

Which are the airports being privatised?

How were the places selected? When is the tender process likely to begin? What are the privatisation goals a part of? When was the revenue-sharing model replaced by per passenger fee? How does it impact airfares? What are some of the issues being raised by airports?

Jagriti Chandra

The story so far:

The third round of airport privatisation, covering 11 airports to be opened for bids in five bundled groups, has moved a step forward with the Ministry of Civil Aviation sending a proposal to the Public Private Partnership Appraisal Committee (PPPAC) for its in-principle clearance and detailed scrutiny. According to government officials, the five bundles, each comprising metro and non-metro airports, include airports at Amritsar and Kangra; Varanasi, Kushinagar and Gaya; Bhubaneswar and Hubli; Raipur and Aurangabad; Tiruchi and Tirupati.

What is the process?

Once the PPPAC completes its appraisal and the Union Cabinet signs off on the plan, bids will be invited from private operators, with the government planning to launch the tender process by March 2026.

The 11 airports were selected from among all AAI (Airports Authority of India) facilities handling 0.1-1 million passengers annually. Projections of future traffic growth and investment requirements then narrowed the list to these top performers for the third privatisation round.

The development comes six years after the plan for privatising 25 airports was first shared by AAI on the conclusion of the privatisation of six airports, bagged by the Adani Group. Sources say the remaining 14 airports would be taken up for privatisation in subsequent rounds.

The privatisation goals are also part of the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) that aims at monetising operating public infrastructure to unlock idle capital and reinvest that in other assets. Launched in August 2021, the NMP set an aggregate indicative target of ₹6 lakh crore to be raised by leasing brownfield infrastructure

The aim should be to ensure the cost of air travel for smaller cities remains affordable

assets over the four-year period from FY 2022 to FY 2025.

The target for the airport sector through the privatisation of 25 airports was pegged at ₹20,782 crore, or nearly 4% of the overall NMP value. In all, 88.3% of the total NMP target has been achieved by various infrastructure ministries, of which roads and railways remain the top contributors, but the aviation sector remains a laggard. The Union Budget 2025-26 announced the launch of the Asset Monetisation Plan 2025-30 to plough back ₹10 lakh crore.

When did the privatisation of airports start?

Privatisation of airports started in 2003 under the NDA government. It approved the privatisation of two brownfield airports, i.e., Delhi and Mumbai airports, with 26% AAI stake and 74% stake owned by private JV partners. Delhi went to a GMR-led consortium in 2006, Mumbai to a GVK-led consortium in the same year via competitive bidding based on a revenue-share model. Two greenfield PPP airports followed, which included Bengaluru and Hyderabad in 2004.

In 2019, six more airports (Ahmedabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram) were privatised, which were all won by the Adani Group. The revenue-share model was replaced by per passenger fee.

For the third round of privatisation, the PPPAC will evaluate key aspects, including revenue-sharing models versus per-passenger fees, cross-subsidisation between metro and non-metro airports in a bundle, and the need for a cap on the number of airports a single entity bags. It will also assess optimal land parcels for non-aeronautical revenue streams that are used to offset airline and passenger fees, and whether the User Development Fee collected from passengers as a component in the airfare will be determined for each airport independently or as a joint asset.

What are the concerns?

Recently, when IndiGo was forced to cancel nearly 5,000 flights in the first two weeks of December, widespread concern was raised about the risks of a duopoly in India's aviation sector. Similar dangers are now emerging in the airport sector, where a monopoly has steadily taken shape over the past five years, with the Adani Group bagging 8 airports – six through privatisation, followed by Mumbai and Navi Mumbai airports, where it acquired GVK's stake.

Consider the recent dispute involving telecom operators, who approached the Department of Telecommunications over what they describe as "extortionary" charges levied at the newly inaugurated Navi Mumbai Airport to allow the use of its in-building solutions and refusal of

right of way to set up infrastructure to provide cellular services.

Why are costs rising for both airlines and passengers?

Privatisation often raises concerns about rising costs for airlines and passengers, even as infrastructure investment increases. These concerns are magnified when a large monopoly emerges, leaving airline operators with limited bargaining power and passengers with virtually none.

