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GULF TIMES BUSINESS



ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIPS: Page 2

USQBC hosts business visit to State of Illinois with consul general of Qatar in New York



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QNB hosted the exclusive entertainment programme for residents and visitors from all over the world to embark on an experience of a lifetime. Tik Tok star Khaby Lame, who is the world's most followed person on TikTok and the QNB Group's Official FIFA World Cup 2022 brand ambassador, made a special appearance in the iconic stadium during the historic match of Saudi Arabia against Argentina, bringing joy to football fans.

QNB organises entertainment-packed event at Lusail Stadium to celebrate World Cup

QNB organised an entertainment-packed programme of events and activities for football fans at Lusail Stadium on Tuesday to celebrate the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

QNB Group is the Official Middle East and Africa Supporter of the FIFA World Cup 2022.

over the world to embark on an experience of a lifetime. The programme included a range of football-related competitions and activities.

TikTok star Khaby Lame, who is the world's most followed person on TikTok and the QNB Group's Official FIFA World Cup 2022 brand ambassador, made a special appearance in the iconic stadium during the historic match of

Saudi Arabia against Argentina, bringing joy to football fans. Lame's participation was marked by joyful moments where football fans imitated his famous signature hand gesture and took souvenir photos with him to capture these special moments.

QNB also shared the joy of the Saudi fans at Lusail Stadium after their historic World Cup

win over Argentina. The entertainment activities came as part of the bank's celebration of the first-ever World Cup in the Arab world and Middle East, and its keenness to provide a unique opportunity for fans inspired by the passion of the tournament.

Heba Ali al-Tamimi, QNB general manager (Group Communications) said, "QNB has

designed a high-energy entertainment programme creating memorable moments and unforgettable experiences for fans throughout the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022.

"We look forward to welcoming fans from across the globe in the QNB booth for a celebration of the beautiful game through our various activities and games."

Destination management sector thriving as World Cup fans continue to arrive

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter



**Italian Chamber of
Commerce president
Palma Libotte.**

Destination management companies (DMCs) in Qatar are witnessing opportunities to promote and showcase destinations across the country as more and more FIFA World Cup fans continue to arrive here, the president of the Doha-based Italian Chamber of Commerce has said.

According to Palma Libotte, destination management "is a new thriving sector" now that the World Cup is underway and since many of the mega-projects related to the tournament have been delivered by the government.

"When business consulting for events was slowing down because the main projects for the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 were already assigned, there was a new gap in the market for services.

"As tourists and fans started arriving in Qatar for the tournament, tour companies in the country need more refined services considering that Qatar is a destination, which is only six hours away from Europe," Libotte told *Gulf Times* yesterday.

Libotte emphasised that destination management is a very thriving sector, most especially during global events, such as the World Cup. She explained that DMCs handle all the different ground services that are sold to tourists when they arrive - from hotels, restaurants, tours, and tour guides, to airport transfers, among others. She noted that Qatar's hosting of the World Cup has added value to many small companies in different sectors across the country, such as DMCs, providing visibility and market reach. Libotte stressed that small companies like DMCs should learn to be flexible and quick to adjust to the rapid changes in market dynamics in order to be successful.

"Flexibility is a key feature for a successful business... the opportunities are there. Companies must also have the capacity to interpret the customer's needs while respecting the local culture to offer the best product possible," Libotte pointed out.

New York-based Croatian-Americans, Vivek Mehta, Ami and Anik Patel, and Stasha and Gordana Novakovic, are among the FIFA World Cup fans currently touring different destinations in the country via QTour, the first Italian DMC in Qatar.

While visiting the Sealine Beach in Mesaieed, Metha said his group marvelled at the "beauty of the desert as it meets the shores of the Arabian Sea."

Amy, an American tourist, also said: "I am enjoying the World Cup, so far. It's my first time in Qatar and everybody is so wonderful. They are very accommodating and very nice people."

Libotte added: "The best promotion is by word of mouth – through the tourists that visit Qatar. The positive experience and enthusiasm they will bring back home will be a great marketing campaign for Qatar."



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QIIB captures World Cup excitement at Sharq Village

By Pratap John
Business Editor

QIB organised a special sporting event at the Shaq Village capturing the excitement of Spain-Costa Rica match last night.

The event, held in collaboration with Visa, was attended by QIB chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Thani bin Abdullah al-Thani, board members, and chief executive officer Dr Abdulbasit Ahmed A al-Shaibei, besides QIB customers and employees.

The Spain-Costa Rica match held at Al Thumama Stadium was telecast live on a giant screen at a special arena at the Shaq Village.

