$1m lost as impounded Ariana Airlines plane returns from Moscow

KABUL: An Ariana Airlines Boeing 737, which was impounded at a Russian airport three months ago, was released and flew back to Afghanistan on Saturday.

Ariana officials say two Russian courts ordered the release of the plane. The aircraft had been impounded after leaving the airport without the permission of the Russian Customs Agency, Russian authorities said.

Ariana officials said that all allegations against the airline were baseless and they plan to file a lawsuit against the Government of the Russian Federation to seek compensation for the losses incurred during the past 3 months.

"The plane was grounded there for three months and 11 days. During this period, we have recorded the number of losses that we incurred," said Mohammad Salim Rahimi, Deputy of commercial affairs at Ariana Afghan Airlines aviation company.

The Afghanistan Aviation Support Association (AASA) says that Ariana Afghan Airlines lost $1 million and more than 30 percent of its income in the past three months due to the impoundment of one of its airplanes in Russia.

Ariana officials did not make the amount of estimated loss public, but officials at the Afghanistan Aviation Support Association say that Ariana Afghan Airlines has endured heavy losses as one of its three planes was seized by Russia for three months.

"Ariana has only three planes. When one of these planes stops operating, it means that over 30% of the company's revenue has been cut in the past few months," said Mahmoud Shah Habibi, director of the Afghanistan Aviation Support Association.

Ariana Afghan Airlines is a state-owned aviation company that currently owns only three aircraft.

Airline officials say they will soon resume flights to Islamabad as the issue with Russia has been resolved.

The Kabul Times

Most Afghans now willing to further use solar energy in Afghanistan

A number of Afghans are now willing to further use the solar energy in most provinces of the country. Lack of water has caused that most people turn to use the solar energy in the country. Currently, Afghanistan is facing with increasing threat of drought; therefore, the people have to turn the energy as the majority of the people are farmers and need water to irrigate their agricultural fields.

For example, most farmers and orchard owners in Jawzjan have now turned to use the solar energy to get water for their agricultural fields. Lack of water is considered as one of the biggest problems facing farmers and orchard owners in the province. In recent years, a number of farmers and orchard owners with close cooperation of provincial directorate of agriculture, irrigation and livestock of Jawzjan have addressed the problem with using the solar energy.

Currently, a number of the province's farmers and orchard owners by installing solar panel mounts provided by provincial directorate of agriculture, irrigation and livestock and using the solar power energy get water to irrigate their agricultural fields, while others have personally purchased and installed the system on their fields.

Meanwhile, provincial director of agriculture, irrigation and livestock for Jawzjan Asadullah Stigh has said that drip irrigation system has been also introduced to farmers and orchard owners of the province.

Drip irrigation is a type of micro-irrigation system that has the potential to save water and nutrients by allowing water to drip slowly to the roots of plants, either from above the soil surface or buried below the surface. The goal is to place water directly into the root zone and minimize evaporation.

"Jawzjan provincial directorate of agriculture, irrigation and livestock has distributed solar water-pump system to 22 farmers and orchard owners in the province," Stigh said, adding that the price of each water-pump has reached to 100,000 – 200,000 AFG.

This comes amid of concerns over increasing problems and shortage of water caused by drought in the province. According to provincial department for agriculture, irrigation and livestock, the new drip irrigation system and installation of solar system will somehow help address the problem in the province.

On the other hand, the provincial director for agriculture, irrigation and livestock in the province by admitting that increasing use of the underground water will cause increasing problems of lack of water and environment in the long-term said in current circumstances in which people are facing with drought the people need to use the system to irrigate their fields.

Farmers and orchard owners in Jawzjan are happy with installation of the solar panel mounts system to get water for irrigation of their agricultural fields in the province.

"With installation of the solar energy system, I can irrigate nearly 46 acre fields where I cultivate lady finger, strawberries, grapes and other vegetables and fruits," said Rahimullah, a local farmer in Jawzjan.

He believes that using of the solar water-pumps is much better to produce power for getting water to irrigate agricultural fields comparing to generators to produce electricity.

Jawzjan is considered a rare province in the country's north which faces with lack of water for irrigation of agricultural fields.

