

THE AUSTRALIAN

February 15, 2008 12:19am AEDT

\$20bn of orders expected at Singapore Airshow

Geoffrey Thomas | February 15, 2008

BOEING and Airbus are expected to announce orders for at least \$20 billion worth of aircraft at the Singapore Airshow next week.

In a major fleet upgrade, Garuda is to order 10 Boeing 777-200ERs to support route expansion plans to Europe, the Middle East and east Asia.

The order is in addition to 10 Boeing 787s the airline has on order as well as 50 Boeing 737-800s which are being delivered through leasing companies from this year.

Indonesia's Lion Air, which has eight Boeing 737-900ERs in service and a further 114 on order, is expected to order more aircraft, with analysts suggesting another 60 aircraft.

The airline has aggressive expansion plans for Thailand and Australia.

Details of what orders Airbus may announce are not known, but there are many letters of intent yet to be signed.

But the commercial orders could be overshadowed by the US Air Force's imminent announcement on the replacement for its aging KC-135 fleet.

Boeing has pitched its 767, while Airbus, which has teamed with Northrop Grumman, is touting its larger A330.

Boeing is favoured to win the \$US40 billion contract for 179 aircraft.

The eventual purchase would be \$125 billion for 530 aircraft.

Airbus has offered to set up an A330 production line in the US to help secure the order.

The Singapore Airshow has moved to a 40,000sqm purpose-built exhibition hall set on a 30ha development at Changi North.

Built on reclaimed land alongside Singapore's Changi Airport, the site also features a new six-lane road, aimed at improving accessibility.

More than 500 companies representing some 800 subsidiaries, principals and agents from 34 countries have booked exhibition space at the show.

The organisers have boldly claimed that the Singapore Airshow will be a hassle-free event.

According to Jimmy Lau, managing director of Singapore Airshow and Events, the show will be the "most comfortable place to do business" on the global airshow calendar.

"We have taken extensive feedback from regular visitors who have attended similar trade events around the world and compiled a hit list of complaints and frustrations common to airshows," he said.

A key problem is access to shows due to traffic and human congestion. "Visitors were frustrated with the long queues at the registration counters, security screening areas and food outlets," Lau said.

"With that in mind, we have introduced more food and beverage outlets on site and built a new six-lane road which will hopefully ease some of the traffic congestion.

"The use of the six lanes will be adjusted at key times of the day throughout the airshow, to keep traffic moving and ease access to and from the show site."

Innovations at this year's show include a smart mobile phone e-ticketing service, introduced to reduce queuing time.

Visiting guests who pre-register online receive a ticketing confirmation, which will come in the form of an e-mail and encoded SMS text message.

Upon arrival at the show site, they will be able to receive their badges by scanning the SMS text message at the e-ticketing booths.

Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology has also been introduced for the first time for all trade visitors.

With multiple re-entries throughout trade show days, RFID tagging will help reduce queues and ease daily access for both exhibitors and guests.

To take the heat out of the show, the organisers are encouraging all visitors to throw the suit and tie away and go casual.

The \$60 million exhibition site was completed last year and includes a 90,000sqm static display area and more than 100 chalets, all of which will feature roof gardens providing exhibitors with a 360-degree view of the show site and the aerial displays.

Organisers are expecting an attendance of more than 30,000 trade visitors, with more than half originating from overseas.

This year the Republic of Singapore Air Force's (RSAF) aerobatics team, the Black Knights, will make their first public display in eight years by opening the event.

The Black Knights feature six F-16 Fighting Falcons.

Kicking off the show will be Air Transport World's annual industry awards presentation on Monday.

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