

WEST ASIA-BOUND

Kingfisher to fly Dubai from 8 Feb

BY TARUN SHUKLA

tarun.s@livemint.com

NEW DELHI

India's second biggest airline firm, **Kingfisher Airlines Ltd**, will launch its first flight to West Asia connecting Bangalore with Dubai next month, which could fuel another round of fare cuts on the sector.

Kingfisher Airlines had launched its international operations in September, connecting Bangalore with a daily non-stop London flight, followed by a Mumbai-London flight that started on Monday.

By end of January, Hong Kong, Singapore and Colombo will also become part of its network, the airline has said.

It will fly the **Airbus SAS**-made A320 aircraft for its daily Dubai flights with a single class economy offering from 8 February, according to an internal company note reviewed by *Mint*. A Kingfisher Airlines executive, who didn't want not be named, said the airline may launch more international

Jet Airways (India) Ltd, which launched West Asia operations last year after the civil aviation ministry lifted a ban restricting only Air India to fly the lucrative West Asian market, has already announced a free ticket for its Dubai flights for every economy or business class ticket bought from Tuesday.

An analyst said with the current economic scenario, it is difficult to imagine any major global expansion by an airline when everyone else is consolidating. Still, "the primary focus (for Kingfisher) will be establishing a presence and getting load factors going", said Kapil Arora, aviation analyst with audit and consultancy firm **Ernst and Young**.

Kingfisher, together with its low-cost carrier Kingfisher Red, flies about 438 flights a day with a fleet of 87 aircraft.

Arora predicted Indian carriers may eat into the share of the market controlled by West Asian carriers such as Emirates and **Gulf Air** by offering lower