Shukria Kohistani

Oregon's economy could fully reopen by the end of next week

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown provided more details on Friday about how the state will lift mask mandates, social distancing and other restrictions meant to slow the spread of COVID-19 once 70% of adult residents have received at least one vaccine dose.

As of June 3, 66.2% of adults had received at least one vaccine dose. The state says 127,308 more people need to be vaccinated to reach the target.

Oregon health providers have administered an average of 20,109 COVID-19 doses per day over the past week. If that rate continues, restrictions could be lifted by the end of next week.

That's not a slam dunk, officials said. To help keep the vaccination rate up, the state is planning "surprise incentives" it will reveal soon, Brown said, and working with counties to offer local incentives.

That's in addition to Brown's vaccine lottery, which offers a top prize of $1 million.

When Oregon hits its vaccination target, the state's county-based system of business and social restrictions will be eliminated, Brown said.

That includes mask, physical distancing and capacity limit rules.

"By and large, this means we will be able to return to the activities and traditions we have missed for more than a year," Brown said. "Fourth of July barbecues, eating popcorn in a movie theater again, getting a beer after work at the local brewery with your friends.

Restaurants and bars will be able to welcome a full house."

The state will not require masks in most settings, she said. It will follow federal guidance requiring masks in airports, public transit, and health care settings.

Because the same mask and social distancing rules will apply to vaccinated and unvaccinated people, employers and businesses no longer will have to verify people's vaccination status to allow them to go maskless.

The Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Administration will update workplace rules to reflect the lifting of the county-based risk system.

State health officials are recommending that unvaccinated residents continue to wear masks and distance. Infection and death rates remain high among unvaccinated people. For example, at St. Charles Hospital in Bend, only 18 of the 346 COVID-19 patients hospitalized since March 1 were vaccinated, Dr. Louis D'Avignon, a staff physician there said. Of the 98 deaths in the hospital system, only one was vaccinated.

"For those of you who are vaccinated, you've helped us reach this point, and you are protected from this virus," Brown said.

A $4,749 bike hints at inflation peril looming for U.S. economy

Customers crowding into U.S. bike shops are often walking out empty-handed — or if they're lucky, with a bike whose price has repeatedly gone up since last year.

Looking for a Santa Cruz Hightower C R, a full-suspension carbon mountain bike? It'll cost $4,749, up 10% from earlier this year. But with stocks depleted, buyers probably will be told to wait for the next model, due out this summer, at a higher price.

A hobby that's enjoying a new wave of popularity illustrates the inflationary pressures rippling through the wider U.S. economy — and bringing political risks for President Joe Biden — amid supply bottlenecks and worldwide surges in demand.

Like their peers in many other industries, bike companies are passing along higher costs driven by rising raw-material prices, strained factories and overloaded delivery chains. They've been able to do that without damping customer demand. And executives foresee more price increases, with supply expected to remain tight and demand elevated through at least next year.

"The only way things would go down is if there's a glut of supply," said Joe Graney, chief executive officer of California-based Santa Cruz Bicycles. "That doesn't seem like it's going to be an issue." Prices for all kinds of products, from lumber to diapers, have been climbing this year. The headline measure of consumer prices rose 4.2% in the 12 months through April, the most since 2008. The numbers for May are due to be published on Thursday.

'Double Whammy'

The Biden administration and the Fed say inflation will likely ease later this year. In the bike industry, though, many expect increases to last longer than that. If that turns out to be the case more broadly for prices across the economy, it could trigger voter discontent as Biden's Democrats prepare to defend their narrow control of the House and Senate in next year's midterm elections. Republicans blame Biden's stimulus spending for stirring up inflation.

Americans went on a bike-buying binge at the start of the Covid-19 lockdown, to get exercise, avoid public transportation or entertain kids stuck at home. Now, savings during lockdown — when many people canceled vacations and avoided eating out — as well as Covid-19 relief checks are propping up demand, according to retailers and bike companies.

They cite other factors too. Some of today's customers want to ride with friends who purchased bikes during the pandemic. And cities are becoming more bike-friendly: Many localities that closed off streets and added bike lanes during the pandemic have kept those changes in place.

The resulting demand is showing up everywhere from big-box retailers like Walmart Inc. — where many lower-range models are sold — to specialized stores.

