

India's aviation sector needs a take off



SANTHOSH MATHEW

India's aviation sector is at a crossroads, grappling with an acute shortage of airports despite its vast population and growing economy

Have you ever wondered just how many airports exist in the United States? Take a wild guess. The number is staggering—nearly 19,000! That's right. With a population of around 330 million, America has built an extensive network of airports, ensuring seamless connectivity across the country. Now, compare this to India, a nation with three times the population, yet managing with only around 500 airports. Even more striking, out of these, just 29 are classified as international airports. This glaring disparity is more than just a number—it is a reflection of India's



challenges in aviation infrastructure and the pressing need for expansion.

Let's take an even closer look by comparing West Bengal to the United Kingdom. Both regions have a similar population, yet their aviation networks couldn't be more different. The UK boasts around 150 airports, while West Bengal has just three passenger airports—Kolkata, Bagdogra, and Andal. This difference is not just a matter of convenience; it highlights lost economic opportunities and underscores the urgent requirement for infrastructure development. In nations like the US and the UK, air travel is an everyday convenience—affordable, efficient, and integral to daily life.

It allows people to skip traffic, save time, and stimulate economic growth. Meanwhile, in India, air travel is still seen as a luxury, accessible only to a privileged few. India's aviation network is wholly insufficient for its growing demand. With only 29 international airports and about 500 total airports, the infrastructure is struggling to keep pace with the needs of domestic and international travelers. Airports in major cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru are perpetually overcrowded, leading to delays, congestion, and inefficiency.

In contrast, vast portions of the country, especially smaller towns and rural areas, remain disconnected, relying on outdated modes of transportation like railways and highways. The Airports

Authority of India (AAI) currently manages around 150 airports, but when compared to the United States' 5,000 civilian airports, this number falls dramatically short. The gap becomes even more concerning when considering that India's population is three times that of the US. Clearly, India needs a massive expansion in its aviation infrastructure, and it needs it urgently. The consequences of this limited aviation network are significant—reduced regional connectivity, hindered tourism, and slower economic growth. India must take decisive steps to address this issue. A bold vision for the future should include constructing at least 1,500 new airports in the coming years.

By ensuring that an airport is within 100 kilometers of every major population center, India can unlock the economic potential of its smaller towns and rural areas. The advantages of a well-developed air travel network are crystal clear. Air travel is not just the fastest mode of transportation; it is also the safest and most efficient. In a country where roads and railways are often congested and prone to delays, a robust aviation network can alleviate pressure on existing transport systems, making movement across the country more seamless.

The economic benefits are also immense. A surge in the



IN A COUNTRY AS VAST AND POPULOUS AS INDIA, AIR TRAVEL MUST BECOME A FUNDAMENTAL NECESSITY, AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE ACROSS ALL ECONOMIC BACKGROUNDS. EXPANDING THE AVIATION NETWORK WOULD MAKE FLIGHTS MORE AFFORDABLE AND PRACTICAL FOR A LARGER SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION

number of airports would create thousands of jobs, attract investment, and boost regional economies. Improved air connectivity would enhance business operations, enable easier travel for tourists, and offer the general population a practical alternative to time-consuming road and rail journeys. Of course, developing new airports requires significant investment and time, but India has the potential to explore innovative solutions. One such approach is the conversion of highways into emergency runways—a model successfully implemented in the United States. This concept could be adapted for India, where strategically modifying highways to accommodate small aircraft could provide crucial air connectivity to remote regions without the high costs associated with building entirely new airports. Implementing such a strategy in states like West Bengal, could be a game-changer.

These adapted road-runways could serve as cost-effective alternatives for enhancing air connectivity, benefiting both everyday commuters and emergency responders in times of crisis, such as natural disasters.

Across the Western world, air travel has evolved into an indispensable part of daily life. It is widely accessible, efficient, and affordable. In India, however, flying is still

perceived as a luxury, something beyond the reach of the average citizen.

This perception needs to change. In a country as vast and populous as India, air travel must become a fundamental necessity, available to people across all economic backgrounds. Expanding the aviation network would make flights more affordable and practical for a larger segment of the population.

India stands at a crucial juncture in its aviation journey. The country's rapid economic growth and massive population necessitate an equally rapid expansion of its air travel infrastructure. Government initiatives such as the UDAN scheme, which aims to enhance regional air connectivity, are a step in the right direction, but much more needs to be done. The goal should be to develop at least 1,500 new airports in the near future, ensuring that every region, particularly underserved areas like West Bengal, is well-connected.

