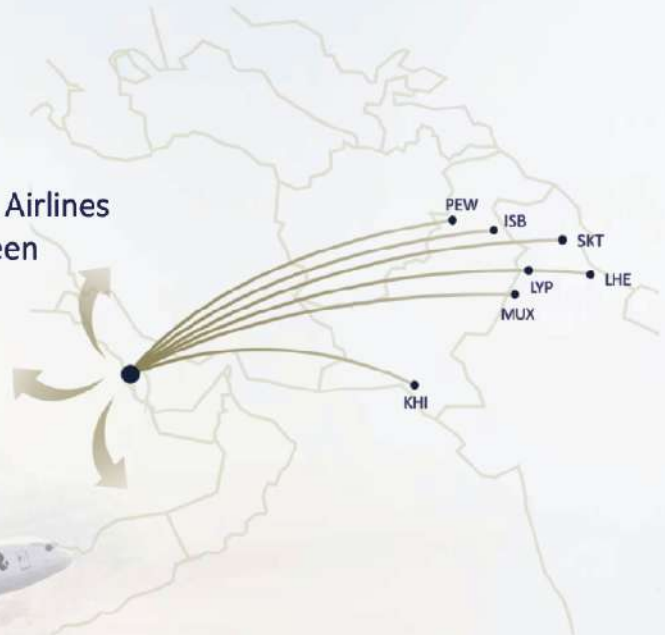
Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham said, "I am sure that a visit to AeroZone will be an eye-opener for the young people who experience it, and I am glad to see Manchester Airport, as a major employer in this region, proactively highlighting the opportunities available here and encouraging the next generation to be ambitious."



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GF785 GF787	PESHAWAR (PEW)	TUE, THU
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Post-Brexit: What happens with UK/EU pilot licences?

Before Brexit, training to become a pilot meant that all UK and EU pilot licences were being issued under the EASA (European Aviation Safety Agency) authority. It allowed pilots with UK licences to fly for both – the UK and European airlines. However, after Brexit, many questions started arising regarding the impact the UK leaving EASA had on pilot training and licence issuance.

The UK leaving EASA

When the UK left the EU on 31 December 2020, it also left EASA. On 1 January 2021, all UK-issued EASA licences became the UK only, and the UK CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) was proclaimed the sole Authority.

What does it mean? It means that the pilots who received their licences before that date by the UK CAA could no longer exercise the EASA privileges. In contrast, licences issued by another EASA member state by the end of 2020 kept granting these privileges but deprived their holders of the right to operate UK-registered aircraft.

Obtaining an EASA licence based on a UK CAA licence

It was possible to transfer a UK CAA-issued licence to another EASA member state up until the end of 2020. Thousands of professional pilots used this opportunity and transferred their EASA UK part FCL licences to an EU country (according to some sources, Austria was topping the list).

In addition, students who started their course in a UK-approved ATO before 1 January 2021 had a possibility, before that date, to transfer their training to a training organisation under the oversight of an EASA member state.

Obtaining a UK licence based on an EASA licence

EASA licence holders wishing to gain UK licences can do it by 1 January 2023. After this date, the UK will officially stop accepting EASA licences.

According to the UK CAA website, „From 1 January 2023, the UK will no longer be able to recognise EASA-issued certificates, approvals and licences for the operations and/or maintenance of UK registered aircraft. The CAA is encouraging holders of EASA approvals and personnel licences to begin the process of obtaining their UK equivalents now by applying to the CAA as soon as possible.“

Benefits of an EASA licence

Some of the most significant

advantages of acquiring an EASA pilot licence may happen to be the cost of training and a broader spectrum of job opportunities.

While in the UK, the ATPL Integrated typically costs over £110-120k, in the EU, the price is considerably lower. Also, far more EU-registered commercial aircraft exist than G-registered. Leaving aside who is or isn't recruiting, statistically, the chances of getting a job are higher.

So which one to choose – UK CAA or EASA?

The most accurate answer to this is probably „it depends.“ Ask yourself questions: „Where do I have the right to live and work?“, „Where do I want to be based during my career?“, „What airlines am I interested in working for?“

If your aim is a UK-based airline, such as easyJet or British Airways, you will need a UK CAA-issued licence. If you wish to fly for an airline registered in an EU Member State, such as Wizz Air, Vueling or easyJet, you will require an EASA licence (although some easyJet's operations require a UK CAA licence).

BAA Training issues certificates of training that are accepted in all EASA member states. With it, you can reach out to the relevant National Aviation Authority (NAA) to acquire a pilot licence.

In conclusion, remember that you can always convert your licence if you get a job proposal elsewhere. It is because EASA and UK are both ICAO licences. So happy training and later on – happy flying with whichever licence you get!

Singapore approves Korean Air-Asiana Airlines merger

The Competition and Consumer Commission of Singapore (CCCS) has approved Korean Air's combination with Asiana Airlines. Following its assessment, the CCCS has concluded that Korean Air's acquisition of Asiana Airlines will not infringe Singapore's Competition Act. Singapore's competition authority conducted a public consultation in July last year and found that the merged entity is unlikely to raise ticket prices due to the



high degree of competition from competitor airlines such as Singapore Airlines in the passenger business. In the cargo business, the authority also concluded that the merger would not reduce competition due to the significant pressure from existing and This content is restricted.

Turkish Airlines begins using SAF on its flights



Turkish Airlines has started using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) on its flights.

Aviation fuel obtained from sustainable sources was used for the first time on the TK1823 flight that departed from Istanbul Airport for Paris Charles De Gaulle Airport on 2 February.

SAF that will be used for Turkish Airlines has 87% less greenhouse gas compared to fossil fuels.

Turkish Airlines chairman Dr Ahmet Bolat stated: “We are the airline that flies to more countries than any other in the world. This also means we are the airline that introduces its guests to richest biodiversity as well.”

“We conduct our work towards achieving sustainability with that mentality and responsibility. Our first flight that uses sustainable resources is a part of that vision. We believe that future generations will continue to be able to discover the world and its preserved beauty with Turkish Airlines.

UMA 48th Pakistan open Golf Championship 2022



UMA 48th Pakistan Open Golf Championship was recently organized by Pakistan Golf Federation. Event held from 26th January to 30th January. His Excellency Imran Ismail, Governor Sindh as Chief Guest along with Mr. Sohail Shams (CEO UMA), Lieutenant General Mian Muhammad Hilal Hussain, HI(M), (Retd) President Golf federation presented award to Mr. Muhammad Shabbir registered Title victory in the tournament which concluded at the Karachi Golf Club Golf Course on Sunday 30th January. PGF promoted amateurs and professionals both Golf players throughout this tournament. UMA as Title sponsor contributed generously in the completion of this successful even. Mr. Sohail shams (CEO United Marine Agencies) presenting award to the tournament winners.

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Air logistics helping to drive economic growth

The rapid change in retail and trade networks caused by the global pandemic has highlighted how logistics - and air logistics in particular - is crucial to the economy.

The first wave of lockdowns brought an urgent need for personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, gowns, and face shields, as well as sanitising products. Given that minimal stock was held in individual countries, this meant emergency supplies had to be sent across the world as express cargo air freight.

These expedited shipments were important to protect citizens in the first wave of the pandemic. Express air logistics is not just about greater speed and convenience, but also fast and efficient cross-border customs clearance – areas where it pays to have experts of specialisation on call.

E-commerce growth driven by safety, convenience

E-commerce had previously been growing at a healthy pace, but it surged in popularity even further during the lockdowns. Ordering online and having the product delivered to your door was the smart option for those focused on their health and safety, and in many cases courier delivery was also practical for people stuck in their homes.

For many, e-commerce became their preferred method of shopping.

Connecting businesses on the continent to new markets, opportunities

On a broader scale, air express has a major role to play in helping to drive economic growth in Africa.

As an African Union trade plan notes: "A key feature of Africa's trade ... is its high external orientation and relatively low level of intra - regional trade."

The proposed African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) trade pact, identified by the World Bank as a major opportunity for countries to boost growth, reduce poverty, and improve economic inclusion.

If implemented fully, it's projected that the trade pact could boost regional income by 7% or \$450bn, speed up wage growth for women, and lift 30 million people out of extreme poverty by 2035.

This kind of trade-driven growth will be important to not only help African economies recover from the impact during the pandemic, but provide new markets for business growth, a particular opportunity for the micro and small business sector which make up around 80% of Africa's business environment, around 44 million micro, small, and medium enterprises in sub-Saharan Africa



Air express delivering relief to communities in need alone.

The World Bank says⁵ that for this to happen, it "will require a determined effort to reduce all trade costs". This means simpler trade legislation, but also logistics that is straightforward and efficient.

A clear choice for speed, special handling, or specialised products

Air freight will play a powerful role. In fact, it already does. According to Iata, despite lockdowns and border closures across the continent, Africa's air cargo volumes rose 1% during 2020.

Today, air cargo transports around \$5.6t worth of goods – around 35% of world trade by value, but representing 1% by volume. When speed and service are important, air freight is the choice.

Air express is perfectly placed to support businesses from major e-commerce platforms to small businesses looking to expand to their first cross-border market. In turn, this access stimulates growth and local economies – here in South Africa, and across the continent.

Partnering with an experienced courier and logistics organisation can make entries to new markets work on your terms, and business looking to trade across Africa and the rest of the world should consider air freight and logistics as an essential part of their growth strategy.

PIA special flights to bring cricketers from Karachi to Lahore

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has arranged to operate three special flights to bring cricket players, officials and broadcasters from Karachi to Lahore as the first flight with players and officials arrived at Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore from Karachi on Monday 7 Feb. A spokesman for PIA said that the first special flight PK-6312 arrived from Karachi on Monday at 6pm. He said the remaining two special flights would reach Lahore on Tuesday afternoon.

Boeing 777 and Airbus aircraft are being used for the special flights by the national flag carrier.

ATR runs test flights with 100% SAF in one engine



Regional aircraft manufacturer ATR announced that it has successfully performed a series of ground and flight tests on its ATR 72-600 prototype aircraft, cumulating seven flight hours with 100 percent sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in one engine. The aircraft was powered by Neste MY Sustainable Aviation Fuel produced from 100 percent renewable waste and residues raw materials, such as used cooking oil.

These tests are part of the 100 percent SAF certification process of ATR aircraft. In September 2021, ATR announced a collaboration with Braathens Regional Airlines and Neste to accelerate this certification. The three companies are working closely together, targeting a demonstration flight in 2022 on a Braathens Regional Airlines' ATR aircraft. The aim is to complete the certification process of ATR aircraft for 100 percent SAF by 2025.

Sustainable aviation fuels are a key pillar of the aviation industry's decarbonisation strategy, with an immediate impact in reducing CO2 emissions. It is expected that an ATR flying on a typical regional route with 100 percent SAF in both engines would reduce CO2 emissions by 82 percent.

