

800 candidates appear in test for PIA jobs

OUR STAFF REPORTER

QUETTA - 800 candidates participated in written test for the different posts in PIA here on Sunday.

Pakistan International Airline sources told The Nation that 800 candidates including 60 women participated in the test that held here for the different posts. The sources said that it was the first time that PIA was conducting written test in such a big scale in Balochistan.

"It is expected that more than 150 people of Balochistan will get jobs in PIA in accordance with its quota in federal jobs", they added. Tight security arrangements were made during the test.

It may be mentioned that Balochistan Assembly had passed a resolution demanding to ensure quota of province in PIA employments

Hiring PIA pilots for inspection duty ICAO audit may downgrade CAA ranking

IQBAL MIRZA

KARACHI: The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) is likely to downgrade the international ranking of Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) after its next audit due in February 2010 for continuing with the practice of hiring PIA pilots in its safety/standard inspectorate. This practice was termed as security concern by ICAO in its audit report of 2000, according to aviation sources here.

ICAO conducts audit of its member organisations every six years. Even after objections raised in the 2000 audit report, the CAA still has five PIA pilots on contract in its flight standard department. Hiring of PIA pilots was considered as "conflict of interests" in the ICAO 2000 audit report because PIA pilots not only draw salary from the airline, which is adjusted in PIA's payment due to CAA against different charges and fees, they also enjoy 70 hours guaranteed flying allowance and \$1500 international flying allowance, which is given otherwise to management pilots for performing duties in PIA headquarters, when not flying. A foreign airline representative said: "CAA is compromising passengers' safety by continuing to acquire the services of PIA pilots on regulatory duties". A watchdog on passenger safety, CAA, despite audit objections in 2000 and 2004 is likely to be downgraded in ICAO's next audit.

In the follow-up audit conducted in 2004, objection was again raised against this practice, and CAA had officially agreed to rectify the objection by inducting permanent instructors, instead of PIA pilots, who could favour or penalise their fellow flying community on likes and dislikes basis. ICAO Universal Safety Oversight Audit Program (ICAO-USOAP) is designed to be conducted once every six years. It has been carried out in more than 100 countries so far in which Significant Safety Concerns (SSCs) in case of Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan were highlighted, while South Korea has been declared the best out of the 100 audits done so far.

ICAO has 199 member states and its general assembly meeting is held every three years. ICAO audit report has certain significance as it does not penalise but broadcasts to member states audit needs to make certain changes/improvement in order to have better safety system and have safer, efficient air travel and smooth operations.

In case of Pakistan, the audit report had pointed out SSC in CAA flight inspectorate having conflict of interests and had advised that CAA Pakistan should have permanent inspector/director in the flight standard inspectorate.

ICAO's advice is placed on the web site and it reflects upon the regulatory body of that state and operators under that particular regulatory body come under severe observation. Thereafter, the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) of United States and European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) are activated and come in for their own audit of the regulatory body resulting in ban on services of operators, as happened with A-310 fleet a few years back when it was banned to land at any destination in all the 27 European countries.

Needless to point out, Pakistan has a strong aviation sector with 42 airports, out of which 10 are international. As a result of new aviation infrastructure developments, three more international airports—at Gwadar, Islamabad and Sialkot—are coming up with the active participation of the private sector under the concept of liberalisation.

Sources said that nowhere in the world such practice is allowed where airline, which is to be regulated, is paying salaries to those who are supposed to regulate and check whether passenger safety aspects and procedures are being followed, or not, by the airline. This not only jeopardises the security but also creates an atmosphere where the inspectors are free to peralise, or favour, their community.

Interestingly, one of the PIA pilots, who serves CAA as well, violated the airline's and CAA's air safety rules by flying a long range flight—PK 790—from Toronto to Lahore on July 21, 2009 without a second backup captain on the aircraft. The flight safety rules make it mandatory for the airline to assign two sets of cockpit crew—two captains and two first officers—for long-range flights exceeding normal flight day time (8-10 hours). In this case, only one PIA captain, who is also CAA Director, took the flight with three first officers.

The example of another conflict of interests is free travel these pilots enjoy as their colleagues in PIA. In case of relaxation or negligence on airline's part, it is bound to be favoured by these pilots, who act as inspectors with CAA.

Experts believe that PIA administration should not permit its staff to perform dual function of regulator and pilot. It is against the interests of the airline that it helps create a situation where leniency in safety standards could be possible because of the conflict of interests of the regulator in his capacity as a member of flying crew. Either the CAA, or the PIA, should have initiated enquiry against the pilot for neglecting of his duty—both as regulator and captain of the aircraft. Another episode reflects how favourites and being favoured by the PIA management. Capt. Javed Saeed, CAA-PIA Inspector, travelled A-310 on general declaration (GD), (a prerogative of airline management used

for operational reasons for pilots travel), to Toronto from Lahore on Sept 29, 2009 by PK-789 and, coming back from Toronto to Islamabad and then Karachi he traveled PK-784 Oct 4/5, 2009.

Although the two operating Captains on PK-784 from Toronto to Islamabad did not accept Captain Javed Saeed on GD in the cockpit, he managed to travel on the same flight through the connivance of Toronto traffic staff on a revenue ticket. He did not have a passport as he travelled to Toronto in PIA pilot uniform posing to be operating crew.

On reaching Karachi, he was held up by immigration authorities as he did not have a passport, and entered Pakistan in an illegal manner. He was detained at Karachi airport for more than two hours and during this period managed to get his passport from his house. How he travelled without a passport to Toronto and back needs a thorough investigation. The incident proves the point that he was trying to get advantage of his dual job, i.e. CAA Inspector on deputation from PIA and at the same time designated as a Captain and operating PIA flights as pilot in command.

According to an experienced flier, the said pilot, who is a safety inspector for A-310, could not have officially flown on Boeing 777 on official business, i.e. inspection. He is understood to have submitted an apology to the immigration authorities.