

Paramount signs \$1.50 bn deal with Airbus

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CHENNAI-BASED Paramount Airways, signed a MoU with Airbus to buy twenty A321 aircraft at the cost of \$1.50 billion marking its foray into the international sectors. The agreement was concluded at the 48th Le Bourget air show outside Paris between M Thiagarajan, Managing Director of Paramount Airways and John Leahy, Airbus Chief Operating Officer on Thursday.

While delivery dates for the first 10 aircraft have already been finalised, the delivery for the next 10 is flexible, according to sources.

Thiagarajan, however, chose to remain tight-lipped about the finer details of the deal and his expansion plans. "Being a private limited company we don't divulge our financial details but the project is being financed by the European Central Bank (ECB)," he said speaking to *Express*.

The company is planning to explore routes in the Middle

East, Far East and Africa. "It will be too premature to comment on the routes and destinations as we are planning to go international by the last quarter of 2010," Thiagarajan said. However, destinations like Mauritius and Seychelles are perhaps in the offing by this premium airline.

Paramount will continue with its business model it adopted for domestic operations. "A-321 was chosen keeping in mind the need to right size our operational frequency as against the number of

passengers to be able to fly at an optimum cost. We are going to have business class and first class offerings on the luxury configurations of this aircraft where in we will be able to offer flat beds for the first class. The idea is to stick to our business class service at an economy fare," Thiagarajan said. A-321 will have up to 160 seats.

Paramount's deal also marks its departure from the Embraer aircraft which it has been using so far for its domestic operations.

Air India asks seniors to forego July pay

New Delhi: Air India has asked its top executives to forego their salary for July, a spokesperson of the national carrier said here on Friday. "The management needs to indicate to all employees that every single paisa which can be saved needs to be saved," said Air India CMD Arvind Jadhav. Corporate directors, strategic business unit heads, executive directors and general managers have been asked to take the pay cut. "As a gesture to ease the liquidity crunch, Jadhav requested all executives above the level of general manager to voluntarily forego salary and productivity linked incentives payable in the month of July," said a company statement. — IANS