

SIA plans 'flights to nowhere' by end-October to tackle COVID-19 crisis

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 16 September, 2020



Dhaka: Singapore Airlines (SIA) is eyeing to launch no-destination flights that will depart from and land in Changi Airport next month, in a bid to give its ailing business a lift during the coronavirus crisis.

Reports said the national carrier is working towards launching this option for domestic passengers - dubbed "flights to nowhere" - by end-October.

They said SIA also plans to explore a partnership with the Singapore Tourism Board to allow interested passengers to partially pay for such flights with tourism credits that will be given out by the government.

Each flight is expected to take about three hours.

Stefan Wood, Director of aircraft charter firm Singapore Air Charter, said that that he had approached SIA about the possibility of setting up a joint venture to provide such flights to nowhere using the Airbus A-350 planes from SIA. But he said the

talks stalled recently, with SIA indicating interest in going ahead with such plans on its own.

According to reports, a SIA spokesman said, "SIA is considering several initiatives that would allow us to continue engaging both our customers and members of the public."

"We will make an announcement at the appropriate time if we go ahead with these plans."

Several airlines worldwide, including Royal Brunei Airlines in Brunei and EVA Air in Taiwan, have piloted flights to nowhere in an attempt to cope with the drastic fall in demand for air travel due to the coronavirus pandemic.

While SIA did not provide any details on its proposed flights to nowhere, Wood said he had envisioned a bundle package for such no-destination flights. This would have included partnerships with hotels to offer staycations, shopping vouchers at Jewel Changi Airport and a limousine service to ferry customers around.

He is confident that there will be demand for such flights in Singapore should they eventually be launched. A survey of 308 people that his firm conducted found 75 per cent were willing to pay for flights to nowhere.

The most popular price that respondents were willing to pay for an economy class seat was USD 288, with 45 per cent of respondents saying they were willing to do so. Meanwhile, 40 per cent said they were willing to pay USD 588 for a business class seat.

Sixty per cent of respondents said they would prefer the flight to last for two hours.