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## UK Removes Ban on Pakistani Airlines, Resuming Flights After Five Years

July 18, 2025

– Categories: General News



Pakistan welcomed the recent decision by the UK Air Safety Committee to remove Pakistani airlines from the UK Air Safety List (UK ASL), enabling the resumption of commercial flights to the United Kingdom after a five-year suspension. This decision marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's efforts to meet international aviation safety standards and restore vital air connectivity between the two countries.

The UK Air Safety List is maintained by the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and it includes airlines that are deemed unsafe to operate within UK airspace. Pakistani carriers had been banned due to concerns over safety oversight and regulatory compliance, which had halted direct commercial flights between Pakistan and the UK since 2018. The ban not only

disrupted travel but also affected trade, business, and the movement of the large Pakistani diaspora residing in the UK.

Foreign Office (FO) spokesperson Shafqat Ali Khan described the lifting of the ban as a “landmark decision,” emphasizing that it reflects Pakistan’s persistent diplomatic engagement and technical efforts to meet global aviation standards. “We have demonstrated our firm commitment to meeting and upholding the highest international safety standards,” Khan stated. His remarks highlight Pakistan’s dedication to improving its aviation sector, which has historically faced challenges related to safety oversight and infrastructure.

The UK Air Safety Committee’s decision follows comprehensive assessments and audits of Pakistan’s Civil Aviation Authority (CAA-Pakistan), regulatory frameworks, and the safety practices of Pakistani airlines. The removal from the UK ASL indicates that Pakistan has addressed the deficiencies that initially led to the ban, including improvements in pilot training, aircraft maintenance, and regulatory oversight. This accomplishment is not just a win for Pakistan’s aviation industry but also signals an enhanced capacity to comply with international norms.

For Pakistani airlines like Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and private carriers, the resumption of flights to the UK is a major opportunity. It is expected to boost airline revenues, create jobs, and improve the availability of direct flights for passengers traveling for business, family, or tourism. The Pakistani diaspora in the UK, which numbers in the millions, will benefit from restored direct air links, simplifying travel and reducing costs.

However, the decision should be viewed as a milestone rather than an endpoint. Continuous oversight and a commitment to maintaining safety standards remain essential to prevent any future setbacks. Aviation safety is a dynamic field, and regulatory bodies must ensure ongoing compliance with evolving international standards.

It is also important to note that while this is a positive development for Pakistan’s aviation sector, it does not imply any shift in the current government’s broader immigration or political stance. The decision strictly concerns technical and safety compliance within the aviation industry.

In conclusion, the UK’s removal of Pakistani airlines from the Air Safety List is a clear indication of progress in Pakistan’s aviation safety framework. This will have a positive

impact on economic ties and people-to-people connections between Pakistan and the UK. Yet, sustaining these gains will require continued vigilance, transparent oversight, and commitment to global standards. The restoration of commercial flights after five years offers hope for stronger, safer, and more reliable air travel between the two countries moving forward.