

# Flights resume as NCAA certifies Abuja airport

LAGOS, Nigeria: Airlines will resume operations, one day ahead of the deadline, after completion of repair works on the runway of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport (NAIA), Abuja.



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Information from the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) stated this yesterday. It said an Ethiopian Airline flight will be the first to land at the newly renovated runway.

It would be recalled that the second busiest airport had been closed down for six weeks, from 8 March 2017, while the Abuja-bound traffic was diverted to Kaduna International Airport.

The Federal Government had promised that the airport would reopen on Wednesday even as the Minister of State for Aviation, Senator Hadi Sirika, put his job on the line, promising to resign if the rehabilitation of the runway was not completed in six weeks.

The Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) managing director, Saleh Dunoma, had said the repair work was completed while the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) had inspected it and certified the airport.

Airlines, also commended the Federal Government for fulfilling the promise to reopen the airport tomorrow, saying they would resume flights in and out of the airport. An operator said, "We are happy that the Federal Government kept to its

promise and in due course, we will also resume Abuja flights."

It was learnt that the closure of the airport led to reduction in passenger movement due to what some people called the inconvenience of going to Kaduna.

Checks at the domestic wing of the airport showed that it was not busy despite the Easter holiday. "This is early morning and can you notice any rush", a passenger told Daily Trust at the MMA 2 yesterday.

Spokesman for Air Peace, Chris Iwarah, also said the airline would resume Abuja flights tomorrow, and commended air travellers for keeping faith with the airline and making a huge sacrifice to ensure repair of the bad portions of the runway of the Abuja airport.

The airline also praised the Federal Government and the Minister of State for Aviation for ensuring speedy completion of the repair work on the runway.

"We considered the decision of the Federal Government to shut down the airport for quick repair of its runway in tandem with the high safety standards of our flight operations. At Air Peace, the safety of our esteemed guests is our first rule of business. We do not compromise on that for any reason."

Meanwhile, Aviation Roundtable (ART) president Gabriel Olowo and another aviation expert, Ibrahim Yinusa Kazaure, have urged the government to sustain the same purposeful actions to turn around the sector towards delivering one per cent of GDP by 2020.

Olowo said, "We in ART salute the minister of aviation and his agencies for living true to the promise to deliver Abuja runway on schedule as we count down to April 19.

"It is our prayer that such purposeful actions are sustained in the sector as we demand that aviation delivers one per cent of Nigeria's GDP by 2020 as against the present meagre 0.4%. We demand for measurable growth on the airline side and the airports."

*Source: Daily Trust*