

AirAsia X to establish Bahrain hub, relaunch London service in 2026

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Dhaka: Malaysian low-cost long-haul carrier AirAsia X announced plans to establish Bahrain as its first hub outside Southeast Asia, marking a major step in its international expansion strategy. In addition, the airline will launch a new service linking Kuala Lumpur, Bahrain, and London-Gatwick starting June 2026.

The Kuala Lumpur-Bahrain-London route will mark AirAsia X's return to the British capital more than a decade after suspending direct services to London Gatwick and London Stansted. The carrier previously operated Airbus A340 aircraft on long-haul routes before retiring the fleet as part of a strategic shift.

The expansion follows a Letter of Intent signed in November 2025 between parent company Capital A and Bahrain's Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications.

AirAsia X said Bahrain's geographic location makes it an attractive gateway connecting Southeast Asia with the Middle East and Europe. The kingdom sits along major travel corridors, allowing the airline to tap into transit traffic flows beyond its traditional point-to-point model from Malaysia.

Group CEO Bo Lingam described the move as a milestone in the airline's post-pandemic recovery. He said the carrier has emerged from the COVID-19 crisis with renewed financial discipline and a clearer strategic focus.

Bahrain's government also welcomed the development, saying the agreement reflects the country's ambition to position itself as a regional aviation hub and strengthen global connectivity.

The new service will be operated with AirAsia X's Airbus A330 fleet. The twin-aisle aircraft currently serve the airline's Istanbul route and offer the range and capacity required for Middle East and European operations while maintaining cost efficiency under the low-cost model.

These recent announcements came after AirAsia completed a broader restructuring. In January 2026, the group finalized the acquisition of all short-haul aviation businesses from Capital A, consolidating seven airlines under the AirAsia X banner.

Capital A had faced financial distress during the pandemic under Malaysia's PN17 framework. The company said it has now completed its regularization plan, paving the way for renewed growth.

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