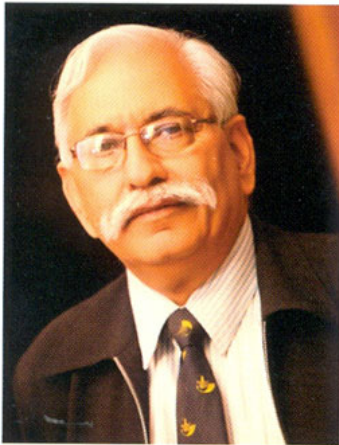


AMRITSAR AIRPORT: GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY, GOLDEN DESTINATION, AAI'S GOLDEN MOVE



The development and management of international/ domestic terminals is one of the functions of AAI and to continue with this endeavour, AAI has developed an air cargo complex at Amritsar airport. **Gp Capt Devender C Mehta, Advisor (MR), Airports Authority of India**, who considers it as 'golden opportunity' airport, informs about the cargo operations at the airport and the potential of cargo in the city.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) - the main stay of Indian Civil Aviation - has been according due diligence to air cargo - a vital ingredient which contributes immensely to the country's ever changing economic scenario and its growth. In keeping with our objectives on cargo operations which are simple yet substantial - excellence, efficiency and service standards which are second to none in the world - we have established a cargo complex at the Golden Opportunity Airport -Amritsar. Here to our motto/aim has been to simplify air cargo movement by using state-of-the-art technology thereby ensuring user-friendly environment.

Expertise in handling air cargo operations

AAI is a 'Reservoir' of expertise in not only in providing consultancy in establishing air cargo complexes but also, in designing and managing air cargo operations - be it of international or domestic nature. Our team carries an experience of close to four decades of cargo operations and has acquired the competence of creating integrated - modernized development of operational terminal of cargo facilities. AAI's cargo handling is known in the industry for its commitment in providing the hi-value/tech goods/ cargo movements respectively. We have established a habit of excellence and have confirmed to the international standards of service. The bottom line is being zero tolerance in mishandling of cargo. AAI having realized the importance of developing the human resources so as to keep pace and abreast with the ever changing technology, has invested intensively on training for various courses like air cargo management system, DGR specialization course which control the proper storage of hazardous cargo worldwide through trained executive team.

Cargo facilities at Amritsar airport

The cargo terminal was constructed by AAI on an area of 2,256 sq m and a paved area of 2,888 sq m on November 20, 2004. The air cargo complex at Amritsar airport has the following facilities:

- Customs EDI system is well equipped with EDI 1.5 version for computerized process of all type of shipping bills.
- Export and import wings with two X-ray machines installed for scanning of cargo.
- Four weighing scales plus two precious items weighing scales are provided for weighing of cargo.
- One strong room for keeping the valuable goods at each side (Import and Export).
- Examination/bonded and pillarization are separately earmarked on each side.
- The cargo terminal has a separate storage area for dangerous goods. Trained manpower is available for handling the dangerous goods.
- The air cargo complex has adequate equipment for handling the cargo.
- An adequate truck dock area is available on both sides.
- A separate cargo bay is available for parking the cargo aircraft.
- The whole cargo complex from city to airside is covered by a CCTV system.

Web-based EDI system with customs ICES 1.5 compatibility

The department of customs have commissioned ICES 1.5 version by issuing notification no. 43/Customs/2010 dated December 15, 2010 for computerization processing of all categories of shipping bills for export cargo. The web-based EDI system enables online registrations, online filling of documents and online status of cargo, accuracy in information, reduces transactions, time, facilitates convenience in payment of charges besides easy tracking and tracing of cargo. Simultaneously, AAI has commissioned new EDI system based Customs ICES 1.5 version at air cargo complex.

Collection and drawback of customs duty through EDI

Department of Customs has issued a trade notice authorizing Punjab National Bank, New Mandi Branch for collection of customs duty and also authorized for payment of duty drawback through Punjab National Bank, Hall Bazar Branch at air cargo complex, Amritsar airport.

Perishable centre

The air cargo complex has a separate perishable centre for export of perishable cargo operated by Council for Value Added Horticulture of Punjab. The infrastructure for perishable cargo includes two pre-cooler chambers, two X-ray machines for scanning of perishable cargo and four cooled room. Major commodity export through perishable centre are baby corn, snow peas, green peas, green chili, coriander, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, red chili fresh now, mangoes, guava kinnow – to name a few. The prime destination is London for exporting perishable goods. Indians are London's non-white ethnic minority group, with a population of around 500,000 (which is more than the number of Indians in the Netherlands, Germany, France, Italy and Portugal combined). They are fond of fresh Indian fruit/vegetables and are getting on cheaper price in comparison to local market of London. Our capacity in r/o both import/export and that of perishable goods is being 250 MT each per day and perishable centre – 80 MT per day (Temperature 0-12 degree centigrade).

Potential of cargo in region

There is a great potential of cargo in the region surrounding Amritsar city. It is an industrial hub like Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Ambala and Baddi.

Ludhiana - The World Bank ranked Ludhiana as the city in India with the best business environment in 2009. There are thousands of small scale industry units produce industrial goods, machine parts, auto parts, household appliances, hosiery, woolen garments, manufacturing of bicycle, tractor parts, auto and two wheelers parts, many parts used in German car like BMW and Mercedes are exclusively produced.

Ambala - Ambala is known as city of scientific instruments. It is a hub for products like glass apparatus, microscopes, laboratory equipment. It produces nearly 34 per cent of total production of scientific instruments produced in India.

Baddi - The Baddi industrial belt is the classic example of a sweet dream gone sour. The zone has become Asia's largest pharmaceutical hub. Today, there are over 800 medical and pharma companies alone in Baddi inclusive of the giants like Cipla and Dabur.

Jalandhar - Jalandhar also has an electrical goods industry. Manufacturers like Hazel India, Standard Switchgears and Apex Electricals are located in Jalandhar. An international sports market is situated in Jalandhar; major sports brands such as BAS Vampire, Bhaseen's Baspo, JJ Jonex, and Syndicate Sports come from this part of the world. Jalandhar is also known for thrust bearings and ball bearings; brands such as BKE, IBI and KKK belong to the city. Major commodities being exported / imported are tobacco products, pharma, sports goods, leather products, RMG (readymade garments), engineering goods, handicrafts, dry mushroom, airlines store and textiles.

Major airline operators

The major international airlines operating ex-Amritsar airport are Air India, Turkmenistan Airlines, Uzbekistan Airlines, Qatar Airways, Jet Airways and also, Hercules Aviation Pvt. Ltd the non-schedule freighter operator.

It is on the anvil for BMI (British midland Airlines Ltd) - an upcoming airline to start operations from October 13, 2011. This is an airline connecting worldwide destinations like London, Birmingham, Toronto, Doha, Ashkhabad, Almaty, Moscow, Milan, Kuwait, Singapore, Colombo, Kabul, Kandahar, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Dubai, Amsterdam, Jonesburg, Leeds, Riyadh etc. •

CONCLUSION

Keeping in view the enormous potential of cargo in the region, especially taking into consideration that this being the richest NRI belt coupled with the ever increasing tourist attraction to Amritsar provisioning of a commensurate air cargo complex to handle activities such as bonded cargo trucking, X-ray screening/certification by AAI, air cargo community system, courier/express cargo handling, also, to undertake domestic cargo handling is not only inescapable but imperative too. Accordingly, it would be apt if one were to sign off on an optimistic note by stating that the world is a witness to the laudable vision of AAI, wherein it is ushering in state-of-the-art cargo terminals in conformity with international standards. The said vision being swiftly materialized is paving way to the economic growth of the country.