ARABIAN GULF AIRLINES A TARGET AS TRUMP VOWS ‘PHENOMENAL’ TAX AID FOR US CARRIERS

News / Airlines

The US president Donald Trump assured US airline executives that his administration would help them to compete with foreign carriers that he said are subsidised by their governments, and promised infrastructure upgrades, lower regulation and tax relief.

"We have obsolete airports and train systems and bad roads," Mr Trump said in a meeting on Thursday with the companies and airport leaders at the White House. "You people are regulated probably as much as anybody. We are going to announce something over the next two or three weeks that will be phenomenal in terms of tax."

The meeting’s agenda will cover airport security, airline fees, regulation and an overhaul of the nation’s air-traffic-control system, a White House official said. The chief executives of American, Delta and United already have asked to meet with the secretary of state Rex Tillerson over their contention that Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad Airways are competing unfairly through government aid. All three carriers strongly refute the acusations.

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Airlines are the latest US industry to have its bosses called to the White House following meetings with car companies, drug makers and banks. The Southwest Airlines chief executive Officer Gary Kelly said last month he was "hopeful" the new administration would take up tax and regulatory changes as well as infrastructure investment, particularly in modernising air traffic control.

"The airline industry listening session breakfast is an opportunity for the president and his team to hear directly from the individuals who work day in and day out to improve consumer experience in air travel," said Lindsay Walters, a White House spokeswoman.

Executives from Delta Air Lines, United Continental and Southwest were expected to attend, along with counterparts from smaller airlines such as JetBlue Airways and Alaska Air. Freight majors United Parcel Service and FedEx were expected to be there, as were officials from airports in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles and smaller cities such as Nashville, Tennessee, and Buffalo, New York. Trade groups Airlines for America and Airports Council International also were expected to attend.

One notable absence: Doug Parker, the chief executive officer of American Airlines, the world’s largest carrier. He bowed out citing a scheduling conflict and has been in touch with the Trump administration, said a spokesman for the airline.

11 FEBRUARY 2017

SOURCE: THE NATIONAL
ARTICLE LINK:
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