Exploring innovative ideas like highway-runways, making air travel more affordable, and significantly increasing the number of airstrips are all essential steps toward closing India's aviation gap. The need for a robust aviation infrastructure is urgent, and the time to act is now.

(The writer is an associate professor; views are personal)



Corporate Communications Directorate

AMAR UJALA

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

हवाई यातायात में सुधार

नए हवाई अड्डों और क्षेत्रीय हवाई कनेक्टिविटी योजना के साथ हवाई कनेक्टिविटी में काफी सुधार हुआ है। हवाई अड्डे के डेवलपर्स और



ऑपरेटर्स ने वित्त वर्ष 2020-25 के लिए लक्षित 91,000 करोड़ रुपये के पूंजीगत खर्च का 91

प्रतिशत हासिल कर लिया है। बढ़ती हवाई यातायात मांग के बीच घरेलू एयरलाइंस ने 1,700 से अधिक विमानों का ऑर्डर दिया है। उड़ें देश का आम नागरिक (उड़ान) के तहत अब तक दो जल हवाई अड्डों और 13 हेलीपॉर्टों सहित 88 हवाई अड्डों को जोड़ने वाले 619 मार्गों का संचालन किया जा चुका है।



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BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

Over 90% of airport capex deployed over 5 years

Rohit Vaid
New Delhi

India's airport capital expenditure programme, pursued by both private and public sectors, has achieved 91 per cent of the planned outlay of over ₹91,000 crore from FY20 to FY25, according to the Economic Survey FY25.

The capital outlay has led to the construction as well as refurbishment of airports, alongside creation of civil enclaves and new terminal buildings.

Notably, the expenditure went towards the upcoming Noida International and Navi Mumbai airports as well.

To enhance connectivity in the country, the PM Gati Shakti initiative is integrating the aviation sector with other modes of transport, such as railways, roads and waterways.

UDAN CONNECTIVITY

The Survey also credited the *Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik* (UDAN) scheme for improved air connectivity.

"Under the regional con-

Operationalised UDAN



Source: Economic Survey 2024-25

nectivity scheme (UDAN), 619 routes connecting 88 airports, including two water aerodromes and 13 heliports, have been operationalised so far," said the survey tabled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Citing India as the fastest growing aviation market globally, the Survey said that to accommodate the substantial growth in air traffic, Indian airlines have placed orders for 1,500 aircraft. Currently, India has more than 800 commercial aircraft.

Earlier this month, official data showed that domestic airlines ferried 6.12 per cent more passengers during January-December 2024 year-on-year. Passenger traffic increased to 16.13 crore against 15.20 crore during the corresponding

period in the previous year.

Per Boeing's 2024 Commercial Market Outlook for South Asia, over 2,700 new airplane deliveries are expected in India by 2042. India will dominate the South Asian market, representing more than 90 per cent of total deliveries.

Furthermore, air cargo handling capacity has been gradually increasing, the Survey noted. It reached 8 million tonnes in FY24, from 7.5 million tonnes in FY23.

TAX ON SPARE PARTS

In the maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) segment, the Survey said that the government is encouraging original equipment manufacturers to establish facilities in India and has introduced policies to align the sector with global standards.

High taxes on spares had dented the growth of the MRO sector in the past, it said. In the last calendar year, the Centre rationalised a uniform 5 per cent integrated goods and services tax on imported aircraft parts and tools.

Additionally, the increasing number of aviation part manufacturers is expected to create a supplier base for this segment in the coming years.

On unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), the Survey pointed out that about ₹60.6 crore has been disbursed under the PLI scheme to support drone manufacturing.

The Survey cited that, as of October 31, 2024, India has seen a notable rise in drone activities, with 140 remote pilot training organisations, 18,862 remote pilot certificates issued, 26,659 registered drones, and 82 approved drone models (DGCA type certificates).

In addition, the Survey said that as of November 30, 2024, 32 aircraft leasing entities (including provisional) have registered in the GIPT-IPSC, leasing 105 aviation assets, including 53 aircraft and 52 engines.

Transfer passengers' share may double in 10 years: BIAL COO

DEEPAK PATEL

New Delhi, 31 January

The share of passengers using Bengaluru airport as a transit hub is expected to increase from 15 per cent to 30 per cent over the next ten years, amid significant capacity additions by airlines and consolidation within the industry, said Satyaki Raghunath, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL).

In an interview with *Business Standard*, he said about five years ago, the share of transfer traffic in the airport's overall traffic was about six per cent.

