

LCQ21: Flight safety of civilian passenger aircraft

Following is a question by Dr the Hon Hoey Simon Lee and a written reply by the Acting Secretary for Transport and Logistics, Mr Liu Chun-san, in the Legislative Council today (June 5):

Question:

It has been reported that a number of incidents involving passenger aircraft designed and manufactured by The Boeing Company (Boeing) have occurred in recent years, and some overseas aviation authorities have pointed out that there are deficiencies in the quality and design of Boeing 737 MAX and Boeing 787 passenger aircraft, and that Boeing 737 MAX passenger aircraft have even been grounded by aviation authorities of a number of countries recently. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) whether at present it has prohibited Boeing 737 MAX passenger aircraft from flying over Hong Kong;
- (2) whether at present it has imposed any additional requirements on overseas-registered Boeing 737 MAX passenger aircraft when they apply for entry into Hong Kong, and whether it has put forward any rectification requirements to Hong Kong-based airlines which own Boeing 737 MAX passenger aircraft, so as to ensure flight safety of such aircraft model;
- (3) whether it has compiled statistics on the models of passenger aircraft currently used by Hong Kong-based airlines;
- (4) whether it has assessed the possible impact of a total ban on the arrival of Boeing 787 or Boeing 737 MAX passenger aircraft on Hong Kong's air capacity; and
- (5) whether it has looked into and followed up the quality issues of aircraft models designed and manufactured by Boeing?

Reply:

President,

The Civil Aviation Department (CAD), as the regulator of civil aviation affairs, has been strictly regulating the operational safety and airworthiness of all aircraft registered in Hong Kong in accordance with the Air Navigation (Hong Kong) Order 1995 (Cap. 448C) and the requirements of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in order to safeguard aviation safety. The statutory requirements and airworthiness standards adopted in Hong Kong are in line with international standards. In accordance with the requirements of the Annex to the Convention on International Civil Aviation, the civil aviation authority of the State of Design (SoD) shall confirm the continued airworthiness of the aircraft type, while the civil

aviation authority of the State of Registry (SoR) shall be responsible for overseeing the safe operation of the aircraft registered in the State. The approving authority of the SoD shall also provide the relevant information on continued airworthiness to the civil aviation authority of the SoR, so that the latter can formulate detailed safety regulations to govern the safe operation of aircraft.

In consultation with the CAD, the reply to the Hon Lee's question is as follows:

(1), (2) and (5) As a precautionary measure, the CAD had temporarily prohibited all Boeing 737 MAX aircraft from entering, leaving or overflying Hong Kong from March 13, 2019 onwards. Subsequently, the Federal Aviation Administration of the United States (FAA) (i.e. the type-certification authority of Boeing 737 MAX), after conducting detailed investigation and flight test prior to flight resumption, issued an airworthiness directive in November 2020 on the relevant corrective measures (including aircraft design, operational procedures and training of pilots). Making reference to international practices and having assessed the relevant corrective measures issued and endorsed by the FAA, starting from January 2022, the CAD decided that Boeing 737 MAX aircraft that fully comply with the safety standards and have completed the relevant corrective measures would be allowed to enter Hong Kong's airspace.

According to the the CAD's records, there are currently no Boeing 737 MAX aircraft registered in Hong Kong.

To ensure the safe operation of all Boeing aircraft registered in Hong Kong, the CAD has been highly concerned about the relevant investigations involving Boeing aircraft as well as the latest information on regulatory bodies, and has maintained close liaison with the approving authorities and aircraft manufacturers through various channels. The CAD assesses from time to time the impact of any latest development on locally registered Boeing aircraft and requires local airlines to conduct comprehensive assessments and take appropriate follow-up actions, including inspecting their fleets as appropriate and in a timely manner.

In addition, in order to strengthen the safety oversight of foreign-registered aircraft, the CAD will continue to conduct safety assessment inspections on foreign-registered aircraft under a risk-based principle to ensure that aircraft operating in Hong Kong comply with international safety standards.

(3) Statistics on the types of passenger aircraft used by Hong Kong-based airlines as at March 28, 2024 are as follows.

Aircraft Type	Number
Airbus A320	60
Airbus A330	59

Airbus A350	48
Boeing 737	8
Boeing 777	55

(4) During the period from March 26, 2023 to March 30, 2024 (i.e. 2023 Summer and 2023 Winter seasons), the number of passenger flights operated by Boeing 787 or Boeing 737 aircraft accounted for about 13 per cent of the total number of passenger flights at Hong Kong International Airport.

At present, major civil aviation authorities such as the Civil Aviation Administration of China and the European Union Aviation Safety Agency have not imposed any flight ban on Boeing 787 or Boeing 737 aircraft. The CAD will continue to closely monitor the development of the incident and the airworthiness recommendations issued by the civil aviation authorities, make timely assessment and take appropriate measures to ensure aviation safety in Hong Kong.