This is amidst a festive atmosphere created by Qatar's celebrations of the biggest sporting event on earth, where fans from all over the globe came to cheer their favourite teams, which made Qatar a destination of global sport.

The event revealed the great passion of the attendees for football and their interest in the match events and the joyful atmosphere demonstrated everywhere, whether in the areas near the stadiums or in fan zones.

Sheikh Khalid said, "We are committed to celebrate, support and interact with the most important global event with all our capabilities, whether at



QIB organised a special sporting event at the Sharq Village capturing the excitement of Spain-Costa Rica match last night. The event, held in collaboration with Visa, was attended by QIB chairman Sheikh Dr Khalid bin Thani bin Abdullah al-Thani, board members, and chief executive officer Dr Abdulbasit Ahmed A al-Shalbei, besides QIB customers and employees.

PICTURES: Thajuddeen

the level of institutions or individuals. "QIB has always been a pioneer in supporting sports and contributing to sporting events and the values that they represent, which include human and cultural interaction, openness to the experiences of other peoples, and belief in the power of sport and its ability to bridge countries and peoples".

"We have intended to hold this event today in this place to experience like being at the heart of the event, literally. As you are aware, Stadium 974 is only a few hundred metres away from our event, and the largest

FIFA fan zone, Doha Corniche, is just a few metres away. We hope that the participants enjoy this event and all the other sporting events, including matches and the accompanying celebrations and festivities."

Sheikh Khalid conveyed his wishes to the Qatar team, "Good luck to Al An-nabi team in its upcoming matches. All the particulars of Qatar's participation in the World Cup, starting from the meticulous organisation to the warm welcoming of Qatar's guests fans, to the national team's preparations, are all part of the picture that integrate to form a beautiful painting

throughout our beloved country".

"We are confident that FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 will be the best-ever world cup tournament. Certainly, we applaud the tremendous efforts exerted by all the organisers of the tournament, and salute the efforts of everyone who contributed to reach this moment that represents a pride for every Qatar and every Arab, because Qatar's success is a success for all".

Al-Shaibei said, "In these moments of joy and celebration, we would like to express our special thanks to Visa International. We are holding this event today in partnership with Visa, and in fact this is a strategic partnership. FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 has demonstrated its importance, as a lot of campaigns were geared to engage our customers in the World Cup and satisfy the passion of football fans by watching this exceptional event by all measures".

Al-Shaibei added, "Like other stakeholders of Qatar's banking sector, QIB participates in providing all possible facilities and services in order to carry out its duty in delivering a successful FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022. This has proved to be an exceptional and unique edition, in the opinion of fair-minded and neutral individuals, in view of the facilities provided and impressive organisational capabilities shown by Qatar".

Qatar Chamber hosts workshop on issuing conformity certificates for food dispatches

Qatar Chamber, in co-operation with the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), recently hosted a workshop on the mechanisms for issuing conformity certificates for food dispatches.

The workshop comes as part of the ministry's initiative 'Third Party: Pre-Shipment Food Inspection on Food Dispatches in the Country of Origin', which introduced the initiative and its application mechanisms, as well as the challenges that companies may face during the issuance of such certificates.

The workshop was attended by Qatar Chamber's assistant director general for Government Relations and Committees Affairs Ali Bu Sherbak al-Mansouri and Dr Nasr Hassanein from the Food Safety Department at the Ministry of Public



Participants of the workshop held recently at Qatar Chamber.

Health. Hassanein said the workshop aims to inform private sector representatives and importers of the initiative's developments.

He said the system was successfully implemented with one of the shipments from a neighbouring country and that it will be evaluated ac-

ording to the results of the actual conformity.

He also said the initiative aims to streamline the flow of incoming shipments

during the FIFA World Cup and to avoid the costs of the re-export process. He noted that three companies were approved after they fulfilled all requirements and that there are other requests under study.

The initiative is optional and aims to issue the required verification certificates for imported food products by a third party in the country of origin before they are shipped for export to ensure modern food safety measures. It also aims to ensure the smooth flow of products by matching them in the country of origin and easing control procedures at entry ports.

The chamber said the initiative is optional for private sector companies and aims to enhance public-private partnerships and keep pace with recent global trends in food control.