"Of this, over 95 per cent was D2D (domestic-to-domestic)...Currently, the share of transfer traffic is about 15 per cent. Within that, about 82 per cent of traffic is D2D, about 17 per cent is I2D (international-to-domestic) or D2I (domestic-to-international), and about one per cent is I2I (international-to-international)," he said.

"As we scale, the share of



Overall passenger traffic at Bengaluru airport grew 9% Y-o-Y to 40.73 mn in 2024

transfer passengers in our overall traffic will increase to 25 to 30 per cent. This doubling of the share of transfer passengers in overall traffic will take place in the next 10 years," Raghunath noted.

Overall passenger traffic at Bengaluru airport grew 9 per cent year-on-year to 40.73 million in 2024. An increasing number of passengers are using Bengaluru airport as a transit hub to travel between Europe and Southeast Asia, Europe and Sri Lanka, Mauritius to Sri Lanka, Mauritius to Singapore, and Mauritius to Thailand.



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DECCAN CHRONICLE

HYDERABAD

31 JANUARY 2025

Chaos after homeless man threatens to blow up RGIA

Hyderabad: The Rajiv Gandhi International Airport police registered a case against a 25-year-old man for threatening to blow up the airport, police said on Thursday.

The accused Nitin, 25, is a native of Kamareddy.

Investigating officer (IO) D. Apparao said Nitin was believed to have a mental illness and is a homeless person.

The police control room received the hoax call on its Dial 100 line. The accused said he planted a

bomb at the airport to take revenge on a social media friend at the airport. Nitin said the rivalry was due to a borrowed sum. RGIA police tracked the call to the Secunderabad railway station. "People present

there told us the man is from Kamareddy. The sarpanch (in Kamareddy) told us that Nitin no longer lived there, but gave us his father's number. The father told us he is mentally unstable," RGIA SI Apparao said.

DIFFERENTIAL PRICING

Delhi Airport may Levy as per Pax Brackets

Arindam Majumder

New Delhi: Business class passengers and peak hour flyers may soon shell out more in New Delhi, with India's busiest airport planning a differential tariff structure based on class and time of travel.

Under the revised tariff model proposed for the five-year period till FY29, passengers travelling in first class, business and premium economy will pay a higher user development fee (UDF) than economy class. UDF is levied by airports

₹450

**YIELD/PASSENGER ON
NEW TARIFF STRUC-
TURE: JEFFERIES**

to recover expenses incurred on infrastructure upgrade.

Similarly, Delhi Airport proposes to raise aircraft landing and parking charges during peak hours. Those operating beyond these hours will pay a lower charge.

The proposals are under consideration by the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA), which fixes tariffs every five years based on parameters including capex, operating costs, depreciation, non-aero revenues and taxes.

Easing Fee Hikes

►► From Page 1

People aware of the development said the model will prevent charges rising exponentially at the Capital's airport, which has invested about Rs 12,900 crore to expand Terminal 1, building a new runway, a 2.4-km elevated taxiway, and upgrading road infrastructure and transfer facilities. The airport handles about 20% of India's total air traffic.

Operator Delhi International Airport is majority owned by GMR Airports.

In a note, analysts at investment bank Jefferies said they expect Delhi Airport's yield per passenger to rise to ₹450, from ₹150, with the new tariff structure in place.

"The airport wants to spread out the charges so the impact on a price-conscious economy passenger is lesser than (that on) someone who travels in business class," said a person involved in the process.

"This will help to drive additional passengers since aircraft with premium configurations carry less passengers."

With congestion impacting operating efficiency of most airports, a peak hour surcharge will encourage airlines to fly more during non-peak hours by offering comparatively lower fares.

"While Delhi Airport has signi-

ficantly upgraded its infrastructure, there remains a saturation level beyond which capacity can't be increased. This (new tariff structure) will allow better utilisation of resources as airlines will be able to give a cheaper fare beyond these hours," the person said.

Sidharath Kapur, a veteran airport executive who has worked at GMR and Adani Airport Holdings, said differential pricing leads to better affordability and the ability to absorb hikes in airport charges.

"This will lessen the percentage of fees in economy class tickets, which otherwise would have been much higher. A peak hour surcharge will lead to better utilisation of slots in non-peak hours and improved affordability in peak hours," he said.

Delhi Airport also expects competition from the Noida airport, which is slated to start operations this summer. While initial capacity at Jewar Airport will remain low, a significant increase in charges at Delhi Airport may result in some flights shifting to Noida in the coming years.

