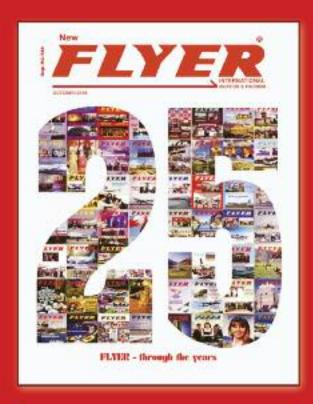
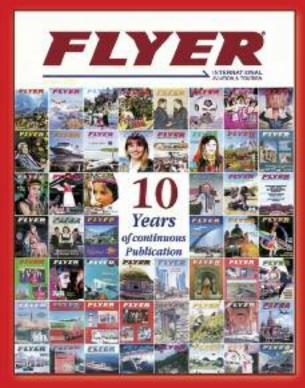
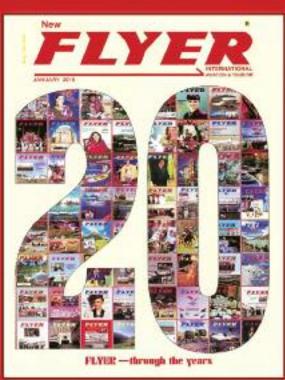
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Chief Editor Managing Editor Assistant Editor Associate Editor Resident Editor Reporter Photographer Contributors

Abdul Sattar Azad Muhammad Faryal Azad Musharraf Azad Shahida Hameed Wagas Masood Bazla Sardar S. Shahid Ikram Prof. Safdar Sandal Chief Correspondent Prof. Karamat Rajput.

Address

B-65 Ablagh-e-Aamma (media) Cooperative Housing Society Block-8, Gulistan-e-Jauhar

facebook.com/flyerintl

Karachi-75290

Phone 34615924 Cell 0333-2194853 Web www.newflyerintl.com E-mail flyer_intl@hotmail.com

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Sialkot S. Shahid Ikram

> Pervaiz Plaza Near Railway Crossing Kutchary Road Ph: (052) 4268424 Cell: 0321-8114505

Art Director & Design

Faisal Ahmed @ Faraz Mob: 0315-8267582



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FLYER - through the years

It was started about six and half decades ago, the monthly Flyer International has completed more then 30 years of its publication under the present management. By far, it is the oldest trade magazine devoted to the promotion of tourism, aviation trade in Pakistan.

Whereas the present management has not drifted from the initial goals set for this journal, it has given adequate encourages to socio-economic-cultural activities in the country. This has been done because the overall progress of tourism depends on a number of factors especially those in the said fields. Not only this, it was a part of our policy to project the important events taking place in the domestic airlines (both in private and public sectors) as well as the GSA's operating in Pakistan. This was done basically with a view for creating conducive atmosphere for the promotion of tourism and aviation in Pakistan.

We maintained a close liaison with trade organisations like Travel Agents Association of Pakistan (TAAP), Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan (ACAAP), Pakistan International Freight Forwarder Association (PIFFA), Pakistan Hotel Association (PHA), Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP), Civil Aviation Authority of Pakistan (CAA), Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC), Provincial Tourism Development Corporations, Pakistan Airlines Pilots Association, (PALPA), Sialkot International Airport Limited, (SIAL), ICAO, IATA, PATA, BRIP, FIATA, Dry Ports etc.

Flyer has always covered the activities and developments taking place in these organizations. Their role in the overall progress of the tourism and aviation industry cannot be undermined. It goes without saying that government as a policy making and monitoring agency is charged with the responsibility to ensure smooth functioning of the institutions engaged in tourism and aviation. Flyer always remained in constant touch with the Federal Ministry of Tourism, Provincial Tourism Development Corporations, Department of Tourists Service (DTS), Pakistan Institute of Tourism and Hotel Management (PITHM) and PATA.

The various conferences, seminars, symposiums, workshops and study tours arranged by these institutions were participated by Flyer's representatives and

reports thereof were printed in positive manner. We have, as a policy, avoided controversy and have never indulged in any activities which could fan the flames of dissension and harm our basic objectives.

It is an established fact that tourism is one sector which, by providing maximum employment, makes a palpable contribution to the economy of the country. Besides, it adds to the national exchequer in the form of taxes, duties, rates, fees (direct and indirect). Financial benefits apart, tourism highlights the national image on international level. Modern tourism is not confined to mere visiting places of historical, cultural and archaeological interest. It involves a lot of "doing" as well. Hence, activities like playing various games (sports tourism), pilgrimage (religious tourism), participation in business meetings (business tourism), taking part in activities such as trekking and mountaineering (adventure tourism), attending sociocultural events (festival tourism), etc. also constitute tourism. Such activity-related tourism or "special interest tourism" brings a lot of revenue to the country. Flyer feels pleasure in making a modest contribution in that direction. We take this opportunity to express our unreserved thanks for the cooperation and help received from all the afore- mentioned organizations and

their responsible officials in our efforts. We are also thankful to the advertisers for their sustained patronage in furthering a noble cause. Our thanks are also due to the domestic and foreign airlines, travel agencies, cargo agencies, tour operators, hotels, tourism corporations, aircraft manufacturers, Sialkot International Airport Limited, (SIAL) and members of other trade and professional organizations who have extended invitations to the Flyer for attending their various programmes and study tours in Pakistan and abroad.

Last, but not the least, we express our heart-felt gratitude to our contributors, (specially late Dr. S. M. Moin Qureshi who contributed a lot-is travelogues and a regular feature (TO BE FRANK), Prof. Safdar Sandal Director SIAL and a business man writer, editorial staff, management personnel, photographers and those associated with the printing and publication of the magazine.

It would not be inept to acknowledge the unstinting cooperation we received from the Gulshan-e-Iqbal Head Post Office, Karachi in smooth and prompt circulation of the magazine. Without the joint and untiring efforts of all these functionaries, it would not have been possible for us to bring the Flyer International with such regularity maintaining a viable (if not enviable) standard.



Vice Chairman Sialkot International Airport presents a shield to A.S. Azad Chief Editor, Flyer International.



Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS)



Shaheen Airport Services (SAPS) is a project of Shaheen Foundation, a welfare organization of Pakistan Air Force and has the largest setup of providing complete Ground Handling Services at major Airports in Pakistan i.e Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Multan, Quetta, Skardu, Gwader, Faisalabad and Rahim Yar Khan International Airports. Its success story goes way back to 1982 when it was established with the sole aim of providing Safe, Secure, Efficient, Cost Effective and Quality Services to Airlines operating in Pakistan.

SAPS adaptability and customer-care are pivotal to the portfolio of Ground Handling Services we offer. Whether partial or complete, SAPS has the ability to adapt program to meet distinctive needs of Airlines.

Besides over-flight and landing clearances, SAPS provides Ground Handling Services as per IATA Airport Handling Standards, with full Security measures. Our services include Passenger / Baggage handling, Flight Operations / Dispatch, Load / ULD control, Ramp / Cabin Cleaning, Cargo / Mail handling, Scanning, etc. SAPS, also makes arrangement for refueling, Catering & Aircraft Maintenance, when required.

In addition to Scheduled Airlines, SAPS also handles Charter / VVIP/Presidential flights and Non-Schedule Carriers operating both Freighters & Passenger Aircraft at Karachi, Islamabad, Lahore, Peshawar, Multan, Quetta, Faisalabad, Skardu, Gwader & Rahimyar Khan and at remote Airfields i.e. Nawabshah, Chandana, Mohenjo Daro, Kadanwari etc on need basis. SAPS has a rich experience of over 42 years and customer satisfaction is our paramount policy.

SAPS experience in Aviation Ground Handling is attaining heights of excellence every day. For the last over 42 years SAPS is handling reputable clients to their satisfaction. SAPS is a member of IGHP (IATA's Ground Handling Partner) and stays abreast with new developments in the World Aircraft-Handling Industry.

We have completely implemented the Safety Management System (SMS) in entire SAPS including Syllabus and teaching is as per Airport Handling Manual (AHM), SAPS is ISO 9001:2015, ISO 14001:2015, ISO 45001:2018 certified since 2014. SAPS also have RA3 certification of five (05) stations from Central Excellence Independent Validator (CEIV) of European Union and United Kingdom. Moreover, SAPS is also ISAGO certified.

Islamabad International Airport records highest passengers flow in 2023

In 2023, Islamabad International Airport IIAP recorded its highest passenger flow ever with a whopping six million people passing through. Out of this number, domestic flights saw about 11,000 trips transporting approximately 1.5 million passengers; whereas international ones served around four and a half million individuals.

The airport noted an exceptional figure of flight operations which sums up to about thirty-one thousand movements all reflecting the day-to-day busy status it keeps running with diverse connections. The surge in passenger volume underlines IIAP's pivotal role as an extensively used aviation gateway too.

PCAA inaugurates exam centre at Islamabad International Airport

The Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) is pleased to announce the inauguration of a state-of-the-art exam centre for pilots at Islamabad International Airport (IIAP). The new exam centre will provide greater accessibility and convenience for aspiring pilots in northern regions of Pakistan. The inauguration ceremony took place at IIAP and was presided over by Advisor to the Prime Minister on Aviation. Air Marshal (Retd) Farhat Hussain Khan. In attendance were notable dignitaries including Secretary Aviation, Director General PCAA, Additional Director General PCAA, Deputy Director General (Regulatory), Director Personnel and Licensing, and Manager Islamabad International Airport. Mr. Matt Margesson and Mr. Ian Saunders, representatives from the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority International (UKCAAi), were also present on

the occasion. With the establishment of this exam center at IIAP, candidates appearing for pilot exams from across northern regions can now benefit from PCAA's modern facilities, advanced technological support, and expert supervision offered through UKCAAi and in collaboration with British Council in Pakistan. The PCAA is committed to providing unparalleled services for future pilots in Pakistan, ensuring their growth and success in global aviation standards.







'FLYER' - beyond the douds story

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

The name 'Flyer' signifies; meant to fly; high and higher.

By deeds or performance, the magazine 'Flyer International' has done so in practical form and has touched the skies, speaking figura-



tively. The sky has been its limit and beyond... The private sector in its administrative seat, has always steered its course in right direction and the academia helping it, has also not lagged behind in support of its upward flight.

In the Aviation and Tourism Industry, there has been no such name as 'Flyer'. It has, since three decades, flawlessly served the interests of tourism in Pakistan as well as those of the neighboring countries of 'Central Asian Arcade', the countries which are its future partners especially in tourism, trade and commerce and in the day by day, city to city increasing Air-links between them and a common goal, sharing their rich heritage. The magazine covers international aviation stories too, beyond this geographical entity, proximity and fraternal amity. It includes interesting articles of diverse nature, especially relating to facilitation of business-travels, leisure, luxury voyages and an enchanting tourism. The magazine was initially started approximately 60 years ago and remained in its embryonic form for several years, but since then it has now gained maturity, grown and overwhelmed the International Aviation Industry. It has been running now more successfully through its experienced administrative staff accompanied by matured family-workforce from its owner cum publisher personality who is Mr. Abdul Sattar Azad and is well known for everyone. He is very familiar to all strata of society and is operative successfully from some several handsome years by now of three decades.

The referred new amalgamated administration has proved to be very proactive and efficient and has given to the journal a new look and made it as the most popular magazine of the country in the field of aviation, besides covering all other flora and fauna of our rich nature. The present issue is a commemorative one, designed to celebrate the first quarter of its anniversary. I, being in my humble capacity have also been associated

with Flyer, on free will only due to my own personal zeal and pleasure. I was invited to make use of this opportunity and have verily enjoyed the good offer and opportunity, to write and give expression to my thoughts which may have not been possible, if not invited. I did contribute to it, out of my own extremely busy business schedule in life. I am only trying to fill the gap by groping the present lines and feel delighted and gratified, in fact. This is what my cherished Prize is!!

Acting very responsibly, the 'Flyer; management has not shifted from its

ports have supported well the beautiful pages of the 'Flyer' forte, mainly because of its high quality of coverage, exquisite printing on a fine art-paper and by a masterly classification and setting of subjects in their most appropriate places. The credit goes to the high-profile administration of 'Flyer' which is always agile to every scope and in fact, true to their marvellous job in implementation of their dignified art-work.

The owner cum editor of 'Flyer International' Mr. Abdul Sattar Azad, possessing a charming personality, has



Mr. A.S. Azad Chief Editor, Flyer International was photographed with Gulf Air crew.

basic goals intended and designed for a journal of its kind; it has not lagged behind in giving necessary coverage to the social, cultural and economic activities of the country and the society. The scribe feels gratified by having freely contributed to the magazine, articles of various nature covering diverse subjects by penning on ancient and recent political, cultural, psychological and economic trends, as well as by attempting on some elementary subjects of archeology. Interesting travelogues have also not been excluded from my submissions and have been given a due place in the magazine; good for the students of history. Above all the 'Chief Editor' of the magazine has been my guest of honour at least once a year, and has personally been happier by dealing profusely with the emergence, steady growth and enviously galloping development of 'Sialkot International Airport'. All these impressions and rapamazingly kept a close liaison with the organizations like 'Travel Agents Association of Pakistan' (TAAP) Pakistan International Freight Forwarders Association (PIFFA) and 'Air Cargo Agents Association of Pakistan' (ACCAP) whose annual moot has recently been held at the gracious hall of the 'Grace' gala of Sialkot-Cantt. Among other associates are 'Pakistan Hotel Association' (PHA), 'Civil Aviation Authority of Pakistan' (CAA) 'Pakistan Tourism Department Corporation' (PTDC) 'Pakistan Airline's Pilots Association' (PALPA) and of course the sprung up 'Sialkot International Airport' (SIAL) with its most importantly striding successes, has been the main attraction.. Above everything else, personal and friendly and frequent visits and contacts established by Mr. Azad with all his clients has boosted his business of the 'Flyer'. With me Mr. Azad

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amadeus

Amadeus and Qatar Airways Collaborate to Enhance Agent Education on NDC in Pakistan



Amadeus and Qatar Airways conducted a series of workshops aimed at increasing awareness amongst travel agents in Pakistan. The workshops, held in Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, focused on the implementation of New Distribution Capability (NDC) on the Amadeus Selling Platform. Connect.

Attendees gained valuable insights into reservation procedures and policies, empowering them to better serve their clients and adapt to the evolving landscape of airline distribution.





