

Philippines Airlines announces new pilot recruitment plans

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Manila: Philippine carriers are preparing for a substantial workforce expansion to align with their ambitious growth plans. Among the carriers that announced a fresh recruitment drive for flight, cabin and ground crew include Philippine Airlines (PAL), Cebu Pacific and AirAsia Philippines.

Philippine Airlines, which currently operates 72 aircraft, stated in August that it was hiring 300 cabin crew amid fleet expansion. The flag-carrier, based in Manila, had 5,920 employees as of December

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PAL pilot Axyl Sia, who has been flying the Boeing 777-300 ER for more than five years. The airline swung to an operating profit of \$298 million in 2022, marking a sharp improvement from 2021, when it reported an

operating loss of \$98.1 million. Revenues for 2022 doubled to \$2.6 billion year on year.

In the first half of 2023, PAL reported a record net income of \$250 million (13.6 billion pesos) and operating income of \$314 million (17.4 billion pesos). The company has announced it will deepen its investments in fleet expansion. PAL aircraft seen parked on tarmac in Manila International Airport in Pasay City.

Cebu Pacific, the Philippines' largest low-cost airline, has also announced a fresh recruitment drive. The airline announced on Wednesday that it is looking to hire 1,500 new pilots to fly new aircraft. This manpower boost comes in anticipation of an unprecedented \$12-billion purchase of new planes in anticipation of a boost in travel over the next decade.

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In outlining aggressive hiring plans, Cebu Pacific announced it has earmarked \$650 million on new aircraft this 2023, ahead of a record aircraft order book announced Tuesday. The airline has also requested for proposal from domestic schools to hire pilots for its near-term fleet requirements. It is projected to operate 76 aircraft, including six new plane deliveries, before end-2023. The airline currently employs more than 4,000 employees — including about 900 pilots.

irAsia Philippines said in March that it already hired 260 new pilots, cabin, ground, and technical crew in the first two months of 2023. Carlo Carongoy, a company spokesperson, said they plan to hire more this year, without giving exact figures. AirAsia's Tony Fernandes poses with the airline's ground crew.

The increase in manpower in Q4 2023 would be on top of the projected 600 new staff who would join AirAsia in 2024. Currently, the airline employs 775 flight crew, 482 ground staff and 200 engineers. A general view of the Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), showing part of Terminal 3 on the right.

Image Credit: Gulf News | Jay Hilotin

On October 9, AirAsia Philippines announced it was hiring more staff to augment the projected growth in domestic and international travel in

2024. The airline said it was in the final round of recruiting cabin crew, guest service assistant and ramp agents. Capital A CEO Tony Fernandes with aircraft engineers from AirAsia Philippines at NAIA Terminal 4. Photo shows Capital A CEO Tony Fernandes with aircraft engineers from AirAsia Philippines at NAIA Terminal 4.

CEO Tony Fernandes has also announced in June the establishment in the Philippines of Asia Digital Engineering (ADE), an engineering firm affiliated with Capital A, the investment holding company behind Air Asia, based in Kuala Lumpur. That is in addition to Lufthansa Technik's existing presence. ADE specialises in offering comprehensive maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) services for the group's commercial aircraft.

Boeing projected that airlines will need 637,000 new pilots over the next two decades — till 2036 — to keep pace with the growth of global air traffic. The aviation industry is projected to be more than 2 million new commercial airline pilots, maintenance technicians, and cabin crew. Airlines in the Asia-Pacific region alone will need 253,000 new pilots, a third of the total, according to the Boeing report. Photo shows Filipina pilot Chezka Carandang, of Cebu Pacific.

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