

**PIA's regular flights to UAE being restored today**

RAWALPINDI / ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will resume regular flight operations to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from Thursday (today) but the passengers are required to get their Covid-19 tests carried out 48 hours prior to the travel date.

In a related development, Pakistan held bilateral consultations with Spain as part of its efforts to get PIA's flights to Europe restored.

PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez said in a press release on Wednesday that PIA would resume its regular flight operations to the UAE from Thursday and tickets are already up for grabs.

He said now PIA passengers would be able to travel to Dubai, Sharjah, Abu Dhabi and Al Ain from Pakistan through the airline's regular flights.

He added that previously PIA was operating one-way relief flights to the UAE to repatriate Pakistanis stranded in the country, but now after obtaining permissions the PIA would operate regular flights for the convenience of passengers.

*Consultations with Spain held to regain access to European airports*

The PIA said the passengers could book and purchase their tickets through PIA offices, corporate website and its travel agents. However, the passengers would be required to get their Covid-19 tests done within 48 hours prior to flight departure and a negative test report would have to be presented at the time of check-in.

In addition to submitting their Covid-19 test results, the passengers would be required to fill health declaration form available online.

However, the PIA has not authorised any health centre for Covid-19 tests for passengers.

Earlier, the UAE-based airline Emirates resumed passenger services to Pakistan's four main cities — Karachi, Lahore, Sialkot and Islamabad — after a temporary suspension, but with a condition that passengers would be required to carry with them a fresh negative Covid-19 report from a specified laboratory.

"The health and safety of our crew, customers and communities remain our top priority. Emirates has put in place a comprehensive set of measures at every step of the customer journey on the ground and in the air, to minimise the risk of infection spread," the airline said.

The Emirates spokesperson said passengers travelling from Pakistan to Dubai and beyond must present a negative Covid-19 PCR test result certificate at the time of check-in.

The PCR test must be taken up to four days prior to the travel date (96 hrs maximum) and must be conducted at the Emirates authorised health centre at the passenger's expense, the Emirates said.

Also on Wednesday, Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood held a video conference with Spanish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Cristina Gallach.

The foreign secretary highlighted Pakistan's concern on temporary suspension of PIA's flights to Europe as a follow-up to a recent decision of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and called for its review. He underlined that all necessary steps were being taken by the government to ensure the highest level of flight safety in PIA operations. The PIA remains committed to maintaining the highest standards and quality in its operations, he said.

The exchange of views covered a broad range of subjects, including response to Covid-19 pandemic, bilateral relations, close cooperation in multilateral fora, and regional situation.

The two sides also discussed bilateral trade and economic ties. The foreign secretary conveyed appreciation for Spain's support for GSP Plus for Pakistan and also underlined the hope that concerted efforts would be made to safeguard Pakistan-Spain bilateral trade against the challenges posed by Covid-19 in the shortest possible time.

The foreign secretary shared Pakistan's perspective on the grave human rights and humanitarian situation in occupied Kashmir, moves to change demographic structure of occupied territory in violation of international law, and threat to peace and security in the face of intensified ceasefire violations on the Line of Control and belligerent actions from the Indian side. He stressed the importance of international community's role in preventing escalation of tensions and facilitating peaceful resolution of Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with UNSC resolutions.

The two sides reviewed the situation in Afghanistan and progress in the Afghan peace process. The foreign secretary highlighted Pakistan's positive contribution to the US-Taliban direct talks culminating in the peace agreement of February 29, 2020.

He stressed that the Afghan leadership must seize this historic opportunity and work together through intra-Afghan negotiations to achieve a comprehensive and inclusive political settlement. He reaffirmed that Pakistan would continue to support Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process as part of a shared responsibility for durable peace and stability in Afghanistan.

The two sides agreed to further increase the frequency of bilateral political exchanges at various levels. It was agreed that the next round of Pakistan-Spain Annual Bilateral Consultations would be held after the Covid-19 situation eases.