



AAI leaps ahead in air cargo

In order to cater to the growth of air cargo industry, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) has taken up extension of the existing cargo terminals with the state-of-the-art technology apart from introducing automation at its airports. V P Agrawal, Chairman, AAI, believes that geographical and technical support, coupled with availability of skilled manpower, provides an opportunity for India to be a major cargo transshipment centre.

CC Bureau

V P Agrawal, Chairman, Airports Authority of India, in his zeal to fulfill his dream of creating airport infrastructure in the remotest corners of our country, has undoubtedly brought about a perceivable change in the 'Skyline' of Indian civil aviation, especially the airport infrastructure to the forefront. With the support of Ministry of Civil Aviation, the AAI has taken many initiatives to boost air cargo operations which have hogged the headlines.

AAI Chairman V P Agrawal said that the growth rate of cargo in the last five years had been 10.5 per cent for international cargo and 25.1 per cent for domestic cargo. The overall growth was 15.3 per cent. In the next ten years, the growth for international cargo would be around 9.6 per cent while domestic cargo would be 11.7 per cent. The overall growth has been forecast at 10.47 per cent.

In order to cater to the growth of cargo, Agrawal mentioned that the AAI has taken up extension of the existing cargo terminals with state-of-the-art technology apart from introducing automation at its major airports.

Chennai:

- AAI has added Phase-II in cargo complex creating storage/processing area of 15,600 sq mt. On the basis of area available, the existing cargo capacity for import and export is 3, 63,712 million tonnes, against the demand of 2, 19,562 million tonnes. The AAI is going to add Phase-III measuring an area of 26,000 sq mt, increasing the capacity by 5, 01,890 million tonnes. This capacity will be sufficient to handle the cargo upto the year 2019-20.

- Phase-III of cargo complex at Chennai will have ASRS with 7,000 storage bins having a capacity of 1.3 million tonnes each. This facility will be increasing efficiency, accuracy and less human interventions.

Kolkata:

- Existing cargo storage/processing area in Phase-I is 21,906 sq mt with a capacity of 1, 25,000 million tonnes, against the existing demand of 41,000 million tonnes. The existing facility will suffice upto 2019-20. Hence, there is no requirement/proposal to add any further infrastructure at this stage.
- Old cargo terminal with an area of 4,000 sq mt has been converted into separate exclusive domestic/courier terminal in the last quarter of 2008.
- Introduction of ASRS at Kolkata Cargo Complex followed by Chennai Cargo complex to increase the capacity on the same lines.

Other Airports:

- Cargo being handled departmentally at Amritsar, Lucknow, Guwahati, Coimbatore and Port Blair. The area available at the existing cargo terminals is sufficient to meet the existing/future demands for next five years.

The AAI has made elaborate plans to modernise as well as automate its cargo terminals so as to keep pace with the time and requirement of the trade/airlines. For smooth and speedy clearance of cargo at metro cargo terminal, cargo headquarter proposes to introduce more automation and mechanization in the air cargo handling

activities, therefore 'Conveyor Belt for handling of export cargo' is proposed at export terminal at Chennai and Kolkata airports.

Agrawal mentioned that the AAI is selling the regional airport concept whereby the capital and commercial cities in the states where infrastructure is now improved, would be exploited under the Regional Airport concept to provide for hub and node types of airport operations. In this direction, the AAI has decided to undertake domestic cargo handling at metro/non-metro airports in a phased manner (including by modifying the old/redundant PAX Terminals at non-metro airports) so as to improve the existing infrastructure by introducing Common User Domestic Cargo Terminal at airports like Amritsar, Lucknow, Jaipur, Varanasi, Ahmadabad, Surat, Aurangabad, Chennai, Coimbatore, Mangalore, Trichy, Trivandrum, Calicut, Madurai, Vizag, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, Ranchi, Gaya; Raipur, Guwahati, to name a few.

To maintain the cool chain of perishable produce, AAI with the assistance of APEDA has created state-of-the-art centre for perishable cargo to encourage the export of perishable cargo from India. With the assistance of APEDA, 'Walk in Type Interim Cold Room facility has also been created at the 'Air Cargo Terminals' in order to maintain the cold chain where 'Centre for Perishable Cargo-CPC' facility could not be provided.

The corporate vision of AAI for 2012, as Agrawal mentioned is "to be world-class organization providing leadership in air traffic services and airport management and meeting India a major hub in Asia Pacific region by 2016". •