

Saudi Airlines plans major fleet expansion

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 15 December, 2024



Riyadh: Saudi Airlines Group is set to acquire 191 new aircraft as part of a bold fleet expansion plan designed to strengthen the Kingdom's aviation sector ahead of two major global events: Expo 2030 in Riyadh and the FIFA World Cup 2034.

Group spokesperson Abdullah Al Shahrani stated that the final aircraft will be delivered by 2032, increasing the fleet size to approximately 381 planes.

This modernization and expansion initiative is a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's strategy to accommodate the millions of visitors anticipated for these landmark events. The current fleet of 190 aircraft will nearly double to meet rising travel demands. "This upgrade is crucial for enhancing connectivity and ensuring seamless travel experiences for visitors," Al Shahrani added.

Al Shahrani also revealed that electric aircraft will play a key role during Expo 2030 and the World Cup, providing swift, eco-friendly transport between host cities.

Additionally, Saudi Airlines plans to double its destinations to 200 international routes by 2030. Currently serving 100 destinations, the expanded network will enhance global access to Saudi Arabia during these landmark events and beyond.

The aviation sector is a cornerstone of Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, contributing \$53 billion annually to the national economy. This includes \$20.8 billion from aviation activities and \$32.2 billion from tourism. The influx of visitors for Expo 2030 and the World Cup is expected to further accelerate economic growth, solidifying the Kingdom's position as a global hub for tourism and innovation.

Expo 2030, with an estimated budget of \$7.8 billion, is projected to attract 40 million visitors. Four years later, Saudi Arabia will host the first-ever World Cup featuring 48 teams, with matches spread across Riyadh, Jeddah, Al Khobar, NEOM, and Abha. These events are anticipated to drive unprecedented demand for air travel, spurring investments in infrastructure and new transportation models, including electric aircraft.

To support this transformation, the General Authority of Civil Aviation (GACA) has launched an aviation roadmap aiming to multiply the sector's contribution to Saudi Arabia's GDP tenfold by 2030, reaching \$2 billion.

-B