

Air India's clever move brings 50 MAX jets from Chinese carriers

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Dhaka: With a clever strategic move, Air India has brought 50 737 MAX aircraft well ahead of their scheduled delivery timeline. The narrow-body jets were actually slated for multiple Chinese airlines, though not delivered due to a regulatory restriction of the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC).

Air India, following its acquisition by Tata Group, has focused on expanding its global network with a modernized fleet of state-of-the-art, fuel-efficient, and technologically advanced aircraft, with the ultimate goal of establishing the name as one of the largest global brands.

As part of this strategy, the Indian flag carrier confirmed orders for a total of 570 aircraft from Boeing and Airbus between 2023 and 2024, and of these 570 aircraft, 190 are Boeing 737-8 MAX, which were scheduled to be delivered from March 2026.

However, things changed when CAAC started conducting a regulatory review of lithium batteries used inside the cockpit voice recorders (CVR) of Boeing 737 MAX. This regulatory restriction delayed Chinese airlines from taking delivery of the aircraft, and a large number of undelivered jets piled up at Boeing's manufacturing facilities with an uncertain future.

Air India grabbed this opportunity to secure 50 units of these white-tail jets. The carrier has received a total of 42 Boeing 737-8 MAX jets since September 2023, two jets per month on average as of March 2025, while the remaining eight units will be delivered by May-June of this year.

All 190 Boeing 737-8 MAX jets were ordered for the airline's low-cost wing, Air India Express. Delivered units have already joined the LCC's fleet.

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