Stefano Bortoli, ATR's chief executive officer, said "As the regional market leader, our aim is to lead the change to decarbonisation. Already emitting 40 percent less CO2 than similarly-sized regional jets, ATR turboprops are the ideal platform to offer significant advances in the reduction of CO2 emissions. The achievement of this great milestone shows that we are fully committed to making the use of 100 percent SAF possible and helping our customers meeting their objectives to provide even more sustainable air links – not in 2035 or 2050 but in the coming years."

Air cargo remains volatile as 5G 'risks' raise new industry fears



AIR CARGO prices cooled substantially on Asia outbound lanes in January, after a very pronounced peak season, reveals Bruce Chan, vice-president of the transportation and logistics sector at investment banking company Stifel.

At the same time, the average US dollar charge per kilo of airfreight was still close to 2.5-to-three times higher than the pre-pandemic marketplace, latest analysis from the Baltic Air Freight Index (BAI) shows, writes Thelma Etim.

“On the Asia-to-North America trade lane, rates cooled sequentially from December by 14 per cent out of Hong Kong and by 27 per cent out of Shanghai Pudong,” Stifel’s Chan notes. “But respectively these were still 70 and 54 per cent higher than they were in an already-tight January 2021.

“On the Asia-to-Europe side, rates cooled by 17 and 21 per cent sequentially out of Hong Kong and Shanghai, but were again up around 50 per cent each on a year-over-year basis,” he points out.

Meanwhile, US consumer demand remains strong, inventories remain stretched, e-commerce volumes continue to increase, and industrial demand continues to recover, according to Chan.

“On the supply side, capacity, congestion and labour availability continue to drive shortages across modes – including ocean freight, which is still pushing ocean-to-air conversion,” he observes. “The spread between ocean and air cargo rates is still historically narrow and critical process goods – including semi-conductors and industrial parts – are still moving on a ‘need-it-now’ basis,” he points out.

As if the pandemic is not enough, the air cargo industry has many other current sensitive global issues to contend with, such as the contentious Russian/Ukraine border situation and also widespread concerns in the USA over the possibility of 5G wireless C-band interference of on-board aircraft altimeter devices.

Stephen M Dickson, administrator of the USA’s Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), stated at a hearing before the House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and

Infrastructure Subcommittee on Aviation on 3 February 2022: “We are confident we will work through this issue safely with minimal disruptions, but we acknowledge that some altimeters – especially older [aircraft] models [still] used by certain segments of the aviation industry – may not receive approval as being safe in the presence of 5G emissions and interference, and may need to be replaced.

“The strengthening partnership across the aviation and telecommunications industries and the federal government has enabled substantial progress. In coming weeks, FAA will move quickly to use testing data and other insights to further refine our [aircraft] models and safely enable additional 5G deployment,” he added.

Aerospace Industries Association, Airlines for America which represents United Airlines, FedEx and other major passenger and cargo carriers, and the USA’s Air Line Pilots Association are among the range of bodies which contributed to that hearing.

Meanwhile, a November 2020 document from the International Civil Aviation Organisation responding to the ICAO Flight Operations panel entitled: ‘Problem Statement – 5G interference with radar altimeter frequency band’, stated: “Radar altimeters (RA), operating at 4.2-4.4 GHz, are the only sensors onboard a civil aircraft which provide a direct measurement of the clearance height of the aircraft over the terrain or other obstacles.

“The RA systems’ input is required and used by many aircraft systems when above ground level (AGL) is below 2500 ft. Any failures or interruptions of these sensors can therefore lead to incidents with catastrophic outcomes, potentially resulting in multiple fatalities,” it stated.

The radar altimeters also play a crucial role in providing situational awareness to the flight crew. “Measurements from the radar altimeters are also used by Automatic Flight Guidance and Control Systems during instrument approaches, and to control the display of information from other systems, such as Predictive Wind Shear, the Engine-Indicating and Crew-Alerting System, and Electronic Centralised Aircraft Monitoring systems, to the flight crew,” it pointed out.

“There is a major risk that 5G telecommunications systems in the 3.7–3.98 GHz band will cause harmful interference to radar altimeters on all types of civil aircraft – including

commercial transport airplanes; business, regional and general aviation airplanes; and both transport and general aviation helicopters.

“If there is no proper mitigation, this risk has the potential for broad impacts to aviation operations in the United States as well as in other regions where the 5G network is being implemented next to the 4.2-4.4 GHz frequency band,” it warned.

European agency refuses to lift Pakistan flight curbs

The national flag carrier’s hopes of restarting flights to key European destinations suffered a setback on Saturday 22 Jan. after the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) conveyed that it would conduct its own evaluation before allowing resumption of flights from Pakistan.

In a letter to Pakistan International Airlines Chief Executive Officer Arshad Malik, EASA Executive Director Patrick Ky said that although Pakistan was able to remove the safety concerns raised by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), this was only part of the process that would lead to a lifting of restrictions on Pakistani airlines.

The EASA letter states, “The closure of this significant safety concern was an important step towards a potential lifting of the suspension of your third country operator authorisation”.

However, it notes that “EASA shall conduct an audit of the operator prior to lifting the suspension. Since deficiencies in state oversight were a contributor to the suspension decision, such [an] audit will have to include an assessment to verify if these deficiencies have been properly addressed and corrected.”

Pakistani carriers had been restricted from flying to EU states in July 2020 when the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) suspended Pakistan International Airlines’ (PIA) authorisation to operate flights to EU member states.

In a press conference on Jan 6, 2022, Aviation Minister Ghulam Sarwar Khan had claimed that Pakistan was writing to EASA – as well as other international aviation bodies – to convey that the safety concerns raised by ICAO had been addressed. He had hoped that flights to important destinations in Europe could be restarted as early as February or March.

In his correspondence with the PIA chief, Mr Ky noted that it was encouraging that “ICAO was able to remove the

significant safety concerns... raised against Pakistan personnel licensing following the on-site Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme activities, performed in Pakistan from Nov 29 to Dec 10, 2021.”

However, he pointed out that since the safety concerns indicated “serious degradation of the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority’s (PCAA) certification and oversight capabilities,” EASA would have to obtain information on the matter when lifting the suspension.

It recalls that following the suspension of PIA’s third country authorization, the EU Commission had entered formal consultations with PCAA and several meetings had taken place. “These discussions revealed the need to address the overall oversight capacity of PCAA,” said the EASA.

EASA also hinted that it would only carry out the audit if Pakistan could guarantee the security of their personnel, and that it would be linked to the situation of the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, PIA spokesperson Abdullah Hafeez Khan told media that PIA was continuously engaged with EASA ever since the suspension of its authorisation in the wake of licensing issues.

According to him, EASA will now conduct a separate audit of the PCAA and PIA before lifting the suspensions.

“At our end, we are fully prepared and have affirmed our availability to EASA to send in their team at the earliest possible instance,” the spokesperson said.

US expands interview waiver eligibility for Pakistani visa holders

The United States Mission to Pakistan has announced the expansion of interview waiver eligibility for Pakistani citizens renewing B1/B2 tourism and business visas at the US embassy in Islamabad and the US consulate general in Karachi.

“Pakistani citizens of ages 60 and older whose B1/B2 visas are valid or have expired within the last 48 months are eligible to participate,” the US embassy said in a press release issued on Monday 7 Feb. This procedural change would improve customer service and enable more efficient processing for renewals of tourism and business visas for qualified and eligible Pakistani citizens, it said.

The B1/B2 visa is a temporary, non-immigrant visa that allows the holder to travel to the United States for business or tourism. An individual on this visa is not permitted to accept employment or work in the United States.

Potentially eligible applicants with scheduled appointments were contacted directly and informed of the option to submit their applications through the new procedure.

However, as required by US law, some eligible visa holders may still be

required to appear at the US embassy or consulate general for interviews after submission of their applications, the statement said.

Applicants may visit the US Travel Docs website to determine if they are eligible for an interview waiver.

Qatar Airways becomes launch customer for Boeing 777X freighter



Qatar Airways livery for the Boeing 777X and the Boeing 737 MAX.

Since June 2021, what was initially thought to be a relatively small dispute between Airbus and Qatar Airways has evolved into a massive legal dispute. Signs of the rift between the two parties gave rise due to the surface pain issues on the airline’s flagship Airbus A350s for both the -900 and -1000 variants, which eventually led to several tossing of blames here and there.

The drift between the two parties showed signs of having been even wider when it was announced that Singapore Airlines, and not Qatar Airways, was going to be the launch customer for the freighter version of the widely-popular Airbus A350 the A350F. As more airline customers started placing their orders, many were left wondering just when Qatar Airways who also stands on the podium for being one of the largest A350 operators would place an order.

Then things probably took a more sour turn when perhaps one of the most shocking turns of events amidst the legal dispute happened. Airbus terminated its contract to sell Qatar Airways 50 Airbus A321neos a massive slap to the airline since it has been one of the most prominent airline customers for the Toulouse, France-based aircraft manufacturing giant.

It eventually led the industry as a whole to wonder what the airline’s next move might have been, either in reconciliation to recover ties with Airbus or to cut even deeper to cease what’s remaining of their relationship.

Big Win for Boeing

It would seem that Qatar Airways has no immediate plans for reconciliation with Airbus, because the airlines placed a huge order with Boeing instead, worth up to a whopping \$20 billion at just list prices for a total of 102 Boeing aircraft. This order

also includes up to 50 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, including 25 confirmed orders for the 737 MAX 10, and 25 options. Additionally, the carrier has orders for up to 50 Boeing 777X freighters, including 34 confirmed orders for the 777-8 freighter and 16 options and finally, two current-generation Boeing 777 freighters.

“Boeing has a long history of building market-leading freighter aircraft and Qatar Airways is honored to have the opportunity to be the launch customer for the 777-8 Freighter, an aircraft which will not only allow us to further enhance our product offering for our customers but also help us meet our objectives to deliver a sustainable future for our business,” Mr. Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways Group Chief Executive, said, in a press release.

This big order is a huge win for Chicago-based Boeing not just in terms of its order books, but also because it has finally landed the first customer for the 777X freighter. On the flip side, this proves to be a huge blow to fellow rival Airbus and is definitely widening the rift between the two disputing parties because Qatar Airways not only found a replacement for those terminated A321neos, but it will also become the launch customer for the 777X freighter.

“We are delighted to launch Boeing’s next great cargo airplane the 777-8 Freighter with Qatar Airways, one of the world’s largest cargo carriers and our partner since the airline began operations 25 years ago,” Boeing Commercial Airplanes President and CEO Stan Deal, said. “Our team is ready to create an airplane that will serve them well for many decades. Qatar Airways’ selection of the efficient 777-8 Freighter is a testament to our commitment to provide freighters with market-leading capacity, reliability, and efficiency.”

