

《C919 takes wing, marks milestone》

Debut flight hailed as making a Chinese 'dream come true'

The C919, China's first homegrown large passenger plane, made its debut flight on Friday in Shanghai, a breakthrough in the country's innovation and manufacturing drive and a change to the landscape of the global civil aviation market.

The successful test flight of the C919 comes only nine days after the country debuted its first homegrown aircraft carrier in Dalian, Liaoning province, showing the world its manufacturing prowess, development of advanced technology and national ambition to regain past glory.

After the flight, which lasted about 79 minutes at an altitude of 3,000 meters and an average speed of 300 km/h, the plane returned to Shanghai Pudong International Airport, from which it had taken off at 2 pm.

"All the activities made in the air are normal. The C919's debut flight is a complete success," said Cai Jun, captain of the flight.

In a letter of congratulation to the C919 project, the State Council said: "The successful maiden flight of the C919 marks a milestone for China's aviation industry. The project carries great weight and importance to the country's innovation drive and manufacturing upgrade push.

"It is also a shot in the arm for the ongoing supply-side reform," the letter said. "The large passenger aircraft flying in the blue sky makes generations of Chinese people's dream come true."

about 3,000 people witnessed the historic moment of the first flight of the narrow-body jetliner. Before the flight, the C919, whose enhanced version has a range of 5,555 kilometers, passed a series of strict tests after rolling off the assembly line in November 2015.

Zhou Guirong, deputy chief designer of the C919, said more than 50 percent of its parts and components were domestically made, either by Chinese companies or joint ventures in China. Since launching the C919 project, the plane's research team has made 102 technological breakthroughs in areas including integrated design of engines and systems control.

With 158 to 174 seats, the twin-engine, single-aisle aircraft will be used for medium-haul commercial flights. The State-owned Commercial Aircraft Corp of China, which manufactured the C919, has received 570 orders for the C919 from 23 clients.

According to its designers, the commercialization of the C919 will take two to three years before getting certification from the Civil Aviation Administration of China. Boeing earlier predicted that China will need 5,110 new single-aisle airplanes through 2035. With China's aviation market growing rapidly as a rising middle class travels more for leisure and business, the C919 aircraft is also expected to eventually take market share from Boeing and Airbus in

the lucrative narrow-body market, which accounts for more than 50 percent of the aircraft in service worldwide.

"We believe the C919 will bring new competition to the market, and we welcome competition, which is good to the development of the industry," said Eric Chen, president of Airbus Commercial Aircraft China.

Kevin McAllister, president and CEO of Boeing Commercial Airplanes, expressed his congratulations on behalf of Boeing for the C919's successful debut flight. "This is a great achievement in the history of COMAC and an important milestone for Chinese aviation," he said.

Federico Marziali, head of quality management of Dornier Seawings GmbH, said he is very impressed by the size of the COMAC C919 project. "I can imagine the huge production ability once it starts production, by the size."

Meanwhile, Lin Zhijie, an aviation industry analyst and columnist at Carnoc.com, one of China's largest civil aviation web portals, said there is still a long way to go before the C919 enters the market.

"Apart from meeting flight safety standards, the C919 team has to make sure all things go right, such as the reliability, fuel efficiency, maintenance cost, as well as the comfort level of the aircraft. They should all be considered before it is put into use in the market," Lin said.

The C919 project was launched in 2006. Two years later, the C919 maker COMAC was established in Shanghai. Plans for the plane, which was originally due to fly in 2014 and be delivered to buyers in 2016, were postponed for manufacturing reasons.