

Consider our products, Boeing urges MAS

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SINGAPORE, Mon: Boeing Commercial Airplanes Group today asked Malaysia Airlines to also consider its civil aviation products if the national carrier is looking at expanding its fleet.

The call came in the wake of a Flight International magazine report which said that Malaysia Airlines is in the final stages of talks to buy up to 80 Airbus.

Boeing's senior vice president Larry Dickenson, speaking at a press conference here on the eve of Asian Aerospace 2000, described Malaysia Airlines as an "excellent customer", operating several variants of its 737s, 747s and 777s.

"If it is looking at expanding its fleet, it should also look at us," he said at a news conference on the eve of the Asian Aerospace 2000 which begins here tomorrow.

Dickenson was asked to comment on the article that Malaysia Airlines is said to be looking to buy 18 A340-500/600 wide-body planes and up to 62 A320s.

"I have not heard about it and I certainly hope that that is not the case," he said of the article.

Dickenson said as Malaysia Airlines is also an operator of the 777s, it should consider Boeing's 777X version.

The Flight International report said Malaysia Airlines has agreed on the Airbus' aircraft types and that the talks are focused on financing and industrial participation issues.

It said the national carrier wants to acquire 10 A340-500s, eight stretched A340-600s and 45 single-aisle aircraft, plus 17 options.

If the deal with Airbus is completed, Flight Inter-

national said Malaysia Airlines plans to use the A340-500s and -600s to replace the older 747s and open non-stop transpacific services to the US.

The A320s would replace its 40 737-400/500s.

In fact, talks on the possibility of an Airbus aircraft purchase by Malaysia Airlines was rife at the recent Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Show 1999 last December when the French airframe maker had showcased a model of its A340-500 in Malaysia Airlines' colours.

It is understood from the industry that a manufacturer is only allowed to display the colours of a carrier only if the airline is buying the particular airplane.

Early this year when in Paris, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had also discussed with French President Jacques Chirac the possibility of a "technical cooperation" with Airbus Industrie, further fuelling talks of a possible aircraft purchase by the national carrier in return for additional landing rights into the French capital.

Malaysia Airlines' single largest order for Boeing planes was placed in 1996, when it announced the purchase of 25 planes for RM10 billion.

Out of the 15 777s ordered, only four remain to be delivered. Out of the 15 747-400s, Malaysia Airlines is expected to take delivery of six more this year.

Malaysia Airlines currently has a fleet of 86 aircraft of both Airbus and Boeing models. The most dominant model in its fleet is the 737, of which 38 are in service.

The airline also has a fleet of 11 A330-300s.