

Boeing Warns Of Pilot Shortfall In Asia

Kelvin Chan, AP Business Writer

HONG KONG(AP) — Airplane maker Boeing Co. warned Monday that Asia faces a shortfall of new pilots needed to meet surging demand for air travel and that it will get harder to recruit because the profession isn't desirable anymore.

Boeing predicts that the Asia-Pacific region will need 182,300 new pilots from 2011 to 2030, with about two-fifths of that demand coming from China. The region will also need nearly a quarter-million new aircraft technicians over the same period, based on long-term aircraft demand forecasts.

About 60,500 pilots and 46,500 technicians now work in Asia. The new pilots and technicians will be needed to fill new jobs as well as replace retiring workers.

But Roei Ganzarski, chief customer officer at Boeing's flight services division, warned that demand for jets and air travel in Asia is already outpacing the growth in "provision of pilots and mechanics."

It's gotten "to a point where here in Asia-Pacific we've already heard of a few airlines that have already reduced their operations or even grounded airplanes because they don't have the people to fly them," in places such as India, Indonesia and the Philippines, Ganzarski said. He didn't name specific airlines.

Ganzarski said Boeing will be trying harder to attract young people to think of flying as a career because the industry is not seen as glamorous anymore.

"We're not as sexy as we used to be," he said, adding that young people these days are more attracted to working at companies like Google and Microsoft.

Airlines have been scrambling to set up low-budget airlines in Asia to grab an ever bigger share of customers as more people join the ranks of the middle classes and can afford to travel.

Singapore Airlines Ltd., Thai Airways International and Japan's All Nippon Airways are all setting up budget carriers that are expected to start flights next year. Australia's Qantas Airways Ltd. is also setting up two new Asian airlines.

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