IATA releases 2024 cargo and ground handling manuals

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has completed the annual revision of its industry manuals for cargo and ground handling operations, incorporating the latest changes and revisions made to many of the underlying industry standards, as well as any State and operator variations. These reflect the sector's ongoing commitment to further improving safety, introducing more sustainable operations, as well as enhancing the passenger experience and cargo handling. In total more than 300 changes have been made, including:

- Updated guidance on the transport of mobility devices, particularly when powered by lithium and other batteries: The safe transportation of mobility aids requires special care and attention, while the additional challenges posed by the transportation of lithium or other batteries required for some of these mobility aids must also be considered. Hence, the guidance for the carriage of dangerous goods by passengers or crew has been updated, in order to improve the end-to-end transportation process for mobility aids. These amendments are reflected in the latest editions of the Dangerous Goods Regulations (DGR) and Lithium Battery Shipping Regulations (LBSR) and support the industry's commitmentto travelers with disabilities made at the IATA Annual General Meeting in 2019.
- Amendments to Live Animal Regulations (LAR): For over 50 years the IATA LAR has served as an indispensable resource, guaranteeing the safe worldwide transport by air of a wide variety of species. It provides detailed guidance on how more than 1,000 different species can be safely transported on aircraft and has already been adopted as national legislation in more than 30 countries. In its latest and 50th edition, the LAR provides more clarity between the requirements for animals which are transported in cargo compartments (IATA Live Animal Acceptance Checklist) and animals which can be taken into the passenger cabin (IATA's In-Cabin Live Animal Acceptance Checklist). This follows a notable increase in the transportation of domestic animals.
- Complete revision of application of Perishable Cargo Regulations (PCR) and Temperature Control Regulations (TCR): As global demand for fresh and perishable goods, such as fruits, vegetables, seafood, and flowers, continues to grow, the industry is investing in advanced

temperature-controlled and cold chain logistics to help maintain the integrity of perproducts throughout transportation journey. The revised manual includes the new definition of perishables ('perishables' are consumable and nonconsumable goods with limited shelf life, susceptible to loss and spoilage if not preserved under appropriate conditions, thereby losing their inherent properties or essential quality components and no longer able to be used as originally intended), as well as further information on training and clarification on how temperature ranges can be placed on labels.

• IATA Cargo Handling Manual (ICHM) now includes guidance on develop-

will ensure the same high levels of skills and knowledge at a global scale, reduce training time and costs and the global adoption of best practices. In parallel, the IATA Safety Audit for Ground Operations (ISAGO) is continuing to gain traction across the industry with more than 330 stations accredited at over 200 airports worldwide. The Revised Airport Handling Manual (AHM) now contains guidelines for management and safety, establishing an industry framework and ISAGO standards for organization management and control. ISAGO will require compliance with the AHM and the IATA Ground Operations Manual (IGOM) for a successful accreditation audit.



ing an Operational Risk Assessment (ORA) and possible mitigation strategies: Following an amendment to ICAO Annex 6, an ORA must now be carried out on all items carried in cargo compartments. The ICHM now includes guidance on developing an ORA, which is a sequential process that begins with the identification of potential hazards. This includes, among others, the capabilities of the operator and the aircraft, containment characteristics of unit load devices, or packaging details. In addition, the assessment needs to include the likelihood of an incident, its severity, and appropriate risk management strategies to mitigate the risk as far as practically possible.

• Ongoing drive for standardized training and operational procedures in Ground Handling: Global standards are the foundation for safe and efficient ground operations and standardisation in training

In addition to the necessary changes in the manuals, IATA published various trend reports in the fields of Dangerous Goods, Special Cargo, Cargo Operations and Ground Operations. These provide a more holistic overview of developments and key 2024 industry trends in these fields, which often become the base for some of the operational changes.

"Operating to global standards is a must in aviation. Devising these standards together with member airlines and other key value chain stakeholders has been the hallmark of IATA's activities since its founding. A great example of this is the Live Animal Regulations which sees its 50th edition published in 2024. Taking into consideration the various trends – especially sustainability and digitalization – more than 300 changes are reflected in the 2024 IATA manuals, a testament to the fact



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that this work is essential to maintain a reliable and safe aviation ecosystem for both customers and employees", said IATA's Senior Vice President Commercial Products and Services, Frederic Leger.

In collaboration with its members, IATA has been setting industry standards since its founding in 1945 and manuals and regulations have been published on a multitude of topics for more than 60 years. In line with moving into a more digital world, all manuals are now available in a digital format, in addition to the traditional printed versions.

The annual update is an extensive exercise undertaken by various industry working groups such as the Dangerous Goods Board (DGB) and the Live Animals and Perishables Board (LAPB). Each working group is comprised of IATA and other respective industry experts who work with local governments and industry stakeholders, ensuring that each manual contains the most updated information on the latest regulations, trends, and best practices. More than 300 updates have been made to the 2024 editions.

PCAA sanctions Serene Air and Airbus for violating passenger rights

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority sanctions Air Blue and Serene Air for exceeding flight delays and violating passenger rights.

Following a string of lengthy flight delays and numerous cancellations that impacted hundreds of passengers, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) issued Serene Air and Air Blue with show cause notices. Serene Air and Air Blue received show cause notices on January 2 and January 15, respectively. Should the operators not convince Director General PCAA that such serious lapses will not happen again, regulatory measures such as financial penalties, license suspension or cancellation, and reducing the number of scheduled flights are on the table. The show cause notices further state that by failing to conduct flight operations on time and regularly, operators disregarded established regulatory standards, resulting in significant disruption. The PCAA remains committed to upholding passenger safety, comfort, and convenience, ensuring that all airlines operating within country's airspace adhere to the highest industry standards.

PCAA gives CIP lounge at IIAP arrangements to Serena Hotels





Serena Hotels Management inaugurating the (CIP) Serena Rakaposhi lounge at Islamabad International Airport.





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Amadeus to acquire Vision-Box for €320 million

Amadeus IT Group, a Spanish multinational technology company that provides software solutions for the global travel and tourism industry, has announced it is acquiring Vision-Box, a leading provider of biometric solutions for airports, airlines and border control customers.



The acquisition of Vision-Box will bring new capabilities around biometrics hardware and software, adding border control solutions to the Amadeus portfolio. Through this combined offering with Vision-Box, Amadeus will now be able to deliver a full end-to-end seamless passenger experience from booking to arrival at the airport, through border control and boarding.

This acquisition will contribute to Amadeus' ambition to connect the travel industry through a seamless ecosystem approach. With this in mind, this deal will deliver outstanding biometrics interoperability between airports, airlines and border control authorities. Additionally, it will complement and improve Amadeus' existing airline and airport value proposition, which focuses on providing a frictionless experience for all passengers, optimising operations and driving effective disruption management.

The use of biometrics in border control is expected to grow significantly in the coming years – with the Biometrics Research Group estimating the global biometrics sector will grow to US\$86.1billion by 2028 from its projected 2023 value of US\$47.8 billion. This growth is being pushed by the travel industry's increased focus on the digitalisation of the passenger journey to improve the experience of travel, meet operational pressures and deliver against regulatory demands.

Vision-Box, which is a fast-growing global business with expected revenues of €70 million and an estimated normalised EBITDA of close to €20 million in 2023, is partially owned by Keensight Capital, a private equity fund dedicated to pan-European Growth Buyout investments. Amadeus will be fully acquiring privately-owned Vision-Box for an agreed price (EV) of approximately €320 million. As part of this acquisition, approximately 470 Vision-Box employees will transfer to Amadeus. The deal is subject to customary regulatory approvals and is expected to close in H1 2024. (£1.00 = €1.17 at time of publication).

Fly Baghdad suspends operations

Fly Baghdad Airlines has suspended operations with this announcement:

"In accordance with the decision of the government and Prime Minister Mohammed al-Sudani, Fly Baghdad will cease operating flights from now until further notice."

In January 2024, U.S. Treasury Department sanctioned Fly Baghdad and its CEO for providing assistance to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corpsvand its proxy groups in Iraq,

Syria, and Lebanon by transporting fighters and weapons.



Pakistan International Airlines, closer to its privatization



Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) may finally be heading towards privatization.

According to Reuters, the country's caretaker administration, which has been in place since August 2023 with a view to organizing the next general election, has finalized the details for the sale of the Pakistan's flag carrier.

The sale has long been under discussion as the country has struggled to restructure its public finances. So far, though, all previous governments have shied away from making a decision about the airline's future.

Although the final formula and price of the sale are not yet known, it is expected that the transaction will take into consideration the recommendations of advisory firm Ernst & Young, which delivered a 1,100 - page report to the government in January 2024.

Loss-making PIA has debts amounting to 785 billion Pakistani rupees (around US\$2.8 billion), which are set to be parked in a separate entity in order to sell the rest of the airline free of liabilities.

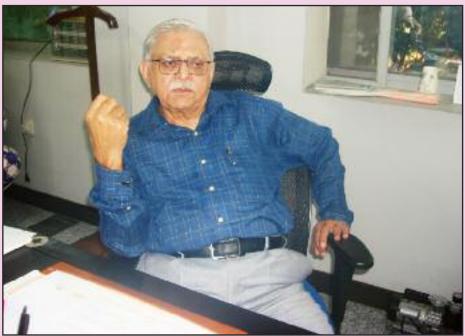
The new government has also introduced legal changes that will allow it to sell off its majority stake in the company.

In the meantime, the government will need to inject another 23.7 billion Pakistani rupees (around US\$85 million) into the airline to keep it afloat for five to six months before the sale can be completed, according to Reuters quoting unnamed PIA sources.

The privatization of PIA is also expected to facilitate negotiations between Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with regards to future financial assistance packages.

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Tahir Butt, Director SIAL & AKI speaks to Flyer International



The Flyer International had an opportunity to interview Mr. Tahir Butt, the Director and Convener of the Finance Committee of SIAL. He is also a shareholder of AirSial and a Director of Anwar Khawaja Industries (Pvt) Ltd, which manufactures world-class footballs.

Mr. Tahir shared insights with Flyer International about the progress and development program at Sialkot International Airport (SIAL). Currently, SIAL handles two flights at a time, accommodating

wide-bodied and other aircraft such as Boeing 777 and A320. The capacity, especially for Boeing 777 and A320, is set to double, following a decision made during the last board meeting. The extension project for the international terminal building is expected to commence within this year. SIAL has successfully completed the repair of the runway (98135 sqft) well before the NOTAM period, within a span of 15 days.

He mentioned that the transportation



Mr. A.S. Azad Editor, Flyer International with Mr. Tahir Butt at Anwar Khawaja Industries, Sialkot.

of air cargo from the Far East to Europe via SIAL would be a fuel-efficient route, motivating long-haul flights to land at SIAL. The airport is equipped with facilities such as a 5-star hotel, Ramada Plaza, with 50 operational rooms out of the planned 200 by the end of the year. SIAL has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in the UAE for MRO to provide maintenance services for aircraft. Plans for a second runway are in progress, with 200 acres of land being acquired, 65 acres directly from landowners has acquired.

Mr. Tahir Butt, also the Director of Anwar Khawaja Industries, highlighted the company's production of high-quality footballs and handballs. AKI manufactures



three types of balls: hand-stitched, thermal bonded, and machine-stitched, producing 18,00 daily. While mainly manufactured in Sialkot, a portion of hand-stitched balls is produced in KotAdu and Taunsa Sharif. Approximately 40% of the balls are handstitched, and 60% are machine-stitched. The primary clients include Derbystar of Germany, constituting almost 50% of total production, and Select of Dens. AKI holds a 49% stake with Derbystar. Additionally, AKI is a member of the Bundesliga (league), covering 2500 clubs worldwide. Mr. Tahir noted that after COVID-19, China ceased producing footballs, resulting in a 30% to 40% increase in the market share for Pakistan. AKI has earned the honor of producing the first FIFA-approved football in Pakistan, featuring the latest patented innovations.

Pakistan signs Roosevelt Hotel deal with US consortium

The caretaker government on Friday 02 Febuary signed an agreement with a US consortium for the joint venture development of the Roosevelt Hotel, a multi-million property owned by PIA Investment Limited, as the privatisation process of the lossmaking PIA nears completion.

The financial advisory services agreement with the consortium led by Jones Lang LaSalle Americas Inc (JLL) was signed at the Privatisation Commission (PC). The Roosevelt Hotel is a priority transaction in the ongoing privatization programme of the government. There were four entities on the list of reale state.

iconic structure with the most modern development features and standards.

The PC board, in its meeting in December, approved the appointment of the financial adviser for the joint venture development of the Roosevelt Hotel. A negotiating committee formed by the PC board concluded the financial services agreement with the successful bidder.

The commission had received technical and financial proposals from four parties. The consortium led by JLL was declared the 'top-ranked interested party' based on the evaluation per the laid-down criteria.



PIA had liabilities of Rs785bn (\$2.81bn) and accumulated losses of Rs713bn as of June last year.

The transactions for Services International Hotel in Lahore and the sale of properties owned or controlled by the federal government have been completed. Only the Jinnah Convention Centre and Roosevelt Hotel remain on the list.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Minister for Privatisation Fawad Hasan Fawad expressed full confidence in the ability and expertise of the financial advisory consortium to find the best possible partners and realise the maximum potential value from its development for the government of Pakistan.

In a subsequent meeting, a detailed roadmap and time bound milestones were also agreed upon leading to the identification and selection of potential joint venture partners for the project.

The caretaker minister further stated that the government intends to develop the historic and landmark site in the heart of the financial capital of the world as an Plans to sell PIA In a relevant development, caretaker administration has nearly finalised plan to sell PIA, Reuters adds.

'Our job is 98 per cent done, Privatisation Minister Fawad said when asked about the plan to sell the airline.

'The remaining two per cent is just to bring it on an excel sheet after the cabinet approves it.' Fawad said the plan, drawn up by transaction adviser Ernst & Young, will be presented to the cabinet for approval before the tenure of the administration ends following the election.

The cabinet will also decide whether to sell the stake by tender or through a government-to government deal, Fawad said.

'What we have done in just four months is what past governments have been trying to do for over a decade,' Fawad said. 'There is no looking back.' Details of the privatisation process have not been previously reported.

Two sources close to the process said

that a 51pc stake with full management control would be offered to buyers after parking the airline's debts in a separate entity, under the 1,100page report from Ernst & Young.

Reuters could not independently confirm the contents of the report. Mr Fawad did not give specific details of the size of the stake to be sold, but confirmed the plan involved the carrier's debts being spun off into a separate entity.

Ernst & Young did not respond to requests for comment.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said the airline was assisting the privatisation process, extending `full cooperation` to the transaction adviser.

PIA had liabilities of Rs785 billion (\$2.81 billion) and accumulated losses of Rs713bn as of June last year. Its CEO has said losses in 2023 were likely to be Rs112bn.

From Page No. 09

'FLYER' - beyond the clouds story

happened to meet at the lawns of 'Sialkot Services Club' Cantt: in the year 2006-07 in a social gathering which had been hosted by the business community of Sialkot in honour of important army personal who were invited and who had rendered meritorious services in making the cantonment of Sialkot a most beautiful place and had helped link it with the city roads. I and Mr. Azad happened to be sitting on one table as per chance; got introduced with each other and shortly made friends. Soon after, I started writing for the 'Flyer' magazine which continues till today despite the busy schedule having intervened during this

The magazine has also grown manifold in its publication and has launched its website (www. newflyerintl.com) and is being read internationally. As a result of this development, calls of appreciation have been received by the scribe from the US, UK, Germany, Japan and India for our writings. Various conferences, seminars, symposiums, workshops and study tours have been regularly attended to, by the Flyer- representatives and the news thereof are exquisitely reported. There have hardly been any snags in the process of progress made by 'Flyer' in all these spheres and years. I quote," catching up is not an issue, but building a niche is a task". 'Flyer' has gloriously built a special niche in its sphere of busi-

Ending with the words of Alfred Whitney Griswold. "The only sure weapon against bad ideas is better ideas". 'Flyer' has successfully followed this course.

