

AVIATION

Nok Air offers charter flights to Betong

POST REPORTERS

Nok Air has joined hands with three business allies to provide charter flights from Bangkok to Yala's Betong district for three months starting from April 29.

On Friday, Nok Air signed a memorandum of understanding with Tangmo Tour Co, CCT Group, and the Thai Tourism Promotion Association to provide the Bangkok-Betong flights.

The move was supported by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, Betong airport, the Betong municipality, and local restaurant and business operators in Betong.

On March 14, Nok Air inaugurated a regular service with a flight from Don Mueang to Betong carrying Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and other dignitaries, with the prime minister officially opening the airport for commercial services.

The following day, Nok Air cancelled all of its thrice-weekly flights from Bangkok to the airport, citing a lack of passengers.

The budget airline gave insufficient marketing time and consequently a lack of bookings as well as high operating costs as the reasons for its decision.

That left the country's southernmost

district with no regularly scheduled commercial flights linking it to Bangkok.

However, under the new MoU, Nok Air will provide three months of chartered flight service beginning on April 29, with 60 seats set aside for tour companies and the rest sold directly to passengers by the airline.

The companies have now launched marketing campaigns including a three-day/two-night package starting at 9,900 baht.

Earlier, businesses in Betong's tourism sector had said they could guarantee 60 seats on every Nok Air flight bound for the airport could be

filled if the airline agreed to lower its round-trip fares from Bangkok to 5,000 baht, according to the Betong Tourism Association.

The association said tour operators discussed the offer with the airline, which agreed to a fare of around 6,000 baht.

As those tickets now sell for around 7,000 baht, the TAT further urged the airline to cover the 1,000-baht difference, a suggestion Nok Air was mulling over.

Without direct air transport, tourists have to fly to Hat Yai and then travel to Betong by car.