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PIA suspends flights to Beijing

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) decided on Thursday to suspend flights to Beijing until Feb 2. Other airlines began suspending flights to and from China on Wednesday due to the novel coronavirus outbreak.

Aviation Senior Joint Secretary Abdul Sattar Khokhar told Dawn that PIA had been operating two flights between Pakistan and China but it has been decided to suspend flight operations.

PIA had started two flights a week to Tokyo and Beijing in May 2019 after a gap of three months.

The flights between Beijing and Tokyo were restricted to Beijing due to low passenger and cargo loads, but PIA later resumed its two flights, one on Monday and the other on Friday from Islamabad to Beijing and Tokyo.

According to sources, the authorities were considering operating a special flight from Pakistan to China to bring back Pakistanis but this could not be materialised.

When the flight enquiry service at Islamabad International Airport was contacted, they said that China Southern and Air China's flights have been cancelled.

However, at the time this report was filed PIA had its flight for Beijing and Tokyo from Islamabad on schedule at 10:50pm but it was delayed till 1:50am.

PIA spokesperson Abdul Hafeez could not be reached for comment.