

BD airlines should modernise fleet with B737 Max, B787 family : MD of Commercial Marketing

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Dhaka : Airlines in Bangladesh currently have the right mix of airplanes to serve their current market needs. However, for future growth and expansion, they will need to modernise their fleet with airplanes that are fuel-efficient such as the 737 Max and the 787 family.

"They need to look to the future. There are lots of growth opportunities in Bangladesh, so the fleet will need to grow both by utilising the existing fleet, and investing in more efficient airplanes going forward such as 737 Max." ❌

Randy Heisey, Managing Director, Commercial Marketing, Middle East, Africa, Russia and Central Asia of The Boeing Company said this to The Bangladesh Monitor in an exclusive virtual interview recently. Randy, earlier, led the similar team responsible for commercial airplanes and marketing services in the Asia Pacific region too.

"We are constantly in discussions with our customer airlines in Bangladesh to understand their needs and support their current and future requirements," noted Randy.

Aviation industry recovery

Even after getting battered by the coronavirus pandemic earlier, the global airline industry has made significant progress in the recovery, and one of the world's

leading plane manufacturing companies Boeing's 2021 forecast reflects its confidence in the resilience of the market.

The Boeing Company's 20-year commercial forecast through 2040 projects demand for over 43,000 new airplanes valued at USD 7.2 trillion, an increase of about 500 planes over 2020's forecast.

Passenger traffic growth is projected to increase by an average of 4 per cent a year, unchanged from Boeing's 2020's forecast while the global commercial fleet will surpass 49,000 airplanes by 2040, with China, Europe, North America and the Asia-Pacific countries each accounting for about 20 per cent of new airplane deliveries, and the remaining 20 per cent going to other emerging markets, expressed Randy.

The global market is recovering largely as Boeing projected in October 2020. Demand for domestic air travel is leading the recovery, with intra-regional markets expected to follow as health and travel restrictions ease, followed by long-haul travel's return to pre-pandemic levels by 2023 to 2024.

"We've seen this phased recovery translate into demand for over 800 737 Max orders since December 2020, mainly supporting domestic and regional international markets," said the Managing Director of Boeing, adding, "We anticipate demand for wide-body aircraft to take longer to return in line with the international traffic recovery."

Southeast Asia

The aviation market in Southeast Asia has faced many challenges on its journey to recovery to pre-pandemic levels. Hence, airlines have implemented changes to the network and business strategies to reduce impacts, as the region's real-time operation level statistics still remain at roughly 20 per cent of the 2019 level (as of 2021 August), explained Randy.

Boeing's forecast anticipates that Southeast Asia's long-term growth drivers for air travel remain solid. Over the next 20 years, the region's gross domestic product (GDP,) air traffic (Revenue Passenger Kilometers), and fleet will grow at 3.9 per cent, 5.5 per cent and 5.0 per cent, respectively - all measures outpacing global averages.

Moreover, the largest contribution of the traffic growth comes from travel within the Asia-Pacific region. Over the last decade travel demand to and from China and Northeast Asia have emerged as new growth driver to the region's air traffic.

Upcoming developments

Talking about the upcoming and new Boeing 777X airplane, Randy claimed, the 777-9 will be the largest and most fuel-efficient twin-engine jet in the world, with the lowest operating cost per seat of any commercial airplane and an exceptional passenger experience.

Opening new growth opportunities for airlines, the 777-9 seats 426 passengers in a typical two-class configuration, with a range of 7,285 nautical miles (13,500 km). The 777-8 and 777-9 passenger airplanes are also designed to respond to market needs and customer preferences.

The 777-8 competes directly with the A350-1000, while the 777-9 fills a unique segment in the twin-aisle market. The 777-8 seats 384 passengers with an incredible range capability of up to 8,730 nautical miles (16,170 km).

Range is just part of the story. The 777-8 also has the capacity to provide more revenue through more payload and improved fuel efficiency at both short and long ranges.

This capability also allows the 777-8 to carry that increased payload at more challenging airports such as those constrained by high altitudes or hot temperatures. The 777-8 offers both range and payload, maximising value for

operators.

"We continue to expect that we will deliver the first 777X in late 2023," said Randy. Besides B777X, Boeing is also progressing on 737-7, 737-10 and 777X development and certification. "We also are beginning to lay the foundation for our next commercial airplane development programme," exclaimed Randy.

In September, 2021, Boeing stood up its dedicated Integrated Product Team to bring together our digital environment where the next new airplane and production system can be designed together.

Return of 737 Max

On the return of Boeing 737 Max, Randy expressed they continue to work with global regulators and customers to safely return the 737-8 and 737-9 to service worldwide and they have made important progress in this regard.

Since the FAA's un-grounding in November 2020, over 185 out of 195 global regulators have approved a return to service or opened their airspace to the 737 Max. Through early March, more than 35 operators had over 500 737 Max in revenue service. Airlines have safely flown over 400,000 revenue flights, totalling more than one million flight hours. The fleet has a schedule reliability rate of more than 99 per cent. Airlines are operating about 1,500 revenue flights daily with the aircraft, said Randy.

This shows, the 737 family is the most ordered narrow-body while the 777 family is the most ordered wide-body of Boeing. In 2021, out of 765 orders for the 737 family, 749 orders were for the 737 Max, mentioned Randy, adding, the 787 family has the largest backlog too. The 737 family has a backlog of 3,497, while the 787 family backlog is 411. Out of 3,497 backlog for 737 family, 3,391 are for the 737 Max.

On the other hand, Randy mentioned, the 787 Dreamliner is a family of super-efficient airplanes with passenger-pleasing features. In response to airlines' overwhelming preference, Boeing designed the 787 family with superior efficiency, which allows airlines to profitably open new routes to fly people directly where they would like to go in exceptional comfort.

This variant is largely used by Biman Bangladesh Airlines, the flag carrier of our country.

Already, in 2022, Boeing received 1,490+ total orders from 80+ customers. Of those, 1,006 delivered through February 2022 while 411 remain unfilled, said Randy.

Fleet statistics mentioned by Randy as of March 2022 is as follows: 611+ million passengers flown; 3 million+ revenue departures; 93+ billion pounds of carbon emissions avoided (when compared to A330); and 325 new routes opened.

The 737 family is also the fastest-selling airplane in Boeing's history, accounting for approximately 78 per cent of all Boeing commercial airplanes ordered between 2011 and 2021. The 737 has flown missions to all seven continents with over 500 operators worldwide, concluded the Managing Director for Commercial Marketing of Boeing.