

BUSINESS

Qatar Airways bullish on China market

Carrier set to offer global connectivity to Chinese fliers with transit points in the Middle East

By ZHU WENQIAN

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Qatar Airways said China's impressive COVID-19 control measures have given it the confidence to increase services between the two countries.

The Doha-based airline said it will further expand its operations in China by increasing flight frequencies and the number of destinations, if local policies and the industry environment permit.

The carrier said it is gradually resuming its flights globally. Nearly 80 percent of its flights have resumed, which is faster than many other large-scale carriers, despite the fact that the global air travel market is still reeling from the COVID-19 impact.

On Dec 22, Qatar Airways resumed passenger service between Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, and Doha. The weekly flight will use a Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

Qatar Airways is now the sole carrier of passengers from Hangzhou to Doha. The return flight from Doha to Hangzhou will have no passengers but only cargo. In July, the carrier resumed weekly flights between Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Doha.

"The flights from Hangzhou will join existing services from Guangzhou to Doha, as well as flights from Hong Kong with connections through our airline partners for passengers from Beijing and Shanghai. We look forward to providing Chinese business and leisure customers with better global connectivity," said Thomas Scruby, vice-president of sales for Australia and North Asia at Qatar Airways.

Despite the challenges brought by



A Qatar Airways flight lands at Guangzhou Baiyun International Airport in Guangdong province. LI TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

2.8 million

number of passengers that have taken Qatar Airways' flights this year

the pandemic this year, Qatar's national flag carrier has flown more than 2.8 million passengers on 47,000 flights.

Lin Tangyi, a Chinese flight attendant based in Doha, who has worked for Qatar Airways for three years, said it has become common for her to report for duty in protective clothing, masks and goggles.

Lin said: "Compared with many other airlines that stopped operating international flights during the outbreak, we are still operating a

large number of international long-haul flights. With the recent re-emergence of the contagion, we mostly stayed in hotels at foreign destinations, and tried not to go out.

"Now, there are almost no travel groups on flights. Most passengers are students who study abroad and people who take business trips. The cabin is quieter than usual. Passengers usually read or watch movies, and they seldom communicate with others.

"Passengers have also shown higher requirements for cabin cleaning and they prefer to eat food in independent sealed packages."

In late 2018, Qatar Airways acquired a 5 percent stake in China Southern Airlines. Starting from Dec 27, Qatar Airways initiated first stage of code share cooperation with Chi-

na Southern for its flights between Guangzhou and Doha.

Next, China Southern will also place its code on Qatar Airways flights between Beijing and Doha, once current pandemic-related restrictions are lifted.

Wu Guoxiang, senior vice-president of corporate and international relations at China Southern Airlines, said: "We have great expectations for the partnership between Qatar Airways and China Southern. This year, the global airline industry has faced unprecedented challenges and we look forward to an early recovery.

"We believe the bilateral cooperation will be an important element in the process of industry recovery and greatly promote air connectivity among countries and regions."

The year of 2020 marks the 17th year since Qatar Airways started operations in China. With the upcoming 2022 soccer World Cup to be held in Qatar, the airline said it hopes to serve more Chinese passengers in the future.

"Serving as air travel hubs, cities in the Middle East have their locational advantages. They are located in the middle of Europe and Asia, and have become ideal transit points for those who travel between the two continents," said Lin Zhijie, an aviation industry analyst and a columnist at Carnoc, a prominent civil aviation website in China.

"The local governments of the Middle East also highly regard the development of those cities in the region as international aviation hubs," he said.

Guizhou nurses big data ambitions

By CHENG YU in Beijing and YANG JUN in Guiyang

Southwest China's Guizhou province is intensifying its big data industry drive through the establishment of a new tech company based on Huawei's core Kunpeng processor.

The new company, Guizhou Yunshang Kunpeng Technology Co Ltd, will manufacture hardware based on Kunpeng technologies.