A spokesperson for GMR Airports did not respond to ET's queries.

Delhi Airport handled 73.7 million passengers in FY24 and has a maximum capacity of up to 100 million passengers per year.

नए हवाई अड्डों, उड़ान योजना से हवाई संपर्क में काफी सुधार हुआ: आर्थिक समीक्षा

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी।

आर्थिक समीक्षा में शुक्रवार को कहा गया कि नए हवाई अड्डों और क्षेत्रीय हवाई संपर्क योजना से देश में हवाई संपर्क में काफी सुधार हुआ है। समीक्षा में इस बात पर भी प्रकाश डाला गया कि हवाई अड्डा विकसित करने वालों और परिचालकों ने वित्तवर्ष 2019-20 और 2024-25 के दौरान लक्ष्यित 91,000 करोड़ रुपये के पूंजीगत व्यय का 91 प्रतिशत हिस्सा हासिल कर लिया है।

संसद में पेश वित्त वर्ष 2024-25 की आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया, "भारत वैश्विक स्तर पर सबसे तेजी से बढ़ने वाला विमानन बाजार है। हवाई यातायात में पर्याप्त वृद्धि को समायोजित करने के लिए, भारतीय एयरलाइनों ने वैश्विक स्तर पर विमानों के लिए सबसे बड़े ऑर्डर दिए हैं।"

घरेलू एयरलाइनों ने बढ़ती



हवाई यातायात मांग के बीच अपने नेटवर्क का विस्तार करने के लिए 1,700 से अधिक विमानों के ऑर्डर दिए हैं। आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया है कि रखरखाव, मरम्मत और ओवरहाल (एमआरओ) उद्योग के क्षेत्र में सरकार मूल उपकरण निर्माताओं को भारत में अपने केन्द्र स्थापित करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर रही है और इस क्षेत्र को वैश्विक मानकों के अनुरूप बनाने के लिए नीतियां पेश की हैं।

इसमें कहा गया, "उड़े देश का

आम नागरिक (उड़ान) योजना के तहत नए हवाई अड्डों और बेहतर क्षेत्रीय संपर्क ने हवाई संपर्क में पर्याप्त सुधार किया है।"

उड़ान योजना के तहत अब तक 88 हवाई अड्डों को जोड़ने वाले 619 मार्गों को चालू किया गया है। इसमें दो जल हवाई अड्डे और 13 हेलीपोर्ट शामिल हैं। हवाई अड्डे की 'कॉर्गो हैंडलिंग' (सामानों की देखरेख) क्षमता धीरे-धीरे बढ़ रही है, जो वित्तवर्ष 2024 में 80 लाख टन तक पहुंच गई।



Corporate Communications Directorate

RASHTRIYA SAHARA

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

नए एयरपोर्ट और उड़ान योजना से सुधरा हवाई संपर्क

नई दिल्ली (भाषा)।

आर्थिक समीक्षा में शुक्रवार को कहा गया कि नए हवाई अड्डों और क्षेत्रीय हवाई संपर्क योजना से देश में हवाई संपर्क में काफी सुधार हुआ है।

समीक्षा में इस बात पर भी प्रकाश डाला गया कि हवाई अड्डा विकसित करने वालों और परिचालकों ने वित्तवर्ष 2019-20 और 2024-25 के दौरान लक्ष्यित 91,000 करोड़ रुपये के पूंजीगत व्यय का 91 प्रतिशत हिस्सा हासिल

कर लिया है। संसद में पेश वित्त वर्ष 2024-25 की आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया, 'भारत वैश्विक स्तर पर सबसे तेजी से बढ़ने वाला विमानन बाजार है। हवाई यातायात में पर्याप्त वृद्धि को समायोजित करने के लिए, भारतीय एयरलाइनों ने वैश्विक स्तर पर विमानों के लिए सबसे बड़े ऑर्डर दिए हैं।'

घरेलू एयरलाइनों ने बढ़ती हवाई यातायात मांग के बीच अपने नेटवर्क का विस्तार करने के लिए 1,700 से अधिक विमानों के



ऑर्डर दिए हैं। आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया है कि रखरखाव, मरम्मत

और ओवरहाल (एमआरओ) उद्योग के क्षेत्र में सरकार मूल

उपकरण निर्माताओं को भारत में अपने केन्द्र स्थापित करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित कर रही है और इस क्षेत्र को वैश्विक मानकों के अनुरूप बनाने के लिए नीतियां पेश की हैं।

