

## **Drukair in the Orient**

**Date:** Sunday, April 18 @ 03:03:00 EDT

**Topic:** home

**18 April, 2010** - The national airline, Drukair, is conducting feasibility studies to start operating to either Hong Kong or Singapore. The study will be completed by the year-end and Drukair will start operations to either destination by March 2011, said officials.

Commercial general manager, Tshering Penjore, said that preliminary studies show that Bhutanese traffic to Singapore is mostly for official work, while with Hong Kong it is primarily commercial. "There's good tourism appeal with Hong Kong," he said.

Meanwhile, Drukair's leased ATR-42 twin turboprop aircraft will arrive by April 21. Drukair will use the aircraft for the next nine months to operate to Kolkata and Kathmandu. It will also be on standby during the upcoming SAARC summit.

Although the airline is already in discussions to buy a third airbus A-319, the possibility that a smaller turboprop aircraft being purchased instead also exists.

A smaller aircraft would mean lower operating costs to the short and low traffic sectors of Kolkata and Kathmandu. But it would also mean higher maintenance costs, since two types of aircrafts would have to be serviced by Drukair.

Drukair's evaluation of the ATR, and civil aviation's decision on who will operate domestic routes in Bhutan, will determine what aircraft it eventually buys.

**By Gyalsten K Dorji**

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