

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY LAUNCHES BURSARY SCHEME

Twenty one (21) youngsters embark on a journey to become aviators.

Cape Town, 05 March 2014. Last night the South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) launched a bursary programme aimed at addressing skills shortages and transformation challenges in the aviation industry. The bursaries were awarded to aspiring aircraft maintenance technicians, aeronautical engineers, and pilots. Other bursary recipients will pursue training in avionics as well as aircraft structural work.

“Statistics indicated that the SACAA had since its inception, in October 1998, issued 27 274 civil aviation personnel licences. Included in this number are licences issued to South Africans and foreign nationals. A further analysis of the statistics indicated that transformation efforts have thus far not had the desired effect. Out of a total of 12 776 South African pilot licence holders, i.e. both helicopter and aeroplane, and including private pilot, commercial pilot, and airline transport pilot licences; only 636 are Black, i.e. African, Coloured and Indian. In terms of helicopter female license holders in all categories, i.e. private, commercial and airline transport licenses, there is only one (1) Indian female. Moreover, there is not even a single Indian female aircraft maintenance engineer in this country. I totally refuse to believe that the ambitions of many of our people stretch only as far as being cabin crew members,” said the SACAA’s Director of Civil Aviation, Ms Poppy Khoza.

“The current statistics indicate that there is a clear need for transformation in the aviation industry. Programmes such as the SACAA Bursary Scheme will ensure that the current picture changes. This is crucial as the aviation industry is one of the major industries that drive the growth of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). We are also cognisant of the fact that there is currently a world-wide skills shortage in the aviation industry; hence we need to work with all role-players including the private sector to make sure that we address the skills gap,” said Transport Minister, Honourable Dipuo Peters, who handed out the bursaries at the ceremony held in Cape Town.

Reiterating that skills associated with aviation are scarce; Minister Peters also mentioned that training in aviation is expensive. “We need huge financial and human

skills to make this industry viable and sustainable. For instance, to train a commercial pilot, you need nothing less than R500 000.00; and that is half a million for an eighteen months training that gets you 250-300 hours. That's not all - you need to increase your hours to at least 1 500 in order to stand a chance of being regarded as employable by commercial airlines. It is thus clear that the need for funding cannot be overemphasised. I am challenging other entities in the department and the industry to emulate the SACAA and match, if not exceed, their contribution. It is for a good cause; and the need is huge yet our resources are limited. We need to work together on this one," Minister Peters elaborated.

Echoing Minister Peters' sentiments, Ms Khoza said that the time to expand the pool from which prospective aviation personnel are sourced is long overdue. "Exciting as it is, aviation is a highly technical field requiring the services of highly skilled individuals. This is an industry that has no margin for any form of error. Having said that I must also point out that this is one of the industries that are not easy to break into due to the high training costs involved. Difficult as it is, we would have failed in our responsibilities if we were to fold our arms and watch by the side-lines. It is for this reason that the South African Civil Aviation Authority has been championing efforts to create aviation career awareness amongst the youth of this country, especially those in remote rural areas," said Khoza.

She further stated that "over the years we noted that once we have sparked our youth's interest in aviation; their chances of fulfilling their dreams are quickly thwarted by the lack of financial support. It is for this reason that SACAA went a step further to put some funds aside to support these kids in their quests to enter the aviation industry. We sincerely hope that our modest contribution will go a long way in maintaining a steady flow of young and passionate aviators who can contribute to the country's aviation industry."

According to the SACAA the bursary scheme is open to all young South Africans. The primary selection criteria are that they should have passed their matric science and mathematics subjects with high marks; and that they are originally from rural communities, and from households that earns less than R100 000,00 per annum.

The bursaries will help the students pay for their tuition and accommodation fees. In addition, the SACAA is pondering on the idea of introducing a mentorship programme in order to support these youngsters who will suddenly be thrust into an industry that demand nothing but excellence.

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About the SACAA:

The South African Civil Aviation Authority (“SACAA”) is a juristic body established in terms of the Civil Aviation Act, 2009 (Act No. 13 of 2009) (“the Act”). SACAA is governed and controlled by the Civil Aviation Authority Board (“the Board”). In terms of mandate, the SACAA is tasked with promoting and maintaining a safe, secure and sustainable civil aviation environment, by regulating and overseeing the functioning and development of the industry in an efficient, cost-effective, and customer-friendly manner according to international standards.

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