'Health, property and motor lines corner 68% of QFCRA-licensed insurers' non-life business in 2021'

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

Health, property and motor lines accounted for 68% of the total business volume of the Qatar Financial Centre Regulatory Authority (QFCRA) authorised insurance firms, according to QFCRA annual report for 2021, which was released recently. "Non-life business has remained broadly consistent compared to the previous year and was dominated by health, property and motor lines, which in aggregate accounted for 68% of the total business volume in 2021 compared to 76% in 2020," the report said. Long-term insurance business represented 22% of the total business volume against 14% the previous year, it said, adding as many as 13 insurance companies and eight insurance intermediaries are licensed by the QFCRA during the review period. The total gross written premium (GWP) by the QFC insurance companies increased by 2.1% year-on-year to QR851mn in 2021; while the proportion of retained premiums was seen growing

to 81% in 2021 compared to 77% in 2020. The retention ratio stood at 83% in the first quarter of 2021, which then declined to 68% in the second quarter of 2021, after which increased to 89% in the third quarter and again fell to 80% in the fourth quarter of 2021. The retention ratio refers to the portion of premiums (and therefore risk) that is kept on a company's books rather than being passed on to reinsurance companies. The QFCRA-licensed insurance companies' total assets was dominated by investments, including cash and bank balances and other investments, which together represented 62% of the total assets at the end of December 31, 2021. In the case of the composition of total liabilities of the QFCRA-licensed insurers, it has remained fairly consistent and was dominated by insurance-related liabilities comprising technical reserves, which together represented 71% of total liabilities at the end of December 31, 2021. Most of the business written by the QFCRA-licensed insurance firms was in Qatar, followed by other Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Positive sentiments permeate QSE as index gains 69 points; M-cap adds QR3bn

By Santhosh V Perumal
Business Reporter

The buying interests in the insurance, industrials and banking counters yesterday lifted the sentiments in the Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE), which saw its index gain as much as 69 points and capitalisation by QR3bn. About 58% of the traded constituents extended gains as the 20-stock Qatar Index rose 0.58% to 11,896.7 points, although it touched an intraday high of 11,983 points. The Arab retail investors were increasingly net buyers in the market, whose year-to-date gains improved to 2.33%. The foreign individuals were also increasingly bullish in the main bourse, whose capitalisation saw QR2.88n or 0.44% jump to QR664.26bn, mainly on the back of midcap segments. The Islamic index was seen declining vis-à-vis gains in the other indices in the main market, which saw a total of 0.91mn exchange traded funds (sponsored by Masraf Al Rayan and Doha Bank) valued at QR2.43mn changed hands across 45 deals. Trade turnover and volumes were on the increase in both the main and venture markets. The foreign institutions' weakened net selling had its influence in the main bourse, which saw no trading of sovereign bonds. The Gulf funds' net selling was seen declining in the main market, which saw no trading of treasury bills. The Total Return Index gained 0.58% and All Share Index by 0.52%, while Al Rayan Islamic Index (Price) was down 0.1%. The insurance sector shot up 3.06%, banks and financial services (0.82%) and industrials (0.66%), while telecom shrank 1.37%, real estate (0.64%), consumer goods and services (0.51%) and transport (0.49%).

Major movers in the main market included Estithmar Holding, Al Khaleej Takaful, Commercial Bank, Qatar Insurance, Aamal Company, Masraf Al Rayan, Qatari German Medical Devices and QLM. Nevertheless, Qatar General Insurance and Reinsurance, Baladna, Ooredoo, Widam Food, Milaha and Medicare Group were among the shakers in the main bourse. In the venture market, both Al Faleh Educational Holding and Mekdam Holding saw their shares depreciate in value. The Arab retail investors' net buying strengthened noticeably to QR7.84mn compared to QR5.99mn on November 22. The foreign individual investors' net buying rose perceptibly to QR5.83mn against QR4.2mn the previous day. The Gulf institutions' net profit booking decreased noticeably to QR7.37mn compared to QR12.37mn on Tuesday. The domestic institutions' net selling weakened markedly to QR8.99mn against QR11.8mn on November 22. The foreign funds' net profit booking shrank considerably to QR0.79mn compared to QR7.2mn the previous day. However, the Gulf individuals' net selling expanded notably to QR1.87mn against QR1.07mn on Tuesday. The Arab institutions turned net sellers to the tune of QR1.07mn compared with net buyers of QR0.02mn on November 20. The local retail investors' net buying fell drastically to QR6.43mn against QR22.23mn the previous day. Total trade volume in the main market zoomed 42% to 158.1mn shares, value by 26% to QR516.56mn and deals by 9% to 16,890. The venture market saw a 15% jump in trade volumes to 0.31mn equities and 7% in value to QR2.18mn but on 3% contraction in transactions to 114.

USQBC hosts business visit to State of Illinois featuring consul general of Qatar in New York

The US-Qatar Business Council (USQBC) recently organised a business visit to Chicago, Illinois, to engage with key policy-makers and the local business community to expand and enhance economic partnerships between the State of Qatar and the State of Illinois.

