

# MAX anti-stall software fix ready

New York, United States

A fix to the anti-stall system suspected in the crash of a Boeing 737 MAX 8 jet that killed 189 people in Indonesia is ready, industry sources said Saturday, as the company tries to avoid a lengthy grounding of its planes.

Boeing was due to present the patch to officials and pilots of US airlines -- American, Southwest and United -- in Renton, Washington state, where the plane is assembled, other sources said.

"Boeing has already finalized the necessary corrective measures for the MAX," an aviation sector source told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) will receive the patch "early next week," a government source added.

Asked how long the certification process could take after the

patch is in the hands of the authorities, this source said that nothing has been decided yet.

The FAA declined to comment. The Lion Air crash in Indonesia last October and another accident this month involving an Ethiopian Airlines jet, which killed 346 people between them, have raised major concerns about the safety certification of the 737 MAX 8 model.

The Ethiopian Airlines crash on March 10 led to the global grounding of 737 MAX planes.

Although it will take months to determine the exact cause of both crashes, investigators in the Lion case have honed in on the MCAS automated anti-stalling system designed to point the nose of the plane downward if it is in danger of stalling, or losing lift.

American Airlines and Southwest pilots were set to test simulators with the updates on Saturday, according to the sources.

Boeing neither

confirmed nor denied the information.

The FAA had given until April for Boeing to make the necessary changes to the critical anti-stall system, and on March 15 two anonymous industry sources told AFP the upgrade would be ready in about 10 days.

A spokesman for United Airlines, whose fleet includes 14 of the 737 MAX 9 planes, confirmed the company's attendance at the training session.

## Consumer protection

Southwest and its SWAPA pilots union "have subject matter experts from our Technical Pilot Team and Training Teams headed to Boeing to review documentation and training associated with the modification to the B737 speed trim system," a spokeswoman said.

The company is one of the biggest 737 MAX 8 cus-

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tom-ers, owning 34 of the planes. "We've been working diligently and in close cooperation with the FAA on the software update. We are taking a comprehensive and careful approach to design, develop and test the software that will ultimately lead to certification," a Boeing spokeswoman said.

"There will be training provided by Boeing."

In addition to the software modification, the industry sources said Boeing has also finalized updates to its flight and pilots' training manuals, as the FAA asked.

"We have been engaging with all 737 MAX operators and we are continuing to schedule meetings to share information about our plans for supporting the 737 MAX fleet," the Boeing spokeswoman said, declining to confirm the timeline for the changes.

In another

modification, the 737 MAX will be outfitted with a warning light for malfunctions in the anti-stall system, an industry source told AFP on Thursday, standardizing a feature previously sold as an optional extra.

Neither the Lion Air aircraft nor the Ethiopian Airlines jet had the feature, the industry source said.

US and Ethiopian authorities have said this month's crash of Ethiopian Airlines Flight ET302 near Addis Ababa bore "similarities" to last year's Lion Air crash. Since the Ethiopian crash, pressure has intensified on Boeing and the image of the company -- which also makes combat aircraft and space equipment -- has been eroded.

Share value of the firm, which says it is the world's largest aerospace manufacturer, has dropped 12 percent since the accident, wiping out \$28 billion in market capitalization.

Boeing and the FAA are un-

der investigation by the Transportation Department over how the rollout of the jet was handled, including the anti-stall system.

The acting FAA head is among transport officials who are to testify on Wednesday before a congressional subcommittee.

Questioning is likely to focus on tight links between Boeing and the regulators, who maintain offices in the airplane factories and delegated a large part of the certification process for the 737 MAX and its anti-stall system to employees of Boeing, sources said.

Press reports say that the Department of Justice has also opened a criminal investigation into the 737 MAX's development.

Ralph Nader, the veteran US consumer protection advocate who lost a relative in the Ethiopia crash, called Friday for an organization to defend passengers' rights.



## Jakarta opens mass rapid transit system

- The multi-billion dollar project is funded through a loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

- The train system runs above and below ground

- The line expects 130,000 daily passengers

Jakarta, Indonesia

Indonesia's capital inaugurated its first mass rapid transit system on Sunday, a \$1.1 billion project seen as crucial to tackling some of the world's worst traffic congestion.