Take the example of Thiruvananthapuram Airport, where, following its first tariff revision after privatisation to Adani, which was approved by the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA), the user development fee charged to passengers as part of the airfare increased from ₹506 to ₹770 for domestic travellers for one year, followed by further hikes in subsequent years. Aircraft landing charges were also sharply increased.

Additionally, the regulator pulled up the airport for under-reporting its projection of non-aeronautical revenues, which are meant to cross-subsidise charges levied on airlines and passengers. AERA noted that the projections submitted were based on pre-privatisation and pre-COVID figures from the AAI.

The common man's grievances include high taxi charges at airports, congestion within terminal buildings, limited access to wheelchairs, and being compelled to pay for porter services to overcome challenges of accessibility. A beginning has been made with the airport tariff regulatory body moving towards evaluating airports on service delivery benchmarks and proposing a penalty if these are not met. The service benchmarks include wait time at security gates, check-in time, availability of help desks, and time taken to travel between terminals, among others. It plans a third-party evaluation of these parameters and a penalty in the form of 5% reduction on airport tariff, so that it results in reduced user development fee for passengers.

What lies ahead?

Only about 6% of Indians currently travel by air, highlighting the enormous scope for growth in what is already the world's third-largest aviation market. While affordability remains a key factor, the low penetration rate makes it clear that air travel in India is far from saturated. To meet rising demand, the government has set a goal of building 50 new airports over the next five years and expanding the existing network of 163 airports. By FY2026, India's airports are expected to have a combined passenger-handling capacity of around 550 million passengers per annum (mppa), factoring in new facilities such as Navi Mumbai Airport and the upcoming Noida International Airport. Industry estimates suggest that airport capacity will need to grow to about 850 mppa within five years. Supporting this growth will require more than just new airports and will also depend on the presence of financially robust airlines.



On track: The airports were selected from among all Airports Authority of India facilities handling 0.1-1 million passengers annually. R. V. MOORTHY



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THE PIONEER

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

GMR Visakhapatnam airport successfully conducts validation flight

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Visakhapatnam

Leaping operational readiness, GMR Aero-led GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Limited on Sunday conducted a validation flight at the upcoming Bhogapuram Airport near here.

The validation flight was conducted by an Air India aircraft in the presence of Union Minister for Civil Aviation Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu, senior officials from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Airports Authority of India (AAI), Andhra Pradesh government officials, and leadership from the GMR Group, a press release said.

The successful flight validated the airport's airside infrastructure, navigational aids, runway systems, and overall operational readiness, in line with regulatory requirements laid down by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

It is a crucial step in the process



of acquiring an aerodrome licence and a critical prerequisite before the commencement of commercial flight operations, the release added.

Rammohan Naidu said the day marked a historic milestone in the

development journey of Andhra Pradesh. "Visakhapatnam is set to become the economic capital of the East.

The Bhogapuram Airport will serve as a powerful engine of

growth — creating employment opportunities, catalysing regional industries, and significantly enhancing connectivity for people and businesses alike. The airport will strengthen trade, boost exports, and unlock the immense tourism potential of Andhra Pradesh," he said.

He further said that with world-class infrastructure, the project would accelerate economic development, attract investment, and place the region firmly on the global aviation and commerce map.

The minister had earlier said that the target was to start airport operations by June this year.

Business Chairman (Airports), GMR Group, G B S Raju, said the Bhogapuram International Airport reflected the Group's longstanding commitment to creating world-class national assets that catalyse economic growth and regional development.

"For over two decades, the Group has played a pioneering role in

building and operating some of India's most iconic airports, transforming aviation infrastructure through scale, sustainability and passenger-centric design," he said.

GMR Group Deputy Managing Director I Prabhakar Rao said the Bhogapuram Airport project had achieved over 90 per cent completion and was progressing well ahead of stipulated timelines.

GVIAL is developing the airport under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model on a Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) basis. The Greenfield Airport will be developed in stages.

Initially, the airport will be built to handle six million passengers per annum and will be scaled up based on passenger traffic growth.

The airport will also feature an aerotropolis, an aviation hub, and a dedicated state-of-the-art cargo terminal, ensuring world-class facilities for efficient cargo operations.



