

Q & A

with
RK Srivastava
Chairman
Airports Authority of India



In a recent *Tate-e-Tate* with RK Srivastava, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI), *Lifestyle Living*, sheds light upon plans of the Chairman for the aviation sector in years to come **SIMRAN MISHRA**

Q. Sir, at the outset I would like to compliment you that having such a long stint of over 30 years in the most sought after Cadre i.e. IAS and having reached such a senior position of Additional Secretary level, you have taken the honourous responsibility of steering the country's most vibrant organization dealing with airport infrastructure i.e. Airports Authority of India. While I received the Press Release on your joining from PR Department of AAI, immediately after that I came across your message to the employees of AAI which has been put on AAI's website. Sir, you will agree that civil aviation in general and airports in particular have come out of category of elite class service. Would you like to dwell upon this in the light of emphasis you have laid upon service parameters in your message?

Ans. In the first instance, let me also thank you for taking the initiative for this meeting. While I appreciate your concern about the sector, as regards a way forward for AAI to steer up on the map of new growth and height in the field of infrastructure development and safety in the aviation sector, I have given emphasis to customer friendliness in our enabling services at airports and I have deliberated upon pro-active approach in gauging the emerging trends, expectation and demands of different stakeholders in aviation sector in general and passengers, airlines, cargo industry and security in particular.

How has the civil aviation sector been progressing over the past year?

Ans. Your question is very straight forward and very specific to the past year. But let me begin with that the civil aviation sector in India started to cater to the needs of big businesses and well healed gentry which is also termed as elite class who needed to travel fast, both within India and abroad, and they wanted their goods and mail to travel equally fast. This scenario, over a period of time, has totally changed. Today civil aviation sector contributes significantly to the process of economic development.

As far as India is concerned, we are the 9th largest aviation market with traffic showing almost double digit growth. The policy initiatives and modernization of both airport as well as ANS infrastructure have propelled Indian aviation sector to a new high growth path. Connectivity has become the Mantra for the overall progress and development, not only for the city where it exists, rather for the adjoining districts and states as well encompassing more and more catchment areas; of-late, airports are being termed as economic magnets. As on date, AAI manages 125 airports including civil enclaves, 60 of them have been recently developed and modernized, thereby provisioning capacity ahead of demand.

Not resting with this, AAI has further evolved itself to undertake development of airports in Tier-II and Tier-III cities.

AAI also provides Air Navigation Services across the nation and has taken up ANS upgradation for enhancing safety, efficiency and capacity of the air-space of the country.

Coming back to your question on progress over the past year, to be specific, during the recently concluded financial year i.e. 2014-15, Air Traffic at Indian airports has reached to 190 million passengers, 1.60 million aircraft movements and 2.5 million Metric Tonnes of cargo indicating growth of 12.6 per cent in pax, 4.3 per cent in the aircraft movements and 11.0 per cent in cargo over the previous year. Further, during the current financial year from April to September, the growth in passenger traffic has further improved to 17 per cent due to significant growth of 20 per cent in domestic passenger traffic. Growth in aircraft movement has also increased to 8 per cent. This shows scope for rapid development of civil aviation sector in India. With the announcement of draft Civil Aviation Policy, last week, the sector is going to be propelled on the high growth chart.

Q What are the measures being taken by AAI regarding the safety and security at airports?

Ans. Safety and security are the prime concerns of civil aviation activity around the globe and India is no exception. Security at airports is governed by the specific provisions of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Within India, BCAS lays down AVSEC norms for security. AAI has enabled all the provisions under its domain commensurating with the same.

Security at airports is being looked after by CISF and the respective State Police. CISF has been introduced at most of the AAI's airports. Survey and resurveys are carried out in coordination with BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security) to assess the threat perception at the respective airports and based on that we adopt the security measures. The intensity of security and provision of equipment is enhanced as per the sensitivity of the airport. We have provided latest security equipment, gadgets and infrastructure to the personnel who are dealing with the security function which includes X-Ray baggage machines, Door Frame Metal Detectors, Hand Held Metal Detectors supported by CCTV at various airports. AAI has also provided explosive trace detectors and inline X-Ray Baggage System at its airports as per need basis.

Q. What are the AAI's plans, in terms of airport construction, upgradation and planned investments over the next 2-3 years?

Ans. At the outset, let me state that AAI has taken all-round initiatives to ensure adequate infrastructure at its airports. With the rising air traffic, improved facilities and services for maintaining desired level of customer satisfaction and commercial exploitation for maintaining the growth of the organization, we are continuously adding more and more airports in the country to meet the expectations of people, thereby enhancing wider connectivity. We have plans of

spending 4-5 billion dollars in the next seven years, to add the new capacity of 70 million passengers at the Airport. However, with the new policy aiming to increase the ticket sale from 70 m to 300 m per annum, the CAPEX requirement would be two and a half times more than what is planned today. This, however, would be factored in our revised calibration of supply with demand in different fields of Aviation Infrastructure.

Presently Construction of new Terminal Buildings are being taken up at Portblair, Kishangarh, Pakyong, Hubli, Tezu, Vijayawada & Belgaum. In order to meet the objective of inclusive growth, AAI in line with Government objectives, plans to enhance Regional and Remote area air connectivity in a time bound manner. Under this AAI has been mandated to develop five airports viz. Kishangarh, Belgaum, Hubli, Jharsuguda and Tezu for which work is in progress.

AAI will be taking up the implementation of Airport Infrastructure projects on Turnkey/ Design Built model for which EOI has been called for empanelment of PMC. To bridge the gap between capacity and demand, expansion and upgradation of Airports are planned at Lucknow, Guwahati, Leh, Srinagar, Agartala, Trichy, Trivandrum, Port Blair and Vijaywada Airports. Terminal Buildings at Jammu, Trichy, Pune, Calicut and Srinagar are also being expanded and modified. For further improving regional connectivity, AAI is taking up joint ventures with State Governments to develop airports in the remote areas.

Q. As the Chairman of AAI, what are your top priorities for the sector in the next 1-2 years?

Ans. The top priorities for the sector in the next 1-2 years would be to transform the image of AAI airports to be the most customer friendly airports at par with anywhere in the globe. We aim to achieve this by augmenting our airports with state of the art infrastructure, provision of new facilities for air navigation, enhancing safety both in air and ground, improving efficiency of air operations in Indian air-space.

We plan to make airports self-sustaining commercial enterprises, by increasing the non-aeronautical revenue. Our endeavour is to make the stakeholders potentially the State Government's partner in our journey of growth. We plan to augment Food and Beverage facilities, retail services, introduce more international and national brands at airports, provide Business Lounges thus enhancing the options for the travelling public for greater convenience and a sense of hospitality.

AAI also plans to extend CUTE (Common User Terminal Equipment) and CUSS (Common Use Self-Service) services at most of the airports, Implement Inline baggage screening with self-service kiosks, provide PBB (Passenger Boarding Bridges) at most of the airports, provide travellers with information on mobile/ gadgets, improve the ambience at the airports, improve signage's for ease of finding ways in and around the airport, augment parking facilities and provide value added services like paid porters and kids entertainment etc.