

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION
RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO : 816
(TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 25th July 2022)**

SHORTAGE OF COMMERCIAL PILOTS

816. SMT MAUSAM NOOR

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:-

- (a) the number of candidates which have taken Online-On Demand Examination (OLODE) for the Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AME) and Flying Crew (FC) since November 2021;
- (b) whether the surge in number has helped in overcoming pilot shortage;
- (c) if so, to what extent and whether it suffices the dire need of trained pilots in the wake of recent emergency landings and technical glitches;
- (d) whether high cost of pilot training is one of the significant reasons of this shortfall; and
- (e) if so, Government's stance on it?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION

(GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD))

(a) to (e) Since November 2021, the number of candidates who have taken Online On-Demand Examination (OLODE) of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AME) is 1,721 and for Flying Crew (FC) is 6,680.

There is no shortage of pilots in India. There is, however, a marginal shortage of commanders on certain types of aircraft and the same is being managed by utilising foreign pilots by issuing Foreign Aircrew Temporary Authorization (FATA). There were 82 FATA-holders in India as on 30th June 2022, as compared to over 9000 pilots employed with airlines in India.

The number of pilots receiving their Commercial Pilot Licences (CPL) in India is increasing every year. DGCA issued 862 CPLs in 2021, an all-time high. The number of CPLs issued prior to COVID-19 were 744 (2019), 640 (2018) and 552 (2017).

The total number of flying hours at Indian Flying Training Organizations (FTO)

increased from 1.20 lakh hours in the pre-COVID year (2019) to 1.62 lakh hours in 2021. The improvement in 2021 is despite severe disruptions due to the COVID-19 second wave, Cyclone Yaas, Cyclone Tauktae, early onset of monsoons and rising cost of imported aviation fuel.

The Government-owned FTO - IGRUA (Amethi, UP) - operated at an all-time high of 19,110 flying hours in 2021-22, despite the severe disruptions mentioned above. In comparison, before COVID-19, it operated 14,830 flying hours in 2019-20 and 14,039 flying hours in 2018-19.

The number of FTOs and the annual production of pilots is likely to increase further. In 2020, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) came up with a liberalised FTO policy wherein airport royalty payments (revenue share payment by FTOs to AAI) was abolished and land rentals were significantly rationalised.

In 2021, after a competitive bidding process, AAI awarded nine FTO slots at five airports at Belagavi (Karnataka), Jalgaon (Maharashtra), Kalaburagi (Karnataka), Khajuraho (Madhya Pradesh) and Lilabari (Assam). As on 30th June 2022, four of these FTOs - two at Kalaburagi and one each at Jalgaon and Lilabari - have commenced commercial operations.

In June 2022, after a competitive bidding process, six more FTO slots were awarded by AAI at five airports namely: Bhavnagar (Gujarat), Hubballi (Karnataka), Kadapa (Andhra Pradesh), Kishangarh (Rajasthan) and Salem (Tamil Nadu).

The cost of pilot training in India is cost-competitive as compared to FTOs in leading countries, with the latter being at least 40 percent costlier. With the planned increase in the number of FTOs in India, the cost advantage of Indian FTOs is likely to improve further.
