

## After Palpa, SAEP flexing muscles to take on PIA management

By KHURRUM ANIS

**KARACHI:** After a face-off with the pilots association, the PIA management is likely to confront another association, the Society of Aircraft Engineers of Pakistan (SAEP), which has accused the management of ignoring the grievances of its members.

SAEP sources have said the members are again preparing for a no-cooperation drive after PIA failed to honour a commitment to redressing demands for better salaries. SAEP members went on their own version of go-by-book in July, when they refused to cooperate with the management to press for their demands for pay

raise and reversal of the management's decision to outsource the Engineering Department.

The matter was resolved, when Defence Minister Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar, who is also chairman of the PIA board, intervened and announced a better pay structures for numerous PIA associations.

But SAEP sources said two months have passed since the announcement of the defence minister but no concrete measure has been taken by the management. "It is mid-September now and nothing has come out of his promise. We had met PIA MD Capt Aijaz Haroon this Friday and he had nothing to offer expect for promising another meeting on Monday," a SAEP

member said on condition of anonymity.

SAEP members are also unhappy over the MD's statement at a recent Iftar that working agreements with all the associations, except Palpa, had been settled. "We have a MoU with the MD on the salaries of our members but even that has hit snags. No working agreement was signed between the management and our association," the source said.

The executive body of SAEP is expected to meet this week to decide about its further course of action. "If the MD fails to honour his promises, we will have no choice but to join our friends in Palpa and refuse to cooperate with the management," another source said.

## Improving PIA's performance

By Sheikh Mohammad Iqbal

IN the recent past, none of the PIA chairmen had any aviation experience or a vision to manage the affairs of the airline on commercially viable basis. Incorrect policies and wrong decisions have brought the national airline on the verge of a total collapse with accumulated losses of Rs81 billion by end of the year 2008. The total liabilities of the airline amount to over Rs140 billion.

The vision about any airline should be to achieve world class standard through excellent services, on-time performance, innovative products, competitive air fares, reduced charges on extra baggage and cost-effective measures in procurement and operations. Unfortunately, these elements are grossly neglected in running the PIA.

In an airline industry, fuel is a major element of operating expenses. In PIA, the fuel cost has always constituted at least 40 per cent or more of the operating expenses whereas an aviation expert can bring such expenses down to between 32—35 per cent by devising fuel efficiencies, capacity/route rationalisation, deployment of suitable aircraft for routes and passenger- load including hedging of fuel cost at an appropriate time.

PIA has suffered inefficiency because of employing a top heavy management. Similarly, the airline has been operating with aircraft from three different manufacturers. Another major reason for its heavy losses has been the large-scale procurement of spare parts for these three types of aircraft lying unutilised in stores.

Other problems of PIA are as under:

(a) operating large aircraft like Boeing 777 on short routes; (b) uneven distribution of passenger and cargo on different aircraft resulting in excessive fuel consumption; (c) employment of unqualified and inexperienced individuals in sales, marketing and operation departments; (d) employment of individuals on contract basis on gross salaries, much higher than offered to regular staff. (See Table); (e) millions of dollars are held up due to non-submission of warranty claims with the manufacturers.

The national aviation policy needs to be reviewed to help the PIA perform better and the Open Sky policy needs to be revised.

To improve productivity and profitability of the PIA, the salary gap between different categories of employees be minimised; strict monitoring of procurement of equipment and tender cost before issuing purchase orders; the fleet should be replaced keeping in view the operational cost, especially of fuel and maintenance; taxes and duty on spare parts and equipment be negotiated with the government for cutting down costs of operations of the airline.

Designation	Monthly gross salaries (apox) of regular employees	Monthly gross salary (apox) of Contractual employees
Deputy Managing Director	PKR 150,000/=	PKR 900,000/=
Senior Vice-President	PKR 125,000/=	PKR 500,000/=
General Manager (PG-X)	PKR 85,000/=	PKR 325,000/=
Dy.General Manager (PG-IX)	PKR 65,000/=	PKR 150,000/=
Manager (PG-VIII)	PKR 45,000/=	PKR 85,000/=
Asst. Manager (PG-VII)	PKR 35,000/=	PKR 65,000/=
Officers (PG-V)	PKR 25,000/=	PKR 35,000/=

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# Cut in PIA flights to Chitral criticised

By Zar Alam Khan

ISLAMABAD, Sept 13: Member National Assembly (MNA) from Chitral Shahzada Mohiuddin has criticised Pakistan International Airline (PIA) for reducing the number of flights on the Chitral route in complete disregard to the communication problems of the district.

Talking to this correspondent here on Sunday, he said the national flag carrier had recently diverted one of Chitral's flights from Peshawar to Kabul besides giving another on Islamabad-Chitral route to Gilgit-

Baltistan.

He said people of Chitral faced immense problems due to the closure of the only land route via the Lowari Pass in winter. This year, due to the military operation in the Malakand division, the valley remained cut-off from rest of the country even in summer. In this situation, the PIA flights become the only way of communication for the people of the area, he added.

Earlier the PIA operated 11 flights a week from Peshawar and daily one

flight from Islamabad but now the number of flights from Peshawar has been reduced to six while Sunday's flight from Islamabad has been diverted to Gilgit-Skardu route. Besides, the only one flight on Saturday from Peshawar has been shifted to Peshawar-Kabul route. On the other hand, most of the flights from Peshawar are cancelled on the pretext of inclement weather leading to rush of passengers including women and elderly people at Peshawar, Islamabad and Chitral who cannot travel by road

through the Malakand division due to security concerns particularly after four Chitrali passengers were shot dead by Taliban militants in the Bajaur area in July this year.

The MNA said instead of taking political decision on allocation of PIA aircraft for commercial flights, the authorities concerned should take into account the communication problems of Chitral which remains cut off from rest of the country most of the year due to absence of an all-weather route. He said the

people of his area had rendered sacrifices for maintenance of peace not only in their own district but also in other parts of the NWFP. In return, they should not be punished by snatching whatever facilities they have been availing for the last many years, he added.

Mr Mohiuddin also called upon the Managing Director of PIA Capt Ejaz Haroon to consider Chitral as a special case and increase the number of flights on the route at least till the completion of the Lowari Tunnel.