Air cargo sees 5% decline in global tonnages for 2023

Global air cargo tonnages for the full year of 2023 were 5% lower than in 2022. Air cargo numbers have yet to see a significant uplift from the recent disruptions to container shipping in the Red Sea. However, there is likely to be some conversion of sea freight to air freight in the coming weeks if the disruptions con-

tinue, according to World ACD market data. Contrasted against the preceding fortnight, weeks 51 and 52 of 2023 saw overall tonnages decrease by 17% and overall global average rates down 7%, with capacity down 3%. While volumes went down significantly across all regions.



Passenger falls out from Air Canada Boeing 777 exit door

A passenger aboard an Air Canada flight from Toronto to Dubai opened a cabin door and fell to the tarmac before takeoff Monday, 08 January evening.

A passenger onboard an Air Canada flight scheduled to depart Toronto Pearson Airport bound for Dubai on Tuesday 09 January night sustained serious injuries after falling approximately 20 feet from an open cabin door.a

The Boeing 777 was preparing for takeoff from Toronto Pearson International Airport when the incident took place.

Air Canada flight AC56 was due to depart Toronto at around 9:35 pm for the 11-hour flight to the Middle East but had to be delayed by more than six hours after the serious incident on Tuesday, 09 January.

Air Canada confirmed that during the boarding of flight AC056, a passenger

"who had boarded the aircraft normally," opened a cabin door on the opposite side of the aircraft, instead of going to their seat while the aircraft was at the gate.

As a result, the passenger sustained injuries falling to the tarmac, and emergency services and authorities were called in.

Air Canada says the flight, which was scheduled to carry 319 passengers, was subsequently delayed and departed later.



PIA receives aircraft after clearance of payment

One of Airbus A320 aircraft was handed over to Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on Wednesday, 10 January at a formal ceremony held at Islamabad International Airport.

Airbus A320 was formally inducted into the PIA fleet as the second Airbus A320 is expected to arrive in Pakistan over the next two weeks.

This was one of the two aircraft which were stuck in Malaysia over a payment dispute.

With the induction of A320, the number of A320 aircraft in the PIA fleet has been 15 aircraft. Out of the 15 A320 aircraft, nine have been flying.

In the ceremony, Adviser to the PM on Aviation retired Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan, Secretary retired Captain Saif Anjum, PIA CEO Air Vice Marshal Amir Hayat, PCAA Director General Khagan Murtaza and other senior officers participated in the event.

Addressing the ceremony, the PM's adviser said this was the sigh of relief owing to the tireless efforts of the PIA team.

He highlighted that the induction would enhance the revenue of the national flag carrier, adding that the second aircraft would also be inducted into the PIA fleet in about next two weeks.

Airbus A320 was then sent to Indonesia, with two pilots. A crew member took off from Jakarta and after refueling from Bangkok and then the aircraft landed at IIAP.

Senior officials of PIA management received the aircraft which is now part of the PIA fleet.

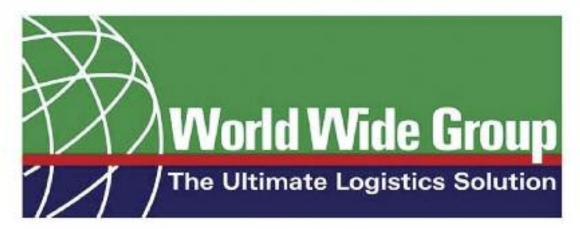
A high-level delegation of PIA headed by the aviation secretary visited to resolve the issue in October 2023.

The PIA's two aircraft A320 had been parked in Jakarta since September 2021 due to a dispute with the leasing company.

The PIA had to pay \$26 million to the leasing company. Since the payment has been cleared now, second A320 aircraft will reach Pakistan in the next two weeks.

World Wide Group

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"Complete Surprise": Mother and Daughter only Passengers on Emirates flight

The two were given a tour of the aircraft, but even with so many seats, they were not permitted to travel in first class.

A mother and daughter duo were left surprised when they boarded their flight for a vacation. The two were the only passengers in the economy-class cabin on the Emirates flight from the Seychelles to Switzerland, as per a report in the Independent.

Zoe Doyle, 25, was travelling with her 59-year-old mother, Kimmy Chedel, on December 25, 2023, to spend Christmas with family. She posted a TikTok video showing the empty seats and since then the clip has been watched over a million times. "Merry Christmas from the only ladies flying Emirates today," the caption said.

In the video, Ms Chedel is seen attempting to put on the headgear that Emirates cabin staff members wear, while her daughter is seen dancing along the clean corridors and creating "snow angels" on the aircraft floor. The now-viral video is set to "All I Want for Christmas Is You," a renowned Christmas pop song by Mariah Carey.

The duo revealed that they had no idea that they were the only passengers and it was a "complete surprise" for them, according to the Stuff. "We had no idea we were the only ones. There were four others, I think, that were in first class but they were totally separate from us, so we were basically the only ones," she said.

She continued, "Because it was monsoon season in the Seychelles, as well as being Christmas Day, it just meant no one was flying I guess."

The two were given a tour of the aircraft, but even with so many seats, they were not permitted to travel in first class. "It was so much fun. We were chatting with the flight attendants and filming funny videos with them. They even got a Polaroid camera out and dressed my Mum up in the cabin crew uniform. It was great" Ms Doyle added.

In April 2023, a UK man who was travelling to Portugal to meet his family from Northern Ireland discovered that he was the only passenger on the entire flight. Mr Wilkinson inquired about the same at the airport, asking if it had been postponed or cancelled, but was taken aback when they informed him that he would be the only one on board, referring to him as a "VIP guest". "I spoke to the stewards waiting to take the passports, and they said, 'Oh, Mr Paul, you're VIP today... You're flying on your own'."

Before the plane took off for Belfast, he got to choose his own seat and speak with the captain. The father of three described the experience of that of a private plane. "Someone told me a private jet is in the region of 28,000 euros (Rs 25 lakh) and it'll probably never happen again," he further said.

Mr Wilkinson enjoyed every second and said that the flight attendants were kind and that their service was "second to none". He received a personal safety demonstration and the event was documented with photographs. "I jokingly asked for a refund on my seat, which I paid for. It was just surreal. I went for a walk around the plane, and I had a pick of the toilets," he said.





Business plan for PIA

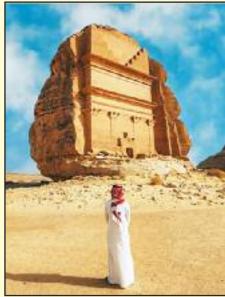
Ernst & Young, financial advisor for the privatisation of Pakistan International Airline Ltd (PIACL), on Thursday, 25 January presented a business plan forecasting the investment roadmap together with immediate funding requirements of the national carrier.

hairing a meeting Caretaker Minister for Privatisation Fawad Hasan made some suggestions to further rationalise the projections contained in the plan before submission to the federal cabinet for approval.

The proposed plan covered the capital and fleet requirements of the airline in the shortand medium term to make it a viable and globally competitive airline.

The Privatisation Commission says the legal segregation plan and transaction structure together with the business plan and valuation methodology will be taken up by the federal cabinet for final approval.

Gulf Air announces to operate flight to Alula, KSA



Gulf Air expands connectivity to Saudi Arabia, a move that promises increased accessibility and convenience, the addition of AlUla (ULH) as our newest seasonal destination in KSA from February 3rd, 2024 with biweekly flights from Bahrain.

An interview

SCAT Airlines to start flights to Karachi

Kazakhstan's SCAT Airlines commenced its flight operations from Almaty to Lahore in July 2023 and has now announced plans to initiate flights

from Karachi to Kazakhstan this year. The airline started operation with two flights a week using Boeing 737-800 aircraft.



Mr. Rizwan Qaiser, CEO of SCAT Airlines GSA for Pakistan, shared his views with Flyer International that the launch of flights between Kazakhstan and Pakistan is expected to catalyze the development of trade, economic investments, tourism, and cultural cooperation between the two nations.

Kazakhstan, ranked as the 7th largest oil and gas-producing country globally and the 9th largest overall, holds significant potential for fostering closer ties between Almaty and Lahore. The new flight route is anticipated to facilitate increased tourism, allowing for stronger connections between the people of Kazakhstan and Pakistan.

Highlighting Kazakhstan's business potential and various attractions, Mr. Qaiser mentioned that many Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed by the Ministry of Trade, Education, and Interbank Services with Kazakhstan. Notably, The Bank of Punjab has opened a branch in Kazakhstan, further enhancing economic ties.

Being a landlocked country, Kazakhstan has the opportunity to utilize Pakistani ports for international trade and logistics. Mr. Qaiser emphasized that the country, known for its wheat production and ranking after Russia, presents a significant opportunity for Pakistan. Pakistan can export rice, fruits, vegetables, sports goods, surgical instruments, leather products, and more.

With 80% of its population being Muslim, Kazakhstan also holds potential for religious tourism. Mr. Qaiser encouraged tourists to explore Pakistan's rich history and cultural significance, particularly in Lahore, known for architectural marvels like the Lahore Fort, Badshahi Mosque, Chauburji Gardens, and more. The CEO expressed optimism about the mutually beneficial opportunities that the new flight route will bring, fostering collaboration and exchange between the two nations.

Mr. Rizwan Qaisar completed his MBA in Lahore and commenced his career in 2005. He gained two years of experience at Gulf Air and another two years at Lufthansa in Germany. In 2009, he joined Qatar Airways as a Senior Sales Executive, where he contributed until 2017. Following that, he also served with Turkish Airlines from 2017 to 2021.

Boeing's blowout forces travellers to check plane model before trips

More travellers are checking the model of an aircraft before booking flights after a midair cabin blowout forced a new Alaska Airlines-operated Boeing jet to make an emergency landing and grounded more than 170 planes, several travel operators said.

A piece of fuselage tore off the left side of the 737 MAX 9 jetliner operated by Alaska Airlines as it climbed following takeoff last Friday, 22 December forcing pilots to turn back and land safely with all 171 passengers and six crew on board.

Regulators have since grounded 171 737 MAX 9 planes for safety checks while Alaska and United Airlines, which together have 70 percent of the 737 MAX 9 fleet, have cancelled hundreds of flights this week.

The Alaska crew have been praised for swiftly landing the plane, with only minor injuries to those on board.

But photos on social media showing oxygen masks deployed and a portion of the aircraft's side wall missing, as well as provisional checks turning up loose bolts in some grounded planes, stirred concerns it would dent passenger conndence in Boeing planes.

Boeing CEO Dave Calhoun acknowledged mistakes and told staff he and many customers had been 'shaken to the bone'.

Boeing must work to earn their confidence, he said.

Ryanair Chief Executive Michael O'Leary said passengers had not shown any concern about flying on Boeing 737 aircraft since the grounding.

Europe's largest airline by passenger numbers is one of Boeing's largest customers and operates different variants of the 737 MAX from the type that has been grounded.

'We see no indication of any passenger concern ...

not one passenger, O'Leary said, adding that the biggest threat to the MAX came when it was grounded for nearly two years in 2019 following two crashes. Even so, Booking Holdings-owned Kayak said it has seen a spike in the use of a filter on its website that allows customers to screen by plane model following last week's incident.

It has moved the filter up on its website to make it more prominent and added the ability to check specifically for the 737 MAX 8 and MAX 9 models. MAX 8 aircraft are still in service.

Internova Travel Group, which represents more than 100,000 travel advisers worldwide, has also seen more queries

about plane models.

'The consumer who is aware of the situation is asking our agents, 'is this an impacted plane?' said Peter Vlitas, an executive at the company.



Ex-attendant named as Japanese airline's first woman chief

Japan Airlines named its first female president on Wednesday, a former cabin attendant who rose through the ranks to senior management, taking a deeply symbolic step in a country struggling to close a vast gender gap at work.

Mitsuko Tottori, a senior managing executive officer who joined JAL in 1985, the year it suffered one of the worst crashes in airline history, will become president from April 1, it said in a statement.

The appointment comes as Japanese companies face increasing pressure to boost gender diversity and tackle a gender-paygap that is the worst among the Group of Seven nations and almost double the average of the OECD grouping of advanced economies.

There are female employees out there who are struggling with their career steps or going through big life events, Tottori told a news conference.

'I hope my appointment as a president can encourage them, or give them the courage to take the next step.' The change comes as the air-line seeks to recover from the pandemic-era downturn and tourists flock back to Japan.

Airline safety is under a fresh spotlight after a collision between a JAL plane and a Japanese Coast Guard aircraft at Tokyo's Haneda airport this month. All 379 people aboard the airliner escaped as it burst into flames.



JAL has said Tottori acquired a 'high level of insight and field experience' in safety operations and service. The current president, Yuji Akasaka, will become chairperson while continuing to hold a representative director title, the airline said in its statement. Yoshiharu Ueki, the current chairman, will retire from his post in April and leave the director position upon shareholder approval in June.

JAL has set itself a target for women to make up 30 per cent of managers across the group by the end of the fiscal year to March 2026. By the end of March 2023, the corresponding figure was 22.8pc.



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Rising freight costs may disrupt supply chains

The arrival of imported raw materials and finished goods, as well as export shipments to European countries and the United States, may face hardships due to rising freight charges following an extended travel time caused by intensifying attacks on shipping vessels by Houthi militants in the Red Sea.

As a result, consumers will bear the brunt of paying higher prices for various goods when stakeholders adjust to the rising freight costs on imported items, including raw materials and finished products.

Former chairman of the Pakistan Ship Agents Association, Mohammad Rajpar, stated that there is currently a significant impact on vessel freight rates due to attacks, prompting foreign shipping lines to consider new routes. A couple of major lines have imposed a \$1,500 surcharge, leading to almost a 100 per cent increase in freight rates.

If negative developments persist, freight rates could more than double or triple in the next six to 12 months, as witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic, he cautioned.

Mr. Rajpar mentioned that the arrival of goods and exports between Pakistan, China, and the Far East, holding a sizable volume, will remain unaffected, as these ships do not use the Red Sea. However, potential issues may arise in the import and export of goods being shipped via European and American shipping lines through the Red Sea.

He noted that Pakistan's exports to Europe and America may slow down in December, given that most Christmas orders

have already been sent to their respective destinations.

'We will assess the situation after mid-January 2024 in case the attacks intensify', Mr. Rajpar said, adding that the United States and its allies have taken steps to intercept the attacks.

Businessmen Group Chairman Zubair Motiwalla expressed concern that ocean freights may escalate to \$5,000 per container, a substantial increase from the current \$550-600. This could occur if commercial ships opt to redirect their routes to the southern tip of Africa instead of the Suez Canal, thereby extending the route by 3,500km for Europe and 6,000km for the US compared to the Suez Canal.

Such a redirection could potentially double or triple the freight rates.

