

CHINA PLANS FOR 97 NEW AIRPORTS



China attracts more and more attention every year. It is an economic giant, no doubt about it. These days it plans to boost its industry by improving the accessibility of aviation transport. The Chinese officials announced that they plan to build additional ninety seven airports by 2020. The government wants to spend US\$62.5 billion for this project. Forty five regional airports should be operational by 2010. In 2006 there were only 147 civilian airports in China compared to more than 3,000 airports in the US. The rapid economic development in recent years has dramatically raised the demand for domestic passenger transport as well as demand for cargo transport. According to the Civil Aviation Administration of China the country's aviation industry suffers from lack of airports, saturation at the main hubs of Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing, and difficulties in coordinating civil and military flight paths. The officials plan to make air travel accessible to more people. They want 82% of the country to be within 100 km or 90 minutes" drive from an airport. Beijing hopes this will help to spread economic development to the poorer regions.

Nevertheless, the industry experts are not quite sure whether this project is the best move. Analysts assume that the industry will have problems with lack of skilled personnel. According to Elizabeth Boshier, managing director at Landrum & Brown, a consultant to Chinese airports, training of new personnel will be a top priority for at least 10 upcoming years. Many of China's regional airports are in fact loss-making and have to be subsidized by the bigger provincial capital-city airports. In past, number of newly opened small regional airports had to be closed soon after they had started because of lack of demand or poor co-ordination with regional neighbors. However, the demand for air transport rises. In 2007 China's airports served 385 million and the numbers are continuously rising.

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