Recurring Problems

Good news aside, this big order could eventually backfire on Boeing, especially considering the fact that the passenger version of the highly-anticipated Boeing 777X has not even entered service yet despite having been originally scheduled to arrive by June 2020. Currently, the 777X does not seem to be ready to fly yet as it’s only scheduled to finally fly in late 2023.

PNS Tughril, 10 Sea King helicopters inducted into Navy

Pakistan Navy inducted PNS Tughril, the first of four Type 054-A/P multi-role frigates, and 10 Sea King helicopters at the Pakistan Navy Dockyard here on Monday 24 Jan.

President Dr Arif Alvi was the chief guest on the occasion. Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Mohammed Amjad Khan Niazi received him and a contingent of the Pakistan Navy presented him with the guard of honour.

A contract for the four multi-role frigates (Type 054-A/P) for PN was signed between Pakistan and China in June 2018. PNS Tughril, the lead ship of Type 054-A/P, has been inducted into the PN fleet along with Sea King helicopters gifted by the state of Qatar.

Speaking on the occasion, Admiral Niazi underlined that the induction of PNS Tughril and Sea King helicopters would augment the force in its combating capabilities in safeguarding the territorial



integrity and the maritime interests of Pakistan.

He also elaborated the PN's role in promoting peace and stability in the region through various maritime initiatives.

President Alvi commended the induction of state-of-the-art ship and helicopters in the PN fleet. He expressed satisfaction and confidence that the potent and highly capable fleet and its air arm

would continue promoting peace and stability in line with the government's policy while devotedly guarding national maritime frontiers.

He stressed the need for well-equipped fleet with surface, air and sub-surface platforms to safeguard the sea frontiers under the challenging security environment. He underscored that Pakistan was a land of peace and urged security and stability in the region.

He emphasised that such projects were a manifestation of the trust and mutual cooperation that existed with Pakistan's time-tested friends.

Later, he handed over the traditional ship's scroll and aircraft documents to the commander of Pakistan Fleet.

The ceremony was attended by guests from the embassies of China and Qatar, governor of Sindh and serving/retired officers of the army, navy and air force.

Two US aircraft carriers enter S. China Sea; Taiwan

Two US aircraft carrier groups have entered the disputed South China Sea for training, the Department of Defence said on Monday 24 Jan. as Taiwan complained of a new Chinese air force incursion at the top of the waterway including a fearsome new electronic warfare jet.

The South China Sea and self-governing Taiwan are two of China's most sensitive territorial issues and both are frequent areas of tension between the United States and China.

US Navy ships routinely sail close to Chinese-occupied islands in the South China Sea to challenge Chinese sovereignty claims, as well as through the Taiwan Strait, to Beijing's anger.

The US Department of Defence said the two US Navy Carrier Strike Groups, led by their flagships USS Carl Vinson and USS Abraham Lincoln, had begun operations in the South China Sea on Sunday 23 Jan.

The carrier groups will carry out exercises including anti-submarine warfare operations, air warfare operations and maritime interdiction operations to strengthen combat readiness, it said in a statement.

The training will be conducted in accordance with international law in international waters, the Department of Defence added, without giving details.

"Operations like these allow us to



US Navy aircraft carrier, USS Carl Vinson, docks at a port in Danang, Vietnam, March 5, 2018

improve our combat credible capability, reassure our allies and partners, and demonstrate our resolve as a Navy to ensure regional stability and counter malign influence," it quoted Rear Admiral J. T. Anderson, commander of the strike group led by the USS Abraham Lincoln, as saying.

Both carrier groups were reported on Sunday by the US Navy to have been exercising with Japan's navy in the Philippine Sea, an area that includes waters to the east of Taiwan.

The news of the US operations coincides with Taiwan alleging the latest mass incursion by China's air force into its air defence identification zone 39 aircraft in an area close to the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands in the northern reaches of the South China Sea.

Taiwan on Monday 24 Jan. reported a further 13 Chinese aircraft in the zone, with one, an anti-submarine Y-8, flying through the Bashi Channel which

separates Taiwan from the Philippines and connects the Pacific to the South China Sea, according to a map provided by Taiwan's Defence Ministry.

The ministry added that two Chinese J-16Ds took part in the mission, though kept close to China's coast, a new electronic attack version of the J-16 fighter designed to target anti-aircraft defences of the sort Taiwan would rely on to fend off an attack.

China has yet to comment, but has previously said such missions are aimed at protecting its sovereignty and to prevent external interference in its sovereignty claims over democratically-governed Taiwan.

Security sources have previously said that China's flights into Taiwan's defence zone are also likely a response to foreign military activity, especially by US forces, near the island, to warn that Beijing is watching and has the capability to handle any Taiwan contingencies.

Taiwan calls China's repeated nearby military activities "grey zone" warfare, designed to both wear out Taiwan's forces by making them repeatedly scramble, and also to test Taiwan's responses.

The South China Sea, crossed by vital shipping lanes and also containing gas fields and rich fishing grounds, is also claimed by Taiwan, while Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and the Philippines claim parts.

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Changing World Order

Prof. Safdar Sandal

Within little more than 2 years (since January 2020) the world has undergone a drastic change. No one could have imagined a complete devastation of the most advanced health system achieved by man in the past century, by having to face a sudden fall of COVID -19 on the world which made its large population succumb to death and an un-paralleled grief. The tragedy has not ended yet and is resurging its head again and again like a sea-monster.

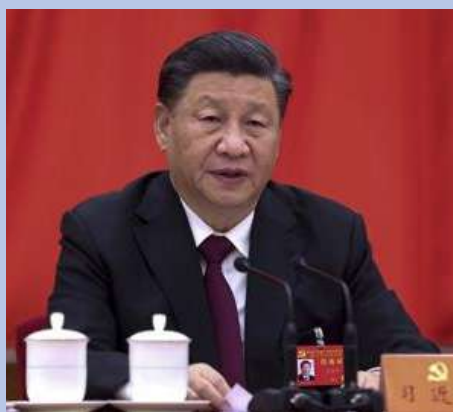
Even more devastating has been its effects on the human activity, loss of industrial pace and growth, poverty among the masses, rise in beggary and sufferings. No one could imagine or anticipate sudden collapse of industries, airlines and tourism including, that the oil-dependent economies would suffer irretrievable rise in losses : that the West would be forced to yield to China (and the East): and that the myth of Indo-Pacific , designed to contain China would decipher into hotchpotch endeavors, resulting in the 'containment of India' instead, along with the fall of the infamous Trumpian anti-Islamic period, pinning hopes on Biden who prefers diplomacy against brinkmanship of nature – a negation of Trump's thought process. We seem to be passing through a gigantic phase of global change. Much like the period of the two World Wars, or the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991; history bears witness to the fact that an alteration in the global power structure necessarily affects the governance systems of its corollary states.



A merely hundred years ago, the world was un-recognizably a different place. Europe and the Middle East were predominantly split between the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the British Empire, the



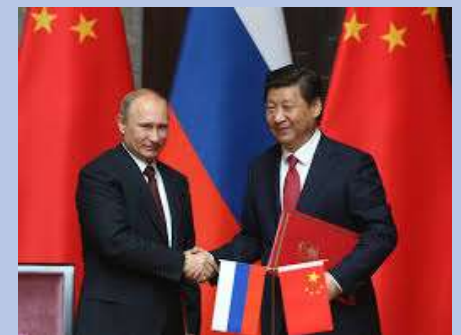
Ottoman Caliphate and the French pockets of power. Russia, China and Japan had empires of their own. India which had been ruled by Mughal Emperors and other Muslim dynasties for centuries now belonged to the British (which personally, I abhor, because they destroyed the hitherto prosperous Indian sub-continent, intentionally made the people poor, uneducated and backward). And this “empire” structure of the ruling powers also dictated the manner in which local governments operated. Raj, Khilafat and Kingship were the accepted norms. Democracy was not the mantra of any people. The only exception, at the time was the United States, whose influence did not extend beyond its oceanic boundaries. The First World War changed the whole scenario. The Ottoman Empire, along with its Khilafat structure, was entirely obliterated. The Austro-Hungarian Empire disintegrated, giving way to German Austria, Hungarian Republic, Czechoslovak Republic, and the spinning



off of Croatia, Serbia and parts of Romania.

The United States, which had just arrived at the international scene, was not yet the power we see today. And its governance structure, an open democracy, had not been proclaimed as the preferred

form of State structure across most parts of the world. Then came the Second World War and its decisive victory for the Allied Forces. This victory abolished the “Empire” structure of the old, ushering in the age of democracy. Japan effectively shed its cloak of Kingship, under American dictate, and adopted western governance structures. Even the British Empire, which was among the victors of the Second World War, could no longer retain its empire status, and chose the allied form of democratic enterprise. The self-coined name of 'Great Britain' had to be shed away because of its degradation in international



political scenario, as no other people of the world reconciled with this mentality of self-aggrandizement. Importantly, as empires crumbled, so did Britain, the ruling powers carved out a new map of the world. Israel was born mischievously by the British out of thin air. The Middle East was [literally!] split across borders that the Queen drew at the back of a napkin. The Indian sub-continent was split through borders drawn by the Viceroy—in many places, against the will of the domestic people causing intermittent wars. A highly inexperienced official named Radcliffe was assigned the job, who intentionally and upon instructions of his boss, drew combustible borders. Parts of Africa were split into smaller nation States. The policy of 'divide and rule' had been employed. And institutions such as the United Nations (and other Western alliances) were established to

institutionalize the allied power-structure.

Importantly, the Western global powers, which redrew most of the global map at their whim, also guaranteed the sanctity of the new borders—either directly or through their proxies. For almost four decades after the Second World War, the only real challenge to Western hegemony was the Soviet Union. Within the territories controlled by the



Soviet Union, the 'American democratic enterprise' was resisted. These territories--from Eastern Europe took their governance lead from the communist -state- structure of the Soviet Union. Fall of the Soviet Union, in 1991, once again resulted in re-making of International boundaries. The eastern part of the Soviet Union was carved into 18 different international territories which caused Balkan wars. Each of these borders was redrawn with the consent of the only remaining super power (the United States). And the consequent governments formed within these territories, also took their lead from the United States. Collapse of the Soviet Union ushered in the age of a unipolar world. For the first time, since the Roman Empire, the world was 'dominated' by a single country: the United States. This extraordinary turn of events ushered in the age of American Imperialism. Since 1990, the United States has enjoyed almost hegemonic power. It has invaded countries at whim, ousted governments it did not like, brought in army dictators who would easily obey them than the elected assemblies, even when the domestic population did not want it—e.g. changes in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Greece, and several others continued. The US is still working on the same spree.