Mr. Motiwalla emphasised that the Suez Canal has remained the shortest route for cargo movement between Asia and Europe. He recalled that shipping lines, in times of crisis, had historically taken longer routes to ensure two way movements of goods.

'Upon intimation from foreign shipping lines, the arrival time of goods from Europe could be extended by up to 20 days if shipping lines choose the new routes via Cape Town, resulting in additional fuel costs.

Due to delays in arrivals from Europe, exporters will need to maintain a three-month raw material inventory, compared to the previous one-and a-half months' stock level, he said.

In this scenario, prices of all goods both imports and exports will significantly in-

crease, he said. A silver lining is that export/import trade from China and the Middle East is likely to remain safe.

Convener on Shipping Affairs of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Abdullah Farrukh, said, 'I think the cumulative impact on goods in a 40ft container will remain minimal after reports of a rise in freight rates by \$200-1,000 per container by the shipping companies as a result of extended transit time.

'So far, non-European vessels are safe in the Red Sea, and only European and American bound carriers are facing attacks, 'Mr Farukh said.

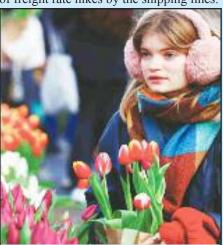
He mentioned that the route from Singapore to Rotterdam used to take 26 days for a ship covering 8,500 miles via the Suez Canal, now, it will take 36 days and cover 11,500 miles through the African route.

Chief Executive of the Pakistan Business Council (PBC), Ehsan Malik, said the attacks on shipping vessels would affect all sources of shipments east of the Red Sea and raise costs for customers in demand-constrained countries in the West. 'It is not a favourable development, leaving aside the political objectives of the obstruction,' he added.

Former vice president of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Younus Soomro, expressed concerns that trade and industry worldwide may face an additional burden of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion during January-March 2024 in terms of freight rate hikes by the shipping lines.



Industry players have expressed concern that ocean freights may escalate if commercial ships opt to redirect their routes to the southern tip of Africa instead of the Suez Canal.



A Dutch woman looks on at a picking garden with over 200,000 tulips that have been created for National Tulip Day where everyone can pick one bunch for free.

Pakistan Single Window (PSW) orientation session held in Lahore

The orientation session for the Pakistan Single Window (PSW) took place recently in Lahore in collaboration with the Pakistan International Freight Forwarders Association (PIFFA) at FPCCI. Mr. M. Jamil Ahmed, former Chairman of PIFFA, organized the event. During the session, participants were provided with insights into the features and services of PSW, as well as updates on the latest initiatives and future projects related to the ports community system of Pakistan. A Q&A session followed, and Mr. Adnan Rafiq (Additional Collector / Domain Officer – PSW) graced the occasion.

Mr. M. Jamil Ahmed, Former Chairman of PIFFA, expressed gratitude during the event, stating, "We appreciate the enthusiasm shown by all the participants in the PSW Seminar, and we are thankful to those who participated online. The contents of the seminar were truly knowledgeable and useful for the freight/logistics industry. This marks just the beginning, and we look forward to integrating with the PSW team for the best module for our industry. Special thanks to Ilyas Sb, Rana Tariq Sb, Arshad Sb, Faizan Sb, and Mr. Tauqeer Malik for their support in arranging this event at the FPCCI platform. Thanks also to the Management of FPCCI. Special thanks again to our valued members who showed their kind interest in the session."





Mr. Adnan Rafiq (Additional Collector / Domain Officer - PSW), Mr. Rana Tariq, Mr. Nadeem Qureshi, Mr. M. Raheel and Mr. M. Jamil Ahmed on dais.







NEW FLYER INTERNATIONAL



Mr. M. Jamil Ahmed presenting bouquet to the Chief Guest.



Mr. Nadeem Qureshi presenting souvenir to Mr. M. Jamil Ahmed, Former Chairman, PIFFA.







Mr. M. Ilyas, Former Chairman, PIFFA being presented a souvenir.



Mr. Rana Tariq Mehmood, Vice Chairman, PIFFA receives a shield.





JANUARY 2024 - 27



Oneworld alliance joins IATA CO2 connect

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the oneworld Alliance will work together in the field of CO2 emission calculations with all 13 oneworld member airlines committing to contributing operational data to IATA's CO2 Connect emissions calculator. This will further improve the quality and accuracy of the tool, as the percentage of airline-specific fuel burn data used by the calculator will substantially increase, with the data provided by the following oneworld member airlines: Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Iberia, Japan Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Qatar Airways, Qantas, Royal Air Maroc, Royal Jordanian, and SriLankan Airlines.

make better and more informed choices for travelers and enhanced ESG reporting."

IATA launched CO2 Connect in June 2022, with the objective of using member airline data, such as fuel burn, belly cargo and load factors, to provide high-quality per flight passenger CO2 emission calculations. Paired with other IATA and open market data sources, IATA CO2 Connect calculates CO2 emissions for 74 aircraft types, representing ~98% of the active global passenger fleet, and considers traffic data from 881 aircraft operators representing ~93% of global air travel.

IATA CO2 Connect data calculations are available to industry partners through an API or flat file, as well as via airline sales channels and travel management



IATA Senior Vice President, Sustainability and Chief Economist, Marie Owens Thomsen said: "Travelers want to make informed choices regarding their CO2 footprint and IATA CO2 Connect set out to provide CO2 emission calculations based on operational data. We are delighted that oneworld will become the first airline alliance to join this initiative, bringing in its 13 member airlines as data contributors. Their decision underscores the importance of the industry's objective of providing consistency and alignment in this field."

Oneworld Environmental and Sustainability Board Chair and General Manager Sustainability, Cathay Pacific, Grace Cheung said: "Oneworld is proud to be the first global airline alliance to support IATA's work to provide customers with high-quality estimates of the CO2 emissions of their flights. Our collaboration with IATA on CO2 Connect will in turn help key players across the aviation sector, including airlines, aircraft manufacturers and travel management companies among others, to

companies.

In a recent opinion poll, 90% of travelers stated that they have a responsibility to know about the carbon emissions of their flight, but only two in five actually do so. And while 84% of those surveyed acknowledged that it is easy to find tools to accurately estimate their carbon emissions, the vast majority (90%) expect airlines or travel agents to provide them with this information, indicating a reliance on the industry to proactively inform passengers about the carbon impact of their flights.

IATA CO2 Connect will continue to evolve and include new features, having just launched a corporate reporting solution to support the demand to accurately report CO2 emissions from business travel, and next year will be introducing CO2 compensation solutions to support airlines and other industry partners. A Cargo calculator is also in development to launch in 2024, supporting demands from shippers and freight forwarders to access accurate CO2 emissions derived from actual airline data

Five die after JAL airliner crashes into plane at Tokyo airport

All 379 people aboard a Japan Airlines (JAL) plane escaped the burning airliner after a collision with a Coast Guard aircraft at Tokyo's Haneda airport that killed five of six crew on the smaller craft on Tuesday, 02 January.

Live footage on public broadcaster NHK showed the JAL Airbus A350 airliner burst into flames as it skidded down the tarmac shortly before 6pm. 'I felt a boom like we had hit something and jerked upward the moment we landed,' a passenger told Kyodo news agency. 'I saw sparks outside the window and the cabin filled with gas and smoke.

All 367 passengers and 12 crew were evacuated from the blaze which destroyed the airliner.

At least 17 people on it were injured, NHK reported, citing the Tokyo Fire Department. Transport Minister Tetsuo Saito confirmed that five of the Coast Guard aircraft's crew had died while the captain of the plane had been injured.

A ministry official told a press briefing the JAL plane was attempting to land normally when it col-lided with the Coast Guard's Bombardier-built Dash-8 maritime patrol plane on the runway.

There had been no reports of engine or other problems on the airliner before the landing, the official said. The Coast Guard said its plane was headed to Niigata on Japan's west coast to deliver aid to those caught up in a powerful earthquake that struck on New Year's Day, killing at least 55 people.

A JAL official told a press briefing it was the airline's understanding that the flight had received permission to land, although he added that exchanges with flight control were still under investigation. Video footage and images shared on social media showed passengers shouting inside the plane's smokefilled cabin and running across the tarmac after escaping via an evacuation slide.

'The cabin crew must have done an excellent job... It was a miracle that all the passengers got off, said Paul Hayes, director of air safety at UK-based aviation consultancy Ascend by Cirium.







Country	City	Airport Code
Indonesia	Jakarta	CGK
Indonesia	Denpasar	DPS
Indonesia	Surabaya	SUB

Country	City	Airport Code
Australia	Sydney	SYD
Australia	Melbourne	MEL

Country	City	Airport Code
Japan	Narita	NRT
Japan	Haneda	HND

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Country	City	Airport Code
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Qatar Airways launches Medan, Indonesia route

Qatar Airways operated its inaugural Medan, Indonesia flight on January 15, marking the launch of its new route. Medan is Qatar's third gateway in Indonesia. The route will operate three weekly flights on its 787-8 aircraft. "We look forward to enabling travellers to experience the best of what Medan has to

offer while seamlessly connecting them to the most popular destinations around the globe through our multiple-award-winning hub, Hamad International Airport," said Qatar Airways Group CEO Badr Mohammed Al-Meer. Indonesia airport management company PT Angkasa Pura 2 Achmad Rifai added.



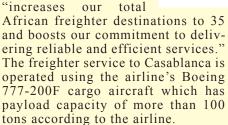
Ethiopian Cargo adds Casablanca as Its 35th freighter destination in Africa

Ethiopian

Cargo

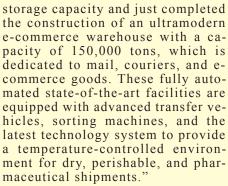
Africa's cargo network operator, Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services has "commenced a freighter service

to Casablanca, Morocco marking 35 in its number of freighter destinations served in Africa." Ethiopian Airlines Group CEO Mr. Mesfin Tasew said: "The new service opens a new chapter as it is our maiden venture into the Maghreb region" and "increases our total



ET says the Cargo and Logistics Services, one of the major strategic business units within the Ethiopian Airlines Group, "currently covers more than 135 international destinations around the world with both belly-hold capacity and 68 dedicated freighter services, deploying





Sabre and Malaysia Airlines enhance long-standing relationship

Distributing NDC content through Sabre's travel marketplace will enable the Malaysian flag carrier to take the next step in its retailing evolution.

Sabre Corporation (NASDAQ: SABR), a leading software and technology provider that powers the global travel industry, recently announced that Malaysia Airlines' NDC content is now available through the Sabre travel marketplace.

The new agreement builds on Sabre's valued relationship with Malaysia Airlines, enabling the carrier to expand its offer-and-order based retailing to travel sellers. By activating NDC through Sabre, travel agencies and other sellers can gain a competitive edge by maximizing access to Malaysia Airlines' real-time offers and rich content.

"We're thrilled to take the next step in our retailing evolution with Sabre, said Dersenish Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer of Airlines from Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG). "We are already successfully using a broad suite of technology solutions from Sabre, and we're excited to be adding our NDC content to Sabre's extensive marketplace. It's essential to us that we can provide travel sellers with the best omni-channel purchase experience when shopping for, and booking, our fares and offers. Joining Sabre's growing family of NDC airlines will enable us to effectively provide our enhanced offers and rich content to travel sellers so they can make the best decisions for travellers.'

Sabre-connected travel sellers in key markets can now shop, book, and service Malaysia Airlines' NDC offers, along-side traditional content options, through Sabre's Offer & Order APIs, agency point-of-sale solution, Sabre Red 360, and Sabre's corporate booking tool, Get There. The carrier's NDC offers are now available through Sabre's marketplace in Australia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom, with additional markets to follow.

Malaysia Airlines and Sabre have worked together for more than 20 years.



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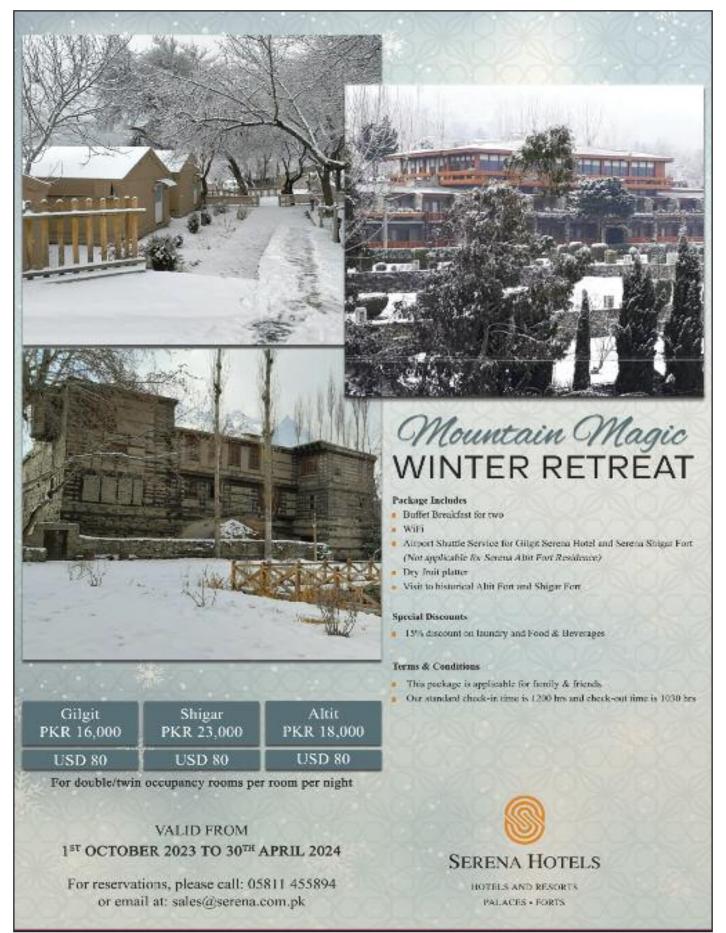
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Sial crew, the hotel is committed to delivering the best facilities and services, ensuring that every guest enjoys a memorable and enjoyable stay.

With 71 state-of-the-art guest rooms, Hotel the Jeeven's stands as the largest accommodation option in Sialkot. Each room is equipped with modern facilities and offers a variety of categories to suit every budget and preference, including Executive Master Bedrooms, Standard Twin Suites, Standard Master Suites, Presidential Suites, and Honeymoon Rooms. The hotel is also well-equipped to host meetings, events, and various functions, boasting different banquet halls and meeting rooms. Additionally,



Hotel the Jeeveen's can also be booked in conjunction with its chain resort hotels in London.

Founded by Mr. M. Nasir Malik, a Sialkot-based businessman now residing in London, Hotel the Jeeven's is efficiently managed by Mr. Ali Azhar, the General Manager with over a decade and a half of experience in the hospitality industry. Mr. Ali Azhar completed his BCS in 2004 from Lahore and commenced his career in 2007, serving with Pearl-Continental Hotels for four years. Subsequently, he joined Ramada Beach Hotel Dubai as a Duty Manager, where he contributed for three years before joining Hotel the Jeeven's Sialkot in 2014.





