

THAI happy with Dreamliner

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THE NATION

THAI AIRWAYS executives are confident the new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner will enhance flyer satisfaction and the carrier's business performance.

"Certainly, it would help us a lot, as we get the best of Boeing commercial airplane," said Usanee Sangsingkeo, THAI acting president, in response to a question on how the new aircraft would contribute to THAI operations.

Thai Airways International Public Company Limited (THAI) took delivery of its second Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft, royally bestowed "Phrom Buri" under aircraft registration No HS-TWB, at Boeing's Everett Delivery Centre in Seattle, Washington, on October 31.

The aircraft is equipped with Rolls-Royce Trent 1000 engines. It has 298 seats in two class cabins: the 30 Royal Silk Class seats can recline 180-degrees to a full-flat bed and the 268 economy class seats have wider windows and electromagnetic window shades.

"Both business and economy class passengers would find it more comfortable. Seats in business class could recline 180 degrees while there is more

space between seat rows in economy class, resulting in wider seat adjustment. The 787-9 is about six metres longer than the Boeing 787-8," Usanee said.

Boeing claimed that passengers would feel more refreshed flying with the 787, thanks to its new technology giving more oxygen in the cabin, higher humidity, cleaner air and quieter flights.

Usanee said that THAI is happy with the first 787-9 which has been in service between Bangkok-Australia for a month.

The new aircraft opens new business opportunity on long-haul flights with range of 14,140 kilometres, such as flying directly from Bangkok to Seattle in the United States.

Moreover, it is an upper mid-size plane which saves fuel costs due to its size and long-haul capacity. The airplane is also made of composite materials, reducing its weight. Airlines prefer efficient aircraft and Boeing has designed an aircraft to meet that demand, the company said.

THAI will operate the new aircraft on roundtrip flights from Bangkok to Singapore until November 30 before using it for the Bangkok to Auckland route, beginning November 16 and

Bangkok to Taipei, starting on December 1.

The airplane will replace the older and larger Boeing 747 which will be phased out, said Usanee.

"We will focus on cost management in order to improve our profits," said Usanee about the strategy of THAI business operation.

The Boeing 787-9 plane is leased to THAI by AerCap, the world's largest aircraft leasing company. Steve Adams, AerCap vice president and head of new aircraft acceptance and delivery, said that airplane leasing helps THAI avoid the much higher cost of ordering a new aircraft. THAI plans to acquire 28 more new planes, awaiting approval from the THAI board of directors, National Economic and Social Development Board, State

Enterprises Policy Office and the Cabinet.

Meanwhile, Areepong Bhoocha-oom, THAI chairman of the board of directors, said that new aircraft to satisfy customers and working harder on marketing to draw more customers is now in focus at THAI. An investment plan with Airbus to create an aircraft maintenance facility centre in U-Tapao of the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) will also generate more revenue. And THAI is also discussing with Boeing to create a human resource training centre in the EEC for the aviation industry, according to Areepong.

"We will maintain our fleet of 100 aircrafts for now and will expand our business in the future," added Areepong.



The Boeing Dreamliner has a total of 298 seats in a two-class cabin. The 30 business class seats can recline 180 degrees to a full-flat bed.