The visit featured Mohamed bin Sultan al-Kuwari, Consul General of State of Qatar in New York; Fahad al-Dosari, the State of Qatar Commercial Attaché to the US; and Mohamed Barakat, USQBC managing director and treasurer of the board of directors.

The business visit kicked off with a virtual meeting between the group and Congressman Darin Lahood, US Representative from Illinois' 18th District. Participants discussed the importance of the relationship between Qatar and the State of Illinois and ways to enhance future business and investment ties.

During the business luncheon hosted by USQBC at the Four Seasons Hotel in Chicago, participants were able to network, learn, and explore business opportunities between the State of Illinois and Qatar.

"The State of Qatar and the State of Illinois are both flourishing trade hubs and some of the world's most dynamic economies.

This visit demonstrates the commitment of Qatar to forging new partnerships, as well as expanding trade and invest-



Mohamed Barakat, USQBC managing director and treasurer of the board of directors.

ment with Illinois. We look forward to a prosperous future together," said al-Kuwari.

Barakat said: "Both Illinois and Qatar are some of the best places in the world for business and we see many opportunities for Illinois-based companies in Qatar and welcome Qatari investment to Illinois.

This visit demonstrates the commitment both sides have

to increase investment and commercial ties across their many overlapping industries."

Al-Dosari said: "Companies from Illinois will find it easy to establish and conduct business in Qatar.

Our government has several programmes underway to encourage investment across a range of industries, including renewable energy, ICT, and

smart cities to achieve economic diversification and sustainability from which Illinois-based businesses, specifically SMEs, could benefit."

After the business luncheon, the delegation met with Michael Fassnacht, president & CEO of World Business Chicago and chief marketing officer for the City of Chicago, to discuss opportunities for

further trade and investment between the business communities of the city of Chicago and Qatar.

The delegation also visited Northwestern University Campus in Evanston, Illinois, and was given a tour of the facilities and was informed about the engagement between its campus in Illinois and its campus in Qatar.

Northwestern University is a private research university and is the oldest chartered university in Illinois and is ranked among the most prestigious academic institutions in the world.

In 2008, Northwestern University partnered with Qatar Foundation to open the university's first international campus in Qatar. It offers students the opportunity to study media and earn a Bachelor of Science degree in journalism or communication.

Qatar and the State of Illinois already share a thriving business relationship with the total exports from Illinois to Qatar amounting to \$74.5mn in 2019, which far exceeded the amount Illinois imported from Qatar in the same year (\$630,292).

In 2012, Al Faisal Holding Company in Qatar, through Seldar Holdings – the North American business development arm of its wholly owned Al Rayyan Tourism and Investment (ARTIC) – acquired the Radisson Blu Aqua Hotel in Chicago.

New maritime line connecting Qatar, China starts operations

A new maritime line connecting Qatar with China has started operations as part of measures to enhance trade flows in a faster and cost effective way, according to QTerminals.

QTerminals has announced the commencement of the new shipping line linking Qingdao, Tianjin, Shanghai, Ningbo, Nansha (China); Jebel Ali (UAE); Dammam (Saudi Arabia); and Hamad Port, the terminal entity said in a tweet.

"This shipping line service will increase direct trade opportunities between the countries through which the shipping line passes and will contribute to the arrival of goods quickly, efficiently, and at lower costs," it said.

During Q3 2022, Asia was the principal destination of Qatar's exports

and the first origin of Qatar's imports, representing 60.5% and 40.1% respectively, according to the latest data from the Planning and Statistics Authority.

In September, China was at the top of the countries of destination of Qatar's exports with close to QR7bn, a share of 14.6% of total exports; it was the leading country of origin of Qatar's imports with about QR1.64bn, a share of 14.5% of the imports.

In October, QTerminals had announced the commencement of Gulf-Pakistan Express (GPX) service. The port rotation is Sohar Port (Oman); Hamad Port; Karashi Port (Pakistan); and Sohar Port.

QTerminals had also announced the starting of new services, Gulf-India Express 2 at Hamad Port.



QTerminals has announced the commencement of the new shipping line linking Qingdao, Tianjin, Shanghai, Ningbo, Nansha (China); Jebel Ali (UAE); Dammam (Saudi Arabia); and Hamad Port

ECB set to raise deposit rate 50 bps as eurozone enters recession

Reuters
London

The European Central Bank (ECB) will press on with policy tightening, adding 50 basis points to its deposit rate next month as it worries rapid price growth is becoming entrenched, despite the bloc almost certainly entering recession, a Reuters poll found. Inflation in the region has soared due to surging energy prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and disrupted supply chains, reaching 10.6% last month – more than five times the ECB's 2.0% target. Initially saying rising inflation

was transitory, the central bank didn't start raising interest rates until July, later than most of its major peers, but has since raised its key rates by 200 bps. It will lift its deposit rate by another 50 bps on December 15, taking it to 2.00%, and do the same to the refinancing rate, putting it at 2.50%, according to the median forecasts in the November 15-21 Reuters poll. That deposit rate view was held by a majority of 45 of 62 respondents, while 14 said it would add another 75 bps as it has done at its previous two meetings. Only three said it would opt for a modest 25-bp increase.

