

Cathay Pacific Airways' localization of cadet pilot training gains ground

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Hong Kong's flagship carrier, Cathay Pacific Airways, welcomed its first batch of 21 cadet pilots who graduated from the airline's new integrated training program, which was developed and conducted in collaboration with the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in a bid to foster pilot training localization. This also marks the 35th anniversary of the airline's cadet pilot training program.

Previously, all Cathay Pacific's flying training was conducted in Australia. The new integrated course offers an alternative mode of training for prospective pilots, which includes theoretical ground training at PolyU and multicrew simulator training at Cathay City in Hong Kong.

The 21 graduates joined the ranks of the Cathay Pacific Group as second officers in November. More than 1,000 Cathay Pacific pilots are graduates of its cadet training program.

"Promoting localization of the aviation workforce is one of our major policy objectives, and local airlines and education institu-

tions have been playing an indispensable role in this," acting secretary for transport and logistics Liu Chun-san said at the Cathay Pacific cadet pilot program graduation ceremony on Tuesday.

Liu said the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government has been working with the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) to tackle the short- and long-term manpower shortage in the aviation industry.

To address the short-term manpower deficiency, the administration launched the Labour Importation Scheme for the Transport Sector-Aviation Industry in July to import workers for filling vacancies of airport front-line nonsupervisory positions under 10 specified job types, while granting priority to locals.

"A total of more than 2,800 quotas were approved in the first round of application, and workers have been arriving in Hong Kong since October," Liu said.

For long-term manpower demand, the government and AAHK agreed a three-pronged strategy to recruit and retain talents, including co-organizing large-scale job fairs with the Labour Department and trade

unions; improving airport staff working conditions through automation technologies, a new transport subsidy scheme, as well as improving staff welfare; and finally, providing training for airport staff under the Maritime and Aviation Training Fund.

Meanwhile, Cathay Pacific Airways on Monday said on its website that it has bought back 50 percent of the Hong Kong SAR government's preference shares and plans to buy the remainder by the end of July next year, subject to market conditions and its business operations at the relevant time.

The airline bought back 50 percent — HK\$9.75 billion (\$1.25 billion) — of the HK\$19.5 billion preference shares that were issued to the Hong Kong SAR government as part of the Cathay Pacific Group's recapitalization financing in 2020.

In addition to buying back HK\$9.75 billion of the preference shares, Cathay Pacific Group will continue to pay dividends on the remaining preference shares as they fall due. To date, the airline has disbursed HK\$1.97 billion in preference share dividends to the Hong Kong SAR.