

## UK lifts 5-year ban on Pakistani airlines

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 19 July, 2025



Dhaka: The United Kingdom has lifted a five-year ban on Pakistani airlines, including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), allowing them to apply to resume flights to and from British airports, the British High Commission in Islamabad announced on July 16.

The ban, imposed in 2020 after a deadly Karachi crash and revelations of fake pilot licenses, restricted PIA's access to UK and European airspace. The UK Air Safety Committee lifted the ban following significant improvements in Pakistan's aviation safety oversight.

"The decision was made through an independent aviation safety process," the High Commission said.

This move follows the European Union Aviation Safety Agency's earlier lifting of a four-year ban on PIA, enabling it to resume flights to Europe in January.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif called the ban's removal "an important milestone," while Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif linked the ban to mismanagement by a former aviation minister and expressed plans to restart flights to New York.

PIA, Pakistan's struggling national carrier with 7,000 employees, has long faced financial and safety challenges. The airline estimates an annual revenue loss of \$144 million due to the ban, with UK routes among its most profitable.

Pakistan is accelerating efforts to privatise PIA, with four groups approved to bid for a majority stake this year. Recent reforms have brought the airline its first operating profit in 21 years, boosting hopes of a successful sale.

This month, Pakistan approved four groups to bid for a 51 to 100 percent stake in PIA. Final bids are expected later this year.

PIA was established in 1955 when the government nationalised a loss-making commercial airline. It enjoyed rapid growth until the 1990s.

-B