International governance bodies (e.g. IMF) forced countries to undergo reforms that suited the United States and the West to adopt American style of governance. Those who followed the American lead were rewarded (South Korea, India etc.). Those who differed (e.g. Venezuela, Iraq, Syria, Libya etc.) were punished. But 2020-21 seems to have changed all that.

Crippled by the spread of COVID-19 and having been drained off its global energies during ill-conceived wars, Donald Trump's reactionary "American First" policy—which shuns the idea of an inclusive American Dream—resulted in withdrawal of American hegemonic global influence. Donald Trump's xenophobic Islamophobia has further disillusioned the Muslim world from the US. Joe Biden has yet to prove his metal.

American withdrawal has prompted competing interests to fill this vacuum. In Syria and Lebanon, for instance, France and Russia are already more important to the local power structure than America is. Countries like UAE, Qatar and Pakistan are looking east, towards China and Russia, for their long term goals.

In particular, the rise of China, which was slow and sluggish till recently, has gained tremendous pace during the course of Coronavirus epidemic. As the West reels from the effects COVID-19 and America loses itself to the madness of domestic strife, China is gaining ground. In the South China Sea, as China asserts its claim on various territories (including Taiwan), American influence is fast dwindling. Maintaining status quo in the South China Sea may require the United States to threaten military conflict. One that the Americans are not sure they can win, despite the recent fanciful 'QUAD' pact signed between US, Australia and turbulent India. The later has been humiliated by China in Ladakh, to make feel their presence in the hot bed sea of the South. China's swift aggression in Ladakh and a speeding up of CPEC projects (despite COVID – 19 lockdown) is a testament to the Global repositioning of China. A global reset is afoot. And the new age of "Look East" is about to start. Pakistan stands at the gaining end. Already, institutions such as WHO and even the EU are no longer in the strangle of American influence. This shift in global power has real consequences for international boundaries that were artificially drawn across the Middle East

and even whole Asia. The powers that created those boundaries and guaranteed their sanctity can no longer do so. And places like Hong Kong, Taiwan, even Ladakh, are a perfect example of this. As China decides to consolidate its control over these areas, will the US risk a war to liberate them? If China stays in Ladakh, or expands its dominion across the Indian border through Nepal, will the United States and its friends come to the aid of India? Will they fight a war to jeopardize CPEC, or the larger Belt and Road Initiative? The answer is big NO; given the worst bad effects of COVID – 19 in the West and the humiliating ouster of Trump in the U.S which has followed a strong bilateral cooperation between Iran and China which seems impregnable. Lately, there has been an origin and spread of the new 'UK- Virus' as its third phase which has proved to be more lethal and has lately encircled the whole West where the situation is grimmer. Resultantly, the haughty posture of the past has minimized and will diminish with the time. The UK-Virus has reached Pakistan too with velocity. Pakistan though stands better in the ratings of COVID in deaths and affectless of COVID than India, Bangladesh, Germany, France or many other countries, but look at the mean nature of the UK, who have banned flights to and from Pakistan in particular for no other than their own UK- Virus reason.

History bears witness to the fact that the rise of a new global power usually results in the corresponding spread of its peculiar governance structure too. Like the structure of the "Empires" in the time of First World War and the structure of American democracy, in the post Second World War period are before us. 2021 may be the first year of the rise of the East. And this new world order, which seems to be evolving before our eyes today, will have profound impacts for Pakistan and its assumingly dysfunctional democratic enterprise. In the months and years to come, countries in our region (and perhaps across the world) may be forced to pick sides between the United States and China. Those who come to the Chinese Camp may also have to grow out of the borrowed American model of democracy and follow something closer to the "Chinese model"—where a loose democracy is coupled with a decisive writ of the State.

50pc drop in kinnow export feared

Higher freight charges, unavailability of refrigerated containers and poor quality of crop are hitting the export of kinnow this season.

Exporters say that either refrigerated containers are not available or their freight charges have doubled and tripled, making the fruit costlier and leading to a drop in its sale in foreign markets.

The mandarin is exported to the Middle East, Far East, Russia, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and some European destinations.

Shaukat Basra, a citrus exporter, fears that export of the fruit will drop around 50 per cent this season because of its high cost and poor quality.

Last year, kinnow exports stood at over 450,000 tonnes, but this season it may not cross the 250,000-tonne mark as per the orders received from abroad so far, he says.

“Contrary to our expectations there are no orders from neighbouring China too, where 80 tonnes of mandarin had been exported last year.”

“We’ve reduced the export price from \$4.5 per kg last year to \$4 this year to absorb some of the hike in freight charges and make the fruit affordable in foreign markets, but this tactic is also failing to find buyers,” he said

Mr Basra complained that shortage of refrigerated containers and increase in the shipping transit time due to Covid-19 related restrictions are making export more difficult. The issues have been raised with PM’s Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood and the commerce secretary, but to no avail so far, he adds.

He lamented the falling quality of local kinnow crop as canker and blemish marks on the skin of the fruit are hurting its cosmetic beauty and appeal for the customers.

Local research centres, including the Sargodha Citrus Research Institute established in 2003-04, have not been able to develop any new citrus variety and the traditional ones are losing their quality, he claimed.

Responding to a question about agriculture scientists’ claims of the development of seedless citrus varieties, Mr Basra, who is also chairman of Sargodha Chamber of Industry and Commerce, said these varieties appear only on paper, but failed practical tests.

He said that the research institute had

been requested time and again to develop some early or late citrus varieties to counter the impact of climate change on kinnow crop, but they always complained of a lack of funds as a hurdle to initiating any research projects.

Three firms back out of PR’s freight contract

Three private companies, which had been awarded a contract to run wagons under phase one of the Pakistan Railways project to outsource its freight business four months ago, have surprisingly backed out, media has learned.

The companies also surprisingly continued using hundred of freight wagons for the transportation of imported coal from Karachi to various destinations without signing the project award agreement and submitting the performance bank guarantees, it is further learned.

“It is a major scam as the firms declared successful after a lengthy bidding process not only backed out of their commitment under a revenue-sharing model but also continued operating the wagons without submitting the bank guarantees,” reveals a former senior executive of PR. “But unfortunately, nothing was done to secure the department and the firms fled on the pretext of loss due to reduction in the cargo,” he deplored.

The PR’s freight business ranges between Rs17-18 billion per annum since 2016-17 including about Rs12bn coming from the dedicated state-run Karachi-Sahiwal coal transportation for running the Sahiwal coal-fired power plant.

However, the process to increase and take the freight revenue to Rs35bn was initiated around one year back in a bid to bring down losses and turn the state-run organisation into a profit-earning entity.

Railways last year initiated the bidding process for gradual outsourcing of its 12,000 wagons. Under phase one, some of the bidders cumulatively offered Rs13bn per annum for running these wagons, but the PR unfairly awarded the project to some others.

“The firms continued running around 300 wagons (Karachi to Daood Khel and Jia Bagga without signing the agreement and the performance guarantee. But the senior PR officials kept allowing them to do so surprisingly. It is a crime really,” the source said. “Had the PR accepted Rs13bn guaranteed offer from the companies of good repute it rejected, it would have not

seen such a bad situation,” he maintained.

When contacted, the PR’s Chief Executive Officer Nisar Memon said the reason behind backing out of the firms from the project is the import of coal through Afghanistan being transported by the road goods transport operations.

Mr Memon admitted that they (the companies) didn’t sign the agreement as they wanted to add some clauses in this for their protection. “But they had submitted bank guarantees we sought under the agreement,” he said.

Exports to US, China, UK surge

The United States remained the top export destination of Pakistani products during the first six months of 2021-22, followed by China and the United Kingdom.

Total exports to the US increased by 45.95 per cent to \$3.32 billion during July-December 2021-22 against \$2.27bn in 6MFY21, according to data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Tuesday.

Exports to China grew by 59.05pc to \$1.33bn against \$837.91 million in the corresponding period last year.

The UK was the third top export destination showing an increase of 19.79pc to \$1.14bn in 6MFY22 against \$956.524m in the same period last year.

Among other destinations, exports to the United Arab Emirates grew by 24.67pc to \$869.26m against \$697.24m in 6MFY21 while the exports to Germany were recorded at \$864.18m against \$748.79m last year, the SBP data showed.

During July-December 2021-22, the exports to The Netherlands were recorded at \$682.45m against \$516.10m whereas goods worth \$488.689m were exported to Italy against \$355.29m.

Exports to Spain rose to \$508.33m in 6MFY22 against \$362.782m in the corresponding period while the exports to Afghanistan plunged to \$240.504m from \$450.77m in 6MFY21.

The exports to Bangladesh stood at \$399.40m in 6MFY22 against \$274.246m in 6MFY21.

However, exports to Saudi Arabia dropped to \$195.68m in 6MFY22 compared to \$244.23m last year whereas the exports to Canada edged up to \$194.453m against \$143.38m.



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CPEC progressing well despite all odds, says FO

Dispelling the impression of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) getting bogged down, the Foreign Office said on Friday 21 Jan. the economic venture was progressing well despite all odds.

“I would like to share a roundup of major achievements in CPEC, which has continued to move forward as a flagship of the Belt and Road [Initiative] despite the Covid-19 pandemic,” said FO spokesman Asim Iftikhar at the weekly media briefing.

His remarks came in the backdrop of reports in the media that CPEC had slowed down reportedly because of Covid-19 pandemic, China's concerns about its workers security in Pakistan, no major new Chinese commitment, pending payments of Chinese power plants to the tune of Rs230 billion, and delays in the financial close of railways ML-1 upgrade project.

The reports gained spotlight ahead of Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to Beijing from Feb 3 to 5, where besides attending the inaugural event of the Winter Olympics, he would also meet Chinese leaders. CPEC is expected to top the agenda of the meetings in Beijing during the premier's visit.

Mr Iftikhar said 27 projects conceived under CPEC were at various stages of implementation and preparation. CPEC's ambit, he said, had been expanded to include agriculture, science and technology and IT cooperation.

“Meanwhile, work on major infrastructure projects has continued apace and a number of new mega projects have been endorsed by the JCC of CPEC. These include the Azad Pattan and Kohala hydropower projects, which will help address Pakistan's food security while also ensuring access to green and cost-competitive energy for our industrial growth,” he added.

Just a day ago, the Chinese foreign ministry dismissed reports of slowdown as disinformation.

At a media briefing in Beijing on Thursday 20 Jan., Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said: “It (CPEC) has seen new progress against all odds since Covid-19 broke out, giving a strong boost to economic development and livelihood improvement and winning high praise from all sectors in Pakistan.”