"Production capacity over the next few years of the new company will hit 1 million units, which will drive industrial output of several hundred billion yuan," said Li Xinyu, chairman of TalkWeb, Huawei's smart hardware producer.

Li told China Daily that the first batch of servers is expected to roll off the assembly line in March.

Industry insiders said the new firm is significant for Guizhou, not only due to the production of Kunpeng hardware, but also because it will form an ecosystem related to Kunpeng industries spanning infrastructure to applications.

“Developing Kunpeng's industrial ecosystem is the biggest new opportunity and the best vision for Guizhou to develop big data.”

Ma Ningyu, head of Guizhou's big data bureau

"Developing Kunpeng's industrial ecosystem is the biggest new opportunity and the best vision for Guizhou to develop big data. It will be a key platform for Guizhou to boost its technological prowess," said Ma Ningyu, head of the province's big data bureau.

Guizhou aims to build itself into one of the largest big data clusters globally over the next few years and spur a new wave of growth in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Guian New Area, a national-level new urban area in Guizhou, plans to create a hub of 12 mega data centers and 4 million servers with a fixed-asset investment of over 40 billion yuan (\$5.6 billion) by 2025.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic comes under better control in the country, Guiyang and Guian New Area will continue to leverage the digital economy to offer important engines for the upgrade and transformation of traditional industries," said Zhang Jibing, deputy director of the Guian New Area Administrative Committee.

"Guiyang and Guian New Area have unique advantages and conditions for the development of big data and have attracted many large and super large data centers to settle here. More efforts will be made to create a better environment for the development of big data in the future," Zhang said.

Nestled in a mountainous region, Guiyang and the Guian New Area provide major engines of growth for the region. The region has been transformed in the past few years into an innovation hub as major global companies such as Apple, Huawei and Alibaba Group have arrived in the area.

Last year, over 100 big data projects worth some 21.6 billion yuan were introduced to Guiyang, capital of Guizhou. The city's software and information technology revenue exceeded 16 billion yuan, which saw an increase of 14.3 percent year-on-year.

Zhao Yandi contributed to this story.

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Impetus to opening-up attracts offshore traders to futures sector in mainland

BEIJING — China's drive to open its futures markets to the outside world has gathered pace with an ultimate goal to serve the real economy amid the country's efforts to seek high-quality development.

China currently has seven kinds of commodity futures and options open to direct participation by international investors, after overseas investors were allowed to participate in the futures trading of a type of palm oil on Dec 22.

This came right after China launched the listing and trading of

bonded copper futures contracts on Nov 19, which are open to global traders.

The China Securities Regulatory Commission, the country's top securities regulator, said on Friday it will further expand the scope of specific futures varieties, enhance the participation of overseas traders and support overseas financial institutions in controlling or holding a stake in domestic futures firms.

The futures market can sharpen its competitive edge amid the internationalization while attracting

more global investors, CSRC Vice-Chairman Fang Xinghai said at a news conference on Dec 19.

The opening-up of the sector can boost China's pricing power in key commodities markets, said Luo Xufeng, chairman of Nanhua Futures Co Ltd.

China has fast-tracked the opening-up of the futures market this year, with new rules making it easier for international investors to trade in China's markets.

The country removed foreign ownership limits for foreign-invested securities companies, fund man-

agement firms and futures companies at the beginning of this year.

The top securities regulator in June granted approval allowing J.P. Morgan Futures Co Ltd to become the country's first wholly foreign-owned futures trading firm.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the launch of China's futures market, which has developed quickly in recent years.

At the end of November, funds in China's futures market had exceeded 855.95 billion yuan (\$130.48 billion), up 55.2 percent year-on-year, CSRC data showed.

Meanwhile, the turnover in China's futures market reached 382.5 trillion yuan from January to November, up 45.5 percent year-on-year, according to CSRC data.

The commodity futures available

to international investors, like crude oil and iron ore futures, have been operating smoothly.