President Joko Widodo and other officials joined a ceremony in Jakarta to give a green light for the 16-kilometre (10 mile) line, almost six years after construction began on the Japanese-backed project.

Tens of thousands of excited Jakartans were in attendance and eager to try riding on the subway for the first time, mobbing the president for selfies while music blared and traditional performers danced on a nearby stage.

"Honestly I am so happy," office worker Mutia Fitrianti told AFP. "Now we don't have to go abroad just to ride an MRT."

The train system runs above and below ground and stretches from the central Hotel Indonesia to the southern reaches of the Southeast Asian megalopolis of some 30 million people.

It aims to cut travel times between the two points to just



Passengers on board a Jakarta mass rapid transit (MRT) coach during a trial run in the city



Indonesia's President Joko Widodo (R) greets people gathered outside the Bundaran HI mass rapid transit (MRT) station

30 minutes from around two hours, offering some relief to frustrated commuters long used to spending much of their day stuck in traffic.

The new line is set to open to the public on Monday, with tickets free during the first week.

Construction on a second line linking downtown to Jakarta's northern port is also kicking off Sunday with completion slated for 2024, and more lines are envisioned in the future.

A separate elevated rail net-

work is also being built to link satellite cities with Jakarta, nicknamed the Big Durian after the pungent fruit that bitterly divides fans and its detractors.

The public transit projects are part of a sweeping infrastructure push that Widodo hopes will boost the fortunes of Southeast Asia's biggest economy -- and get him re-elected in national polls next month.

"If we have and integrated transportation system, it will be easier for people to go places

and they will leave their cars or motorcycles at home," Widodo told journalists yesterday.

## Clogged streets

Over the past decade, rising incomes in the country of 260 million have created a ballooning middle class and sent vehicle ownership soaring.

But that's also brought hazardous air pollution and annual economic losses that run into the billions as cars crawl along the capital's roadways in the steamy tropical heat -- alongside an underused bus system.

Environmentalists hope that the new line will cut traffic-linked carbon emissions by about half.

It could also make a dent in annual economic losses of some 65 trillion Rupiah (\$4.6 billion) linked to road congestion.

The multi-billion dollar project is funded through a loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

"We think MRT Jakarta is the project of the century for us," JICA senior vice president Tanaka Yasushi told reporters.

But transport analysts have cautioned that the new line and cheap prices will not cure the traffic woes of a city infatuated with private vehicles and with few decent sidewalks.

"The MRT won't immediately ease the traffic because changing the culture and attitudes isn't easy," Hendi Bowoputro, a public transit expert at the University of Brawijaya, told AFP before the inauguration.

And the line's expected 130,000 daily passengers represent only about 10 percent of those who already cram into a decades-old commuter rail network.

## Last hurdle for EU copyright reform in European Parliament

Strasbourg, France

The European Parliament will vote Tuesday on controversial copyright reforms championed by news publishers and the music business but criticised by big tech and internet freedom activists.

The run-up to the vote has seen furious lobbying and protests by both supporters and opponents of the law, which is designed to update European copyright legislation that is now nearly two decades old.

The reform, two years in the making, is loudly backed by media companies and artists, who want to obtain a better return from web platforms -- such as YouTube or Facebook -- that use their content.

It is strongly opposed by some of those same internet giants such as YouTube-owned Google, which make huge profits from the advertising generated on content they host, and also by supporters of a free internet, who fear it

will result in unprecedented restrictions to web freedom.

Tens of thousands of protesters rallied in cities around Germany on Saturday under the slogan "Save the Internet".

There were similar protests in Austria, Poland and Portugal on Saturday.

Germany is at the heart of the anti-reform movement, led by Julia Reda, a 32-year-old Pirate Party MEP, who has led a campaign against two of the law's provisions that have become flashpoints in the debate.

First is Article 13, which aims to strengthen the bargaining power of rights holders with platforms such as YouTube, Facebook and Soundcloud, which use their content.

In the reform, for the first time European law would hold platforms legally responsible for enforcing copyright, requiring them to check everything that their users post to prevent infringement.



A protestor holds a plastic "Godzilla" and a portrait of German member of European Parliament Axel Voss during a demonstration under the slogan "Save The Internet" against the planned copyright law in Berlin