

CHINA: GROWING AVIATION INDUSTRY SEEKS PILOTS



China boasts of having the fastest growing aviation industry in the world. The country however fights a considerable shortfall of about 10,000 pilots.

"Compared to other jobs, a pilot's salary is considerably high," a student at China's Tianjin Aviation Academy muses about his future career. "This is going to make my life better, and also the life of my parents."

With a projected salary of almost \$100,000 year, the life of a pilot is, indeed, a very attractive career option for China' youths. But why the sudden demand for pilots and other airline personnel?

In a country with a rapidly growing middle class population, the exponentially increasing allure of air travel has been virtually unstoppable. China's air travel market is the fastest growing in the world, and its aviation industry is expected to increase by at least 10 percent in the near future. This could mean an additional 140 million people filling up China's airspace.

Next year will also see the country's relaxing on its own airspace rules. Private planes will be allowed to fly below 1,000 meters, thus giving rich Chinese citizens an incentive to own their own aircraft.

The aviation industry is now struggling to fill up the increased need for more airline personnel. It is estimated that the country still needs at least 10,000 pilots to fulfill current market demand.

Tianjin Aviation Academy, China's largest aviation school, receives an average of 60,000 applications for their pilot program each year. Only 1 in 10 makes it, and from that figure, only 600 will be able to graduate successfully.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority, the country will have to produce at least half a million more pilots by 2035.

The slow growth of infrastructure and training is also evident in the demand for other airline personnel. Airline officer Zhao Han states "...we still have a lack of 7,000 or 8,000 air traffic controllers in China."

It is to be noted that there is a lack of female pilot trainees in the Academy. Most of the female students in the aviation industry are usually in training to become flight attendants.

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