The ECB will raise interest rates again to fight inflation but those increases may well be smaller than recent ones, the bank's chief economist, Philip Lane, said on Monday, echoing comments from other policymakers in recent days. December's move will be followed by another 50-bp increase next quarter, giving peaks in the current cycle of 2.50% and 3.00% for the deposit and refinancing rates, unchanged from an October poll. When asked about the risks to their deposit rate forecasts, 18 of 22 economists said it would end higher, either earlier or later than they expect.

California: The sustainable aviation fuel hub



By Alex Macheras

California continues to solidify its status as one of the world's fastest-growing hubs of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) as the industry continues to take steps towards decarbonisation.

Neste has delivered over 500,000 gallons (1,500 metric tonnes) of Neste Sustainable Aviation Fuel to Los Angeles International Airport this week, made possible by a close co-operation with LAXFUEL, the consortium of the airlines

operating at LAX providing the jet fuel supply infrastructure for aircraft at the airport. It is the first time SAF is delivered into LAXFUEL's supply infrastructure using barges for transport.

The fuel delivery significantly increases the availability and accessibility of sustainable aviation fuel at one of the busiest international airports and aviation hubs in the US, offering airlines and passengers a solution to travel more sustainably with reduced greenhouse gas emissions from air travel.

This partnership marks the first time that SAF is being delivered as a ready-made fuel blend into the existing fuelling infrastructure in large volumes at LAX.

John Trozzo, chairman of LAXFUEL Corporation, said: "Sustainable aviation fuel is the fastest, most effective means we have to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from air travel. "We now have the means to supply this low-emission fuel in larger volumes not only to the airlines flying from LAX but also to other airports in the region serviced by the broader fuel infrastructure managed by LAXFUEL in California.

"This partnership with Neste proves that we have the capability to immediately implement this fuel as a low-carbon solution. It also provides a sound basis for

scaling up future deliveries to airlines."

Chris Cooper, president of Neste US, said: "Neste is fully committed to supporting the decarbonisation of aviation. Our company has been at the forefront of accelerating the availability of SAF, and this achievement together with LAXFUEL shows how we are taking concrete steps towards a more sustainable future for aviation.

Recognised as one of the most visited states in the US, California has a huge demand for air travel. By offering SAF to the state's busiest airport, we are enabling passengers who travel to and from California to lower their carbon footprint while enjoying the benefits of flying."

SAF is considered the most important way to decarbonise airline operations in the next few decades, before alternatively powered aircraft can be widely deployed in commercial operations.

Here in Doha, Qatar Airways and sustainable aviation fuel producer Gevo Inc have already signed an offtake agreement, where the airline will purchase 25mn US gallons of neat SAF over the course of five years with deliveries expected to commence in 2028 at various airports in California. Qatar Airways will be uplifting 5mn US gallons of neat SAF every year and will blend it with its exist-

ing supply of conventional jet fuel.

The airline became the first airline in the Middle East and Africa region to announce its commitment to an international SAF offtake agreement. This partnership is part of the airline's earlier commitment, along with other oneworld Alliance members to purchase up to 200mn US gallons of SAF from Gevo.

Decarbonising aviation requires a gradual incorporation of lower carbon and sustainable aviation fuels, and we are proud to collaborate on this global effort for a better future.

Compared to conventional jet fuel, SAF can reduce up to 100% carbon emissions on a lifecycle basis, depending on the SAF technology used. Aircraft today are powered by liquid aviation fuel, made mostly from fossil fuel sources. Yet new fuels have been developed that have the potential to dramatically reduce aviation's net CO2 emissions. Although supply is currently limited (0.01% of global jet fuel use), sustainable aviation fuels (SAF) are already in use today and take-up is increasing.

Aviation currently accounts for approximately 2-3% of manmade global carbon emissions, but without action, aviation could consume up to 22% of the global carbon budget by 2050. To

maintain growth and at the same time address its environmental impact, the wider aviation industry has committed to reducing net aviation carbon emissions to 50% below 2005 levels by 2050. Since the first commercial flight operated by KLM in 2011, more than 150,000 flights were powered by SAF.

