

Druk Air plans new flight to Guwahati

posted by Saraswati, 13 March 2010



Druk Air is mulling a flight to the capital of the neighboring Indian state of Assam, Guwahati, a prominent business destination for many Bhutanese.

"The situation has improved drastically over a few months," the Consul General of the Bhutan Consulate at Kolkota, Dasho Tshering Wangda, told Business Bhutan over phone referring to the security scenario along the Indo-Bhutan border. He had met with the Assam Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi and proposed the Paro-Guwahati flight.

The General Manager of the Commercial division of Druk Air, Tshering Penjore, has confirmed that the national airline will commence flight operations with Assam on the Paro-Guwahati- Bangkok route by October this year and later extended till Patna, india. "We are still working on the plan," he said adding that the plan is to have two flights a week in the sector.

If the projects work out, then Bhutan will be connected with all major business destinations in the region. Last year, Druk Air began its Bagdora flight, which has increased the traffic between the business hub of India's north eastern region, Siliguri. The Bagdora flight also brought to Bhutan, many foreign tourists who visited Darjeeling, internationally known as the Queen of the Hills.

Bhutan, especially the eastern region, has shared historical trade relations with Guwahati - recently rated as one of the world's fastest growing 100 cities - which is only around 100 kilometers from Samdrup Jongkhar.

But since 2003, the year Bhutan flushed out Indian militants, this city was tagged under a travel advisory for the fear of attacks from extremists including ULFA, KLO and NDFB. Even along the Indian national highway connecting Phuentsholing and Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutanese have to travel with an army convoy fearing attacks.

But with the lifting of the travel advisory, which Dasho Tshering Wangda said Bhutan was considering, businessmen and students can move freely in Assam.

The Chirag district in Assam which is a popular destination for businessmen from Bhutan who bore the consequences of the ban is happy with the news of the lift.

"I am glad that the movement would be safe now, and we need not worry about convoys anymore," said Malati, who owns an import house in the capital.

The Indian media, quoting the Consul General, said the number of tourists visiting Bhutan will increase with the introduction of the flight to Guwahati, a city considered as the gateway to north-east India.

"The tour operators here (in Assam) have given me a positive feedback of the feasibility of starting flights from Bhutan to Guwahati," said Dasho Tshering Wangda.

During his visit to the bordering state, the Consul General also discussed with the chief minister issues relating to scope in tourism, health and education sectors where the two countries can partner.