

KSA to launch new USD 30bn RIA airlines

A Monitor Report

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Riyadh : The new Saudi national carrier RIA will begin operations using small narrow bodies planes for regional flight initially, said reports.

RIA airlines is due to launch in the final months of 2022, as a second national carrier alongside the existing SAUDIA. It has long term plans to become a major international carrier, competing with Emirates and Qatar Airways on major routes. Etihad CEO Tony Douglas is in talks to head up the carrier.

However, according to reports, the initial launch phase will be more low key. "The ambition is huge but you cannot start operating direct flights to the UK and USA on day one. Regardless of complex negotiations underway for traffic rights, you need the planes, many of which take a long time to be secured - and all the infrastructure and personnel."

It is believed that deals are being struck with Boeing for its 737 MAX planes, which have a range of less than 4,000 miles.

"It will be regional to begin with as they scale up," reports added.

RIA is the centrepiece of Saudi Arabia's USD 100 billion investment in the aviation industry as part of its Vision 2030 plans.

A third national carrier, based in NEOM, is also being considered.

RIA will be based out of Riyadh, while SAUDIA will operate from Jeddah.