Bicycle sales are up 77% in the year through March to $6.7 billion, according to research firm NPD Group, while the average amount paid for a bike rose 27% — partly due to price hikes and partly because depleted stocks pushed customers to choose more expensive models.

"We've got another surge coming in," said David Conte, chief operating officer of Conte's Bike Shop, which has 15 stores from Washington, D.C., to Florida. "We're almost getting a double whammy here. We can't meet demand."

Conte said he's been receiving less than half of the bikes he ordered. Even so, he's in a better position than many smaller retailers whose racks are empty.

The supply problems faced by bike companies have pre-pandemic roots.

Toward the end of 2019, major brands held off placing orders from China, where most bikes and parts are made, to await an exemption on 25% tariffs imposed by the Trump administration, said Jay Townley, a former bike company executive who now works at consultancy Human Powered Solutions.

The exemption came through and bike companies placed their orders in early 2020 when Chinese factories were closed for Lunar New Year, he said. But then Covid-19 hit, and the factories remained shuttered.

Now they're running full tilt and reluctant to expand capacity, likely because of concern over how long increased demand will last, Townley said.

Meanwhile the tariff exemption for bikes has expired, and there's no indication it'll be renewed. And the price for shipping a container from China to the U.S. West Coast has been hovering near record highs for several months. Many of these added expenses are set to remain, with high shipping prices getting sealed into contracts for the next year.

With an economic potential of $11 trillion, internet of things is here to revolutionize global economy

In 2019 IoT industry was projected to have an economic impact of 11 trillion dollars by the year 2025. A report published by Statista Research Department in 2016 projected that by 2025, 75 billion IoT devices would reach potential consumers worldwide.

In only two years from now (by 2023), global spending on IoT will reach 1.1 trilion U.S. dollars.

The advent of the fifth-generation internet (in some cases, sixth-generation networks) will be a game-changer for future global economies.

The infrastructure needed for this economic transformation is no longer road and railway dependent, as it used to be the case during the second industrial revolution of the early 20th century.

Instead, we need infrastructure that entails updated and advanced hardware, software, powerful semiconductors, digital storage clouds, and most importantly, a more robust political push in making the IoT a success to reap the benefit of this economic revolution.

Industries that are rapidly adopting IoT include the healthcare, manufacturing, and agriculture sectors, to name a few. Even everyday households are seeing an increasing demand for IoT devices.

With more and more adoption of IoT-based technologies in our everyday lives, manufacturing and service sectors will be sitting upon insurmountable data, which will need intelligent archiving and innovative retrieval mechanisms with a little-to-no time lag.

Just like several other industrial sectors, IoT is already being used for smart homes.

Internet-connected gadgets and devices in our homes— such as doorbell cameras, smart thermostats, voice assistants, and the ability of these gadgets to communicate among themselves in making our everyday home experience more rewarding and relaxing—are already in high demand among almost every household.

The COVD-19 pandemic has already acted as a catalyst to speed up the adoption of IoT at the workplace. While governments were advising and requiring their human workforce to stay at home to minimize the spread of the virus, employers were aggressively looking for alternative technologies to get the job done. Smart devices offered a solution in these challenging times.

Online shoppers are no longer satisfied with just ordering a product in the post-pandemic world, but they are now engaged in "smart shopping."

Amazon's Growing Power In The U.S. Economy

This smart shopping lets them try their favorite sunshades and apparel virtually before they hit the checkout button on their smart screens.

Also, virtual carts on these shopping platforms, such as amazon.com and Walmart, continue to remind their customers when it is time to replenish their supplies.

The demand for IoT is also skyrocketing among small-scale businesses. IoT industry will soon convert traditional workspaces into smart workplaces, which will help small scale investors to save money and enhance productivity.

The education sector is another example of such a change. With the advent of new communication technologies, we have witnessed that academic institutions are quickly transitioning towards "smart education."

Not only video chatting platforms, but thanks to wearable smart devices such as Microsoft's HoloLens and Facebook's Oculus Quest, students and professors find themselves well equipped in a distant learning environment.

It is only a matter of time when such wearable gadgets will become part and parcel of pedagogy among academics.

These virtual interactions among human beings and between humans and machines require efficient and reliable IoT-enabled devices. IoT connects not only devices and machines, but in fact, it connects things and people in a massive network of digital communication.forbes