

PIA launches new Airbus A320 simulator

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 25 April, 2022



Dhaka: Pakistan International Airlines has launched a new state-of-the-art Airbus A320 simulator - first of its kind in the region - at the PIA training Centre in Karachi.

With 15 A320s currently in its fleet, and four more on order, the airline has around 670 A320 pilots that previously had to travel overseas for simulator training.

Having its own facility will bring significant cost savings for the airline, as overseas simulator fees can be as high as USD 500 per hour.

PIA will also be able to rent its facilities to other airlines in the region that operate the A320, such as Airblue and AirSial.

In addition to the pandemic, PIA has faced a series of challenges in recent years.

PIA's safety and training procedures were thrown into the spotlight following

the crash of flight 8303 on May 22, 2020, killing all but two of the 99 people onboard, and one on the ground. The flight was travelling from Lahore to Karachi.

Following the crash, 150 PIA pilots were grounded on June 25, 2020, on suspicion of holding “bogus or suspicious licenses.” The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) subsequently banned the airline from operating in the EU on June 30, 2020, and in the UK the following day. On July 9, PIA was also banned from the US.

Nevertheless, things could be starting to look up for PIA following a turbulent few years. The airline’s proposed five-year business plan and restructuring sees a return to profitability in 2024.

Following a recent audit, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) removed its Serious Safety Concern (SSC) about the airline’s pilot licenses. This is an important step in the ban on flying to the EU, UK, and US being lifted.

PIA’s new A320 simulator is also another way of demonstrating to the international community that the airline takes safety and training seriously.

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