He conceded that China was yet to commit a loan for the ML-1 railway line upgrade project, saying it “involves a large amount of investment and relevant

departments of the two sides are still in consultation”. Mr Lijian, however, rejected the impression that no new project had been approved in the past three and a half years as “pure disinformation”.

SBP revises time limit for export proceeds

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has reversed its earlier decision to reduce the time period from 180 days to 120 days to bring exports proceeds into the country.

In a circular issued on Jan 5, the SBP said that full export value of goods exported from Pakistan and declared to the Customs authorities should be received in an approved manner, on the due date for payment or within one hundred and twenty (120) days from the date of shipment, whichever is earlier.

However, a circular issued on Feb 1 by the SBP clarified that amendments introduced through the earlier FE circular shall not be applicable on such exports where irrevocable letters of credit with usance (time for payment of foreign bill) period up to 180 days were issued or established up to the date of issuance of above instructions.

This decision was taken in view of the representation received from various Authorised Dealers (ADs), Chambers of Commerce and Industries and Exporters' Associations, and to help exporters to fulfill their commitments, said the SBP.

However, in all such cases ADs shall not allow any change beyond 180 days in shipment date/expiry of LC/enhancement in LC or shipment against expired LCs or any other terms and conditions relating to tenure of the LC after the issuance of the circular, it added.

Moreover, where the terms of sale or irrevocable letter of credit provide for payment on 120 days' usance from the date of shipment, it shall be permissible for the exporter to repatriate the export proceeds within 135 days from shipment date.

Exporters usually complain that the SBP takes decision without consultation of relevant sector or stakeholders which creates problem. The exports proceeds are prime focus for the government in the wake of increasing need of foreign exchange and declining reserves of the SBP.

Exports to China surge 69pc to \$3.6bn in 2021

Exports to China increased 68.9 per cent in 2021 to \$3.58 billion while total trade between the two countries stood at \$27.82bn, according to data released by the General Administration of Customs (GACC) of China.

Exports to China crossed \$365.35 million in December 2021, up 17pc from a year ago when it totalled \$312.33m, China's Economic Net (CEN) has reported.

The country's exports to China made the highest gain in November 2021 when they clocked in at \$379.17m. In the preceding year, the highest value was recorded in December 2020 when its exports totalled \$312.33m.

China's exports to Pakistan in 2021 increased 57.8pc to \$24.23bn. They were \$15.36bn and \$16.17bn in 2020 and 2019, respectively.

Shan Saeed, chief economist at Juwair IQI, a real estate technology firm, said trade between the two countries has made significant progress as both export and import volumes are on the rise. This is a testament to China's commitment to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in the limelight, he said.

Trade and commerce volumes signify that China wants to provide unconditional support to Pakistan and import more from it in order to uplift its economy, he added.

Mr Saeed said China will continue to support Pakistan for a long time to come as Islamabad values unconditional support from Beijing.

Among major items traded between the two countries, volumes of electronics, textiles, seafood and agricultural products have gone up on a year-on-year basis.

Leather exports

Total exports of leather goods witnessed an increase of 9.41pc in the first half of 2021-22 on a year-on-year basis.

Pakistan exported leather goods worth \$319.79m in July-December against \$292.28m in the same six-month period a year ago, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Within leather products, exports of garments increased 9.73pc to \$167.77m while those of gloves rose 9.19pc to \$142.63m.

Likewise, exports of all other leather goods also increased 7.16pc during the period under review to \$9.39m. Their foreign sales clocked in at \$53.15m in December, up 1.87pc from a year ago.

December exports of leather garments increased 6.49pc while those of gloves dipped 2.79pc on a year-on-year basis. Exports of other leather goods also decreased 7.33pc in the same month.

Their exports declined 10.97pc in December 2021 versus foreign sales of \$59.7m recorded in the preceding month, PBS data showed.

On a month-on-month basis, exports

of leather garments and leather gloves also dipped 10.03pc and 11pc, respectively, while those of all other leather products went down 26.08pc.

Freight train service launched to link port with rest of Pakistan

The huge and powerful dark green locomotive attached to a long line of big and small freight containers awaited the inauguration ceremony to be off on its way at the Hutchison Ports Pakistan, also known as the South Asia Pakistan Terminal, on Monday 24 Jan.

Then as soon as the ribbon was cut, it honked loudly while making the slouching guests sit up straight in their chairs as it chugged away on its new ballastless tracks.

Expected to take away the traffic congestion caused by container trucks on roads and highways here, this freight train will reach its destination, Lahore, in up to four days.

The freight train service also coincides with the commissioning of a 3.7km, hightech train track laid at the Hutchison Ports Pakistan connecting the facility to the rest of the country in a seamless manner through Pakistan Railway's extensive network spread throughout the country.

This new track laid within the terminal comprised three rail sidings of 700 metres each alongside a crippled wagon sliding.

The tracks are embedded in concrete and are ballastless, which is a better, albeit a more expensive option than the traditional sleeper/ballast design used in Pakistan.

Switching between the tracks and signalling is carried out using a computer-based interlocking system, eliminating the need for manual switching. As many as three freight trains can be handled simultaneously using rubber-tyred gantry cranes with a quick turnaround. Another track can also be added.

Captain Syed Rashid Jamil, general manager and head of business unit at Hutchison Ports Pakistan, said that with the commencement of the freight train service, they were expanding their contribution towards Pakistan's trade. 'We are extending our physical gates to somewhere in Multan, Sialkot and Lahore as the containers will be discharged from the ships and put on a train that will deliver them to the customers at their factory gates,' he said.

Federal Minister for Railways Mohammed Azam Khan Swati said it was a matter of immense pleasure for him to help uplift business opportunities for Pakistan.

This will triple the container transport for Pakistan. In six months, it will also make railways a profitable institution of Pakistan,' he said, explaining that Pakistan Railways would make several terminals for this freight service with the collaboration of the Karachi Port Trust. 'With shared value and shared benefits, we will all go towards profitable business,' he added.

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi said the freight train service should have started with the coming up of the South Asia Pakistan Terminal.

Sadly, when compared to the rest of the world we are lagging behind so much that we are inaugurating basic things such as storm drains these days. But today's inauguration is a welcome change,' he said.

Karachi needs to be an international standard business hub. Pakistan's entire business, its industry, its trade all come from here. It only needs good governance to transform this city and this country, he said.

The federal minister announced they needed to work at connecting Port Qasim Authority with this freight train service too.

'We should also be transporting coal and oil via railway,' he said.

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail said port cities across the world were responsible for their country's prosperity and Karachi was a port city.

Earlier, Pakistan had its flag-carrier PIA, Railways and Pakistan Steel Mills to be proud of, the governor said, 'but now PIA is running losses, the Pakistan Railways is running losses and the Steel Mills happen to be a burden on the exchequer. It is so

because our country fell in the wrong hands'.

But now we have people like Railways Minister Swati and Minister for Maritime Affairs like Ali Zaidi, who are powerful pillars. They are doers. [PM] Imran Khan has chosen the best people in his cabinet. We were labelled as incompetent in our first year of governance but we kept working with the uplift of economy as our main focus despite the Covid-19 pandemic and now Imran Khan is the first prime minister in years to have completed the longest term in office,' he said.

PSO, Railways ink MoU In a related development, Pakistan State Oil (PSO) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Pakistan Railways for the supply of POL products, transportation and other businesses.

Minister Swati, who was the chief guest at the signing ceremony, congratulated both PSO and Pakistan Railways on the occasion. 'This strategic alliance between the two national flag-bearers will enable the growth of our country's economy and also contribute to the national exchequer.

Organizations like PSO and Pakistan Railways are playing an instrumental role in helping our nation's economy reach its full potential and I congratulate the senior management of both entities on attaining this major milestone,' he said.

The MoU was signed by PSO Managing Director and CEO Syed Taha and Pakistan Railways Senior General Manager Nisar Ahmed Memon at PSO's head office in Karachi.



The locomotive chugs away on its new ballastless tracks.

Without structural reforms, CPEC won't yield results, says ADB

Pakistan can harness its strategic geopolitical potential, improve regional and international economic connectivity and become an economic hub for Asia if the \$60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is implemented successfully, but without structural reforms the country will not be able to achieve optimal benefits.

This was stated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in a fresh report released on Wednesday 2 Feb. The study "Economic Corridor Development in Pakistan: Concept, Framework, and Case Studies" coincided with Prime Minister Imran Khan's three-day visit to China along with a high-level delegation of cabinet members and government officials.

"If CPEC is successfully implemented, Pakistan can harness its strategic geopolitical location, improve its regional and international economic connectivity, enhance industrial development, and become an economic hub for Central, South, and West Asia," observed the ADB.

"However, the CPEC alone will not bring optimal results. Structural reforms for private sector development are needed as well. Also, tax reforms are essential to broaden the tax base and enhance the perceived fairness of the tax system. Infrastructure built under the CPEC should be fully utilised to expand trade and regional cooperation," the study observed.

The report blamed poor export performance largely on low productivity and a lack of competitiveness, but said an unfavourable trade policy environment also played a key role.

An overvalued exchange rate and escalation of tariff on imported raw materials and intermediate goods could have contributed to a fall in exports, resulting in a consistently large trade deficit, which stood at \$32.8 billion in FY2019.

The study said exporters had often faced a liquidity crunch due to non-payment of sales tax refunds and duty drawbacks.

The increase in interest rates to 13.25pc in 2019 had substantially raised the cost of capital to firms, which may further dampen investment and exports.

"Through market reforms, Pakistan needs to transform its economy into an export-led growth trajectory. In addition to improving the economy's competitiveness and productivity with a

vibrant private sector, it is critical to attracting domestic and foreign investments to support this transformation," it added.

The Manila-based lending agency advised the government to "expedite the development of the nine special economic zones (SEZs) planned along the CPEC routes" as it noted that urban development and economic corridor development (ECD) were inextricably linked, with urban centres being the focus of labour, capital, technology, knowledge, innovation and structural transformation. "Therefore, a successful ECD strategy should aim to harmonise industry development and urbanisation," it said.

"As cities become urbanised and industrialised, addressing challenges such as infrastructure deficits, overstretched public services, and environmental stress will be crucial. While cities in Pakistan are still vibrant, they are becoming increasingly disorderly, complex and congested, making it imperative to identify and address the constraints on building well-performing urban centres and integrating infrastructure public service systems," the study noted.

The government, it said, implicitly treated urbanisation and industrialisation as separate processes and had designated different governance systems to manage them. Furthermore, local government units generally do not consider local economic development as part of their mandate and, therefore, do not actively promote industrialisation.

The ADB advised the government to develop an evidence-based targeted strategy for delivering affordable and reliable public services, including the public transport system, water supply and sanitation facilities, solid waste management, education and skills development.

