

# Egypt seeks to restore passenger air traffic to pre-pandemic levels

Sun, 2021-07-18 22:48

CAIRO: Egyptian Civil Aviation Minister Mohammed Manar has called for the concerted efforts required to restore passenger air traffic to what it was before the pandemic.

His call came as ways to maximize EgyptAir's returns outside the country, especially within Africa, were discussed at a recent meeting. The minister and airline officials took part in the talks.

Manar discussed ways to revitalize and promote the airline's sales in light of the pandemic's impact on global travel.

He highlighted the airline's aim to spread in Africa through the establishment of bodies in Ghana and South Sudan, in order to operate from there, and the launch of new flights from those countries to others.

He described it as a great investment that had been reviewed by authorities and one that would help the airline make gains from its fleet.

Montaser Manna, who is deputy minister of civil aviation, said that agreements had been made between the ministry and some African countries to establish a partnership.

It comes within a government framework and ministerial directives to support development and increase income.

Aircraft maintenance expertise from the airline's engineers and specialists would be loaned out to inspect and maintain European planes landing in African countries under these deals, he explained.

Egyptian engineers had high levels of professionalism and craftsmanship, according to the minister, and some African countries were unable to maintain certain aircraft which hindered air traffic in these countries.

But if European and other countries were aware of the availability of full maintenance, spare parts, and the possibility of repairing aircraft malfunctions, it would encourage them to land in and fly to those African countries, he said.

He added that Egypt would provide such a service to those countries by way of an agreement, with specialist engineers and technicians being made available.

Engineers and technicians would be assigned according to the model they specialized and were trained in, he explained.



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## [Frankly Speaking: Fugitive motor mogul Carlos Ghosn ready to stand trial in 'a fair and neutral jurisdiction'](#)

Sun, 2021-07-18 22:20

DUBAI: Carlos Ghosn, the fugitive motor-industry mogul, wants to stand trial in a country he regards as more neutral than Japan, he told Arab News.

Ghosn, who fled Tokyo 18 months ago, said: "I think the end of it has to be in a trial, but a trial that takes place in a country which has no stake in what is being tried. The only thing I'm asking is for a jurisdiction to be fair and neutral and not to be politically motivated. That's all."

In the course of a wide-ranging interview, the former boss of Japan's Nissan and France's Renault talked of how he was "abandoned" by the French government after it "surrendered" to Japan; his advice on how Lebanon – where

he is currently seeking refuge from international law enforcement – can get out of its dire economic and political crisis; and his views on the Vision 2030 reform strategy in Saudi Arabia.

In conversation on the “Frankly Speaking” series of video interviews with leading policymakers and business people, he also gave his view on the intense rivalry between Nissan and Toyota in the Middle East.

Ghosn’s most savage criticism was of the Japanese legal system, after he was arrested and imprisoned on charges of financial irregularity at the Nissan Motor Co., where he was chairman.



Carlos Ghosn arrives for a pre-trial hearing at the Tokyo District Court in Tokyo on June 24, 2019. (Kazuhiro Nogi / AFP file)

“Prosecutors prevailed 99.4 per cent of the time, which is unheard of and unseen, quite frankly. Even though I’d been living in Japan for 18 years, I never suspected this kind of score,” he said.

“But having gone through the system and seeing the kind of intimidation – confession seeking, pressures, violation of human rights etc. – I am even surprised that they get only 99.4 per cent of confessions. I wonder how the other 0.6 per cent were able to resist when you look at the arsenal of arguments and things that they put against you.”

Japan’s justice system has been labeled “hostage justice” by the UN, he said, adding: “I’m ready to go to Japan the day they change their ‘hostage justice’ system.”

He said that he “felt bad” for people on trial in Japan, including his former lawyer, Greg Kelly. “I was lucky to be able to get out before the systems locked me down for God knows how many years, but I feel bad for Greg Kelly,” he said.

Japanese prosecutors charged Ghosn with a variety of financial crimes, including inflating his salary, but he said his remuneration had been agreed by the Nissan board of directors on several occasions. “I deduced from this that they were happy, particularly knowing that dividends were paid, the company was growing, the company was profitable,” he said.



French carmaker Renault CEO Carlos Ghosn arrives on Feb. 17, 2016 at the French National Assembly, before addressing the Economical and Financial commissions during a hearing. (AFP file)

Ghosn – a French citizen as well as holding Lebanese and Brazilian nationality – was also scathing about the actions of the government of President Emmanuel Macron, which appeared to want to appease Tokyo over the future of the Nissan–Renault alliance.

“Instead of somehow getting good support, I was just abandoned, after two or three weeks of obvious conflict between France and Japan,” he said.

“But then the French surrendered, and they said it very clearly – you know we want to preserve the good relationship between Japan and France, we want to preserve the good relationship between Nissan and Renault, and we trust that Japanese justice will solve this problem with Carlos Ghosn,” he said.

