

## Saudia to introduce electric jet service

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Riyadh: Saudia Airlines' electric jet, made by German manufacturer Lilium, marks a step toward zero-carbon commercial flights for medium-sized aircraft.

Daniel Wiegand, co-founder and chief engineer of innovation at Lilium, stated that both companies are considering opportunities beyond the initial order of 50 jets, which Saudia acquired for at least \$7 million (Dh25.7 million) each, with an option to purchase an additional 50, according to Saudia's reports.

Lilium aims to launch a 50 to 80-seat electric aircraft capable of flying 1,000 kilometre by 2035, and a 100-seater with a 2,000 kilometre range by 2045.

Saudia officials showcased the jet for the first time at a global logistics forum in Riyadh this week, announcing that the first unit will enter

service in 2026, with more to follow from the Munich production line.

In addition to Lilium, there are seven other major manufacturers of electric aircraft, primarily marketed as air taxis or flying cars. The futuristic Saudi city Neom is also utilising a smaller model called Volocopter, which resembles a helicopter.

The Lilium jet features vertical take-off and landing capabilities without rotors. Although this design consumes more battery power, it facilitates quick boarding and disembarking at urban helipads, eliminating the need for runways.

The jet will be available in two configurations: a luxury four-seater and a six-seater, offering regular services from Jeddah and Riyadh to nearby tourist and pilgrimage sites within a 175-kilometre radius.

Wiegand emphasised that the electric jet is cheaper to operate than traditional planes and, with battery packs located on the wings instead of fuel tanks, it produces significantly less noise.

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