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THE TIMES OF INDIA

HYDERABAD

4 JANUARY 2026

Bhogapuram airport to open on June 26



Work underway at the Bhogapuram international airport

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Visakhapatnam: The Alluri Sitharama Raju greenfield international airport at Bhogapuram will open for operations on June 26, with 97% of the work completed, and only civil and interior jobs pending. The first commercial validation flight, an Air India Boeing, with Union civil avia-

tion minister K Rammohan Naidu, Airport Authority of India and Director General of Civil Aviation officials on board, will land on Sunday on the new 3,000-m runway.

The Bhogapuram airport, the second greenfield one in the country after Mumbai, is built to sustain severe cyclones. It can face wind velocity of 275kmph and rain of 27cm.



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BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Bhogapuram airport near Vizag receives maiden flight in trial run

Our Bureau
Hyderabad

Six years after GMR Airports won the bid to build the Bhogapuram airport near Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, a commercial aircraft landed at the airport. The Air India flight from Delhi, carried among others, the Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu on the maiden trial run. The airport is expected to begin full-fledged operations in June.

Initially, the airport capacity will be 6 million passengers per annum, and will be scaled up based on passenger traffic growth. The airport will also have an Aerropolis, an aviation hub, and a dedicated state-of-the-art cargo terminal, ensuring world-class facilities for efficient cargo operations. GMR Visakhapatnam Interna-



tional Airport Ltd (GVIAL), a subsidiary of GMR Airports Ltd (GAL), is developing the airport with an investment of about ₹5,000 crore. The Government acquired 2,200 acres to build the airport.

AIRPORT VALIDATION

The successful flight validates the airport's airside infrastructure, navigational aids, runway systems, and operational readiness, in line with the regulatory requirements laid down by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). "The Bhogapuram Airport will serve as a powerful engine of

growth—creating employment opportunities, catalysing regional industries, and significantly enhancing connectivity for people and businesses alike," Rammohan Naidu, said, addressing a gathering after his arrival.

The airport is 45 kilometres away from Visakhapatnam. "The airport, planned and initiated during the NDA government's tenure between 2014 and 2019, will be ready to serve our people with commercial flight operations from June," Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said in a post on social media platform 'X'.

The airport project has achieved over 90 per cent completion and is progressing well ahead of the stipulated timelines," GMR Group's Deputy Managing Director, Prabhakar Rao, said.



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BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Bhogapuram airport conducts validation flight ahead of launch

DEEPAK PATEL
New Delhi, 4 January

A validation flight, a requirement for commercial operations, was conducted at the Bhogapuram airport, near Visakhapatnam, on Saturday, said its operator GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Ltd (GVIAL).

This marked a regulatory milestone ahead of the airport's inauguration in June this year.

The flight, operated by an Air India aircraft, took place in the presence of Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu, senior officials in the Ministry of Civil Aviation, representatives of the Airports Authority of India (AAI), officers in the Andhra Pradesh government, and the leadership of the GMR group.

A validation flight is mandatory for obtaining the aerodrome licence from the aviation regulator, apart from being



Visakhapatnam Airport conducted validation flight at upcoming Bhogapuram airport, operated by Air India

PHOTO: X/@BHOGAPURAM_ARPT

a prerequisite for commercial flights.

The airport is being developed under a public-private partnership on a design-build-finance-operate-transfer (DBFOT) basis.

Saturday's exercise validated the airport's airside infrastructure, including runway systems, navigational aids, and overall operational preparedness,

in line with requirements prescribed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

GMR Group Deputy Managing Director I Prabhakar Rao said 90 per cent of construction was complete and was progressing ahead of schedule.

Speaking on the occasion, Naidu said the airport would play a critical

role in Andhra Pradesh's development. "Visakhapatnam is set to become the economic capital of the East," he said, adding that the Bhogapuram airport would act as a growth engine by creating employment, boosting regional industries, and improving connectivity for businesses and tourists.

GMR Airports, which operates airports in Delhi, Hyderabad, and Goa, among others, has been doing greenfield projects in India and overseas, with Bhogapuram seen as a key addition to its domestic portfolio.