In Shanghai, the transshipment business of crude oil based on Shanghai crude oil futures price has expanded to the South Korea, Singapore and other regions.

The iron ore futures trading on the Dalian Commodity Exchange has attracted about 270 overseas investors from 21 countries and regions.

Though China's futures market has made remarkable progress, it still needs to improve market mechanisms, products, rules and infrastructure, while boosting its pricing power on key commodities to better serve the high-quality development of the economy, Fang said.

XINHUA

Procter & Gamble shows it's a 'force for good' and 'force for growth'

By OWEN FISHWICK

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The unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19 to both life and business in 2020 have helped demonstrate the importance of social responsibility on both personal and corporate levels in times of hardship.

Procter & Gamble, a consumer goods multinational, has seen in the pandemic scenario an opportunity to demonstrate the importance of its global citizenship.

Heading into 2020, P&G already had a series of impressive citizenship campaigns covering environmental sustainability, equality and inclusion and community impact, featuring programs aimed at helping China's underprivileged and less well-off in rural areas and more.

And then the pandemic hit Wuhan, Hubei province. As a large multinational with a connection to extensive supply chains, and with many consumer brands, P&G was able to quickly step up and help those in urgent need.

"There's no question that this has been an unimaginable year," said Marc Pritchard, chief brand officer at P&G, in a recent interview with China Daily. "What we've been doing is responding to consumers, because

our consumers who we serve look up to brands and companies to step up and be a force for good and a force for growth."

The Chinese market has recovered quickly for the consumer product company, whose fiscal year runs from July to June.

On Oct 20, P&G reported financial results of the first quarter (July-September) of its fiscal year 2021. It noted that its net sales globally have reached \$19.3 billion, an increase of 9 percent year-on-year.

In the same quarter, the beauty segment sales increased 7 percent compared with a year ago, skin and personal care sales grew in high-single digits, driven by innovation-led growth in North America and China.

Its high-end skin care product SK-II grew over 20 percent with strong domestic consumption trends in China.

David Taylor, chairman, president and chief executive officer of P&G, said in the previous fiscal (2020) annual report: "We delivered strong, balanced sales and profit results in



Marc Pritchard, chief brand officer at P&G



A visitor checks out P&G products at the company's booth during an exhibition in Shanghai in November. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

fiscal 2020, both pre-COVID and through the balance of the year, meeting or exceeding each of our going-in targets, demonstrating the commitment and agility of P&G people and the robustness of our strategy."

The fast-moving consumer goods market in China has seen recovery in the second half of this year. According to Kantar Worldpanel, a market research firm, the total spending on FMCG grew by 4.1 percent in the three-month period to Sept 11, compared to the

same period last year.

Stronger growth in lower-tier cities and e-commerce channels remained the key driver. The non-food segment continued to be the growth engine, with home-care products reporting strong growth of 7.1 percent in sales value.

P&G and its brands have contributed to the market rebound starting from cash donations and products distributed to those battling the pandemic.

As of March 8, more than a month

after the outbreak was detected and the city of Wuhan locked down, P&G and its brands had provided 19.47 million yuan (\$2.98 million) in cash and product donations to those working on the front lines.

"The efforts we have made in China have been extraordinary. Our China team stepped up during the COVID-19 pandemic, supplied products to people in China who really needed our health, hygiene and cleaning products more than ever," Pritchard said.

The donations included Safe-guard antibacterial hand sanitizer and Ariel liquid detergent, which were delivered through P&G's distribution centers in Tianjin, Taicang and Guangzhou to hospitals, community clinics, fire stations as well as the newly built temporary hospitals in Hubei province.

P&G is committed to carry out 2,021 acts of good in 2021, as it further cements its reputation as an outstanding global corporate citizen.

"If there's anything we need after experiencing this past year, it would be more acts of good and more love," Pritchard said. "We are determined to make 2021 a year where we all come together to do more for our communities, equality and the planet," Pritchard said.