The Boeing 707 — the first jetliner that changed how we travel today

If it ain't Boeing – I ain't going is quite a bold statement. However, consider the context at the time. This was the beginning of the jet age – with the de Havilland Comet becoming a synonym for "mid-air explosion", the Boeing 707 came at the right time.

McDonnell Douglas and SUD were lagging behind and introduced their DC-8 and Caravelle jet aircraft a year later than the 707. The Tupolev Tu-104 was behind the iron curtain. Because of this, it had no chance to impact anything culturally outside the Soviet sphere of influence.



Thus, this allowed the Boeing 707 to become an icon and symbol of a new and revolutionary way of travel.

Culturally, October 17th, 1958 was the day that the jet age began in the minds of everyone. Or maybe restarted?

Anyhow, let's roll back a bit and conceptualize what are the reasons why the 707 become such an icon.

A first Boeing with a jet engine

The first reason was that the Boeing 707 was a jetliner. At the time, the only commercial jets were flying behind the Iron Curtain. The de Havilland Comet was grounded after a series of crashes. That is why, when Boeing 707 introduced a reliable and safe jet-powered aircraft, it certainly did change the way we travel.

As I have previously already talked about the jet engines and the reasons why they will definitely replace piston jets in the Tupolev Tu-104 story, I won't go too much into detail. To summarize, there were three reasons:

• Piston-powered engines were coming to their maximum as to how much power they can produce. To squeeze more, engineers made them more complex and that is the reason why maintenance costs shot up. Fuel consumption to engine power ratio was not ideal either:



- Passenger comfort. Piston engines are loud, they vibrate a lot (especially on a plane like the Constellation with 4 piston engines) and generally make passengers uncomfortable. With the price tag at the time for a ticket, they certainly did not provide a luxurious experience;
- The demand for trans-Atlantic flights has risen significantly. While Piston props could theoretically do trans-Atlantic flights, they usually had to stop to refuel. Their cruising speed was slow, so the flights took much longer than with jet engines.



Laving down the foundations

One of the most important facts to know is that Boeing risked everything with the new 707. It was literally a make it or break it situation. The current Boeing company president at the time, William Allen, committed \$16 million to develop 367-80. The money was everything that the company had earned after the war. So, if the 367 was a bust – the company would go bust as well.

Subsequently, the public nicknamed it the "Dash 80". The 367 was an early

Boeing 707 and Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker prototype.

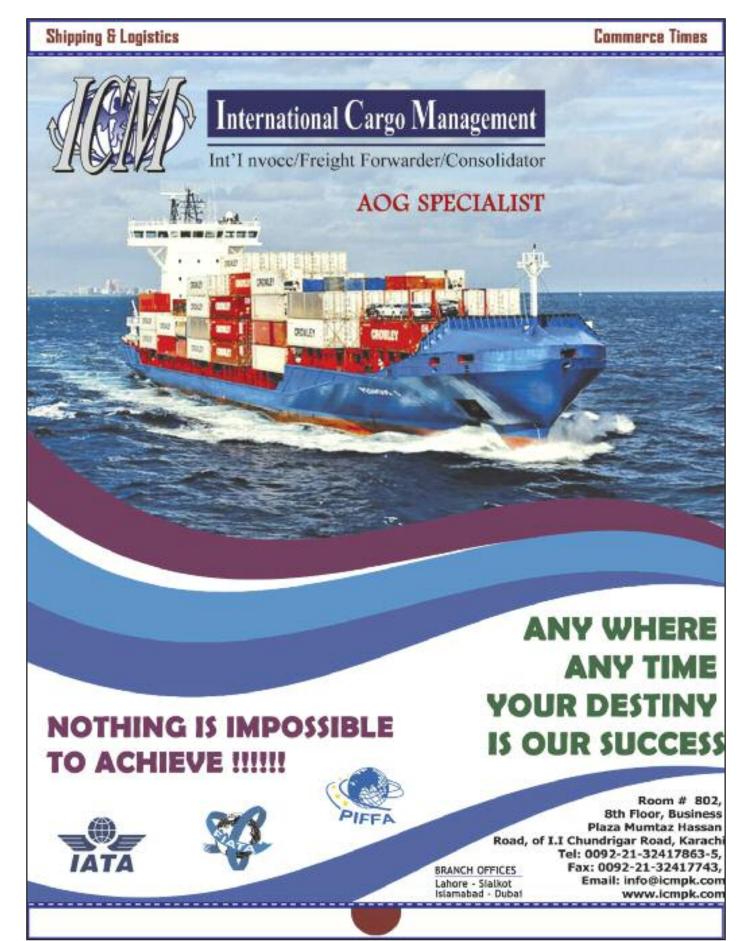
Boeing's strategy was simple – change the general perception that jet aircraft were unsafe. So, they developed and built the 367-80 to go on a tour around the United States (US) to prove to the public and CEOs of Airlines alike that a jet-powered aircraft can be safe while showcasing a flying example.

You got to hand it to Boeing – if the aircraft were to fail during these demonstration flights, the company was gone. However, they did a brilliant job of designing and building it and it encountered no issues after preliminary taxi and flight tests. After engineers completed the early designs in 1952, Boeing decision-makers approved it. Just two years



later, in July of 1954, the 367-80 commenced its first flight.

Boeing, like all others, had an advantage – they knew the structural problems of the de Havilland Comet. Nevertheless, you mustn't forget that Boeing also built military aircraft. Like the Russians with the Tu-104, Boeing also used their experience from the B-47 Stratojet to build the new 367-80.



Do a barrel roll and make 707 a jetstar

August 6th, 1955 was a huge day for Boeing. In Seafair, an event held in Seattle, William Allen invited AIA and IATA members to show them the new jet.

This was crucial for the future success of the 707. If those 2 associations approve it, then there was nothing to stop the new Boeing jet from entering commercial service. As the company already secured orders for the KC 135 Stratotankers, it was crucial to do so for the 707 as well.

And one man made sure that the members of AIA and IATA would approve it. While doing a casual fly over, test pilot Alvin Johnston performed two barrel rolls. It might not have been the smartest decision to do so, the pilot later said he was just "selling airplanes". While you cannot certainly say that the barrel roll sold

short-movie about the new jet and called it "The Wonderful Jet World of Pan-American."



Boeing 707 – a commercial success

It became a cultural icon for a good reason – airlines also loved it. In total, Boeing built 856 Seven O' Seven jets. Airlines bought 725, while Air Force units used the rest of the 707s.

Pan American Airways introduced the Boeing 707 on October 17th, 1958.



the aircraft to customers, but it definitely made an impact.

Cultural impact

While the Comet was the first commercial jet that started service, people wanted to forget about it. As quickly as possible. So when Boeing, a well-known manufacturer in the US, kicked the door open with it's 707, it instantly became a hit. Not only commercially for Boeing, but notably, it became an American cultural icon.

Even so much so, that Frank Sinatra bought his own 707. His "Come Fly With Me" album cover showed an aircraft, albeit a Lockheed Constellation. However, whenever someone heard the "Come Fly With Me" song, they imagined a Boeing 707 in front of their eyes. What is even crazier, that Jantzen, a swimwear company, used the Boeing 707 to advertise their newest swimwear collection in 1957.

Pan American Airways released a

Pan Am held a christening event, which the current president of the US, Dwight Eisenhower, attended. A special inaugural flight from Baltimore to Paris followed. Friends of Juan Trippe, the founder of Pan Am, occupied the seats onboard the flight. 9 days later, on October 26th, Pan Am started passenger operations from New York to Paris, with a fuel stop in Newfoundland.

The jet was not popular only inside the American market. Qantas started flying the 707 in 1959 and was the first international airline to do so. Many more followed Qantas and bought their first jets. El Al, BOAC, Singapore Airlines, Air France, Aer Lingus and Lufthansa were amongst the long list of 707 customers.

As I mentioned above, the Air Force used the 707s in various military specifications. Even today, 61 years after its launch, the Boeing 707 military units use it as a transport or a reconnaissance aircraft.

Regarding its safety record, aviation experts regard the 707 as a safe aircraft. Although accidents destroyed 173 Boeing 707 aircraft completely, pilots never complained about the difficulty of flying the jet. Nor it had any major structural issues like the de Havilland Comet did.

Too good for its own good

As public confidence grew, so did the passenger numbers for airlines operating the 707. Airlines could not keep up with the demand and Boeing had to come up with new variants to satisfy their customer needs. Qantas received a longrange model, while Braniff International got special 707s to fly in the high altitudes of South America.

As a result of trying to satisfy everyone's needs, Boeing did not make a lot of profit off of the 707. Although it was commercially successful amongst airlines, the constant modifications made the program costly. However, the 707 laid the foundations for the further success of the company. As I said that airlines could not cope with the demand, the 707 eventually developed into the Queen of the Skies. So, while indirectly, the 707 still brought a profit to Boeing when the aircraft convinced airlines that Boeing built great jets.

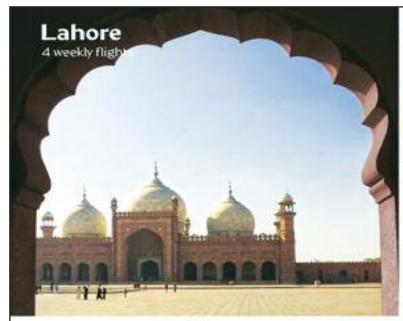
And the Boeing 707 was good. In fact so good, that John Travolta even bought one. Qantas previously used the airline for regular service, when John Travolta purchased it. He then donated

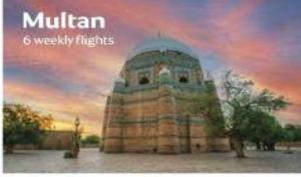


it to Historical Aircraft Restoration Society in Australia.

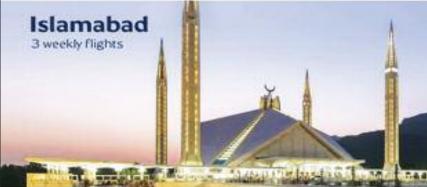
Furthermore, numerous countries still use the 707s in their Air Force, while the last commercial 707 crashed just two weeks ago.

To sum up, what the 707 did for aviation would be difficult and would require me a lot of additional words. But in an effort to keep it as short as possible, I will say this – the 707 was a huge risk that paid off for Boeing. And not only it did push the company forward, but it also pushed every other aircraft manufacturer forward to innovate, strive for greatness and be daring. The Boeing 707 brought revived the dream of jet aviation.















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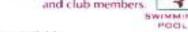
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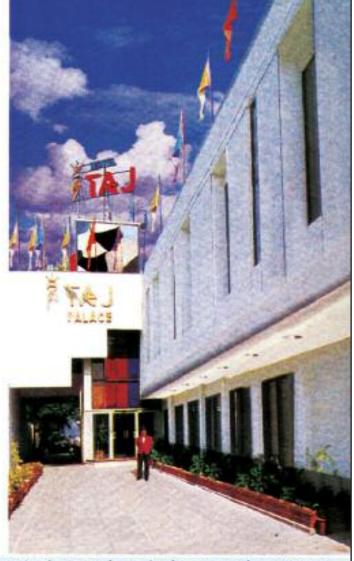




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This Wall will fall...

(Prof. Safdar Sandal)

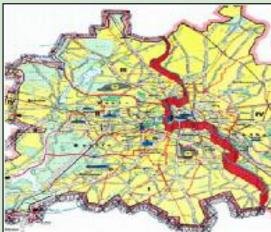
I am not going to be pessimistic by re-calling only half-part of what John F. Kennedy had said once: "This wall will fall, for it cannot withstand faith; it cannot with stand truth. The wall cannot withstand freedom" (being the complete remark). The fall of the Berlin-wall started on 09th November 1989. It was a historical day which marked the end of the 'Cold War' and made re-unification of Germany, possible. The raising of arms by the people of East Germany mounted on the Berlin





(Berlin Wall being fallen 1 - Nov. 1989).





Wall was a symbol of victory and a part of their jubilation in the whole of East Germany which used to be a part of whole of Germany. The separation persisted for 30 years, against the will of the people and the 'Law of Nature'.

It was not pre-planned that on this eventful day, I happened to be in Bonn/Germany (the then capital of West Germany)only on my annual business trip of Europe and



specifically to take part as an exhibitor in the 'Messe Intermot' (a famous trade fair) being held in the nearby more commercial city of Cologne, every two years. Obviously this coincidence in my business trip enabled me to witness the jubilation of the German people in Bonn and Cologne and of course in the rest of Germany which I visited, as usual, until Munich – the capital city of Bavaria, after accomplishing

with the fair. The state of Soviet Union (USSR) had also collapsed, a year later. Emily Haber, Germany's ambassador to the United States, described the demolition of the Berlin Wall as a "sudden gift out of the blue".

In the preceding years before demolition of the Berlin Wall and during my business travels abroad (since 1967) I had the opportunity of meeting some East German people too who had escaped from East Berlin to the West side of the city through various means. Most hazardous one was the example of a person who narrated to me, how he had passed through the underground sewerage way that connected the

This had happened in this part of the world to many more men who had attempted to escape and had ultimately suffered a lot during this suicidal effort, mainly due to the shortage of oxygen needed and rest for the human body. But the predominant desire of the East Germens had been to come out of their part to West Germany and be able to breathe in a free democratic world for the rest of their life. The desire was much stronger than languishing to die there. In this process way, to escape from the hegemonic communist control with undemocratic system, which still continues at their side of the world, as opposed to the free economic, political,

against the will of the people. Finally, a near impossible but decisive action was taken to remove the Berlin Wall. The Berlin Wall was not one wall, but two. Measuring 155 kilometers long and four meters tall, these walls were separated by a heavily guarded and a mined corridor of land known as the 'death strip'.

The reunification of Germany symbolized the collapse of the oppressive communist regime in East Germany and the triumph of freedom and democracy. The wall had divided families and friends for nearly three decades and finally made them possible to live under one roof in (West) Germany. The fall of



two parted-cities of East and West Berlin. The health and physique of the man, who had met me, as per chance, told me his story of success in escaping from the East Berlin to West Berlin. He looked so badly shaped because of having passed, though successfully by creeping through the underground tunnel sewerage's long way of 1,476 feet which had resulted into his pale and skeleton-like body and destroyed his health because of insufficient oxygen and lack of body rest. He had told me that through this ordeal he had almost halved his age. He was actually 30 years of age, as he told me, but he definitely looked like to be of 55 years.

social, religious and humane- world, to where we are lucky to travel freely, is a phenomena which is more natural to the specie, 'man' who is born to live a free and independent life. To enslave him is opposite to his nature.

Half a million people had gathered in East Berlin to demand in a mass protest that the Berlin Wall dividing communist East Germany from West German must fall. East German leaders had tried to calm them down by offering to loosen the borders between the two Germanys, making travel easier for East Germans, but this effort did not succeed. Some other offers proved to go, all in vain as it was

Berlin Wall allowed people to freely move and communicate with each other; thus fostering unity and reconciliation. This unification made them more than happy and prosperous. The event was significant globally too, as it inspired democratic movements and led to the dissolution of 'USSR' (Soviet Union) later, very soon. The fall of the Berlin Wall remains an iconic symbol of peaceful revolution and power of people demonstrated in an epic way. This proved power of the people to go their way and eventually gain freedom of living-behavior. The powerful instinct in man is supreme which is ultimately to come up, like cream on the milk.



