

**August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2005** – Kabul - Afghanistan's national flag-carrier Ariana Airlines will start airlifting fresh-fruit exports to Saudi Arabia from Thursday. Afghanistan International Chamber of Commerce head Hamidullah Qaderi told Pajhwok Afghan News on Wednesday 5,000 tons of apricots would be dispatched to Jeddah. An accord on airlifting the fruits to Saudi Arabia was signed here on Wednesday between the Ariana Airline and the Afghanistan International Chambers of Commerce.

Land-route exports involved several problems like transit and sea-port delays and non-cooperative attitude of neighbouring countries, said Qaderi, who was confident the agreement with Ariana would help overcome those hardships.

Ariana Airline chief **Dr. Nadir Atash** stated: "It's just the beginning of the exports, which may be increased if the results are found gainful." Under the deal, the airline will initially charge the exporters 10 afghanis (20 cents) per kilogram, a rate that could be revised later on.

Ghaffar Daudi, owner of the Daudi Company which exports fruits to the kingdom, pinned high hopes on the new arrangement of fruit shipments. With time, he believed, the fruits could be exported in a similar way to Asian countries, Europe and the United States. Commerce Ministry official Sayed Hashim Saadat revealed more than 70,000 tons of fresh fruits and more than 80,000 tons of dry fruits had been exported last year by the landlocked country.