

## Pakistan suspends Serene air's license

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) has suspended the license of private carrier Serene Air due to a persistent shortage of aircraft and frequent flight cancellations, the regulator said.

The PCAA said the action aligns with the country's aviation policy and aims to ensure compliance with operational standards.

The Air Operator Certificate (AOC) of Serene Air was withdrawn after all five aircraft in the airline fleet were deemed "unserviceable," prompting a wave of cancellations affecting both domestic and international passengers, according to the PCAA.

Launched in 2017, the airline aspired to "modernize" Pakistan's commercial aviation but struggled with mounting operational setbacks, including frequent flight cancellations in recent years.

"Out of the airline's total fleet of five aircraft, none are currently

available for flight operations,” the PCAA said in a statement.

“Even if a single aircraft becomes serviceable, as claimed by the airline, operations cannot be permitted as this would constitute a clear violation of the National Aviation Policy (NAP) 2023.”

Serene Air has yet to issue a statement in response to the development.

Irshad Ghani, who heads an aviation consultancy firm, said the closure reflects deep-rooted financial fragility in Pakistan’s aviation industry.

“Twelve airlines have shut down since the sector’s inception [in 1947],” Ghani said. “Aviation is capital-intensive, and when losses mount, investors often prefer to exit quickly rather than absorb further costs.”

Ghani said the collapse of Serene Air leaves behind only four active carriers, the state-run Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Airblue, Fly Jinnah and Sial Air, to serve the domestic market.

“Until yesterday, the number was five,” he noted. “The market itself is not that large and rising airfares are pushing many families to opt for road travel instead.”

To resume operations, Serene Air would require at least three aircraft and re-apply for the license and meet all regulatory benchmarks.

Pakistan’s aviation sector has long faced turbulence, plagued by weak regulatory oversight, underinvestment and a loss of international trust, particularly after a 2020 pilot license scandal that led to ban on the Pakistani flag carrier in the US, UK and European Union (EU). While the EU and the UK have lifted the restriction, the debt-ridden airline remains barred from flying to the US.

Past casualties included Shaheen Air International, Air Indus and Bhoja Air, all of which were grounded over financial or safety concerns. PIA remains the dominant domestic operator but continues to operate under massive debt and unresolved privatization.

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