

September 29th, 2005 - JALALABAD - Residents of the eastern Nangarhar province are faced with serious problems owing to continued suspension of flights between Kabul and Jalalabad over the last three months.

The government-owned Ariana and the private Kam-Airlines have suspended flights saying their large aircraft had problems landing at the Jalalabad airport. People traveling between Kabul and Jalalabad have to use the uneven and bumpy Lataband route which is not only time-consuming but a dangerous trek through jagged mountains.

Mohammad Nadir Hamdard, a local businessman and resident of Jalalabad, said his business had slowed down due to the continuous flight suspension between the two cities. "The land route is not only long and troublesome, but also unsafe from security point of view," he continued.

But officials of the two companies have their own logic for halting operations to Jalalabad. They said the companies did not have small planes while the Jalalabad airport had no landing facility for Boeing aircraft.

Speaking to Pajhwok Afghan News, Ariana president **Dr. Mohammad Nadir Atash** said: "No doubt, people are faced with a lot of problems, but we have our own limitations." He said Ariana had a fleet of big planes which could not make a landing at a small airport like Jalalabad. "As for as small planes are concerned, they are being repaired and the company will resume flights in the near future."

Fida Mohammad Fidwai, deputy director of Kam Airline, also said they did not have small planes to land at the airport. "We had only two small planes; one of them crashed near Kabul while the other was banned by the government," the director said, adding Kam Airline had only two planes for international and domestic flights.

By: Mustafa Basharat and Ezatullah Zawab