

《New aircraft engine firm to lift sector》

Xi hails establishment of company, saying it will further modernize industry, military

President Xi Jinping called on Sunday for acceleration of the research, development and manufacturing of aircraft engines and gas turbines to help China to build a strong aviation industry.

His words came after the Aero Engine Corp of China was established in Beijing. Previously, all of the country's aircraft engines were developed and made by Aviation Industry Corp of China.

Setting up the new company is a strategic move that will improve the aviation industry and boost the modernization of the Chinese military, Xi said in a written instruction that was read at the company's establishment ceremony in Beijing on Sunday morning.

Premier Li Keqiang said in his written instruction that engineers at the company should learn from other nations' experience and focus on key technologies for aircraft engines.

Headquartered in Beijing, the AECC has been set up with investment from the State Council, the Beijing municipal government, Aviation Industry Corp of China and Commercial Aircraft Corp of China. It has a registered capital of 50 billion yuan (\$7.5 billion) and 96,000 employees, including six academics from the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Chinese Academy of Engineering, according to the company.

Cao Jianguo, 53, former general manager of China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp, is the AECC chairman. The company's general manager is Li Fangyong, also 53, former deputy general manager at Aviation Industry Corp of China.

Despite China having made tremendous achievements in science, technology and manufacturing industries, aircraft engines remain one of the few fields in which the country still lags largely behind top players, especially the United States.

Because advanced aircraft engines such as the afterburning turbofan, which propels the world's best combat planes including the US' Lockheed Martin F-22 and Russia's Sukhoi Su-35, are so sophisticated, only the five members of the United Nations Security Council are able to develop and produce them.

According to military sources, most of the People's Liberation Army Air Force's best aircraft, such as the J-10 fighter jet and Y-20 transport plane, rely heavily on engines imported from Russia, while the new-generation J-20 stealth fighter jet also used Russian-made engines for its test flight.

In the Made in China 2025 blueprint published by the central government last year, aircraft engines were listed as one of the 10 crucial manufacturing sectors that are of great importance to the nation and would be strongly supported by the government.

Thanks to efforts made by Chinese researchers in the past 10 years, a number of domestically developed engines such as the WS-10 "Taihang" turbofan have been introduced and installed on some J-10 and J-11 fighter jets, observers said.

They added that a certain period of time will be needed to see whether they are reliable and powerful enough to replace the imported ones.

Yin Zeyong, a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and head of AECC's science and technology commission, said the company's founding indicates that China is determined to mobilize all resources needed to research and develop key aircraft engine technologies.

Wang Ya'nan, editor-in-chief of Aerospace Knowledge magazine, said, "The establishment of an aircraft engine firm will strengthen China's capability in the aviation field and improve efficiency in research and development."

More participation from the private sector should be encouraged in the aircraft engine industry to bolster competition, he added.