इसमें कहा गया, 'उड़े देश का आम नागरिक (उड़ान) योजना के तहत नए हवाई अड्डों और बेहतर क्षेत्रीय संपर्क ने हवाई संपर्क में पर्याप्त सुधार किया है।' उड़ान योजना के तहत अब तक 88 हवाई अड्डों को जोड़ने वाले 619 मार्गों को चालू किया गया है। इसमें दो जल हवाई अड्डे और 13 हेलीपोर्ट

शामिल हैं।

हवाई अड्डे की 'कागों हैडलिंग' (सामानों की देखरेख) क्षमता धीरे-धीरे बढ़ रही है, जो वित्तवर्ष 2024 में 80 लाख टन तक पहुंच गई।

आर्थिक समीक्षा में कहा गया है, 'हवाई अड्डा परिचालकों और विकासकर्ताओं, जिनमें भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण भी शामिल है, ने वित्तवर्ष 2019-20 से 2024-25 तक 91,000 करोड़ रुपये से अधिक की पूंजीगत व्यय योजना पर काम किया है।'



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

Flyers may have to pay to use IGIA air train

New Delhi: Passengers flying in and out of Delhi Airport may have to pay to use the much-awaited air train which is expected to be ready by March 2028. Only transit passengers — those flying into T1 & taking connecting flight from T2/3 or vice versa — will not be required to pay to use this automated people mover (APM), according to the consultation paper released by Airports Economic Regulatory Authority for determining IGIA's tariff for the period April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2029.

"APM is already under bidding stage... expected to be operational by March 2028. The movement would be bi-directional both from T1 to T3 and vice-versa. DIAL expects throughput of 40,000 to 50,000 passengers/day initially which would be scaled up to 80,000 to 90,000 passengers/day by increasing the frequency. APM will not be chargeable for transfer passengers while for rest of the passengers, it will be chargeable," the paper says.

Delhi International Airport Ltd has also submitted its plans for converting a domestic pier to int'l at T3 and build a new pier at T3, as reported by TOI recently. While the conversion and T2 refurbishment are expected to cost about Rs 184 crore, the proposed new pier will cost about Rs 1,662 crore. TNN

The Daily Guardian

epaper.thedailyguardian.com
31 Jan 2025 - Page 7

IndiGo ramps up Prayagraj capacity to meet Maha Kumbh rush

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

With rising demand for Prayagraj flights, IndiGo airline has further increased its flights and seat capacity significantly to/from the Sangram city during the period in which the city hosts the Mahakumbh Mela 2025.

Maha Kumbh commenced on January 13 and will continue until February 26, 2025. As per various travel aggregators, a one-side Mumbai to Prayagraj flight dated January 31 would cost about Rs 24000. From Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, and Hyderabad, it would cost Rs 21000, Rs 17000, Rs 30000, and Rs 28000, respectively. As one opts to travel in early or mid February, one-side ticket costs fall but still remain elevated at Rs 20000-25000.

Initially, IndiGo had already planned a significant capacity increase, however, given the unprecedented



demand for air travel on the Prayagraj route, more flights have been added.

For this special period, the airline will now operate more than 165,000 seats to/from Prayagraj, which is more than double its normal capacity to the airport.

During this period, IndiGo will connect Prayagraj to 10 locations in India, adding connectivity from Ahmedabad, Kolkata and Jaipur, over and above existing connectivity from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Raipur, and Bhubaneswar. Additionally, the airline has also increased capacity deployed on existing routes to/from Praya-

graj through the addition of frequency and operations of A321, its larger aircraft.

Overall, the airline will operate around 900 flights to/from the city, up from 490 regular services.

IndiGo said it is committed to supporting the efforts of the government by ensuring smooth travel for pilgrims.

Besides the additional capacity that the airline has already activated, it is working on reallocating capacity from other parts of its network to add more flights, to cater to the influx of passengers.

The airline has also ensured to stabilise airfares and is committed to providing the best possible travel experience to all its customers. IndiGo said it remains dedicated to providing safe, reliable, and affordable air travel, and this capacity increase from Prayagraj underscores the airline's commitment to connecting people and places, especially during significant cultural and religious events.

Recovery, Probe Underway in Washington Air Tragedy

Divers are expected to return to the Potomac River as part of the recovery and investigation after the US' deadliest aviation disaster in almost a quarter century.

The collision between an American Airlines passenger jet and an Army helicopter at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport near Washington, D.C, late Wednesday killed 67 people, including more than a dozen figure skaters.

