BOEING SOUNDS OUT INDIAN CARRIERS ON 737 MAX-10 AIRCRAFT

News / Manufacturer

Boeing Co has approached India's SpiceJet Ltd and Jet Airways Ltd as it gauges airlines' interest in its 737 MAX-10 aircraft, the stretched version of the yet-to-be-delivered 737 MAX narrow-body jetliner, a senior executive said.

Indian carriers are rapidly expanding to meet demand in the world's fastest-growing aviation market, with most of the growth involving flights into and out of the country's biggest cities.

"We have presented it to both the airlines what the airplane looks like, and it's in a very preliminary stage," Dinesh Keskar, senior vice president, Asia Pacific and India sales, Boeing Commercial Airplanes, told Reuters.

"If you are flying to the metros this (737 MAX-10) will be a perfect airplane, because runways are long, demand is there, frequency is already there."

Airplane makers typically line up orders before deciding whether to formally undertake building a

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new aircraft.

SpiceJet and Jet Airways have the option to substitute some of their existing orders of MAX planes with the MAX-10, Keskar said.

In January, budget airline SpiceJet agreed to buy 100 new 737 MAXs aircraft with an option for 50 more, while Jet Airways had 75 orders for the 737 MAX through January 2017.

SpiceJet and Jet Airways did not respond to requests for comment.

Boeing is creating up to five versions of MAX, which will replace the current 737 "NG" introduced in 1997 and offer greater fuel efficiency.

The company has been looking at the feasibility of the 737 MAX-10 - the biggest aircraft in the MAX family - to take on rival Airbus (AIR.PA), which has had strong sales of its A321neo, its largest single-aisle aircraft.

The first MAX model in production, the MAX-8, is on track to reach customers by mid-year.

The A321neo competes with Boeing's MAX-9, which carries a list price of $116.6 million and seats as many as 220 passengers. The A321neo seats as many as 236 and has a list price of $127 million.

Keskar said the incremental cost to operate the MAX-10 is going to be very little and airlines may face slightly higher costs on fuel, food and an extra cabin attendant.

"But your potential gain in the revenue will be phenomenal," he said.

04 MARCH 2017

SOURCE: REUTERS
ARTICLE LINK:
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