

## Dubai, Syria to Launch New Airlines

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Two new airliners are to join the rapidly developing aviation industry in the Middle East.

Ruler of Dubai, Sheikh Muhammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, earlier this week instructed concerned authorities to set up a low-cost carrier that will join the national airliner Emirates, the local daily Gulf News reported.

Chairman of Emirates, Sheikh Ahmad Bin Sa'id Al Maktoum, will also preside as chairman of the new company. Nevertheless, sources in Emirates stressed that the two airlines will be completely separate.

"Dubai's open-skies policy encourages the growth of air transport, which has and continues to contribute to the development of this city. The new airline, a low-cost carrier, will complement the international air services already provided by Emirates," Sheikh Ahmad told reporters.

The rapidly growing tourism industry in the United Arab Emirates has fuelled growth in the country's aviation industry. The two main national airlines, the Dubai-based Emirates and Abu Dhabi's Etihad, as well as the low-cost carrier Air Arabia, have added many new destinations to their networks during the course of 2007.

In November 2007, Emirates placed orders for 93 new aircraft, with a total value of nearly \$35 billion, the largest-ever single order announcement in aviation history.

Another airline, Dubai Aerospace, plans to enter the international aviation leasing market. It recently signed agreements to order between 100 and 200 planes.

Meanwhile, the Syrian parliament has approved a draft law regarding the establishment of a second Syrian airliner - Syria's Pearl.

The new carrier will be a joint company comprised of Syrian Air and several private companies, including one from Kuwait.

Syria's Pearl will complement the activities of Syrian Air and will provide services to sectors that the latter does not reach, said Syria's Transportation Minister Y'arab Badr, according to Syria's official news agency SANA.

The new carrier will start off with two airplanes and will develop according to needs, Badr added.

In Saudi Arabia Saudi Arabian Airlines (SAA) late last year signed agreements with Airbus for the purchase of 30 A320 planes. The first group of planes is due to arrive by mid-2012.

SAA has already placed orders to buy 22 A320s at an estimated cost of \$1.7 billion. The 2007 agreement allows the airline to purchase eight additional A320s.

In a bid to modernize its fleet, the airline also announced it would lease 20 new aircraft by 2009 to meet growing passenger demand.

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