Air crash investigations can take months, and federal investigators told reporters Thursday they would not speculate on the cause.

CHOPPER FLEW TOO HIGH: TRUMP

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump said the Army chopper involved in the mishap was flying too high at time of midair crash. "It was far above the 200 foot limit. That's not really too complicated to understand, is it???" Trump he said in a Friday morning post on his Truth Social platform.

The President's comments come the day after he questioned the actions of a US Army helicopter pilot involved in the midair collision with a commercial airliner, while also blaming diversity initiatives



Search efforts being undertaken in the Potomac River in Arlington, Virginia on Friday AP

for undermining air safety.

The maximum altitude where the chopper was during the crash—along a published corridor called Route 4—was 200 feet above ground, as per Jonathan Koziol, chief of staff for Army aviation.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said Thursday that elevation seemed to be a factor in the crash.

Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth stresses importance of US military's 'continuity' training

The three-person Army crew on the UH-60 Blackhawk was conducting a continuity of government planning training mission at the time of the midair crash. **AP**



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

Will reach out to lenders of Go First: Busy Bee to NCLAT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi, January 31

BUSY BEE AIRWAYS, which has challenged the liquidation of grounded carrier Go First, on Friday informed the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) that it will try to reach out to the lenders concerned. It also told the NCLAT that it is ready to acquire Go First as a going concern as it still has valuable assets and a licence from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to operate.

Travel portal EaseMyTrip's co-founder Nishant Pitti is the majority shareholder in Busy Bee Airways.

Meanwhile, the counsel appearing from the liquidator of Go First has agreed to file the minutes of the 37th meeting of the committee of creditors (CoC) of Go First before the NCLAT, along with the additional affidavit.

The appellate tribunal was hearing two petitions filed by Busy Bee Airways and Bhartiya Kamgar Sena Mumbai, challenging the order of the Delhi bench of the NCLT, which, on January 20, ordered the liquidation of the low-cost carrier.

Trade union body Bhartiya Kamgar Sena Mumbai submitted that around 5,000 workers would be left with nothing if the company is liquidated. The trade union body requested to keep the airline as a going concern until arbitration with American engine maker Pratt & Whitney concludes at the Singapore International Arbitration Centre.



Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

31 JANUARY 2025

Sirius Airlines in talks with Textron Aviation to acquire 20 Cessna aircraft for \$600 million

PTI
MUMBAI

Air charter services operator Sirius Aviation Airlines is in advanced discussions with the US-based Textron Aviation to acquire 20 Cessna Citation Longitude aircraft for USD 600 million, according to sources privy to information.

The acquisition is aimed at bolstering the company's operational capabilities in the business aviation segment, they added.

The company, which launched its operations in August 2023, in partnership with Dubai-based Transworld



Group, last November announced that it is targeting a fleet size of 50 private jets, comprising both small and medium-sized business jets as well as group charters by FY2027 to serve a wider clientele. "Sirius Aviation Airlines is in advanced discussions with Textron Aviation to acquire 20 Cessna Citation Longitude aircraft. The deal is valued at a list price of USD 600 million and

expected to close in the next 3-4 months," a source told PTI.

The delivery of these 8-12 luxury business jets should start coming in from 12-18 months after the signing of the deal, the source said.

The company refused to comment on the developments. As part of the negotiations, Textron Aviation conducted a demo flight earlier this week in Dubai for Sirius India Airlines and Transworld Aviation, sources said.

The airline plans to extend its reach beyond India to new markets in the Far East, Southeast Asia, and East Africa.



Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

31 JANUARY 2025

Kenya Airways, AI enter into codeshare partnership

PTI
NEW DELHI

Air India has entered into a codeshare partnership with Kenya Airways as the Tata Group-owned airline seeks to expand as well as provide more choices for passengers.

Both airlines will also continue to have their interline partnership. As part of the codeshare pact, Air India will place its 'AI' designator code on twice daily flights between Nairobi and Mumbai operated by Kenya Airways. The codeshare partnership will also enable Kenya Airways to place its 'KQ' designator code on Air India-operated flights between Delhi and Nairobi.

Investigators fish out black boxes after deadly DC crash

Names of all the victims have not been released, but they included promising young figure skaters and people from Kansas where the flight originated

Reuters

letters@hindustantimes.com

WASHINGTON: US authorities said on Thursday it was not yet clear why a regional jet and a US Army helicopter collided at a Washington airport, killing 67 people in the deadliest US air disaster in more than 20 years.