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Ready to upgrade CPEC, says Beijing

China has said it is ready to work with Pakistan to upgrade the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era.

Separately, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar said after having achieved the first phase of CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase.

Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson Wang Wenbin while answering a question during a briefing on Wednesday 24 January said, 'China stands ready to work with Pakistan to deliver on the important common understandings between the leaders of the two countries, deepen political mutual trust, and expand practical cooperation.

About the recent visit of Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong to Pakistan, he said the minister during his Jan 20-22 trip called on President Arif Alvi, Prime Minister Kakar, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir and Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani to have indepth exchange of views on bilateral relations and issues of mutual interest.

The spokesperson added that the Chinese minister also co-chaired the fourth meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group on International Cooperation and Coordination with Foreign Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi. 'China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners,' he said.

China appreciates Pakistan's firm commitment to the One-China principle and supports Pakistan in defending its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, stability, development and prosperity.

Next CPEC phase in Islamabad, PM Kakar said that after having achieved the first phase of CPEC, Pakistan is benefiting from its early harvest projects while remaining engaged with China to execute the next phase.

'We have already achieved the CPEC's first phase and we are benefiting from its early harvest projects.

We are entering the second phase. We do need more deliberations when it comes to the second phase,' he said in an interview recorded by CGTN during his recent visit to Davos to attend the World Economic Forum. The Chinese news outlet ran the interview on Wednesday, 24 January.

PM Kakar said the CPEC's second phase required road and air connectivity around industrialisation projects. `Both sides are engaged and we have developed a lot of connectivity road, air and the rest of connectivity corridor. We are benefiting from the ecosystem of doing trade with one another,` he remarked.

Asked how he saw the Chinese economy, the prime minister said: 'I am always sanguine about it. There are 1.5 billion consumers and 1.5bn producers... How can you divorce 1.5bn people from 8bn people? It has to remain connected.

Circular debt Less than two weeks away

from the end of its term, the caretaker government on Wednesday, 24 January vowed to devise a plan to overcome the mammoth circular debt in the power and gas sector.

The circular debt reportedly swelled to over Rs5.73 trillion Rs2.5tr power and Rs3tr gas.

Presiding over a meeting, PM Kakar directed the authorities concerned to devise an effective, durable and doable plan to overcome circular debt.

The PM had already expressed dissatisfaction over the poor performance of Discos and directed the power division to submit a comprehensive plan with clear targets, responsibilities and timelines, said an official.

Commitment for CPEC success renewed

Pakistan and China on Monday 22 January renewed their commitment for the success of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as the two sides expressed their desire for enhanced cooperation in the areas of information technology, economy, agriculture, and human resource development.

for both sides to ensure timely completion of the ongoing projects.

He earlier welcomed the vice foreign minister as well as members of his delegation and said Pakistan deeply valued its all-weather, strategic and cooperative partnership with China.

Meanwhile, caretaker Foreign Minister



Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar meets with the Chinese delegation.

Both sides expressed this resolve during a series of meetings of visiting China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong with President Arif Alvi, caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, caretaker Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani and Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Gen Syed Asim Munir.

President Alvi, in his meeting with Mr. Weidong, said Pakistan was fully committed to the high-quality development of CPEC, pointing out that the Chinese support in the next phase of the corridor project would be 'crucial for Pakistan's industrial development'.

He also appreciated the Chinese help in stabilising Pakistan's economy.

In a separate meeting, caretaker PM Kakar told the Chinese vice foreign minister that Pakistan was fully committed to CPEC's success and highlighted the need Jalil Abbas Jilani and the vice foreign minister of China reaffirmed the all weather strategic cooperative partnership and held an in-depth discussion on the entire gamut of bilateral relations, including CPEC as well as economic and financial cooperation.

FM Jilani appreciated the contributions of the vice foreign minister to strengthening Pakistan China friendship and commended China's unflinching support for Pakistan on all issues.

Mr. Weidong also met Chief of the Army Staff Gen Syed Asim Munir and conveyed China's satisfaction over security arrangements for the CPEC projects.

According to the Inter Services Public Relations, matters of mutual interest and measures to further enhance bilateral defence cooperation were discussed during the meeting.



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Commerce Minister eyes \$100bn exports with new zone

Caretaker Commerce Minister Gohar Ejaz has said that exports will cross \$100 billion in the next five years if the 10,000-acre new industrial zone in Karachi is materialised, which will also create three million new jobs.

Addressing the business community at the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on Saturday 13 January, Mr. Gohar said the new industrial zone would be aligned with international standards.

The business community can simply triple its earnings if it plays its due role in the accomplishment of targets set by the economic team of the government, he said, adding that it is a win-win situation

According to FPCCI's press release, Mr. Gohar shared his deep concerns over the state of Pakistan's economy; specifically, trade deficit, rupee depreciation, low number of active tax filers, anomalies in Afghan transit trade, reliance on the external sources of financing and dearth of the active participation of the business community in the policy-making.

The minister also offered his full support in taking top economists on board as advisers of FPCCI to formulate its policy re commendations.

Provincial Caretaker Minister of Commerce for Punjab S.M. Tanveer stressed that FPCCI should establish a credible, functioning and productive research and development (R&D) structure so that the federal and provincial governments incorporate its recommendations in budgetary, industrial, trade, agricultural, monetary, taxation, SME and infrastructure development policies.

FPCCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said the apex chamber has decided to support the government's initiatives for achieving the \$100bn export target, documentation of the economy and stabilising rupee-dollar parity.

The FPCCI is going to announce its R&D structure in the next 10 days to turn the chamber into a top consultative body for the government, he said.

Mr. Atif also proposed that the business community should embark on a

mission to accelerate exports by being competitive, holding single-country exhibitions for major export destinations, diversifying its export basket and creating an effective liaison and consultative process with the government.

GSP+ helps double Pakistan exports to EU: envoy

Ambassador of the European Union Raina Kionka has said that the GSP+ status for Pakistan has been rolled over without any changes to the rules of framework so everything was going to stay the same up to 2027.

'We also have elections in June 2024, which means there will be a political changeover in the parliament and the EU's Commission. Once everything settles, we expect that the new parliament and the Council of EU member states will once again take up negotiations on a new directive for GSP+ with Pakistan which couldn't happen last year,' she said while addressing the members of the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Tuesday 09 January.

Although it's a four-year rollover for GSP+, if they come up with a new regulation, it will become effective before 2027, she added.

According to KCCPs press release, the EU ambassador said that rather than staying confined to exporting textiles only, the business community of Karachi should broaden and diversify their exports to the EU to take maximum advantage of GSP+.

GSP+ is tremendously important for Pakistan's economy whose overwhelming beneficiaries are not just textile producers but also workers in textile factories,' she said, adding that GSP+ has been extremely positive and useful in economic terms during the last 10 years as it helped in increasing Pakistan's exports to EU by 108pc while EU imports also ascended by 40pc since the start of this scheme. While identifying gems and jewellery, tourism, handcrafts and auto parts as potential sectors under GSP+, she said that the EU's delegation in Islamabad would also like to set up a platform to promote EU-Pakistan business-to-business relations which could also help the SMEs in making good connections with businesses in EU and ultimately help the SMEs in Pakistan to also benefit from GSP+.

Earlier, KCCI President Iftikhar Ahmed Sheikh said that the EU has been the largest export destination for Pakistan, which stood at \$8.4 billion, followed by the US at \$5.93bn and China at \$2.02bn in FY23.

Pakistan's exports to the EU are dominated by the textiles sector and last year, Pakistan's total textile exports remained at \$16.50bn which is almost 60pc of the total exports.



He said Pakistan and the EU need to discuss ways to improve Pakistani products' access to the EU market, address trade barriers, foster collaboration, focus on export diversification, and ensure smoother trade practices and compliance with international standards.

Food exports up 37pc

Food exports increased year-on year by 37.12 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year, reported the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics on Tuesday, 26 December.

Food exports were recorded at \$2.64 billion during July-November 2023-24 as compared to \$1.92bn in the same period last year.

The rice exports surged by 49.37pc to \$1.11bn from \$749.4m last year.

Likewise, the exports of fruits rose year-on-year 15.27pc to \$128.13m, leguminous vegetables 79.01pc to \$0.084m and spices 19.21pc to \$45.179m.

On a year-on-year basis, the exports of oil seeds, nuts and kernels increased by 263.82pc to \$350.37m, sugar by 100pc from zero to \$21.07m, meat and meat preparations by 21.81pc to \$195.7m in 5MFY24.

However, exports of fish and fish preparations dipped year-on-year 12.87pc to \$161.9m, vegetables 27.15pc to \$88.72m and tobacco 31.23pc to \$16.750m during July-November.

The Trade & Investment Officers (TIOs) visit FPCCI Regional Office Lahore

The experts from the various fields including Logistics Industry of Pakistan briefed another session with TIOs (Trade & Investment Officers) who appointed abroad.

This event provided a unique platform for all stakeholders for networking opportunity, foster collaborations, gain insights into international market dynamics, and explore promising avenues for trade and investment. The active participation, insights, and contributions are invaluable to the success of this event.



THE DELEGATION OF THE 40 NEWLY-APPOINTED TRADE & INVESTMENT OFFICERS (TIOS) VISITED FPCCI LAHORE



A DELEGATION OF THE 40 NEWLY-APPOINTED TRADE & INVESTMENT OFFICERS (TIOS) LED BY MR. SHAHZAD AHMED KHAN, DG TDAP VISITED FPCCI AND HELD A MEETING WITH MR. ZAKI AIJAZ, REGIONAL CHAIRMAN / VP FPCCI AND MS. QURRAT-UL-AIN, VICE PRESIDENT FPCCI AT FPCCI REGIONAL OFFICE LAHORE. THE ROLE OF TRADE AND INVESTMENT IN INCREASING PAKISTAN'S EXPORTS, JOINT VENTURES, B2B MEETINGS, TRADE DELEGATIONS AND SINGLE COUNTRY EXHIBITIONS WERE DISCUSSED DURING THE MEETING. MR. ZAKI AIJAZ AND MS. QURRAT-UL-AIN WERE BRIEFED ON THE EXPORT POTENTIAL OF ALL SECTORS OF PAKISTAN. FORMER PRESIDENT OF LCCI MR. SHAHZAD ALI MALIK GIVES A BRIEFING TO TRADE & INVESTMENT OFFICERS ON THE RICE SECTOR, MR. ABDUL BASIT, FORMER PRESIDENT LCCI ON POULTRY AND FROZEN FOOD, MS. RIJA TAYYAB ON THE PACKAGING SECTOR, MR. AMIR RAFIQUE ON FAN INDUSTRY, DR. ZUBAIR ON THE DAIRY SECTOR, MR. ANAS HAROON ON AUTOMOTIVE PARTS AND ACCESSORIES AND MR. JAMIL AHMED BRIEFED ON THE LOGISTICS SECTOR.

Glimpses of the newly oppointed TIOs visit to FPCCI Lahore





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Glimpses of the newly oppointed TIOs visit to FPCCI Lahore











Glimpses of the newly oppointed TIOs visit to FPCCI Lahore







THE FEDERATION OF PAKISTAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY REGIONAL OFFICE LAHORE





Tourism and mindset

Pakistan has deserts, beaches and some of the world's highest, most stunning mountains.

We have plenty of religious, cultural and heritage sites too. These are not just related to the Mughal and British eras. Our history goes back thousands of years, and we have the sites to show for it.

Harappa, Mohenjodaro and Taxila are excellent examples but there are many others. Baba Nanak was born and has his resting place in what is now Pakistan. But we do very poorly in tourism.

I recently came to Turkey for a trip. The contrast could not be greater. It is estimated that Turkey received around \$40 billion in the first nine months of 2023 through tourism. Seeing the place one can believe that. It was simple to get the online visa that was granted an hour after the application. Immigration formalities took two minutes in Istanbul. The officer asked no questions; she just checked our visas and let us proceed. The green channel took care of Customs and we were outside in five minutes.

Though few people know English here, they are extremely welcoming. If you ask someone for help, they usually go out of their way to help.

Shopkeepers are the same. People can dress any way they like. On the same street, you see men in T-shirts and shorts and in traditional dress, and women in the shortest possible skirt and others in black burgas and face-covering hijabs. Nobody asks questions, nobody stares, nobody makes individual space and individual choices an issue

Even though Turkey is a Muslimmajority country, the public space is completely open to men and women.

At about 35 per cent, the female labour force participation rate is low in Turkey, compared to developed countries, but is still alothigher than the 22pc or so in Pakistan. And it shows: women are visible in all shops, restaurants and places of business. Formal labour market participation in the larger cities might be higher than in the smaller cities or rural areas, but it shows in how public spaces are structured and how they pro-vide a more open and welcoming environment for all, irrespective of gender, in shops, etc.

The contrast with Pakistani bazaars, even those that sell products mostly bought by women, could not be starker.

Police presence in tourist areas is very visible but neither at the airport nor on the streets do you see automatic-toting guards.

And there are no gun-holding guards outside every bank or shop.

The heritage sites are very well maintained and the surrounding areas have been developed for tourism (food, banks, money exchanges, and all sorts of shops). Renovation work goes on almost all the time. There is a wing of the Blue Mosque that is being renovated even now. Contrast this to the state of our heritage sites.

Though in the middle of the city, most of Lahore Fort tells a story of neglect and lack of care. I remember an archaeologist once telling our A-Level class long ago that they do not get enough money so they have allowed many parts of the Fort to crumble and are maintaining just a small area in reasonable condition.

tem in place?); we do not have the hotels, restaurants, cafes and public spaces needed to make tourists spend their time and money in; and we definitely do not have the mindset needed for tourism. These are things that a Special Investment Facilitation Council cannot fix.

It bears repeating that most people working in tourism in Turkey do not have very developed English-language skills. But language is not a barrier to tourism. Eighty-five per cent of the tourists are foreigners. The availability of alcohol is not the issue either. Though alcohol is legal in Turkey and anyone over 18 years of age can buy and drink it, most tourists come from countries where alcohol is legal as well. This is not what brings them to Turkey.



Getting a visa for Pakistan still takes a long time and sometimes a lot of effort. Though visa reforms have been in the works for some time, government and other sites still say it takes seven to 10 working days to get a tourist visa. Then foreigners need several NOCs for visiting areas in the north of Pakistan. Whatever the rules, sometimes foreigners have not been allowed to enter even cantonment areas. Once when we had some foreigners coming, we had a person from an intelligence agency come around and ask us to give a guarantee' in writing of their safety while they would be in Pakistan. On asking if this was not the job of law-enforcement agencies, the person was not amused. The security lens for looking at everyone who comes to Pakistan will need to change.

Our infrastructure, at least at the moment, cannot support significant tourist numbers. Wedo not have public transport in the larger cities (can you name any notable tourist destination city of a certain size that does not have a good public transport sys-

We keep saying Pakistan has so much potential for so many things. It is true. With 250 million people how could we not have potential? But there is hardly any area in which we are performing even close to our potential. It is the same with tourism. We have the heritage, culture and sites that could be dream destinations for millions.

