

# Nok Anna leads flock of six

**BOONSONG KOSITCHOTETHANA**

Nok Air took delivery of the first of the six Q400 NextGen turboprop aircraft it ordered from Bombardier aimed at strengthening the budget carrier's regional network.

The airline yesterday released a picture showing the 68-seat aircraft, named Nok Anna, taking off from the Canadian aircraft maker's Toronto facilities.

The delivery followed Nok Air's move last month to convert two of the four previously placed options for such aircraft into firm orders.

The conversion, valued at US\$66 million, raised the total commitments for the Nok Air to six.

The move reflects Nok Air's strategy to further consolidate its secondary route network, which has seen a vacuum following a break-up earlier this year with Siam General Aviation (SGA).

SGA has since March 30 ceased operation after serving a "letter of termination"

to Nok Air to suspend charter services on secondary routes for the budget airline, and grounding all its six Saab 340B turboprops, each with 34 seats, which served those low-density routes, mostly domestic.

Nok Air executives said the Q400s will not only play a major role in the airline's domestic development, but also in the international expansion.

The SET-listed airline is looking at new destinations such as Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia — areas with airports not serviceable by jets but accessible with the Q400 turboprop.

Nok Air is expected to have a total fleet of four Q400s by the end of 2014, with the two additional orders joining the fleet in 2015.

The Q400s will essentially replace two ageing ATR-72 turboprops it leased from Thai Airways International.

NOK shares closed yesterday on the Stock Exchange of Thailand at 16.20 baht, unchanged, in trade worth 12.8 million baht.