

# Zoom Air eyes hub in Durgapur

Mohammad Asif

**Andal (Durgapur):** Zoom Air will begin commercial operations on the Delhi-Kolkata-Durgapur-Delhi sector from February 15 with plans to connect Mumbai and Hyderabad to the steel town later in April. The carrier is even contemplating a maintenance, repair and operations (MRO) base for regional jets at Andal by year-end.

Zoom Air CEO & director Koustav Dhar, who flew to Andal in a pre-launch flight on Sunday, said the airport would become the airline mini-hub as it launches flights to multiple destinations from here. Zoom will operate all the flights with 50-seater Bombardier CRJ 200 aircraft. It is a full-service carrier that will serve complementary meals on board.

"As more aircraft is inducted into the fleet, we will gradually add flights to Andal and eventually have four-five flights a day. We see potential business as the entire belt up to Dhanbad has a number of public sector giants as well as private firms whose executives currently travel via Kolkata," said Dhar.

Dhar said Zoom Air would aim to connect smaller cities like Durgapur with metros, thereby feeding other scheduled carriers like Air India, Jet Airways, IndiGo and SpiceJet with passengers. "There

## FLYING HIGH

| Sector           | Dep      | Arr      | Fare   |
|------------------|----------|----------|--------|
| Delhi-Kolkata    | 7.35 am  | 9.35 am  | ₹3,000 |
| Kolkata-Durgapur | 10.05 am | 10.35 am | ₹1,000 |
| Durgapur-Delhi   | 11.05 am | 12.45 pm | ₹3,500 |

Evening return flight is in the pipeline. Timings are yet to be decided

are many airports to which other airlines will not fly because they don't have an aircraft that can cater to 50-60 fliers a day. With our 50-seater jet planes, we are perfectly placed to fill the gap," said Dhar.

While Zoom is beginning operations with connections to Durgapur, Kolkata, Delhi, Chandigarh and Amritsar it plans to add flights to Surat, Bhavnagar, Mumbai, Aurangabad, Jabalpur, Shillong and Aizwal in the summer schedule and Tirupati, Vijaywada, Vizag, Aizwal, Pasighat, Zero, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, Indore and Bhopal thereafter.

The carrier has two CRJ-200s now and three more Bombardier jets, that are currently undergoing C-check, are expected



An aircraft receives water salute at Andal Airport

to get the DGCA nod for operations by next month. With plans to further augment the fleet to 10 aircraft by year-end, Dhar said he needed to establish an MRO base and Andal was likely to be the airport of choice.

The Bombardier Canadair Regional Jets used by Zoom Air are long-range versions fitted with high performance CF34-3B19 engines. "The planes are extremely versatile for short-sector flying and aptly suited for tier-II and tier-III cities, including a major support to the ministry of civil aviation's initiative for Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS). In fact, we are the first airline to support and join RCS," said Dhar.