But we do not have the infrastructure to support tourism at any significant level. Even if infrastructure is built, the bigger problem is the mindset. Unless the thinking of the people in government and society changes, unless we become a much more open and welcoming society and embrace service orientation, we will not become a desirable tourist destination. Whatever else we might try. Given our current social, political and economic situation, mindset change seems farfetched. Our potential will remain just that: potential. Thewnter is a senior research fellow at the Institute of Development and Economic Alternatives, and an associate professor of economics at Lums.



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Stupa conservation in Khyber

The conservation of the ancient Shpola Stupa here was suspended after a portion of the stone mound collapsed due to the 'unauthorised' blasting at the site last month.

Officials of the directorate of archaeology and museums in Peshawar told media that two projects of site conservation and development were being executed in the area simultaneously.

They said that the directorate was tasked with conserving the damaged portion of the stupa, while the communication and works department was building an approach road to the top of the mound, where the stupa stood.

The officials claimed that the C&W employees carried out unauthorised rock blasting near the ancient stupa for levelling the path for road construction that led to the collapse of the stupa's portion, which was being conserved.

They said that the C&W employees didn't inform the directorate about the use of explosives for the construction work, while two of the directorate officials, including an engineer and an archaeologist, were transferred from the stupa site for being negligent in performing their responsibilities.

The officials said the stupa's conservation, which was financed by the World Bank, would resume in the next few days.

Bakht Mohammad, an official of the directorate of archaeology and museums, told media that the directorate had acquired the site of the Shopla Stupa from the Khyber district administration two years ago for its repair and conservation.

He added that the repair and conservation of the ancient structure was part of the project to develop a 'tourism trail' on the historic Khyber Pass under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Tourism Plan meant to promote tourism and conserving historical sites in the province, including tribal districts.

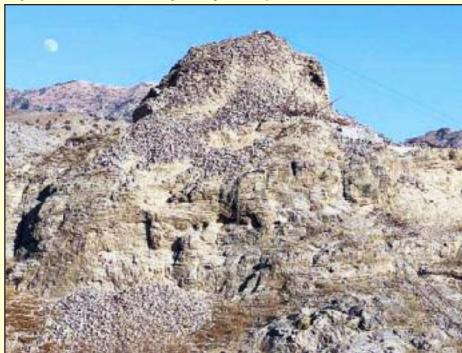
The official said the demolition of a security post that hindered the sight of the Shpola Stupa along with its reconstruction at a nearby place and establishment of an information centre were part of the project.

He said that his directorate had conducted a survey of the ancient sites in Khyber tribal district in 2015 and had so far identified 130 such sites in Landi Kotal area only.

'Our objective is to develop the Shpola Stupa, a Buddhist monument of the second century from the Kushan Rule, into a tourist spot and promote tourism in the region,' he said.

Mr. Bakht said the directorate of archaeology and museums had signed a memorandum of understanding with security authorities in the Jamrud area for the repair and renovation of the Sikh era Jamrud Ford, which was made of mud.

He added that the fort would be opened to visitors after the completion of repair and renovation for which tenders had already been floated.



Museum at Denso Hall to open on March 23, says Karachi mayor

City Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Sunday, 31 December announced that the first Karachi Metropolitan Museum would be open for public on March 23 at the historic Denso Hall building.

Speaking at a press conference here, he said Karachi was a historic city, so the KMC was working on the restoration and improvement of its heritage.

'Denso Hall, Frere Hall, Merewether Tower, KPT and KMC buildings, all are great heritage, which unfortunately got hidden somewhere in the politics of bigotry and hate,' he added.

To tell the future generations what had been the historical background of Karachi, the establishment of the first metropolitan museum of Pakistan at colonial-era Denso Hall was approved recently by the City Council, he added.

On this occasion, he showed the historical records and documents regarding Karachi.

Karachi Medal The mayor said the KMC would also award the Karachi Medal on Aug 14 every year to the heroes who had rendered precious and exceptional services to the city.

Cash prizes and other medals would also be given to those who made useful and informative documentaries on Karachi, he added.

He said that all the money earned by improving tax recovery system in the KMC would be spent on the welfare of the citizens as per the decision of the elected representatives of the City Council.

'The issues of parking fee between the KMC and the town administrations, anti encroachment and land departments would be resolved under the Sindh Local Government Act,' he said. 'To solve the traffic problems, a project is being worked out to build parking plazas at different places in the city.

'In the next six months, we will further improve the tax system and make it more transparent. This performance is the answer for those who said they cannot work in this city owing to unavailability of powers. It has now proved that the mayor of the PPP and the administration of PPP are working,' he added.

God's own kingdom

Jerusalem is holy to three faiths, yet telorance and harmony are in short supply

"Are you Muslim?" ask two thickset men squatting at the entrance of the Muslim Quarters after I enter the Old City of Jerusalem through one of its seven gates. Seeing my ankle-high slacks, my tee shirt and the baseball hat perched on my head, they refuse me entry after I have 'successfully' cleared the first check post manned by disinterested but armed to teeth Israeli police who couldn't care less about my religious credentials.

I quickly spread out my black shawl to take cover from my Arab interlocutors. "Where are you from?" they ask. Pakistan, I say. "Show us your passport." "I've left it at the hotel where I am staying, I answer." Fear of being turned away grips me. "Recite the Surah-i-fatiha" I am ordered.

I do. I enter. I soak in the sacredness of a divine presence as I stay to take in the stunning, vivid, utterly memorable scene around the sprawling grounds dotted with cedars and olive trees.

Despite Jerusalem's afternoon sun, a gentle breeze blows, making the air comfortably pleasing. Soul-struck, I gaze in awe at the Dome of the Rock. "You have to be fully covered," a helpful man at the door of the Dome tells me pointing towards my clothes. He asks his female colleague to drape me in a full gown. "Make sure to return it to us once you have also been inside Al-Aqsa Mosque," she says, pointing to the mosque near the Dome of the Rock.

Like the Kaa'ba in Makkah, the Dome known as Al-Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) is built around a sacred stone believed to be the place from where our Holy Prophet (PBUH) ascended to heaven during his Night Journey.

Once inside the 7th century shrine built by Caliph Abd al-Malik between 687 and 691, the ambient sound of worshippers lost in prayers while seated or walking on the lush red and green carpets is all-encompassing. I am dazzled by the Byzantine design of the beauteous Dome showcasing an arched wall called the 'octagonal arcade' resembling the exterior shape of the shrine.

I follow people walking around in circular movements (tawaf) like the pilgrims around the Kaa'ba. Despite the many people taking selfies, the atmosphere is serenely sacrosanct. One of the women



The Dome of the Rock

seated in rows of wooden desks reciting the Holy Quran gestures to a woman standing next to me telling her to make me cover my head. That's when I realise my head cover has slipped. I quickly put it back but still receive an angry scowl from the woman. Stepping outside, I linger a while to soak in the grandeur of the shrine. Verses from the Holy Quran cover the octagonal part of the Dome.

The tiled area just below the golden dome known as the drum has glazed tiles that were made in Turkey and contain Quranic inscriptions (Surat Al-'Isr') describing the Night Journey of our Holy Prophet (PBUH). Originally made of gold, the Dome was later replaced with copper and then aluminum. Thanks to the generosity of the late King Hussein of Jordan, the aluminum is now covered with gold leaf that gleams and glitters and is visible from all corners of Jerusalem. Looking

heavenwards, I see the shiny crescent, symbol of Islam, placed atop the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

In close proximity stands the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Its beauty lies in its simplicity. It is the third holiest site in Islam after the mosques of al-Haram in Makkah and al-Nabawi in Madina.

According to the Holy Quran, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was taken on a steed to visit the 'Farthest Mosque' (literally Al Aqsa in Arabic) from Makkah to Jerusalem and back during the Israwal Mi'raj or "Night Journey" where he prayed at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and then ascended to Heaven. Surat Al-'Isr' of the Holy Quran states: "Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing." In the Hadith al-Bukhr and



Al-Aqsa Mosque: Islam's third holiest site where Prophet Muhammad prayed during his Isra wal Mi'raj or "Night Journey"

Muslim, the Holy Prophet is quoted as saying, "I was brought the Buraq, a long white beast, slightly bigger than a donkey but smaller than a mule which when trotting (ride), would place its next step as far as its eyesight could see. I mounted it until I reached al-Quds, Jerusalem. There I tied it up to the same ring used by the Prophets."

Al-Aqsa Mosque is spacious with plenty of room to walk around. I hear the azaan and suddenly the place fills up with worshippers — men, women and children

conversation adds, "In August each year we fast to commemorate the destruction of both of our Temples. We recite dirges." Moving closer to the Wall, I see men and women fill the chinks in the Wall with written notes containing prayers. A certain messianic certitude pervades the atmosphere. One Jerusalem resident tells me that she comes here daily along with other worshippers to recite the entire Book of Psalms. Some orthodox Jews are chanting and swaying. Like the Juma prayers at Al-Aqsa Masjid, the Sabbath prayer services

until Israel captured the Old City in 1967 and three days later their Schadenfreude (gloating), resulted in the bulldozing of the adjacent 770-year old Moroccan Quarter so that the narrow alleys leading to the Wall could be widened. The Arab-Israel conflict springs to my mind as I walk up to the Wailing Wall to touch it and pray for peace in the world.

The sun is setting; the shadows lengthening; there's a chill in the air. I make my way to the Christian Quarter. There stands in all its Romanesque glory the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is the holiest Christian site in the world believed to encompass Golgotha, or Calvary, where Jesus was crucified, and the tomb (sepulchre) where he was buried. At the entrance lies an elongated ochre-coloured marble slab known as 'Stone of Anointing.' I see people kneeling down and kissing the stone believed to be the spot where Jesus' body was prepared for burial. Walking through the dimly lit baroque corridors leading down to yet more rooms, peace and quiet reign. I try going everywhere and am glad when I reach the exit as it is easy to get lost among the festooned Gothic-style chandeliers that don't shed much brightness around the space.

Darkness has arrived; my feet are killing me but my peripatetic spirit urges me to continue walking the centuries-old streets where every stone bears testament to the millions of people — Muslims, Jews and Christians, who for thousands of years, have lived, fought and worshipped the one God on this Holy Land. I look for answers that are hard to find: Why did God make a mere 0.9 square kilometre the iconic juxtaposition of three monolithic religions that have failed to reconcile with each other till today? Perhaps the fault lies less with the heavens than with ourselves.

(by Anjum Niaz)



The Wailing Wall: For centuries Jews have gathered here to lament the loss of their Temples

— come to offer their Asr prayer. "The mosque is packed during Friday salaat," a lady tells me. After all, this was the first qibla

Muslims call the 0.9 square kilometre of the Old City Al-Quds and Bayt Al-Magdis; the Jews call it 'The Temple Mount.' According to the Bible, both Jewish Temples stood at the Temple Mount. The first Temple was built by King Solomon, son of King David, but was destroyed by the Babylonians. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans. Now called the 'Jewish Quarter' this openair synagogue with the 'Wailing Wall' in the foreground is the holiest site in Judaism. The Jews regard it as the place where 'God's divine presence is manifested more than any other place'. Busloads of tourists alight and walk towards the 'Wailing Wall' also called the 'Western Wall'. No one asks me what my religion is or why I have not covered my head. I feel a sense of freedom to move and do whatever I want. Some worshippers are seated on chairs facing the Wall while others stand with their foreheads touching the Wall to pray.

"Why is it called the 'Wailing Wall'?" I ask a tourist whose camera never stops clicking. "For centuries Jews have gathered here to lament the loss of their Temples." Another man hearing our

are big worshipper-pullers at the Wall. Shabbat in Hebrew means 'rest' or 'cessation' and falls on the seventh day of the week. Sabbath begins before sunset on Friday evening until the appearance of three stars in the sky on Saturday night when the Jews light candles and recite blessings.

After the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, the Wall came under Jordanian control when a British officer Lieutenant-General Glubb Pasha was ordered by King Abdullah of Jordan to overtake Jerusalem. Jews were barred from the Wailing Wall for 19 years



Church of the Holy Sepulchre: Christians kiss the stone where Jesus Christ was anointed after crucification at the same spot

Railways launch 'Restaurant on Wheel'

Pakistan Railways (PR) launched state of the art dining car called 'Restaurant on Wheel' on Thursday, 04 January. The modern dining car has been introduced initially for the passengers travelling through Bahauddin Zakariya Express. In a week or so, Hazara Express will also have the restaurant on wheel service, media has learnt.

PR Chief Executive Officer Amir Ali Baloch inaugurated the new dining car service here at Lahore Railway Station.

'In limited resources, we are trying our best to improve our services. Besides introducing the modern dining car facility, we have also decided to improve our service related to cleanliness and passengers' rest/sleeping,' he told media after he inaugurated the upgraded dining car facility.

In the new premium service, the passengers would have a better environment. At a time, 45 passengers can take food in the upgraded dining car. The premium din-



ing car has a menu list of 40 food items, including barbecue and pizza. Keeping in view demands of the passengers, ovens (Tandoors) have been installed to provide fresh roti (bread).

'It is air-conditioned dining car having a beautiful ambiance.

It is in fact a restaurant on wheel where the passengers can enjoy with quality delicious food like the restaurants in cities', Mr. Baloch said. He said besides Tandoors, the dining car is equipped with microwave ovens and other facilities which are generally available in modern kitchens. If someone doesn't want to take meal in dining car, waiters would serve them food on seat.

He said initially two dining cars have been attached with Zakariya Express (Up and Down), followed by two to beattached with the up and down trains of Hazara Express. After this, five more trains will be equipped with restaurant on wheel service, followed by the other ones. 'We are focusing to improve our other services too, he added.

449,000 tourists visited Swat in 2023

SWAT: Swat valley witnessed ardval of 449,000 tourists, including 4,000 foreigners from 108 countries, during 2023, deputy commissioner Dr Qasim Ali Khan

tourists from 108 countries, particularly from China, Australia, Afghanistan, Germany and the US, visited various spots in Swat,' he added.



said on Sunday on 31 December.

Speaking to reporters at the Swat Press Club, Dr Ali, who is also Director General of Upper Swat Development Authority, said beautiful Swat valley was famous worldwide for its natural beauty. 'Despite the devastation caused by the super floods in 2002, a significant increase in tourists to the scenic valley was recorded compared to 2022,' he said.

