CHINA TO HAVE 500 AIRPORTS BY 2020

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China plans to build more than 500 airports by 2020 to create a market worth over $153 billion for its general aviation industry.

According to a guideline issued by China's central cabinet, the country will have more than 500 general aviation airports in a number of places, including major agricultural and forest regions and over 50% of five scenic tourist spots by 2020.

It also plans to increase the number of general aircraft, including helicopters and private jets, to more than 5,000 by 2020.

Total annual flying time is estimated to rise to 2 million hours, state-run *China Daily* reported on Wednesday.

China saw a rapid development in its general aviation industry.

According to the latest data released at the end of 2015, China had more than 300 airports, 281 enterprises and 1,874 aircraft.

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Total annual flying time reached 732,000 hours last year.

On 12 May, China had announced plans to invest $723.8 billion in the next three years to improve the country’s well laid out infrastructure which includes development of airports to boost investment-led growth to halt the economic slowdown.

The action plan includes 303 projects covering railways, highways, waterways, airports and urban rail transit with 131 projects to be taken this year, 92 projects in 2017 and 80 projects in 2018.

The Chinese economy slowed down to 6.9% last year and the government hopes to achieve a GDP (gross domestic product) growth rate between 6.5% to 7% this year.

The new cabinet guideline said China will move towards further opening up lower altitude airspace for civilian use and promote research and manufacturing in the sector.

China will encourage private investment in the general aviation sector, boost pilot training and expand the use of general aircraft in disaster relief, emergency medical services and environmental monitoring, as well as national land and resources exploration, the guideline said.

To encourage aviation consumption, general aviation is encouraged to integrate with the internet, creative economy and tourism, it added.

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