RUSSIAN BUDGET AIRLINE POBEDA'S DEAL WITH BELARUS FAILS TO TAKE OFF

News / Airlines

Russia's only budget airline, **Pobeda**, will not be sending flights to **Belarus** yet due to the countries' failure to reach an agreement on tariffs and air carrier slots, the Vedomosti newspaper reported Thursday.

Minsk was supposed to be Pobeda's first international destination after the airline was recently granted permission to fly abroad, but the airport didn't allocate slots for the Russian air carrier and wanted to impose ? barrage of tariffs, an unidentified Pobeda representative told the newspaper.

Single-passenger tariffs required by Minsk National Airport exceed Pobeda's minimum ticket price on international destinations, which currently stands at 999 rubles ($15), Pobeda's representative said, adding that the average passenger airport tax in Moscow is around 600 rubles ($9).

Pobeda said it will request the Russian Transportation Ministry's assistance in resolving this issue.

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But some experts told Vedomosti that Belarus was creating obstacles for the Russian budget airline in order to prevent competition in the market.

Belarussian authorities denied imposing a ban on the flights of the Russian budget airline.

“We are outraged by this report,” Vladimir Kostin, director of the aviation department of the Belarussian Ministry of Transport and Communications, was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency Thursday. He added that negotiations concerning Pobeda's flights to Minsk have not been conducted yet.

Currently, flights between Moscow and Belarus are only being carried out by Russia's Aeroflot and Belarussian national airline Belavia.

Pobeda, a subsidiary of Russia's flag carrier Aeroflot, was set up last year to replace Aeroflot's budget subsidiary Dobrolyot, which was forced to ground all flights after it was included on the European Union's list of sanctioned companies last year.

Last month, Pobeda received permission to offer service to five international destinations — Minsk, Cologne, Bratislava, Dresden and Chambery — after amendments to Russian aviation regulations were made.

As a result of the disagreement with Minsk, Bratislava will become Pobeda's first international destination. Flights will start on that route as of Dec. 19.

On Thursday, the company started sales of tickets to Bratislava and Vienna, which involves a flight to Bratislava's airport and then a bus to Vienna.

In the first 10 hours since the start of sales, 2,700 tickets have been sold, RIA Novosti reported, citing an unidentified company representative.

Media reported Thursday that customers had been experiencing difficulties while booking tickets with Pobeda. For instance, the cheapest 999 ruble fares were no longer available. As of 2 a.m. on Thursday the cost of the cheapest one-way ticket to Vienna was 4,639 rubles ($72), the RBC newspaper reported.

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