

Jett8 replacing ageing freighters with newer planes

By VEN SREENIVASAN

SINGAPORE'S only privately owned cargo airline, Jett8 Airlines Cargo, has started replacing its ageing Boeing 747-200Fs with newer-generation and more fuel-efficient B747-400ERF (extended range freighter) aircraft.

The airline has inked a one-year wet lease agreement for one B747-400ERF freighter with Shenzhen-based Jade Cargo International. The deal was signed earlier this month and is subject to regulatory approval.

The aircraft deployed for Jett8 is one of the models delivered to Jade in January.

Jett8's founder and chief executive, Cpt Louis Tan, said his airline was embarking on a fleet renewal programme to get the best planes currently available. 'Our B747-200Fs will progressively be phased out of their Singapore operations, due to high aviation fuel prices, and will be redeployed on routes based elsewhere where cargo yield is higher,' said Cpt Tan, who is an ex-Singapore Airlines veteran.

'The new B747-400Fs are profitable for our Singapore operations. The deal with Jade Cargo International enables us to start a smooth B747-400 fleet rollover within the next two years.'

The newly acquired aircraft will operate in Jett8's fleet once Jade Cargo International has completed its relief operations to the disaster areas of Myanmar and Sichuan Province.

Cpt Tan said the plane will initially be deployed on Jett8's routes from Singapore to Amsterdam, Malmoe (in Sweden), Bangalore, Chennai and Hong Kong. Jett8 also operates two B747-200Fs to various European, Middle Eastern and Asian destinations.

Jett8 is a privately owned airline with strategic stakeholding and an alliance partnership with Japan's Nippon Cargo Airlines and NYK Line. This partnership covers cooperation in joint sales and marketing, ground and engineering support and equipment and crew training. Other shareholders include several members of OCBC Bank's founding Lee family.

Jade Cargo has a total fleet of six B747-400ERF aircraft which were delivered between July 2006 and February 2008, and has a network covering all major markets in China, North Asia and Europe. The airline is a joint venture between Shenzhen Airlines (51 per cent), Lufthansa Cargo (25 per cent) and the German development bank, DEG (24 per cent).

Jade Cargo's CEO Cpt Kay Kratky said the deal with Jett8 would enable his airline to smoothly ramp up its own production after a 'difficult year in 2007'. 'It gives us flexibility and stability at the same time,' he added.

The deal comes at a time when jet kerosene has shot up to historical highs at over US\$150 per barrel, putting severe strains on the aviation industry.

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