INNOVATIVE UK-BASED AIRLINES FIRNAS AIRWAYS LAUNCHES

News / Airlines

UK carrier **Firnas Airways** has **launche**d a Gulf funding campaign in a bid to raise the US$50 million it requires for expansion.

The airline's founder and CEO, British entrepreneur Kazi Shafiqur Rahman, is confident Gulf investors will be keen to capitalise on an airline concept and business model that is unique in its scope and ambition.

Firnas Airways will establish routes between the UK and Bangladesh, Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia that are currently un-served or underserved but offer huge commercial potential.

"These are routes that remain unexploited. Firnas Airways will fill the void by providing a world-class, premium service at economy prices," said Rahman.

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“Safety and security will be a top priority. We are developing innovative concepts with the relevant authorities to push the boundaries in this field.”

As a ‘halal’ carrier, Firnas Airways will provide unrivalled services for the large British Muslim population travelling to the Middle East and Asia. Bespoke services will include high-quality halal cuisine, kiblats and an alcohol-free refreshment offering.

Rahman is hoping to secure Shariah-compliant capital for his venture, which to date he has self-funded.

The $50 million cash boost will support operations for the first three years from launch including the cost of leasing three Boeing 767-300ER aircraft.

The airline will retrofit these with “new dynamic seating concepts” that will offer passengers generous legroom, as well as a state-of-the-art in-flight entertainment system and free Wi-Fi.

The carrier is currently in talks with London’s five major airports with a view to establishing the airline’s UK hub. Airport authorities in target markets have warmly welcomed the new airline’s proposed services.

Steering the airline’s expansion plans is the recently appointed managing director, Kevin Steele, an airline industry veteran with more than 30 years’ experience.

Steele is the former managing director and CEO of Biman Bangladesh Airlines and has also held senior management roles with airlines including Arik Air, Sama, Etihad Airways and British Airways.

“We are now ready to take our business to the next level,” said Rahman.

“With Kevin on board and funding in place, we will be able to work towards a 2016 launch date.”

Rahman will be staging talks with prospective Middle East investors later this month when he attends the inaugural World Halal Travel Summit & Exhibition (WHTS15) in Abu Dhabi (October 19-21).

The global halal travel industry was worth $140 billion in 2013 and is predicted to rise to at least $238 billion by 2019, according to Thomson Reuters figures, and Firnas Airways is looking to establish itself as a major player in this market.

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