Second, it should ensure access to affordable housing for factory workers and the low-income labour force. Third, the roles and responsibilities of the federal, provincial and local governments need to be streamlined, and vertical governance imbalances in revenue generation should be reduced. In this way, essential public services like

education and health can be fully provided. Also, adopting a public-private partnership strategy could fill the gap for fiscal space.

Fourth, SEZs should be fully utilised as a spatial economic unit to create synergy between urban and industrial development processes.

The SEZ-based industrial and urban development has become one mode of expanding urban spaces in several countries.

The study said the international experience suggests that economic corridors succeed on the basis of latent economic potential and prospects as the corridor thrives and rides on the inherent economic potential of a region to attract private investment.

The starting point is selecting and prioritising a geographic area based on identified and bankable existing and future economic potential-based robust economic and technical analysis to build on economic potential and develop strategies to prioritise the most productive way to allocate scarce resources to create business opportunities, infrastructure needs and policy and regulatory requirements.

On top of that, political commitment at the highest levels of the government and coordination among the diverse government agencies are essential to incorporate ECD in a country's overall economic plan.

"Based on the framework presented in this study, successful ECD planning and implementation in Pakistan must focus on the three pillars infrastructure development, urban development and industrial development and the four key drivers: economic potential, institution and regulation, sustainability and inclusiveness and external factors as described above," the study concluded.



Artists perform in a play, Parmeshar Singh, during Alhamra Drama Festival

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Creating the Pakistan Pavilion

The Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai has pleasantly surprised the world. It is being continuously featured in the top three to five pavilions-to-visit list by international media, critics and bloggers. The visitor footfall has matched this hype and the Pakistan Pavilion continues to be one of the most visited pavilions at Dubai Expo ever since its opening on October 1, 2021.

As part of the team that worked behind the scenes for the Pakistan Pavilion, I want to give you an idea about the challenges this project went through a behind-the-scenes peek into what such a massive project entails. Had it not been for the passion and dedication of the team behind this project, we might not even have had a Pakistan presence at Expo 2020 Dubai.

The World Expo was taking place in the Middle East region for the very first time. But not many would know that Pakistan regularly participates in this most prestigious international event that is held after every four years. Never has Pakistan's participation at such events garnered so much interest and attention, however, as it has this time. It's simply because, in the past, never had such a creative, wholehearted, quality showcasing of Pakistan really been put together.

Initially, even this time round, things were no different than in the past. Earlier, the Pakistan Pavilion project had been awarded to a Dubai-based company by the previous government. When the government changed, the government's adviser for commerce and investment Razak Dawood was handed over this neglected baby. He gave it the kind of personal love and attention it really deserved, all through the team-building, conceptualisation, creation and execution phase. He brought on board architect Shahid Abdullah as the project lead, who then put together a carefully chosen core team.

But the first and foremost big challenge was not creative; it was how to make this project financially possible. The construction costs were huge, though

half of them were being footed by the UAE government. But the Government of Pakistan couldn't fully support such an ambitious project financially and there came a time when it actually decided to pull out.

But Dawood and his team had other ideas and he personally reached out to the private sector and started private fundraising for the Pavilion. Almost 60 companies ended up contributing to this huge national cause, and it included companies from all kinds of sectors. Again, had this private sector fundraising not been done right, Pakistan might not have had this successful pavilion today.

A Board of Trustees was formed in tandem to this, comprising Yunus Bengali (chairman, The Indus Hospital), Mushtaq Chhapra (founder, The Citizens Foundation), Riyaz Chinoy (MD, Yaqin Steels) and Aslam Khaliq (chairman, Reckitt Benckiser Pakistan), in addition to Mehboob Khan and Shahid Abdullah from the core project team. These were people that the corporates knew would make sure that the funds would be duly and transparently spent on this national project.

Once the project was financially mobilised and given another lease of life, the team looked at the existing structure of the pavilion that was already ready in the last government's tenure. They decided not to redo it too much, as a lot of work had gone into it already. The previous government's chosen theme was 'Emerging Pakistan' and the company that had developed the pavilion structure had used inspirations from Pakistan's mountains, forts and hills.

However, the structure looked quite bland and the team decided to do something about the exterior. This is when Rashid Rana, a top Pakistani artist (also the dean of Beaconhouse National University, Lahore) with international acclaim, was brought on board to bring his magical, artistic intervention to turn this bland architecture into a piece of art.

The glittering mirror-work façade of the Pakistan Pavilion that you see today is Rana's handiwork, and has been a real crowd-puller. It just stops people in their tracks as they walk by, and has played an instrumental role in the success of the



Pakistan Pavilion. It also, of course, caters to today's social media age, making Pakistan's one of the most Instagrammable pavilions at Expo 2020 Dubai.

The new 'Hidden Treasure' theme hundreds of themes and titles were rejected before finalising this one and the curation of the entire inner journey of the pavilion were made possible thanks to Noorjehan Bilgrami, another well-known Pakistani artist, who was brought on board for this project.

The 'Hidden Treasure' theme reframes the international narrative vis à vis Pakistan by highlighting the unique or little-known aspects of the country that rarely makes the news. Using its magnificent landscapes as the metaphorical fabric from which all other threads emerge, the Pakistan Pavilion creates an immersive, multi-sensory experience, through which Pakistan's ancient history, ethno-religious diversity, rich cultural traditions, natural resources, and economic potential can be explored.

Although each thread is seen as a section into which the narrative is divided, all of these categories of focus are interlinked, thereby creating a seamless narrative and experience.

Again, the big challenge here was that the building structure already existed and the interior was designed like a labyrinth, so the different spaces had to be designed according to the existing peculiar sizes and shapes, so as to create a seamless journey in such a way that visitors could enter from one point and leave from another without being able to turn around.

As you walk into the pavilion, you come across an entertaining and engaging immersive film experience in each of the eight spaces of the pavilion. They take you through time, from the ancient Indus Valley civilisation to modern day Pakistan, revealing the area's rich and layered history, culture and traditions, as well as the investment potential and



possibilities the country holds for the future.

Seventy percent of the experience consists of audio-visual films being played on large ceiling-to-floor screens. In addition, there are some live exhibits in some of the spaces, such as the 'Sheesha Kari Pathway of Mirrors'. It's a mesmerising experience created by light-and-mirror reflections. In another section, for example, a traditional houseboat used in the past on the Indus by the Mohanas of Sindh a community that can trace its roots to the time of Mohenjodaro was rebuilt. There was a lot of buzz in Sukkur about

this boat that was built after more than half a century.

Imagine the challenge of recreating these hidden treasures of the past using archival material and reaching out to the right local craftsmen, then transporting all these exhibits to Dubai and putting them up there. A lot of Pakistani craftsmen, filmmakers, artists and musicians were engaged to give life to this creative, inner-journey experience.

The pavilion is open to visitors from October 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022, so running the pavilion for six months, in

itself, creates huge challenges. Usually such events or experiences last only for a weekend or a week at most. The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan team, led by Rizwan Tariq, the pavilion director, deserves all the credit for making this possible in a seamless manner.

The Pakistan Pavilion has surely made Pakistanis proud. It has shown to the world a positive face of Pakistan, and helped change perceptions about the country. We can only hope that the effort and time put into this project pays off in the years to come, by encouraging tourism and investment in the country.

Sindh before the Arabs arrived

There are many facets of Sindh's history that are shrouded in mystery. One such aspect is the era before the advent of Arab rule in 711, when the region was under Buddhist and Brahmin rule.

The limited scholarship that has been carried out on the subject portrays Sindh as a highly developed and prosperous society back then. Dutch scholar J. E. van Lohuizen-De Leeuw, in her 1981 essay 'The Pre-Muslim Antiquities of Sind', from the book *Sind Through the Centuries*, states: "Sind [sic] appears to have been a rich country in those days, materially rich due to its flourishing trade and culturally rich on account of its diversified religious patterns."

An effort has been made here to draw a picture of Sindh during the interesting times of the 7th and early 8th century CE when, in a span of just 60 years, Sindh went through three great dynastic transitions, from Buddhist to Brahmin rule and then the Muslim conquest.

The Buddhist Rai Dynasty

The dawn of the seventh century saw the Buddhist Rai dynasty ruling Sindh for several generations. The region's peace was stirred in 626 CE during the rule of Rai Seharas, when, "All of a sudden, an army of the king of Nimruz invaded his [Seharas'] country, entering Makran," reads *The Chachnama*, the oldest multi-genre chronicle on the era. It was translated into English from Farsi by Mirza Kaleech Beg in 1900, under the title *The Chachnama: An Ancient History of Sind*.

Though Sindh's army repulsed the attack, it lost its king in the battle. He was succeeded by his son Sahasi II, who ruled Sindh from 626 to 652 CE, according to Dr N.A. Baloch in his article 'The Historical Sind Era', published in *Sind Through the Centuries*.

It was around 642 CE when a Chinese pilgrim, Hsuan Tsang, visited Sindh and "found innumerable stupas" and "several

hundred Sangharama occupied by about ten thousand monks," states British historian John Keay in *India: A History*. Although Buddhism was the most dominant religion in Sindh, Hinduism had a presence too, with about "thirty Hindu temples."

Speaking about people, the Chinese pilgrim observed that they "as whole were hardy and impulsive and their kingdom ... was famed for its cereal production, its livestock and its export of salt," Keay quotes him.

The Earliest Portrait of a 'Sindhi'

One of the most important relics from the Buddhist era was discovered from among the remains of a stupa near Mirpurkhas. About 18 centuries old, it is a plaque containing a man's portrait, which most of the scholars believe was either that of the builder or donor of the temple. Thus, it is held by H.T. Lambrick, in his 1973 book *Sindh Before the Muslim Conquest*, as "the earliest known portrait of an individual inhabitant of Sindh: perhaps a prominent merchant of the second or third century AD [CE]."

Describing the portrait, Lambrick states: "The figure wears a waist cloth, a necklace and an elaborate headdress which may have been a wig. It was painted; the complexion was wheat-coloured, with black eyes, eyebrows and moustache. One hand holds a small lotus flower, the other is placed carefully on a fold of waistcloth, which we may suppose did duty as a purse."

The Brahmin 'Soft Coup'

During the closing years of Buddhist king Sahasi II's 28-year-long rule, most of the affairs of state were entrusted to his



The ruins of Alor, once a capital of the Buddhist kingdom; Lambrick's map shows kingdom of Sindh circa 642 AD.

most loyal Brahmin minister Chach. Chach originally came from a humble background, but earned the admiration and confidence of the king on account of his sheer merit, talent and hard work.

"Having the entire support and confidence of the king, his [Chach's] personal authority over Sindh and its dependencies was absolute," notes Lambrick.