The type of fuel known as 'sustainable' is essentially clean substitute for fossil jet fuels. Rather than being refined from petroleum, SAF is produced from sustainable resources such as waste oils from a biological origin, or non-fossil CO2. It is a so-called drop-in fuel, which means that it can be blended with fossil jet fuel and that the blended fuel requires no special infrastructure or equipment changes. It has the same characteristics and meets the same specifications as fossil jet fuel. Aircraft do not require modifications to be able to fly with SAF, and it's a sustainable solution available to us today.

More than 99% of airline emissions and approximately 50% of airport emissions are related to the combustion of jet fuel. Although increased energy efficiency and reduction in energy demand are effective ways to reduce fuel consumption and related greenhouse gas emissions, these improvements do not offer a sole solution to aviation-related emissions.

The aviation industry maintains a clear vision for its use of SAFs and will adopt only fuels made from feedstocks that can be grown or produced without the risk of unintended environmental and social consequences, such as competition with food production or deforestation.

Several airlines are driving forward the use of SAFs by signing multi-million dollar forward purchasing agreements. Others have invested in start-up support for SAF deployment, and some have promoted SAFs through test flights, research, and investigation of local opportunities. Five airports also have a regular SAF supply: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Oslo, Bergen, and Stockholm.

However, scaling up the use of SAFs to a global market is challenging and requires substantial investment. The industry has called on governments to assist potential SAF suppliers to develop the necessary feedstock and refining systems - at least until the fledgling industry has achieved the necessary critical mass and prices drop thanks to economies of scale.

More than 45 airlines now have experience with SAF, and around 14bn litres of SAF are in forward purchase agreements.

■ The author is an aviation analyst. Twitter handle: @AlexInAir

Airlines in fire-fighting mode to mitigate hazards posed by dangerous goods' shipments

By Pratap John

The air transport industry handles more than 1.25mn shipments of dangerous goods per year.

The growth of e-commerce and proliferation of lithium batteries in global supply chains are two indicators that the number of dangerous goods shipments will grow. To handle them safely, the industry must further improve compliance with global standards.

The carriage of lithium batteries and other potentially dangerous goods on air transport continues to present a significant safety risk.

In March this year, for example, Qatar Airways diverted a New Delhi-Doha flight to Karachi in Pakistan following the detection of smoke in the cargo hold. The incident is thought to have been caused by lithium batteries.

Unless remedial action is taken, the risk caused by the transport of lithium batteries will only increase. This is due to the accelerating rate of improvement in the energy density of a battery. Consumers are demanding more from their battery life and capability, and manufacturers are working hard to deliver.

Regulations cannot match this pace of development, rarely proceeding at anything other than a glacial pace.

"This issue is not getting the attention it deserves," said Andres Bianchi, CEO, LATAM Cargo, at the 78th IATA AGM in Doha in June. "It is my first concern from a safety perspective," Bianchi noted.

A four-step process will go some way to mitigating the danger. The first step is creating awareness. The lithium battery market is growing 30% annually, bringing many new shippers into air cargo supply chains. But compliance with existing regulations is difficult as they are complex and can be hard to understand.

This creates an evolving risk of undeclared or misdeclared shipments. The aim is to help shippers understand the potential risk and whether there are dangerous goods in what



Workers refurbish the cargo hold of a Boeing Co 777-300ER aircraft, operated by Air France-KLM, at an Air France Industries hangar at Orly Airport in Paris. The air transport industry handles more than 1.25mn shipments of dangerous goods per year. To handle them safely, the industry must further improve compliance with global standards.

Beyond the Tarmac

they are trying to ship. The second step is appropriate standards, processes, and regulation. IATA has called for the development of outcome-based, harmonised safety-related screening standards and processes for lithium batteries. This would support the safe transport of lithium batteries and provide an efficient process for compliant shippers of lithium batteries.

Safety data collection and sharing information between governments is also critical. Without sufficient relevant data there is little ability to understand the effectiveness of any measures. Better information sharing and co-ordination on lithium battery incidents among governments and with the industry is essential to help managing lithium battery risks effectively. But

just as important as the regulations are the tools for enforcement - the third process step - should shippers disregard the rules. IATA has long suggested that there should be stiffer penalties for rogue shippers and the criminalisation of egregious or wilful offences.

Enforcement is difficult, however, because of international jurisdictions and, of course, there can be genuine mistakes.

Nevertheless, governments need to ensure that rules are followed and effective deterrents for potential offenders are in place. Finally, there needs to be better protective measures if there is a lithium battery incident. Qatar Airways is reported to be investing in fire resistant aircraft containers for

example. Airlines need to know they can contain a fire involving lithium batteries loaded into aircraft cargo compartments. Fire-resistant aircraft containers, fire containment covers for aircraft pallets, and fire containment bags are all possibilities.

