

AAI—THE CRUCIAL CONNECT

Airports Authority of India plays a pivotal role in the local, regional and national economy with an impact that goes well beyond the airport fence **INDIRA LAUL**



It is a well established fact that aviation infrastructure contributes to economic growth and it achieves this in a number of ways. At its simplest, it provides better access to markets; enhances communications and interactions between and within business, and is a generator of wealth—both material and of the human spirit.

Along with the increase in air traffic, the key question that needs to be addressed is the building of airport infrastructure to sustain the boom in the long run. Airports Authority of India (AAI) understands this well, as is borne out by V P Agrawal, Chairman, AAI's words: "AAI is automating the operations at the airports with state-of-the-art technology so as to bring efficiency and reduce the dwell-time". In a recent interview, the Chairman spoke lucidly about the measures taken by AAI to improve connectivity and infrastructure at airports.

Agrawal elucidated that many factors affected connectivity of airports, including inherent traffic from catchment areas, willingness and viability of airlines to operate regular flights and suitable government policies and incentives like subsidies, etc. AAI spearheaded the development by incurring an expenditure of around Rs 12,000 crores during the 11th Plan to boost connectivity across India. It upgraded Chennai, Kolkata airports, 35 non-metro airports and 10 other airports across the country. Of these, most of the airports, including Chennai and Kolkata, have been completed.

In order to facilitate and make air connectivity affordable for people in remote areas, AAI is charting a roadmap for development of low cost regional airports. Plans are afoot to provide air connectivity in Tier II and Tier III cities of India by development of low-cost airports. During the first phase, places with basic airport infrastructure will be developed and made operational,

AAI'S INCREDIBLE INNOVATIONS

1. Use of solar energy for electricity at various airports.
2. Recycling of paper to stationary products throughout AAI.
3. Designing low-cost airport models.
4. Waste water recycling.
5. Reducing separation between aircrafts to increase air capacity.
6. Introduction of PBN procedures for operational efficiency.
7. Straightening of routes to reduce travel time and fuel.
8. Reducing emissions in all phases of flight.
9. Use of eco-friendly, self-propelled electrically operated conveyor belts, towable conveyor belts, fork-lifts; battery operated tugs and push back, ultra- low floor true flat-bedded passenger coaches.
10. Use of electronic surveillance for complete path of passenger.

and subsequently, Greenfield airports will be developed.

When questioned about how AAI intended to modernise airport infrastructure with a view to achieving high growth by 2017, Agrawal informed that development of airports were undertaken both with public as well as private investment. As the public entity, AAI invested heavily, to develop more than 50 airports, including Kolkata, Chennai, 35 non-metro and 10 other airports in Tier II and Tier III cities. In the private sector, Hyderabad and Bangalore airports were developed as Greenfield airports with an investment of about Rs 5000 crores; Delhi and Mumbai were developed through a joint venture under the PPP (Public Private Partnership) model with an approximate investment of Rs. 20,000 crores. New Greenfield airports that are underway are Pakyong, Gangtok and Sikkim.

Agrawal then articulated about the extensive work carried out for the expansion of existing Terminal Buildings at Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Aurangabad, Agartala, Agra (CE), Bhopal, Chandigarh,

Calicut, Dehradun, Dibrugarh, Indore, Jaipur, Lucknow, Madurai, Mangalore, Mysore, Raipur, Surat, Srinagar, Trivandrum, Udaipur, Varanasi, Coimbatore, Ranchi and Bhubhaneswar, all of which boast state-of-the-art passenger facilities, comfortable lounges and a good ambience. New Terminal Buildings are coming up in Khajuraho, Goa and Vadodara, and in Coimbatore and Port Blair.

The 12th plan, continued Agrawal, envisaged investment in upgradation and modernisation of non-operational airports in Tier II and Tier III airports to improve connectivity and development of Greenfield airports approved by Government of India, apart from associated infrastructure like MRO, ground handling, training, etc. On the anvil would be provision of regional connectivity and upgradation of about 30 airports across India.

As far as AAI's experience with global meltdown was concerned, the Chairman explained that the effect on AAI was less severe and they were able to face the challenge upfront by the deployment of effective strategies. Projects that were underway were not stalled and resources were optimised. Only essential projects were given the go ahead. AAI used recession to provide adequate airport capacity ahead of demand, which was required once the demand picked up. Moreover, AAI was able to maintain its financial performance and showed reasonable profits.

With respect to air connectivity, Agrawal maintained that AAI connects with 11 airports in the North Eastern Region. The statistics are incredible—with air connectivity in the North Eastern Region having grown from 290 flights per week in 2007 to 370 flights per week in 2011. To integrate the North Eastern states with the rest of the country AAI has developed low-cost airports at Along, Daparizo, Itanagar, Tezu, etc.

AAI's involvement with PPP has been

a "mixed bag," according to Agrawal. "Successful projects have been delivered at Cochin, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai, in the form of private or JV (Joint Venture) airports. However, airports at Tier II and Tier III cities are not financially viable for the private sector, therefore development at all these airports are catered to by AAI from internal resources.

IT INITIATIVES

1. Airport Operations Control Centre (AOCC) at 10 airports: AOCC will optimise and automate the airport operations at these airports with state-of-the-art technology to bring efficiency and reduce dwell-time. The central system is to be implemented at Chennai airport by end August, 2013.
2. Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP): This will help in standardising the processes in the key functions of HR, Finance, Material Management and Project Systems across India and providing unified reporting structure to the senior management through dash boards.
3. No Objection Certificate Application System (NOCAS): This application is to automate and streamline the process of issue of No Objection Certificates through GIS-based application to handle peoples' requests for granting No Object Certificate for construction related activities in the vicinity of airports.
4. Airports Information Management System (AIMS): It provides 14 modules covering all areas of functioning of an airport and is being used for revenue billing, MIS reporting about all aspects of airport operations at about 74 airports.
5. GIS Based Land & Asset Management System (GLAMS): This application is working at 18 airports. All GIS assets are superimposed on the latest satellite image.
6. AAI website: This website (www.aai.aero) is being used widely for dissemination of information about the organisation.