

Andal receives second service as AI launches Hyd operations

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Kolkata: The Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport at Andal near Durgapur received its second service on Sunday as Air India, which was already running three flights a week to Delhi, started another thrice-a-week operation between Hyderabad and the industrial belt in Burdwan.

The inaugural flight touched down at Andal with 67 passengers around 12.55am on Sunday. The return flight took off around 2am with 107 passengers. The flight reached Hyderabad around 4.15am.

Sunday's flight is the second service from the greenfield airport after Air India resumed services between Delhi and Durgapur in April last year. However, unlike the Delhi flight, the one to Hyderabad is a red-eye flight, arriving past midnight and taking off in the early hours of the day.

The flight is to be operated with the 144 all economy seater Airbus A319 aircraft that will fly between Hyderabad and Durgapur every Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. While the timings are odd, airline officials opined low pricing and the timing itself would be attractive to passengers.

"Bookings for the next few days are also encouraging. Because of the late night journey, people can fly at night and save the day. This flight will allow passengers to catch connecting flights from Hyderabad to other states in south India at ease as they would reach Hyderabad as early as 4.30am. This timing will surely act as a catalyst for passengers to take this flight," said Apurva Sharma, the airport director.

Sharma added the passengers were excited for the new flight as some of them

TAKING WINGS



The inaugural flight touched down at Andal with 67 passengers around 12.55am on Sunday

had turned up at the airport six hours before the flight's departure. "The passengers were excited as the inaugural flight landed and the fliers were greeted by airport staff. From next Wednesday, we will run a survey asking passengers about additional services and facilities they would like to have at the airport," said Sharma.

The director also said that they were expecting SpiceJet, which won bids for two flights in Udaan 3, to start operating their flights to Chennai and Mumbai in the next two months.

"The Chennai service too is likely to begin by the end of March. By the middle of April, services between Mumbai and Durgapur may be launched," Apurva Sharma added.

FLIGHT DETAILS

Aircraft | Airbus A319

Capacity | 144 passengers

Sunday passenger count | 67 arrival, 107 departure

Time | Arrival: 1am; Departure: 2am

Days in service | Wednesday, Friday, Sunday

ALREADY OPERATIONAL

► Air India flight between Delhi and Durgapur; thrice a week

ON THE CARDS

► SpiceJet flight to Chennai by end of March

► SpiceJet flight to Mumbai by mid-April

Developed by Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Ltd (BAPL), the Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport at Durgapur is India's first operational private greenfield airport. Air India had resumed operations on the Durgapur-Delhi-Durgapur sector last April. Unlike the earlier stint, when AI operated flights with viability gap funding (the state or airport operator's commitment to fund a certain number of seats if they remained unsold), it returned with a commercial flight that had no such constraints.

In August last year, the directorate general of civil aviation cleared the operation of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) at the airport that allowed it to continue operations even after dusk.