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## PIA Initiates Cadet Pilot Program to Tackle Crew Shortage

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Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) launched a cadet pilot training program on July 28, 2025, to address a critical shortage of cockpit crew, aiming to bolster operational efficiency and support its ongoing privatization efforts. The initiative seeks to train young aviators to meet the airline's growing demands amid resumed international flights.

The program, announced via PIA's official channels, targets candidates with a Commercial Pilot License (CPL) and Instrument Rating (IR), requiring at least 250 hours of flight time, as noted in a 2018 PIA recruitment document. The 10-week training course, designed to

prepare cadets for roles as first officers, comes as PIA grapples with a depleted workforce. A 2023 Express Tribune report highlighted the airline's struggle, with 1,199 separations in flight operations since 2018 due to a Supreme Court ban on new hires, leaving PIA short of 80 pilots. "This program is a lifeline for our operations," a PIA spokesperson told Samaa TV, emphasizing the need for skilled pilots to maintain flight schedules.

PIA's crew shortage has led to operational woes, with 29 flight cancellations in December 2022 alone, costing revenue and reputation. The airline's recent financial turnaround, achieving a 12% operating margin after restructuring Rs 671 billion in debt, has spurred efforts to strengthen its workforce. The cadet program aligns with PIA's broader strategy to resume flights to Europe, following the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) lifting its four-year ban in November 2024. Candidates will undergo rigorous computer-based testing, needing a 70% score to advance, ensuring only qualified individuals join the ranks.

The initiative also reflects PIA's push for self-reliance amid privatization talks, with the government aiming to sell the airline by December 2025. By investing in homegrown talent, PIA aims to reduce dependency on foreign pilots and address past scandals, like the 2020 fake license controversy that grounded 262 pilots. As Pakistan's flag carrier navigates economic reforms tied to a \$7 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) program, this program signals a commitment to operational excellence and national pride.