The development and implementation of a fire-testing standard is vital. Governments must develop a testing standard for fires involving lithium batteries that can be used to evaluate supplementary protection measures over and above the existing cargo compartment fire suppression systems.

According to the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) (as of January 24, 2018) there were as many as 191 air/airport incidents involving lithium batteries carried as cargo or baggage that have been recorded since March 20, 1991. Most of these incidents included smoke, fire, extreme heat or explosion involving lithium batteries or unknown battery

types. Incidents have included devices such as e-cigarettes, laptops, cell phones, and tablets.

The severity of these incidents ranged from minor injuries to emergency landings.

IATA's Director General Willie Walsh noted: "Airlines, shippers, manufacturers, and governments all want to ensure the safe transport of lithium batteries by air. It's a joint responsibility. The industry is raising the bar to consistently apply existing standards and share critical information on rogue shippers. But there are some areas where the leadership of governments is critical.

Stronger enforcement of existing regulations and the criminalisation of abuses will send a strong signal to rogue shippers.

And the accelerated development of standards for screening, information exchange, and fire containment will give the industry even more effective tools to work with."

Even as regulators and safety experts are working on tackling the issue, a few precautions can help prevent such incidents. While lithium batteries are becoming more and more prevalent in our society, so are the risks involved. The above mishaps highlight dangers posed by lithium batteries on flights.

Safety experts therefore urge passengers not to travel with a device with a damaged or defective battery.

They must make sure battery is properly installed in their devices.

Batteries properly installed in devices pose less of a fire risk as long as they are recharged properly.

If a passenger is travelling with a spare battery, he must take care to protect them from damage and short circuiting. This can be accomplished by placing the spare batteries in their original retail packaging; placing tape over the terminals of the battery to insulate them or place each battery in a separate plastic or protective pouch.

■ Pratap John is Business Editor at Gulf Times. Twitter handle: @PratapJohn

Singapore Airlines adds Asia flights, trims some US services in rejig

Bloomberg
Singapore

Singapore Airlines Ltd will add flights to East and Southeast Asia from early next year and trim some US services as it tweaks routes and plane allocations to get a head start over rivals as nations ease travel restrictions.

The city-state's flag carrier will resume flights to Busan in South Korea and increase services on Airbus SE A380 superjumbos to Australia, it said in an exchange filing Tuesday. It will also operate fewer services to Los Angeles, Houston and Seattle, and fly a Boeing Co 777 to New York, instead of an A380.

While the Asia-Pacific region in general has been slower than the rest of the world to open up after the pandemic, places like Singapore and Australia have largely thrown off the shackles, encouraging airlines to tap travel-hungry tourists and business executives. China, however, one of the world's biggest aviation markets, remains largely off limits due to virus restrictions, and airlines are adjusting their capacity and fleets accordingly.

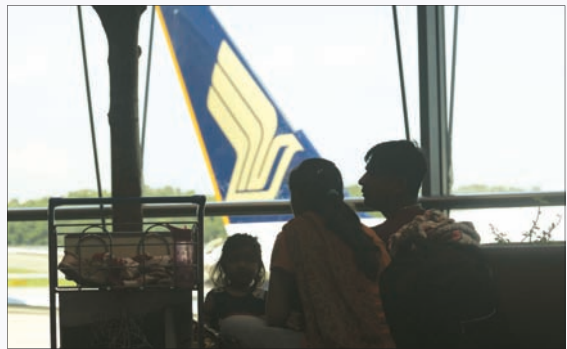
Singapore Air will now operate the A380 to Melbourne

and add a second daily service on the world's largest passenger plane to Sydney. It also plans to operate the larger plane to newly opened Hong Kong from March, bringing Singapore Air's daily services between the two financial hubs to four round trips.

Singapore Air is also increasing flights to Bangkok, with a fifth daily service, and Phuket. Asia's post-Covid reopening has been exemplified over the past few weeks with several high-profile conferences in Southeast Asia.

The airline's flight frequencies will reach or exceed pre-Covid levels in several destinations across East Asia and Southeast Asia by March 2024, the statement said. Even with cuts to US flights, Singapore Air remains "strongly committed" to the North American market and seat capacity to the US will remain above pre-pandemic levels.

The carrier, which posted a second consecutive quarterly profit earlier this month, is also racing ahead of Hong Kong, traditionally the biggest aviation hub in Asia. Singapore Air carried 1.54mn passengers in October while Hong Kong's Cathay Pacific Airways Ltd flew just 401,000.



Travellers sit in a waiting area near a Singapore Airlines aircraft at Changi Airport. Singapore Air will add flights to East and Southeast Asia from early next year and trim some US services as it tweaks routes and plane allocations to get a head start over rivals as nations ease travel restrictions.