Ghosn has lived in Lebanon since December 2019 with his wife Carole, and is subject to a “red notice” from Interpol at the request of the Japanese government. Lebanon does not extradite citizens.

“Lebanon asked for Japan to transmit the accusation and the charges so they could look into them and eventually try me in Lebanon. But Japan has refused

to do so," he said.

Although there was "zero chance" of him becoming involved directly in Lebanese politics, including considering any offer to become the next president, Ghosn said that he was aware of "the misery brought on the country by the financial collapse, the economic recession with all its social consequences."



A portrait of ousted Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn is seen on a publicity billboard in his support at a street in Beirut on December 6, 2018. (Joseph Eid / AFP)

He would "support, help, guide, advise whoever is interested to limit the suffering that people around us are going through," he said.

"Having turned around many companies, I know by practice that whatever solution you bring when you have to turn around a company, or a country, five percent is the strategy, and 95 percent is execution," he said. "So somehow those who will save the country are those who are in power and put in power by the Lebanese people, because frankly, the methods and the strategy to get out are pretty simple, and they have been (tried) in many countries (and) many companies."

He also offered his view on the Vision 2030 reform strategy in Saudi Arabia. "I think that makes a lot of sense – transforming a country from being overly reliant on a couple of resources, to have different sources of revenues, and different sources of income, and different sorts of activity for employment," he said.

Ghosn cautioned that the challenge for Saudi policymakers lies in the implementation of that strategy. “The success of this depends on how disciplined it’s is going to be – the execution, how focused (it is) going to be, the people in charge of delivering on this, and how serious they’re going to be about gathering the maximum level of talents into transforming the reality of Saudi Arabia.

“Saudi Arabia is a very rich country. It benefits from a lot of resources, but I think the people in charge of the country know that it’s not going to last forever. So, in my opinion they’re doing the right thing and I hope that will be successful,” he said.

From his perspective as a global expert in the motor business, he said that the difference between the Nissan business and the dominant Toyota operation in the Kingdom lay in the strength of the distribution network Toyota has built there in partnership with the Abdul Latif Jameel group.

“They have probably one of the best distributors in the world located in Saudi Arabia, so it’s going to be very difficult to fight if they (Nissan) don’t have people even approaching this level now,” he said.



This courtroom sketch illustrated by Masato Yamashita depicts former Nissan chairman Carlos Ghosn attending his hearing at the Tokyo district court on January 8, 2019. (JIJI PRESS via AFP/file)

He added that he thought the Nissan–Renault–Mitsubishi alliance, which he was developing in the global motor industry, was doomed to fall apart.

“Frankly everything I’m seeing today makes me see the alliance as a zombie –

that means it looks like it's living matter, but in fact, inside nothing is happening. So, I'm not very optimistic when it comes to the future of this alliance. I hope I'm wrong but I will bet you that within the next five years this whole thing is going to totally unravel," he said.

Ghosn cooperated in the making by Saudi media company MBC of a full-length documentary, "The Last Flight," describing his dramatic escape from Japan in a large musical-instrument box on board a private jet, and analyzing the events leading up to it, which was released last week.

"I think there was a clear motivation from MBC to do it. They were the first one to come to me and say we would like your cooperation to do something like this, and they were very straightforward and honest about it," he said.

Ghosn is planning further publicity initiatives, on top of legal action against his former employers.

"I want to leave something in order to help re-establish my reputation, on top of what I'll be doing from a legal point of view. But I have no intention to come back to the high-flying life I had before," he said.

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## [Israeli soldiers attack Muslims as Jewish extremists break status quo at Al-Aqsa](#)

Sun, 2021-07-18 21:04

AMMAN: Israeli soldiers used force to clear worshippers and protestors from Al-Aqsa Mosque on Sunday morning, to allow over a thousand Jewish extremists to enter Al-Haram Al-Sharif compound.

Members of the Israel Defense Force then failed to stop the extremists from praying at the site, violating a long-standing agreement forbidding Jewish prayer in the compound.

Soldiers fired stun grenades and tear gas into the Muslim shrine, causing injuries to worshippers and damage to Islam's third holiest site.

The Jordanian Foreign Ministry sent an official letter of protest, calling on Israel "to stop its violations and provocations, respect the historical and legal status quo, respect the sanctity of the mosque and the freedom of worshipers, and respect the authority of the Jordan-run Jerusalem Endowment Department and Al-Aqsa Mosque Affairs."

The Islamic Waqf in Jerusalem said the interruption took place during Islam's holy week leading up to Eid Al-Adha, which will be marked on Tuesday. "Today is the holy day which precedes the ascension to Arafah and Eid Al-Adha," it said.

According to the Jewish calendar, Sunday was the Jewish Tisha b'Av day of remembrance of the destruction of the Jewish temples more than 2,000 years ago.

The first temple is said to have been destroyed back in 586 B.C., and the second temple in A.D. 70.