Another person that enjoyed the confidence of the king was his young queen, Suhandi. "Sahasi [was] entirely under influence of his wife, who was evidently a woman of strong mind as well as of strong passions," observes Lambrick.

An incident brought Chach and Suhandi closer to each other. Once, Chach wanted to see the king regarding an urgent state business. The king was resting in his palace with his queen. He granted audience to Chach in the presence of the queen, who "fell desperately in love with the handsome Brahmin," writes Lambrick. Initially, Chach resisted Suhandi's romantic overtures, citing his religious and moral limitations, but eventually he succumbed to the queen's persuasions.

Apart from this romantic tale, there were the hard political realities which may



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have compelled the two to foster an alliance. King Sahasi was childless. Suhandi feared that, after his death, the kingdom would fall to his relatives, who would not only divest her of her property, but perhaps not even spare her life. Meanwhile, Chach realised that his position would be even more precarious than hers. Hence, the two may have formed an alliance to safeguard their personal interests.

The story goes that when the king fell terminally ill, with Chach's help, Suhandi called the ailing king's sympathisers and close relatives from the capital of Alor to the palace. There she detained them and they were all ultimately put to death. In their stead, Suhandi and Chach appointed courtesans who pledged their loyalty to the queen. Suhandi declared Chach as the king's vicegerent during the king's illness. After the king's death, Suhandi married Chach, who ascended the throne, marking the transition from Buddhist to Brahmin rule in the region.

Though Alor had already been pacified, Chach's assumption of power invoked rebellions from governors and attacks from neighbours. In these circumstances, Chach "had to prove his right to rule, and this took him two or three years," writes Lambrick. During the process, "he won the capital and the metropolitan region by a mixture of force, fraud and the influence of his former master's widow."

Proto Pakistan?

The kingdom of Sindh during the 7th century AD, as shown in the map, comprised most of the Indus Valley, excluding its northern reaches. After ascending the throne, as Chach fought wars, he invented a novel way of demarcating his kingdom's borders, by planting trees suitable to those environs.

"In the north, we learn, he [Chach] reached 'Kashmir,'" observes Keay, based on the account given in *The Chachnama*. "Even if this meant not the Kashmir valley but Kashmir territory, which then extended down to the plains of the Punjab, he must have entered the Himalayan foothills, for he marked his frontier by planting a chinar, or plane tree, and a deodar, or Himalayan cedar; both native to the hills."

"Heading west, he laid claim to Makran, the coastal region of Baluchistan [sic], where he planted date palms," Keay continues. It was against this backdrop that "Chach's kingdom lacked only the erstwhile Gandhara in the north-west to qualify as a proto-Pakistan," Keay writes.

Internally, the kingdom was divided into four provinces ruled by governors, in addition to the central territory directly ruled by the monarch. The territories of two provinces comprised present-day

Sindh, while the other two comprised what is now Punjab. The Sindh provinces were Brahminabad, which covered "central Sindh eastward of the Indus together with the whole of lower Sindh and possibly Cutch [sic]," and that of Sehwan (Siwistan) included "the modern districts of Larkana and Dadu, and possibly Las Bela," notes Lambrick.

Among the Punjab provinces, the Askaland "corresponded broadly with Bahawalpur state and part of adjoining Punjab districts, and the Multan province would seem to have run up at least as far as the Salt Range, as it is said to have bordered in Kashmir," Lambrick outlines.

The important cities included the capital Alor (near Sukkur), the port-city Debal (near modern-day Karachi), Nerun (Hyderabad), Brahminabad (in present Sanghar district), Sehwan and Multan.

Chach proved to be an able administrator and ruled the country for about 40 years. It may seem strange, but the Arab chroniclers of *Chachnama* valued him highly, prompting Keay to observe that "for an infidel, Chach would be rated highly by Muslim rulers."

Chach's Succession and Raja Dahar

Chach had two sons, Daharsiah and Dahar, from Queen Suhandi, and a daughter, Bai, from another wife. On Chach's death, initially his brother Chandar succeeded him, but finally power was transferred to his youngest son, Dahar.

Dahar too was a brave man and an able administrator who ruled for about 13 years. However, his morality stood compromised when he reportedly 'ceremoniously' married his half-sister to evade an astrologer's prediction, which said that his half-sister's husband would rule his kingdom.

This immoral act on his part sent shockwaves across the kingdom and even his elder brother took up arms against him, leading an expedition against Dahar. But he fell ill and died encamped outside Dahar's fort.

Commenting on this, prominent Hindu scholar Dayaram Gidumal, states in the introduction to Mirza Kaleech Beg's English translation of *The Chachnama*: "The king [Dahar] was undoubtedly a greater sinner. It was he who, by the advice of a credulous minister, solemnised his marriage with his own sister, to prevent the working of a prediction. The marriage was not intended to be consummated and, as a matter of fact, it was not consummated; but [the] impious ceremony nevertheless alienated from Dahar not only his brother but all the best and bravest men in the land."

The king's alienation from the people played a key role in the Arab victory in 711 CE over Sindh, a land which had in the

past repulsed several Arab attacks. This brought an end to the Brahmin dynasty and the power was transferred to the Arabs.

A note on the sources: Three main sources on the history of this period are the accounts rendered by Chinese and Arab travellers, archaeological discoveries and three books on the subject, namely *The Chachnama*, the *Tarikh-e-Maasumi* and the *Tuhfatul-Kiram*. The oldest amongst them is *The Chachnama* and various scholars have attached varying weightage to its contents.

Black diamond, largest ever cut, goes on show in Dubai



A view of The Enigma, a 555.55 carat black diamond, at Sotheby's.

The world's largest known cut diamond went on public display for the first time on Monday 17 Jan. ahead of its sale, when it is expected to reach five million dollars. The Enigma, the name of the rare black carbanado diamond, was put on display in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates.

The diamond is believed to have been created when a meteorite or an asteroid hit the Earth more than 2.6 billion years ago, according to Sotheby's auction house jewellery specialist Sophie Stevens.

One of the most difficult substances to cut, the 555.55-carat diamond has never been shown by its unnamed owner of the past 20 years, but experts turned it into a 55-face jewel. Its shape was inspired by the Middle East palm-shaped symbol of power and protection, the Hamsa, which is also associated with the number five.

"It is very different," said Stevens of the jewel, which holds a Guinness World Record as the largest cut diamond. After being on show in Dubai the Enigma will also be taken to Los Angeles and London, before a seven day online auction starts on Feb 3.

What Sotheby's called a "cosmic wonder" could very well go to a bitcoin bidder, Stevens said. "We are accepting cryptocurrency for the diamond, which we have done for other important stones," she said. Last year in Hong Kong, the Key 10138 diamond sold for 12.3 million dollars which was paid in cryptocurrency.

India declines visas to Pakistani pilgrims

India on Wednesday 2 Feb. declined to issue visas to Pakistani pilgrims at the eleventh hour for attending the annual Urs of Khawaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer from February 3 to 14.

Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Pir Noorul Haq Qadri, in a statement, expressed dismay over the non-issuance of visas to the religious tourists, which was beyond his comprehension.

The Indian embassy, he said, had asked the ministry to complete all the arrangements for the departure of pilgrims for the Urs following all the standard operating procedures issued by it. The pilgrims belonging to far-flung areas of the country had arrived in Lahore. However, the last moment refusal for issuance of visas had hurt their sentiments leaving them in mental stress, he added.

Mr Qadri said Pakistan would take up such an ill-treatment of Zaireen with India at the foreign ministry's level. India had violated the 1974 Pakistan-India Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines on the pretext of the coronavirus pandemic.

On the contrary, he said, Pakistan had always facilitated Hindu and Sikh Yatris from India to visit their sacred sites in a bid to promote interfaith harmony.

Amid the prevailing Covid-19, Pakistan issued visas to both Hindu and Sikh pilgrims during the last two years.

PM directs ministry to develop more tourist spots

The Ministry of Tourism has been directed to develop alternative tourist destinations in the country so that the flow of visitors towards the same places every year could be reduced.

In his meeting with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Tourism Coordination Azam Jamil, the prime minister emphasised on the need to enhance the tourism industry by developing housing and infrastructure.

The PM also directed him to begin work on rehabilitation of Governor House Nathia Gali so it could be turned into a high-end tourist destination especially for state guests. The private sector must be involved in this process, he added.

The newly-appointed Mr Jamil has

plans to promote Pakistan's historically fascinating infrastructure and focus more on the youth as, according to him, with them lies the future of the tourism industry.

Mr Jamil, who has spent four decades in Pakistan's tourism and hospitality journey said that projects needed to be socially, culturally, politically and environmentally sustainable and local communities should be involved in them whenever possible.

Renovation of Gwadar football stadium complete



An aerial view of the Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo Football Stadium.

After the construction of a scenic cricket stadium in the port city, a football stadium is set to be inaugurated in the foothills of Koh-i-Batil, much to the delight of Makran's people, especially sports fans.

The director general of the Gwadar Development Authority, Mujeeb Rehman Qambrani, said on Friday 28 Jan. that Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo Football Stadium had been renovated and would soon be inaugurated by Balochistan's Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo.

The old football stadium, spread over 138,000 square feet, was in a dilapidated condition and void of greenery, Mr Qambrani said, adding that players used to play there in the dust. The stadium had now been planted with greenery and illuminated by floodlights.

A new pavilion for spectators, a separate seating area for guests, rooms for players and offices have also been set up besides underground water tanks, walking tracks and washrooms for spectators. The parking area and other places have also been improved.

"As football is quite popular in Gwadar, sports fans have expressed happiness over the stadium's renovation," Mr Qambrani said. "We were also improving other stadiums so that the youth of the city could continue their healthy activities in a better environment." He said

Gwadar residents praised the provincial government's efforts to promote sports and improve the football stadium's condition.

In November 2020, former Balochistan chief minister Jam Kamal inaugurated the Senator Muhammad Ishaq Baloch Cricket Stadium Gwadar, jointly constructed by the provincial government and Pakistan Army.

Sambar deer set free near LoC



A Sambar deer that entered Azad Kashmir from across the Line of Control.

A female Sambar deer believed to have penetrated the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) territory from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Kotli district was released into its natural habitat along the unmarked dividing line on Sunday 23 Jan.

The Sambar (*Rusa unicolor*) is a large deer native to the Indian subcontinent, South China and Southeast Asia that is listed as a vulnerable species on the IUCN Red List since 2008.

AJK wildlife and fisheries department director Naeem Iftikhar Dar told media that a group of villagers had captured the deer in their Dharamsal village, located in the proximity of the LoC, at about 10:30am.

A wildlife guard also reached on the occasion and it was mutually resolved to shift the animal to the office of Charhoi's assistant commissioner for a further decision about its release or captivity, he said.