Regulators and airlines push for lone pilot flights to cut costs

Bloomberg
London

Airlines and regulators are pushing to have just one pilot in the cockpit of passenger jets instead of two. It would lower costs and ease pressure from crew shortages, but placing such responsibility on a single person at the controls is unsettling for some.

Over 40 countries including Germany, the UK and New Zealand have asked the United Nations body that sets aviation standards to help make single-pilot flights a safe reality. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency has also been working with planemakers to determine how solo flights would operate and preparing rules to oversee them. EASA said such services could start in 2027.

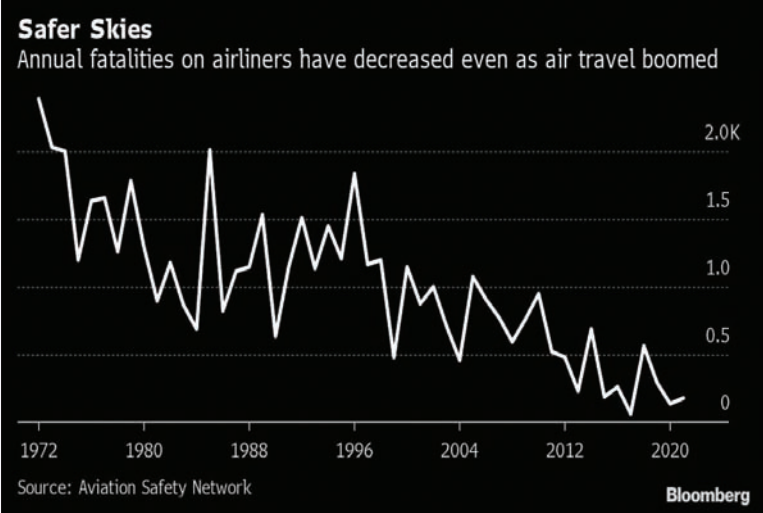
The plan doesn't sit well with pilots. It's a hard sell for passengers, too.

Tony Lucas, an Airbus SE A330 captain for Qantas Airways Ltd and president

of the Australian & International Pilots Association, is concerned that a lone pilot might be overwhelmed by an emergency before anyone else has time to reach the cockpit to help. "The people going down this route aren't the people who fly jets every day," Lucas said. "When things go awry, they go awry fairly quickly."

That's what happened on board Air France Flight 447 on its way to Paris from Rio de Janeiro on June 1, 2009. With the plane cruising at 35,000 feet (10,670 meters) over the Atlantic Ocean and the captain resting in the cabin, the two co-pilots in the cockpit started receiving faulty speed readings, likely from frozen detector tubes outside the aircraft.

By the time the captain got to the cockpit 90 seconds later, the plane was in an aerodynamic stall from which it never recovered. Less than three minutes later, it hit the water, killing all 228 people on board. Lucas, a check and training captain, also worries about the lost opportunities to mentor junior pilots if flight crew



are working increasingly on their own. The planned changes bring many challenges. It's not yet clear what would

happen if a lone pilot collapsed or started flying erratically. Automation, technology and remote assistance from the

ground would somehow have to replace the expertise, safety and immediacy of a second pilot.

Aviation has been moving towards this point for decades. In the 1950s, commercial aircraft cockpits were more crowded, typically with a captain, first officer or co-pilot, a flight engineer, a navigator and a radio operator. Advances in technology gradually made the last three positions redundant.

"We are potentially removing the last piece of human redundancy from the flight deck," Janet Northcote, EASA's head of communications, wrote in an e-mail.

One condition for single-pilot operations is that it is at least as safe as with two people at the controls, according to an EU request to the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the UN aviation standards body.

"The psychological barriers are probably harder than the technological barriers," Boeing Co Southeast Asia President Alexander Feldman said at a Bloomberg business summit in Bangkok last week.

"The technology is there for single pilots, it's really about where the regulators and the general public feel comfortable."

A first step would be to allow solo piloting when aircraft are cruising, typically a less busy period than takeoff and landing. That would allow the other pilot to rest in the cabin, rather than staying in the cockpit to help fly the plane.

By alternating breaks in this manner, a two-person crew could fly longer routes without the help - and expense - of an extra pilot. Ultimately, flying could be fully automated with minimal oversight from a pilot in the cockpit. The system could detect if the pilot for whatever reason became incapacitated and then land the plane by itself at a preselected airport, according to EASA. Such flights aren't likely until well after 2030, it said.

The value of having two pilots up front was famously borne out on January 15, 2009, when a US Airways plane struck a flock of geese shortly after takeoff and lost power in both engines.