

CAA issues notice for airspace closure

RAWALPINDI: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) issued on Wednesday a fresh NOTAM (notice to airmen) intimating that the country's airspace would remain closed till 1pm on Thursday (today).

However, flight operations to and from Islamabad, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta international airports, and partially from Lahore and Faisalabad with restricted routes, are continuing.

Flight operations from Multan, Chitral, Punjgur, Turbat and Gwadar airports were restarted on Wednesday with restricted air routes, after having remained suspended for seven days, a spokesperson for the PIA told Dawn.

According to a senior CAA official, flight operations from Sialkot, Multan, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan and Dera Ismail Khan airports could not be initiated on March 5 due to 'security concerns', while flights on the eastern routes remain suspended. "Flights from airports on the [Pakistan-India] border cannot resume until clearance is given by the authorities concerned." However, he added, given that the Pakistan Navy blocked an intrusion attempt by an Indian submarine recently, clearance may not be given even on Thursday.

Earlier, the CAA had said that Pakistan's airspace would remain closed till 1pm on March 5 (Tuesday), but flight operations to and from Islamabad, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta international airports, and partially from Lahore and Faisalabad with restricted air routes, would continue.

The CAA official said that due to restrictions on air routes, a flight from Islamabad to Karachi that flew direct and took just under two hours was currently taking nearly three hours, flying over Balochistan.

According to the CAA official, all international airlines being operated from Gulf countries have been operating normally, but Thai Airways has so far not resumed its flights to Pakistan because they use Indian airspace.

Mohammad Asghar