



MRJS TO FLY ALL J-AIR ROUTES IN FUTURE, JAL CHAIRMAN SAYS

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Japan Airlines Co. plans to replace all aircraft flown by domestic subsidiary J-Air Corp. with the new fuel-efficient Mitsubishi Regional Jet.

Chairman Masaru Onishi explained the move in a recent interview with Kyodo News, saying the swap-out could be complete just over a decade from now.

J-Air primarily serves routes linking Osaka and Sapporo with smaller Japanese cities. It operates 15 E170 aircraft with 76 seats, manufactured by Brazil's Embraer SA, and nine 50-seat CRJ200 planes made by Canada's Bombardier Inc.

The MRJ, developed by Mitsubishi Aircraft Corp., is Japan's first domestically built small passenger jet and seats about 90. It made its first test flight last month.

Onishi, 60, said J-Air's network will serve as the basis for introducing the MRJ.

"If some routes start growing, we will need to think about something else, but the basic idea is to switch to the MRJ entirely for the routes we currently run," he said.

JAL has ordered 32 MRJs for J-Air, with delivery set to start in 2021.

Provided new planes are delivered on time, it will take roughly six years to replace the fleet, Onishi said. This assumes five MRJ aircraft are delivered each year.

He said the subsidiary's fleet will have converted entirely to MRJs by the second half of the 2020s.

J-Air is hoping for cost reductions because the MRJ is more fuel-efficient than comparable planes made by other manufacturers.

ANA Holdings Inc., JAL's competitor and the parent of All Nippon Airways Co., is set to receive the first MRJs sometime between April and June 2017. The planes will serve with regional subsidiary ANA Wings Co.

Meanwhile, the JAL chairman welcomed Mitsubishi Aircraft's plan to consider developing a 100-seat version of the MRJ in future.

He said a plane of that size might be a perfect fit for JAL.

"In that sense, 100-seaters are fully within our range (of operations), and we would appreciate it if they are built," he said.

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