Investigators recovered the so-called black boxes from the plane, an American Airlines Bombardier jet carrying 60 passengers and four crew members, which collided with an Army Black Hawk helicopter and crashed into the Potomac River as it prepared to land at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport on Wednesday night.

No one survived. Names of all the victims have not been released, but they included promising young figure skaters and people from Kansas, where the flight originated.

Senator Maria Cantwell said that the dead also included citizens from Russia, the Philippines and Germany, and Chinese state media Xinhua reported two Chinese citizens had been killed



A diving team and police boat are seen around the wreckage site in the Potomac River from Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport, on Thursday, in Arlington, Virginia.

AP

in the crash.

Investigators recovered the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder from the Bombardier CRJ700 passenger jet, the National Transportation Safety Board said. A preliminary report about the incident is expected within 30 days.

NTSB member Todd Inman said the military helicopter was equipped "with some form of recording devices and those will be read either by DOD or by us." He said NTSB and DOD have agreements to share data on those recorders.

The agency has begun collect-

ing wreckage, including portions of the helicopter, and is storing it at a hangar at Reagan National. Washington's fire and emergency department said its divers had searched all accessible areas and would conduct additional searches to locate aircraft components on Friday.

US Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said both aircraft had been flying standard flight patterns on Wednesday and there had been no breakdown in communication.

"Everything was routine up to the point of the accident," Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin

told Reuters. More than half of the bodies had been recovered, he said. The airport is just across the river from Washington in Virginia.

President Donald Trump, without evidence, said that federal diversity efforts could have been a factor, reiterating a theme that has become a focus of his presidency.

Rights groups and Democrats said he was politicising the disaster.

Trump also criticised the helicopter pilots and suggested air traffic controllers were to blame. Radio communications

showed that air traffic controllers alerted the helicopter about the approaching jet and ordered it to change course.

One controller rather than two was handling local plane and helicopter traffic on Wednesday night at Reagan National, a situation deemed "not normal" but considered adequate for lower volumes of traffic, according to a person briefed on the matter.

The decision to combine duties in the evening is not uncommon, the source said. The New York Times first reported the "not normal" designation.

A shortage of air traffic controllers in the US in recent years has spurred safety concerns. At several facilities, controllers work mandatory overtime and six-day work weeks to cover shortages. The Federal Aviation Administration has about 3,000 fewer controllers than it says it needs.

Airspace is frequently crowded around the US capital, home to three commercial airports and several major military facilities, and officials have raised concerns about busy runways at Reagan National Airport. Several close calls at the airport have sparked alarm, including a near-collision in May 2024.

Trump accused his Democratic predecessor Joe Biden of lowering hiring standards and suggested the Federal Aviation Administration's diversity push could have weakened its capabilities.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

DGCA rejects Akasa's training head candidate

NEW DELHI: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has rejected Akasa Air's proposed person for being its head of Training. The interview for a new Director of Operations was held by DGCA's flight standards directorate on January 28. An official said, "The performance of the candidate in an interview conducted on January 28 was found unsatisfactory and hence has been rejected by the regulator." Akasa has over 800 pilots and 27 aircraft in its fleet.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE MORNING STANDARD

DELHI

1 FEBRUARY 2025

Busy Bee Airways to reach out to Go First lenders

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

BUSYBEE AIRWAYS on Friday informed the insolvency appellate tribunal NCLAT that it will try to reach out to the lenders of Go First. Travel portal Ease-MyTrip's co-founder Nishant Pitti is the majority shareholder in Busy Bee Airways.

Busy Bee had earlier challenged the liquidation of the grounded carrier. During the insolvency resolution process, Busy Bee Airways, along with SpiceJet chief Ajay Singh, and Sharjah-based aviation entity Sky One had made bids for Go First. It also told the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) that it is ready to acquire Go First as a going concern as it still has valuable assets and a license from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to operate.

Meanwhile, counsel appearing from the liquidator of Go First has agreed to file the minutes of the 37th meeting of the Committee of Creditors (CoC) of Go First before the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), along with the additional affidavit.

The appellate tribunal was hearing two petitions filed by Busy Bee Airways and Bhartiya Kamgar Sena Mumbai, challenging the order of the Delhi bench of the NCLT, which, on January 20, ordered the liquidation of the low-cost carrier.

US army copter may have deviated from approved path before crash

Black Hawk Was Flying Higher Than It Should've; Trump Too Raises Concern But Def Secy Says Probe Still On; ATC On Duty Was Doing Job Of Two People

The military helicopter that collided with an American Airlines regional jet on Wednesday night appears to have been flying too high and outside its approved flight path at the time of the crash, according to four sources.

