CHINESE PLANE MAKER SENDS NEW PERFORMANCE CHART

News / Manufacturer



The Chinese manufacturer of the MA60 and Y12E aircraft delivered to Nepal Airlines Corporation (NAC) last year has sent a revised performance chart as the two planes did not meet the performance specifications sent earlier.

NAC's Managing Director Sugat Ratna Kansakar said that they received the revised performance chart for the two aircraft on Monday, and were doing an internal technical assessment.

"It will take us four to five days to assess the performance chart. Only after the assessment can we decide whether to procure the remaining planes on order," said Kansakar.

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On November 29, 2012, NAC and AVIC International Holdings had signed a commercial agreement for six aircraft. One 58-seater MA60 and one 18-seater Y12E arrived in Kathmandu on April 27 and November 3, 2014 respectively under this deal. These two aircraft were provided to Nepal as gifts. However, NAC found the planes to be financially unviable due to their poor performance after test flying them on a number of routes, and wrote to the Tourism Ministry on Jan. 26 telling it so.

NAC had also informed its line ministry that if the problems were not resolved, they would not want to procure the remaining aircraft. Since then, the planned procurement of the remaining aircraft has been kept on hold, and various committees have been formed to resolve the issue.

The national flag carrier said that as per the landing and take-off weight, the planes were not capable of carrying a full capacity of passengers, an issue not disclosed during the aircraft deal.

For example, the 58-seater MA60 aircraft can take off from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport with 54 passengers, but during the return trip from smaller airports like Bhadrapur, it can carry only 34 passengers.

Similarly, the other China-gifted aircraft, the Y12E, has a weight problem. The plane weighs 200 kg more than what is stated in the specifications, and this has forced NAC to carry three less passengers.

Moreover, the Y12E can only fly to airports with a maximum grade of up to 2 percent or about 1.2 degrees of slope as per the Chinese aircraft's specifications. Since most mountain airports in Nepal are short take-off and landing (STOL), including the one in the tourist hub of Lukla in Khumbu, the Y12E cannot serve these destinations. As a result, NAC has been forced to fly the Y12E to Bharatpur and Pokhara only.

Recently, a meeting was held between officials of China EXIM Bank, Tourism Ministry, Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal and NAC over these issues. The Chinese bank that is financing the deal has asked Nepal government officials when they would be taking delivery of the four remaining aircraft.

According to a senior government official, they have informed the Chinese side that they would proceed with the deal if the revised performance chart was found to be satisfactory after conducting a technical evaluation.

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