

STRATEGY BRENDAN SOBIE /SINGAPORE &amp; LUBOMIR SEDLAK / PRAGUE

# LZ mounts Let sales push in Asia

Affiliate's ambitious plans for region could boost Czech manufacturer, which filed for bankruptcy in October

Letecke Zavody's Asian partner has leased two L-410s to carriers in Australia and Indonesia and plans to buy another 10 L-410/420s from the bankrupt Czech manufacturer in a drive to push sales of the 19-seat turboprop throughout South-East Asia.

Singapore-based JSD has been responsible for sales of the former Let aircraft in Asia since early 2002 and last month signed up its first customers. Managing director Kumar Balasingam says undisclosed Australian and Indonesian carriers have signed a memorandum of understanding to lease one L-410 from May and June next year.

The deals are a big boost for Letecke Zavody, which has only manufactured five aircraft this year and filed for bankruptcy in October.

JSD plans to set up a parts depot in Singapore after its first aircraft are in service. JSD secured type certification for the L-410 from Indonesia and Australia earlier this year. Only the quieter and more expensive L-420 has US Federal Aviation Administration certification.

In Asia, the L-410 was earlier certificated in Bangladesh, India and the Philippines, but currently the aircraft is only operated by two Asian carriers – Asian Spirit and Seair, both of the Philippines. LZ is

hoping to sign part-supplier agreements next year with both of these carriers, which now purchase L-410 parts from outside vendors.

Balasingam says he is also in talks with Bangladesh's Air Parabat, which formerly operated two L-410s and is interested in again operating the type after the Asian service centre is established. He says Air Seychelles and Malaysia Airlines are also studying replacing their de Havilland Canada DHC-6 Twin Otters with L-410s, but decisions are not expected soon.

JSD is prepared to certificate the L-410 in Malaysia, the Seychelles and Sri Lanka if it can find a cus-

tommer and is aiming for New Zealand approval next year.

JSD last month agreed to buy 10 L-410s and two L-420s from the Letecke Zavody factory in a deal valued at up to \$36 million. Balasingam says JSD has agreed to buy the first L-410 for about \$3 million, while prices on the other 11 are being negotiated. Deliveries will be over the next few years.

JSD, which has served since 1989 as a leasing agent for Boeing 737s, Bombardier Dash 8s, ATR 42/72s and other types, partnered Letecke Zavody in early 2002 and says the manufacturer's bankruptcy should not affect sales activities in Asia.

DEVELOPMENT VLADIMIR KARNOZOV / MOSCOW

## Sukhoi-led RRJ team upbeat on forecast

The Sukhoi-led Russian Regional Jet (RRJ) team has increased its market forecast from 600 to 800 sales over the next 20 years, after the group held its first airline consultancy council with potential customers last month.

Airlines were presented with a critical design review of the aircraft, and the amended configuration is to be used as a basis for formal customer offers.

RRJ's revised market prognosis for 800 RRJs would be worth \$12 billion. Research and development costs are estimated at \$650 million on airframe and systems, and about half that for the

Sneema/NPO Saturn SM146 engines. First flight is set for 2006, with deliveries the following year.

Meanwhile, the first flight of the Antonov An-148 regional jet has slipped by one month to April next year. Three prototype aircraft are being assembled by the KhAPO plant in Kharkov, Ukraine. One will be used for static tests and the others for Russian certification flight tests. Series production may be shared with a Russian plant. VASO in Voronezh, Russia supplies the An-148's empennage, while UUAZ in Ulan-Ude also supplies airframe components. The latter is considering setting up an assembly line.



AVIONICS

## CMC upgrades Classic cockpit

CMC Electronics has upgraded a Qantas Boeing 747-300 with its CMA-900 flight management system (FMS), triple inertial reference systems and Electronic Horizontal Situation Indicator, the first of six -300s to be upgraded for the Australian carrier. The Canadian company's CMA-2102 high-gain satellite communications antenna is also fitted as part of the avionics upgrade with the GPS-based FMS. Qantas's configuration will allow it to make use of FANS-1 equivalent datalink functions on the 747s.

SAFETY

## Incidents prompt changes to 747-400 checklist

The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) last week recommended that Boeing 747-400 operators adopt new non-normal checklist procedures in the event of failure of the cockpit's integrated display systems.

747-400s operated by Singapore

Airlines (SIA) twice lost all six EFIS/EICAS interface units (EIUs) – the primary and secondary flight displays – in flight. A Boeing operations manual bulletin issued in February states: "In the unlikely event all six display units [go] blank, cycling the left and centre

EIU circuit breakers may recover the display units." Cycling an EIU means pulling the unit out of its mounting and pushing it back in.

The SIA incidents in November 2001 and January this year were solved by cycling the EIUs.

The NTSB proposes Boeing's

advice as "a reasonable temporary action until a permanent solution is determined". It advises airlines to incorporate the procedure as a non-normal checklist for ease of reference during such an occurrence.

The cause of the Singapore EIU failures has not been determined.