'In 2023, 449,000 tourists visited Swat, including Malam Jabba, Gabin Jabba, Kalam, Bahrain, Mahodand, Madyan, Marghuzar and other tourist sites. At the same time, more than 4,000 foreign

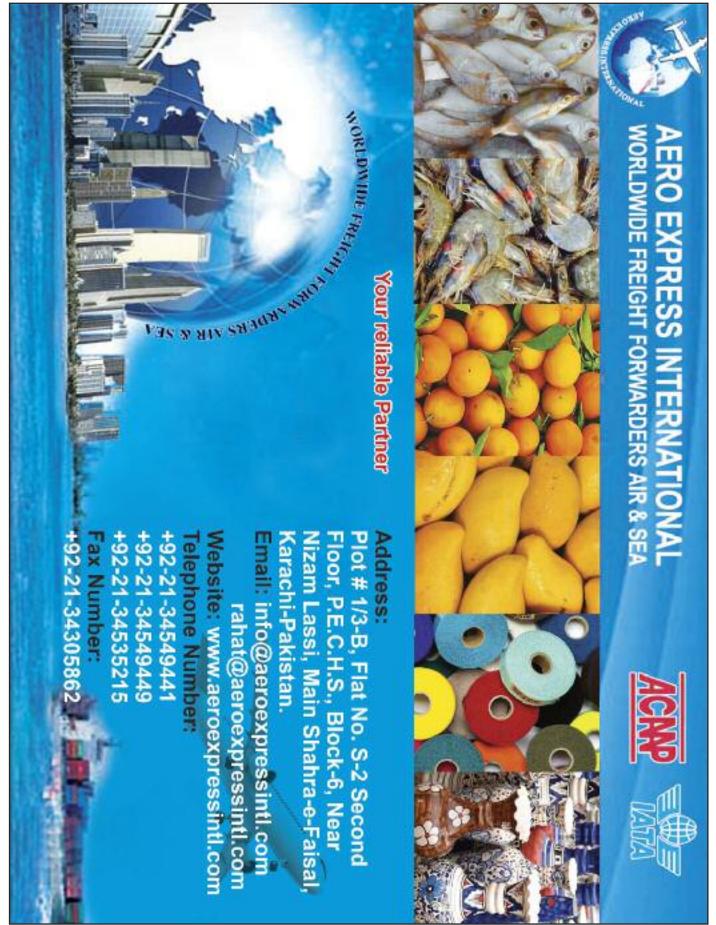
Dr Qasim Ali said the Upper Swat Development Authority was taking concrete steps with the support of the police and district administration to promote tourism in the valley.

'New tourist destinations are being introduced, whereby providing infrastructure and other facilities, the tourism sector will become stronger to provide livelihood to more people,' he said.

On the occasion, Ahmed Khan, chairman of Upper Swat Development Authority Board, also expressed happiness on the arrival of a large number of tourists in Swat during the outgoing year.



Islamabad International Airport introduces free message chairs for passengers.





Tourism dept taking steps to facilitate Sikh pilgrims, global tourists

The Punjab government, tourism, archaeology and museums department along with its attached departments is taking steps by launching an online portal tailored for Sikh pilgrims, streamlining booking and digital payments for global tourists.

This marks a significant milestone in easing access for tourists visiting the country. The government's dedication is evident in planning guided tours for international Sikhs across Punjab's historical landmarks.

The proposal to establish a Sikh resort in Kartarpur and the creation of an online booking portal for Sikh visitors from other countries demonstrate Pakistan's inclusivity and commitment to facilitating diverse tourists.

TDCP's proactive measures extend to enabling online bookings for Patriata and sightseeing buses, leveraging technology to enhance the tourist experience.

Under the World Bank-funded project Punjab Tourism for Economic Growth (PTEGP), 10 golf carts are operational at various sites, amplifying convenience for tourists exploring these attractions.

Furthermore, the Tourism Development Corporation (TDCP) has bolstered visitor convenience by providing seven vans and five coasters, facilitating seamless travel experiences.

This initiative has resulted in and increased tours, propelling tourists to explore various attractions across Punjab.

The tourism department's efforts in Lahore are commendable, focusing on revitalising key areas like Anarkali Food Street and Nabha Road, showcasing a commitment to restoring vibrancy and cultural richness.

A novel addition to TDCP's offerings is the introduction of a new route to Governor House on the double-decker bus, offering citizens weekly tours within its halls, enhancing accessibility to historically significant sites.

In addition to these initiatives, the Cholistan Jeep Rally attains international recognition as an event designated by the Federation Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA), spotlighting Pakistan's sports and tourism competence.

Simultaneously, advancements in technology allow TDCP buses to be booked online, while the extension of Eticketing facilities to the Patriata chairlift enhances convenience for visitors.

The Archaeology Directorate of Punjab Monuments successfully completed restoration projects at key heritage sites including BibiJiwindi Mausoleum in Bahawalpur, Chitti Masjid in Rahim Yar Khan, Khair al-Nissa's tomb in Jhelum, and the Baoli of Sher Shah Suri in Mianwali, preserving the country's rich historical legacy.

These commendable efforts have garnered recognition from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in its 2023 report, highlighting Pakistan's exceptional recovery, achieving 92 per cent of pre-pandemic tourism levels. The influx of foreign tourists has surged by 115pc, projecting a promising path with expected international receipts reaching

\$1.3 billion by the year-end.

Secretary Tourism, Archaeology and Museums Raja Jahangir Anwar said he understands the need for innovation and collaboration in today's dynamic tourism landscape.

Collaborating with stakeholders, embracing technological advancements, and adopting innovative strategies will be key in shaping Punjab as a progressive tourism destination.

Pakistan's recognition by the UNWTO reinforces its leading role in the resurgence of tourism, cementing its status as a top global destination. This accolade underscores the nation's dedication to nurturing tourism for economic advancement and cultural interchange.

Tourism numbers

Some encouraging numbers have emerged with regard to Gilgit-Baltistan's tourism potential. The regional government says over 11,000 foreign climbers and tourists visited the area in 2023. These are said to be the highest figures of the past two decades. Separately, as reported, the UN's World Tourism Organisation has termed Pakistan the 'best performing destination` for the first nine months of 2023. These are indeed positive developments for the country, which is endowed with breath-taking natural beauty and a rich historical legacy. And yet, unfortunately, Pakistan has been unable to market itself to global tourists. As some tour operators have pointed out with reference to GB, foreign visitors' visa applications can often take several months to process, discouraging potential tourists from visiting Pakistan. In an age where countries issue visas on arrival, or provide painless e-visas within a few days, such bureaucratic hurdles on the part of officialdom are counterproductive, especially when the state wants to draw in more foreign tourists.

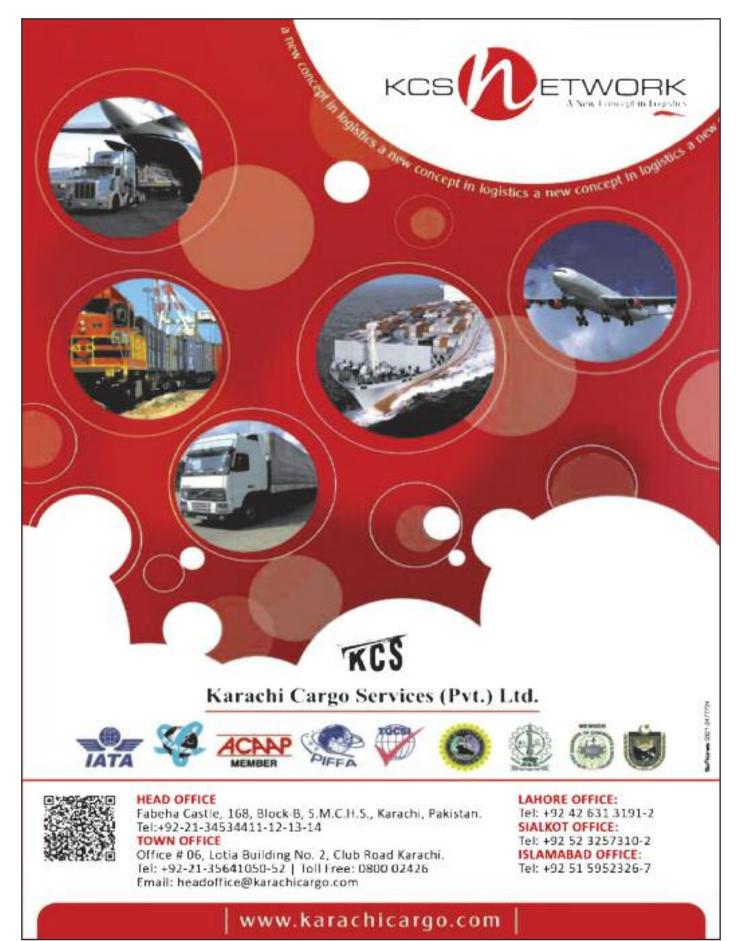
The fact is that in Pakistan, the state's efforts to attract tourists are paradoxical. On one end, the government launches campaigns such as 'Salam Pakistan' to market the country to potential visitors. On the other, the securitised, indeed paranoid, approach, which views all foreigners with suspicion, negates these efforts. The visa process, including security clearance,

should be swift and transparent so that more people can visit this country, and contribute to the tourism economy. Aside from easing the visa procedure, infrastructure and security need to be worked on. People need decent accommodation that meets international standards, as well as reliable means of transport to explore the country. Moreover, the security situation needs vast improvements. Not many people will be willing to visit if militants lurk in the shadows. Sustainable tourism can indeed bring in foreign exchange and help create jobs for local communities if visas are simplified, and security and infrastructure improved.

Sindh to appoint tourist guides

In a strategic move to enhance tourism in the province, the Sindh government has announced the appointment of professional tour guides for all tourist destinations across the province.

Caretaker Tourism Minister Arshad Wali Muhammad emphasised the importance of trained tour guides for creating memorable experiences for the tourists visiting the historical and cultural sites in Sindh.



China's first domestically built cruise ship begins maiden voyage

China's first domestically built cruise ship set sail on its maiden voyage from Shanghai on Monday, 1st January a sign of the nation's growing prowess The Adora Magic City 'marks the beginning of the country's inevitable and rapid development in cruise design and construction', he said.



Pakistan's major sport event, the 19th Desert Jeep Rally, will be held from Feb 20 to 25 in Cholistan. Bahawalpur Deputy Commissioner Zaheer Anwar Jappa told media the rally would touch boundaries of three districts -Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar and Rahim Yar Khan -in the Bahawalpur division with the coordination of the Punjab Tourism Department.

He said the week-long jeep rally celebrations would include a number of cultural events to be managed by government departments concerned.

Cholistan

Jeep Rally to kick off

from February 20

He expressed the hope that rally and cultural programmes would attract visitors from across the country.

He said the Punjab Tourism Secretary Raja Jahangir Anwar, who recently visited Bahawalpur, was briefed about the plan.

in sophisticated construction as it seeks self-sufficiency in key technologies.

The Adora Magic City left port on its first commercial cruise late afternoon, en route to South Korea and Japan.

Equipped with a mahjong lounge and hotpot restaurant, the luxury vessel is aimed squarely at China's expanding middle class and their appetite for international travel.

State media have hailed the 16-deck behemoth as a 'major milestone for the country's shipbuilding industry' and a 'crown jewel'.

Its construction was delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic, according to Lloyd's Register (LR), which provided marine services for the ship. It is China's first foray into a sector dominated by European shipbuilders.

The country's first homegrown passenger jet, the C919, also made its debut outside mainland China last month. The complex projects are key to Beijing's decades-long ambitions to compete with European and US rivals and cut down China's reliance on foreign technology.

Many of Adora Magic City's components were provided by international suppliers. But in the future, 'China has the opportunity to build its own supply chain', Marco Scopaz, LR's on-site project manager, said in an article on Lloyd's website.

Black partridge hunting rules changed after excessive shooting

In view of excessive hunting of black partridges by permit-holders, the Punjab Wildlife Department has changed the rules of the game.

From now on, only three permits will be allowed to a hunter for a season. Since each permit allows hunting of six partridges only, a hunter cannot shoot more than 18 birds.

Each hunter has to mention the place and time of hunting in advance, says Mudassar Hassan, Deputy Director Publicity, wildlife department.

Mr. Hassan denied allegations of illegal hunting of partridges but admitted that there were reports of excessive hunting of partridges by permit-holders.

'That is why the department has taken the decision to issue only three permits for a season,' he told media.

The partridge hunting season starts from Dec 1 and ends on Jan 30

Earlier there was no restrictions on the hunters as they could hunt partridges on every Sunday during the two months. Some hunters told media black partridge is almost extinct in South Punjab while its population has drastically shrunk in areas like Chakwal, Jhelum and Attock districts.

Wildlife lovers have meanwhile urged the Punjab government to completely ban the hunting of black and grey partridge, CC partridge and Chakkor, which also belong to the partridge family.





Master Ezhan Ruman s/o. Ruman Sandal wearing captain's cap posed during his journey by Emiretes from Jeddah to Sialkot.



Chairman HOAP, Sindh Zone, Mr. Furqan Abdul Qadir along with the delegates presenting a shield to H E Abdullah Muqeed Almutairi, Consul General of Saudi Arabia in Karachi.



Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan delegates meet Consul General of Saudi Arabia in Karachi.



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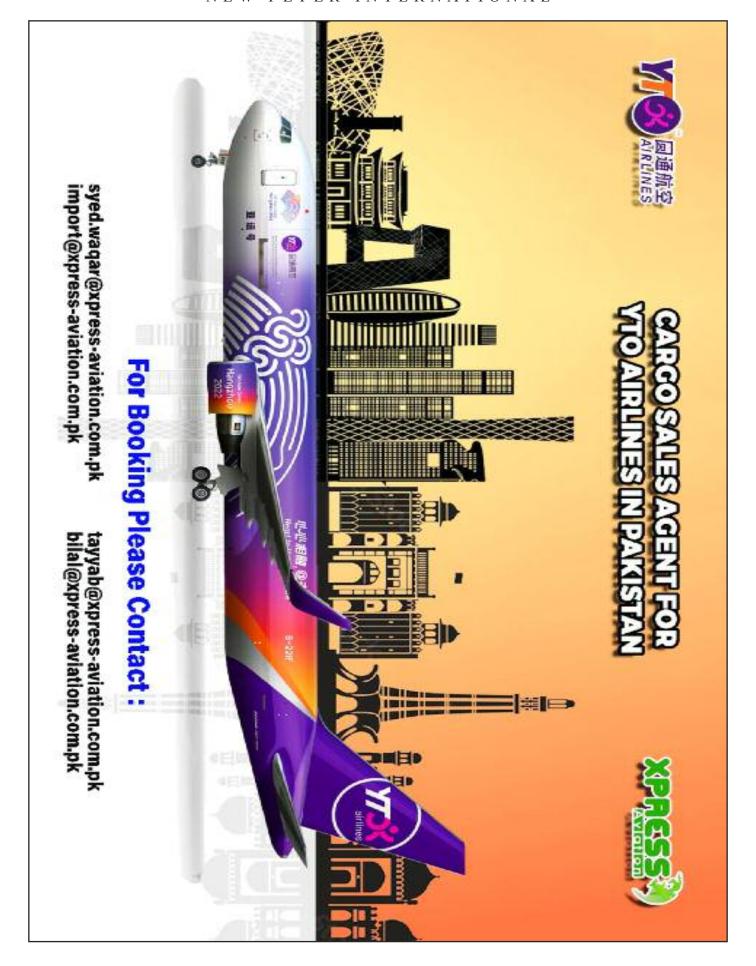






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