GMR Group Business Chairman (Airports) G B S Raju said the airport reflected the group's longstanding focus on building large-scale aviation assets.

The airport is being developed in phases, with an initial passenger-handling capacity of 6 million per annum. This will be scaled up in line with traffic growth.

150-km rule waived if existing airport hits capacity: Naidu

The '150 km aerial distance' rule, which prohibits the construction of a greenfield airport within that radius, will no longer apply if the capacity of the existing aerodrome is saturated, Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said on Sunday.

"When it comes to the 150-kilometre radius policy, it is a policy that guides the initiation of airport development. Once capacity is saturated, the clause no longer applies. There is an opportunity for the State to cater to a second airport," Naidu said.

PTI



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BUSINESS STANDARD

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Telecom firms, Navi Mumbai airport operator lock horns over network access

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA
New Delhi, 4 January

A battle is brewing between the country's leading telecom services providers (TSPs) and Adani group-run Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd (NMIAL), with the telcos seeking the Department of Telecommunications' (DoT's) intervention over allegations that they have been denied "right of way" at the airport and are being forced to mandatorily use a network deployed by the airport operator at what they describe as "grossly exorbitant and untenable" charges aggregating to ₹44.16 crore a year to provide services to customers.

An NMIAL spokesperson rejected the claims, saying telecom operators had not been denied "right of way" and that discussions had been held with them, including an offer for in-building solution (IBS) services at charges in line with prevailing industry standards, to which the telecom companies had not responded. "We welcome individual TSPs to discuss and mutually agree on rates. However, we will not give in to cartelisation in this regard," the spokesperson said.

The telecom industry's apex body, the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), representing Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea, has argued in a recent communication to the DoT that under the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, and the

What telcos say

- Denied statutorily obligated 'right of way' at NMIAL
- Asked to mandatorily use network deployed by airport, which is not allowed under the Telecom Act
- Asked exorbitant and untenable charges for airport network

Tense banter



NMIAL's defence

- Not denied 'right of way'
- Price offer has been made to use the IBS services but telcos have not reverted
- Ready to discuss mutually agreed rates but will not allow cartelisation
- Installed IBS on their own after numerous discussions
- Maintenance and upkeep of network best managed by airport rather than third party

Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024, the new airport qualifies as a "public utility."

The COAI said NMIAL is statutorily obligated to provide "right of way" permission in a non-discriminatory and time-bound manner for the installation of telecom infrastructure, including in-building solutions.

The association said that while the three operators had approached the airport company, NMIAL had declined to grant the necessary permissions,

contrary to the statutory framework of the Telecommunications Act and the "right of way" rules. Instead, it had directed them to mandatorily utilise a network deployed by NMIAL at charges that were exorbitant and commercially untenable.

According to the COAI, its members have been asked to pay around ₹92 lakh per month per operator, aggregating to ₹44.16 crore per annum for four operators, including state-owned BSNL. These charges are grossly disproportio-

tionate and significantly exceed the total capital expenditure ordinarily required to deploy an independent IBS network, it added.

The COAI also said it understood that NMIAL held the relevant licence for access services and had conferred upon itself exclusive "right of way" under the guise of being a neutral host, which it argued was not permitted under the Telecommunications Act. The law, it said, did not allow the grant of exclusive "right of way" or the creation of a monopolistic arrangement for the provision of "right of way".

NMIAL, however, said the IBS had been procured and installed after multiple discussions with individual telecom service providers, and that BSNL was currently at an advanced stage of testing use of the IBS at the airport.

NMIAL had consciously decided to install its own IBS infrastructure based on the experience that certain critical areas such as baggage belts, utility buildings and air traffic control were often neglected by telecom operators in favour of passenger-heavy zones, affecting airport efficiency, a spokesperson said. Given that airports are sensitive zones, frequent servicing, maintenance and upkeep of the network are best managed by the airport operator with the requisite security clearances, noting that turnaround times for third parties to address network issues tend to be longer, they added.