Daifallah Al-Fayez, spokesman for the Jordan's Foreign Ministry said the "Israeli actions against the mosque represent a violation of the historical and legal status quo, international law, and Israel's obligations as an occupying power in East Jerusalem."

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said that Jews who wanted to ascend to the compound should be allowed to do so in an orderly fashion. No official contacts exist between Israel and the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf.

Jordan's King Abdullah had extracted a commitment from the former Israeli Premier Benjamin Netanyahu in the presence of former US Secretary of State John Kerry in 2014 to reserve Al-Aqsa for Muslims to pray at, and for all others to visit.

The public prayer by the Jewish extremists on Sunday, which was displayed on Israeli media, violates this agreement, and is considered a break with the status quo since the Israeli occupation in 1967.

Jordan's ruling Hashemite royal family is the custodian of Jerusalem's holy sites, and both Israel and the international community accept this.

King Abdullah is expected to meet US President Joe Biden on Monday, and the issue of Jerusalem will most likely be on the agenda.

Meanwhile, Palestinian citizens of Israel flocked to defend Muslim worshippers at Al-Aqsa. Knesset member Ayman Odeh, head of the Joint List, denounced the attacks on the compound, and laid into Bennett's new government, dubbed the "Government of Change" by its members.

"A month after the flag parade, the 'Government of Change' continues with the violence and repression in Al-Aqsa, the Nablus Gate, and Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood. But shootings, batons, and stun grenades only reinforce the simple truth: There is an entire nation here under occupation and it's our right to be liberated from it," Odeh said.

Knesset member Ahmad Tibi lashed out at the new Israeli government, saying: "The 'Government of Change' has surrendered to right-wing extremists on everything, including the occupied Jerusalem. 'Death to Arabs' and 'Rebuild the Temple' demonstrations are a violation of the historic status quo. They're fully responsible for whatever may happen today," he tweeted.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas held the Israeli government fully responsible for the escalation.

"Attacks by Israeli forces and settlers on Al-Aqsa Mosque compound provoke our people's sentiments and (are) a grave danger to the region's stability/security," Abbas said in a statement.

Sabri Sidem, deputy secretary-general of Fatah, said the silence of the world had encouraged the occupiers. "What is happening at Al-Aqsa clearly shows how the world's silence encourages aggression in Al-Aqsa Mosque."



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Israel proposes new restrictions to combat virus surge

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## [Yemen to get more COVID-19 vaccines by end of month – health ministry](#)

Author:

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ADEN: Yemen expects to get a second batch of COVID-19 shots by the end of this month through the COVAX global vaccine-sharing scheme, the health ministry said on Sunday.

Yemen is expecting to get 151,000 doses of the Johnson & Johnson single-shot vaccine, out of an eventual total of 504,000, a spokesperson said.

The desperately poor country, whose health infrastructure has been devastated by six years of war, received 360,000 doses of AstraZeneca's vaccine in March through COVAX.

Another batch of AstraZeneca shots is expected via COVAX in August, according to the health ministry of the Saudi-backed internationally-recognized

government.

So far vaccination campaigns have only begun in parts of Yemen controlled by the internationally-recognized government.

A small number of vaccines, 10,000 doses, were transferred to north Yemen, which is controlled by the Iranian-aligned Houthi movement, but they have not yet been administered.

Yemen's emergency coronavirus committee registered four confirmed cases and no deaths on Sunday. It has recorded 6,981 coronavirus infections and 1,368 deaths in total so far, though the true figure is widely thought to be much higher as the war has restricted COVID-19 testing and reporting.

Houthi authorities, who control the capital Sanaa and most major urban areas, have provided few figures.



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## Magnitude 5.6 earthquake recorded in Iraq's Basra – Iraqi news agency

Sun, 2021-07-18 19:06

LONDON: A magnitude earthquake struck the Iranian southern city of Bushehr on Sunday, 250 kilometers from the Iraqi border, the Iraqi General Authority for Meteorology and Seismic Monitoring announced.

The authority said the tremor recorded 5.6 on the Richter scale, and was felt by residents in Basra, Iraqi News Agency reported.

"We call on citizens to take caution, stay away from rumors and false news, and to abide by the seismic authority's instructions commandments," it added. The quake struck at a depth of 11 kilometers, with the epicenter near the town of Khesht, at around 7 PM (1430 GMT). Several weaker aftershocks followed, according to Iran's seismological center.

The United States Geological Survey put the initial tremor at 5.4-magnitude. There were no reports of casualties or damage, about two hours after the quake.

Rescue and survey teams were sent to the area and hospitals put on alert, Fars province's head of crisis management Rahim Azadi told state television. Iran sits astride the boundaries of several major tectonic plates and experiences frequent seismic activity.

In 2003, a 6.6-magnitude quake in the southeast levelled the ancient mud-brick city of Bam and killed at least 31,000 people.

Iran's deadliest was a 7.4-magnitude quake in 1990 that killed 40,000 people in the north, injured 300,000 and left half a million homeless.

*(With AFP)*



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