Mr Dar said initially it was decided to transfer the deer to the wildlife department manned zoo in the neighbouring district but later the decision was changed because the animal was healthy and capable of surviving in its natural habitat.

It was released along the LoC after sunset by a group of officials from the wildlife department and tehsil administration, he said.

A video clip about the release showed the officials taking the deer out of a vehicle, removing the rope from around its neck and pushing it towards a mountainous slope. The deer galloped across the mountain in a short while.

Interestingly, many of the officials present on the occasion were heard bidding adieu to the female deer as if it was a human being.

“Be in God's protection,” they said.

Mr Dar said Sambar deer had its presence [mostly] in occupied Jammu areas but over the past few years there had been many instances of its migration to the adjacent areas on this side of the divide.

Foreign expedition reaches K2 Camp 1

While a foreign expedition team on Monday 31 Jan. started climbing the 8,611-kilometre K2 peak, another team of foreigners called off their attempt to scale the 8,126-kilometre Nanga Parbat.

A seven-member team led by Taiwanese woman climber Grace Tseng established the Camp-1 at the world's second highest peak on Monday 31 Jan.

The winter expedition has been organised by Dolma Outdoor Expedition of Nepal in collaboration with the Summit Karakoram of Pakistan.

The team had started journey from Skardu on Jan 19, arriving at the base camp on Jan 25. The team also includes six sherpas from Nepal.

According to a statement issued by Summit Karakoram of Pakistan on Monday, the team has safely established Camp-1 (6,000m) and further progressed by 200 meters from there.

It said if the weather remained stable then the team will establish Camp-2 at 6,760 metres on Tuesday 1st Feb.

Meanwhile, the Nanga Parbat winter expedition members called off their attempt to scale the killer mountain through Rupal Face over deteriorating weather.

The Nanga Parbat winter expedition



was organised by Adventure Tours of Pakistan.

The three-member Nanga Parbat expedition team included German climber David Göttler, Italian Hervé Barmasse and American Mike Arnold. They had arrived at the base camp of the peak in last week of December.

However, American Mike Arnold had decided against attempting the climb, while the other two had reached up to 6,200 meters, but had to return to the base camp recently due to bad weather.

GB govt to bear cost of ailing climber's treatment

Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid Khan on Wednesday 2 Feb. announced that his government will bear all the expenses on the treatment of renowned mountaineer Mohammad Karim, also known as Little Karim, who is suffering from a liver disease.

Taking notice of a social media message by climber's son, Mohammad Hanif that the family had no money for treatment of his father, the chief minister directed relevant officials to contact the mountaineer's family.

According to a statement, the CM said his government would also give employment to his children.

In the video message, Mohammad Hanif also said he had been unemployed for last two years, and that it had become tough to meet home expenditures or pay for treatment of his father. He said they had to sell their home, and he had to auction the shirt autographed and gifted by renowned footballer Cristiano Ronaldo to meet treatment expenses of his father.

Abdul Karim, 70, hails from Hushe village of Ghanche district. He was globally known as a high altitude porter and mountaineer through the 70s and 80s.

He also holds the world record of climbing the 8,035-metre Gasherbrum-2 without supplementary oxygen.

Taiwanese woman climber starts journey for K2 base camp

A Taiwanese woman climber along with six Nepalese sherpas on Tuesday 18 Jan. started journey for the base camp in her attempt to summit K2.

The team comprises female climber Grace Tseng and sherpas, including Nima Gyalzen, Chhiring, Dawa, Furi, Ngima Tendi, Ningma Dorje Tamang.

The Taiwanese Winter K2 Expedition 2021-22 has been organised by Dolma Outdoor Expedition from Nepal in collaboration with the Summit Karakoram of Pakistan.

Mr Iqbal from Summit Karakoram told media that the expedition team members along with 60 local porters, two kitchen staff and two guides had left Askoli area of Shigar for the K2 base camp.

Dawa Sherpa, executive director from Dolma Outdoor Expedition, told media that the expedition would last until the end of February depending on the weather situation.

He said Ms Tseng was looking forward to being the first female climber to achieve the first K2 summit in winter.

Karrar Haidri, secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan, said the Taiwanese female climber aged 28 sought to conquer world's 14 peaks over 8,000 meters high.

The female mountaineer had successfully ascended the summit of Kanchenjunga at 8,586 metres, the world's third-highest mountain, in October last year. Grace Tseng became not only the first Taiwanese to conquer the world's third highest mountain, but also the first woman in the world to have done so in autumn.

Ms Tseng has also reached the summits of Mount Everest (8,848m), Lhotse (8,516m), Dhaulagiri (8,167m) and Manaslu (8,163m).

K2 is considered the most difficult peak among 8,000m mountains to climb, and the number of successful ascents to its summit is much lower than the successful attempts at Mount Everest over the years.

A Nepalese team made it to the top of K2 in January last year, marking the first time humans ever successfully reached its summit in winter.

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A brief history of the subcontinent's mail

Even back in the 13th century, there was some form of postal deliveries in India. The earliest reference to an official postal system in India was made in the 14th century by the famed Arab traveller and historian Ibn Baah, who noted the organised official service of mounted couriers and runners.

There were 'horse runners' for speedy deliveries and there were foot runners called 'Harkara' who were the mainstay of the postal service. As one can imagine, the task of laying out a communication network was difficult as well as dangerous, travelling through the forests amidst the wild animals. Thus, postal services were not accessible to the common people and were expensive in the early centuries.

The network of post relays with changing horses at caravan sarais (inns) was established by the emperor Sher Shah Suri in the early 16th century. The Mughals, particularly Akbar, organised the system to improve the postal service, through horse couriers between Agra and Kabul, and camels for the deserts, thus setting up regular routes for mail delivery and improved access between areas.

In 1688, the East India Company introduced the system of postal hubs in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, such that all the mail would be brought to those hubs, where it was sorted out in different bags according to the destination. These bags were secured with company seals, which only the postal chiefs at different places were allowed to open.

In 1766, an official post was re-established by Major-General Lord Robert Clive to serve a new ruling power. The British colonial administrator, Warren Hastings, made it available for use for the general public in 1774.

Karachi has a unique place in the postal history of the Subcontinent. In many ways, it led the way forward for the mail system in the region

Further reforms in 1774 meant the postal rates were determined by the weight and distance of the post. The fee charged was two aanas per 100 miles. Copper tokens were minted as a way of payment.

The Indian Post Office was established in 1837. The Post Office Act of 1837 provided the Governor-General of India exclusive rights of conveying letters by post within the territories of the East India Company, thereby granting Imperial post a monopoly. In 1850, four post offices were set up in Sindh in Sukkur, Shikarpur, Hyderabad and Karachi.

One of the tasks for Sir Henry Bartle Frere, on taking over as the Chief Commissioner of Sindh in 1850, was to modernise and reform the postal system.



The first postage stamps of India. Issued on July 1, 1852 in Karachi, these were the world's first circular stamps

The very first Indian stamps were introduced in Karachi under the auspices of the Scinde Dawk. The efficiency improved when, in 1851, runners were replaced by horses and camels that followed the planned and established routes. Mail was now carried quickly and efficiently, connecting government offices and post offices between Karachi, Hyderabad, Shikarpur and Sukkur. The common person could use the facility now, which included doorstep delivery of letters.

Asia's first-ever stamp issued from Karachi

The Postmaster of Karachi, Edward Lees Coffey, helped design the first postage stamps of India. These prepaid stamps were issued on July 1, 1852. Before the introduction of the stamps, postage was paid by the recipient of the letter, who could decline to accept the post.

The post stamp introduced standard rates, and served as a marker of prepayment. It bore the Merchant's Mark of the East India Company, embossed on wafers of circular red sealing wax impressed on paper, valued at one-half anna. The design on the stamps depicted a heart-shaped device divided into three segments, each containing one of the letters E.I.C. of the East India Company. Below this was the value: ½ anna. The whole design was further enclosed in a circular belt with the inscription "Scinde district dawk", in capital letters.

India, thus, became the 10th country in the world, and the first in Asia, to issue postage stamps. These were the world's first circular stamps. They came cheap and had a uniform rate. Thus, a hallmark in the history of postage was initiated from Karachi.

Not satisfied with the local printing, Sir Bartle Frere sent the design to England and asked for the stamps to be printed in blue. In 1852, the Postmaster General of Karachi received 10,000 stamps. These orders were repeated till almost 50,000 of them were in circulation. Thereafter, a fresh order was placed in England for blue-embossed stamps.

By the time these stamps arrived, another order was issued in September 1854 that the Scinde Dawk stamps should be withdrawn because stamps were being

introduced on an all-India basis. However, the withdrawal order was not fully implemented, as the Scinde Dawk stamps, which remained in use for almost two years from July 1, 1852 to September 30, 1854, were still being used in 1856.

In June 1856, the then Director-General of the Posts, India, received a letter addressed to him which had the Scinde Dawk stamps affixed on it. He immediately took notice of the situation, and the collector of Karachi destroyed the balance stock.

A new post office for Karachi

The first All India Stamp was issued in October 1854 by Captain H.L. Thuillier, deputy surveyor-general of the survey office, Calcutta. It had a denomination value of ½ anna and had Queen Victoria's head on it. Railway mail service was brought in, and sea mail service was introduced from India to Great Britain and China in the same year. The Telegraph and Post Office of Karachi was designed by Captain P. Phelps and built on McLeod Road in 1866, at the cost of 20,500 rupees.

As the postal service evolved, faster routes were explored and airmail started. On January 23, 1920, the Royal Air Force commenced a weekly Karachi-Bombay airmail service. That was the first airmail service in India. It was reported 102 years ago:

"Karachi, January 23 Punctually, at 2 o'clock today, two aeroplanes carrying the first postal mail from Karachi to Bombay started from Muger Pir aerodrome, a mild south-western wind blowing. But the planes, after manoeuvring, appeared to enter a calm zone at about 10,000 feet. Great interest was taken in the event in the locality and the citizens, representing all races and classes, drove out in vehicles. The flight, according to the planned air route, covers 700 miles. Before the start, the Hon'ble H.M. Commissioner in Sind, who accompanied by his Private Secretary, wished the airmen bon voyage, and among the passengers was Mr. Lupton, C.B.E., Editor of the "Daily Gazette" Karachi, who on the invitation of His Excellency the Governor of Bombay was making the flight. The mail was carried in twelve cases and took the place of bombs carried on war service. The machines, as they moved across the ground, were 'farewelled' by visitors from Karachi and by the detachment of the 97th R.A.F. Squadron."

Those operations, however, were terminated in six weeks because of heavy losses. It only resumed years later, in March 1929, when Imperial Airways commenced operations in Karachi for services to India.

Communications, since, have advanced far with electronic media. But, still, Karachi is credited with these revolutionary events in history.

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