The Army Black Hawk helicopter was supposed to be flying in a different location and lower to the ground as it traversed the busy Reagan National airspace, the people said. Before a helicopter can enter any busy commercial airspace, it must get the approval of an air traffic controller. In this case, the pilot of the helicopter asked the air traffic controller for permission to use a specific, predetermined route that lets helicopters fly no higher than 200 feet and that hugs the bank on the east side of the Potomac River, a location that would have let it avoid the American Airlines plane.

The requested route — referred to as Route 4 at Reagan — followed a specifically carved out path already known to the air traffic controller and helicopter pilot. The helicopter pilot confirmed visual sight of the American Airlines plane, and the air traffic controller instructed the copter pilot to follow the route and go behind the plane. But the helicopter pilot did not follow the intended route, the sources said. Rather, the helicopter was above 300 feet, not below 200 feet, and was at least a half-mile off the approved route when it collided with the jet.

A senior army official urged caution in making any assessments until the helicopter's black box could be recovered and analysed, along with other forensic data. However, US President Trump too suggested that the Blackhawk helicopter was "flying too high, by a lot". "It was far above the 200 foot limit. That's not really too complicated to understand, is it???"



41 OF 67 BODIES RECOVERED: After recovering the plane's black boxes, divers aim to salvage both the aircraft and find the additional components on Friday. Divers plumbing the dark depths of the Potomac River have recovered at least 41 bodies of the 67 flyers of the two aircraft. The divers are facing tough conditions — cold rain and wind gusts of up to 38kmph

FAA restricts copters near Washington airport indefinitely

Authorities restricted helicopter flights near the US capital's Reagan Washington National Airport indefinitely on Friday. The Federal Aviation Administration took the action to reduce the risk of another collision as crews worked to pull the wreckage of US' deadliest air disaster in two decades from the Potomac River. An FAA official said the agency was barring most helicopters from parts of two routes near the airport and only allowing police and medical helicopters in the area between the airport and nearby bridges, pending a complete evaluation. Airspace is crowded around the Washington area, home to three commercial airports, multiple military bases and some govt officials who are ferried around by helicopter. Over a 3-year period ending in 2019, there were 88,000 helicopter flights within 48km of the airport, govt accountability office said in 2021. REUTERS

Pilots have long worried about DC's complex airspace

The airspace around Washington, DC, is congested and complex — a combination aviation experts have long worried could lead to catastrophe. Those fears materialised Wednesday night. Even in peak flying conditions, experts said, the airspace around Reagan Washington National Airport can challenge the most experienced pilots, who must navigate hundreds of other commercial planes, military aircraft and restricted areas around sensitive sites. "This was a disaster waiting to happen... because our systems are stretched to extremes," said Ross Aimer, a retired United Airlines captain. Experts and some lawmakers said they are concerned that the airspace is about to get more congested in the wake of Congress' decision last year to ease restrictions that had limited the airport to nonstop flights within 2,012km of Washington, with few exceptions. AP

he said in a Truth Social post.

US defence secretary Pete Hegseth has acknowledged there may have been an elevation issue with the Black Hawk. But, speaking earlier on Friday, before Trump's remarks, he said it was still inconclusive. "We're looking at altitude, and the president was clear about that: someone was at the wrong altitude. The investigation will help us understand that. Was the Black Hawk too high, was it on course? Right now, we don't quite know," he told Fox News.

Hegseth and the Army have said the three-member crew of soldiers on the Black Hawk were experienced. The army said the instructor pilot, who was the designated pilot in command, had 1,000 flying hours while the other pilot had 500 hours. The third soldier was a crew chief, typically riding in the back of the helicopter.

Clues emerging from the moments before the deadly collision also suggest that multiple layers of the country's aviation safety apparatus failed. The duties of handling air traffic control for helicopters and for planes at Reagan National on Wednesday night were combined before the deadly crash. That left only one person to handle both roles, according to a source. Typically one person handles both helicopter and plane duties after 9.30pm, when traffic at Reagan begins to lessen. But the supervisor combined those duties sometime before 9.30, and allowed one air traffic controller to leave, according to the person. The crash occurred just before 9pm. A chronic shortage of air traffic controllers has forced many to work six-day weeks and 10-hour days — a schedule so fatiguing that multiple federal agencies have warned that it could impede controllers' abilities to do their jobs properly. NYT & REUTERS