

AIRLINES IN THE MIDDLE EAST LACK TRAINED PILOTS



In order to cope with the growth of aviation sector in Gulf, estimates have indicated that forty thousand pilots are needed. Globally, close to five hundred thousand pilots are needed. Gulf airlines are facing shortage of pilots and this could be attributed to the number of years that pilots need to train before they can be in a position to fly Boeing 777. Literally, it takes four years.

Due to the most recent orders of aircraft in the Middle East region, over five hundred actually, Abu Dhabi asserts that pilots will be in high demand. In fact estimates have clearly shown that **approximately forty thousand pilots would be required for the next twenty years.** Abdullah Al Hammadi, a manager at Emirates Airline, revealed that earlier forecasts were made two years ago but figures are continually rising.

He went on to say that the shortage has already been witnessed in China and it is no doubt that it will reach Middle East. As a matter of fact, China due to lack of pilots has started grounding aircraft. He also added that thirty or twenty years ago, there were quite a number of pilots who moved from the military into commercial aviation. However at present, we seldom find those pilots. Now who will fill the gap? That is actually the big question.

According to Al Hammadi, there have been no major improvements in pilot training globally to match the rapid technological advancements in aircraft. This has resulted in the need to concentrate and invest in a training process that takes around four years. Definitely something needs to be done. He therefore made a suggestion of making changes to the existing curriculum such that pilots can be in a position of flying larger planes without necessarily going through a system that consumes time. In his plan of overcoming the shortage, he said that in 2015 they will come up with a flight academy in Dubai which will accommodate 600 pilots.

According to a statement by Air Arabia, Middle East leads in the number of aircraft orders. This implies that more pilots will be required. It continues further to state that necessary measures have been put in place to take care of the long term needs of the pilots. This will necessitate recruiting more pilots. Air Arabia has already put up a flight academy in Sharjah.

During the recent Dubai airshow in which several conferences were held, the experts from aviation industry cautioned against the possible shortages because Middle East is sixty five percent down, as compared to the regional demand for pilots. Middle East is however not alone as far as this hurdle is concerned. Boeing revealed that five hundred thousand pilots will be in demand globally for the next twenty years. Meanwhile, experts have cited fourteen thousand pilots as the highest number to be ever employed on an annual basis into the industry. The report further implied that concrete growth strategies will make Middle Eastern Aviation outpace the global average.

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