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5 JANUARY 2026

अब बड़े शहरों में एक से ज्यादा एयरपोर्ट होंगे: राममोहन नायडू

भास्कर न्यूज़ | विजयनगरम

देशभर में हवाई यात्रियों की बढ़ती संख्या को देखते हुए केंद्र सरकार अब बड़े शहरों में एक से ज्यादा एयरपोर्ट की अनुमति देगी। नागर विमानन मंत्री राममोहन नायडू ने रविवार को कहा कि सरकार मौजूदा नीति की समीक्षा करेगी, जिसमें 150 किलोमीटर के दायरे में दो एयरपोर्ट खोलने पर रोक है। आंध्र प्रदेश के विजयनगरम जिले के भोगापुरम में ऑल्टुरी सीताराम राजू इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट पर पहली टेस्ट फ्लाइट के सफल संचालन के बाद एक कार्यक्रम में राममोहन नायडू ने कहा कि मुंबई, गाजियाबाद (दिल्ली से 42 किमी दूर), बंगलुरु और चेन्नई के परंदूर समेत कई शहरों में नए एयरपोर्ट बनाने की प्रक्रिया शुरू हो चुकी है। जब मौजूदा एयरपोर्ट अपनी पूरी क्षमता तक पहुंच जाएंगे, तब नए एयरपोर्ट के प्रस्तावों को मंजूरी दी जाएगी। नायडू ने कहा कि नए एयरपोर्ट के साथ-साथ एमआरओ (मेंटेनेंस, रिपेयर और ओवरहॉल) सुविधाओं को भी बढ़ावा दिया जा रहा है, जिससे आर्थिक गतिविधियों को रफ्तार मिलेगी और रोजगार के नए अवसर पैदा होंगे।



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DELHI

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केशोद एयरपोर्ट का रनवे 1 किमी बढ़ेगा, एग्रो और टूरिज्म सेक्टर से रोजगार बढ़ेगा

भास्कर न्यूज़ | जूनागढ़

जूनागढ़ के होटल फर्न लियो में जूनागढ़ डिस्ट्रिक्ट वाइब्रेंट समिट आयोजित किया गया। प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी ने 2003 में वाइब्रेंट गुजरात का जो बीज बोया था, वह अब बरगद का पेड़ बनकर जिलास्तर पर फैल गया है। जूनागढ़ में हुए 'डिस्ट्रिक्ट वाइब्रेंट समिट' में जिले के औद्योगिक विकास को नई रफ्तार देने के लिए अलग-अलग सेक्टर में कुल 1209 करोड़ रुपये के कैपिटल इन्वेस्टमेंट के लिए 218 एमओयू साइन किए गए हैं। इस इन्वेस्टमेंट से आने वाले समय में जिले में बड़े पैमाने पर रोजगार के मौके बनेंगे।

अलग-अलग सेक्टर में 281 करोड़ रुपये के 102 एमओयू साइन हुए: जिले के प्रभारी मंत्री डॉ प्रद्युम्न वाजा की अध्यक्षता में हुए इस इवेंट में 281 करोड़ रुपये के 102 एमओयू साइन हुए, जिनमें मुख्य रूप से एग्रो,

फूड प्रोसेसिंग और डेयरी सेक्टर शामिल हैं। इसके अलावा इंजीनियरिंग और टेक्नोलॉजी सेक्टर में 144 करोड़ रुपये के 55 एमओयू, मिनरल और माइनिंग सेक्टर में 403 करोड़ रुपये के 41 एमओयू, टूरिज्म सेक्टर में 114 करोड़ रुपये और इंफ्रास्ट्रक्चर सेक्टर में 175 करोड़ रुपये के एमओयू साइन हुए। इस समिट में हेल्थ, हॉस्पिटल और एजुकेशन सेक्टर में भी बड़े इन्वेस्टमेंट की घोषणा की गई है।

जिला कलेक्टर अनिलकुमार राणावसिया ने कहा कि जूनागढ़ खेती और टूरिज्म वाला जिला है, इसलिए एग्रो-प्रोसेसिंग इंडस्ट्री पर खास जोर दिया गया है। सीफूड इंडस्ट्री को बढ़ावा देने के लिए 22 हेक्टेयर जमीन भी दी गई है। केशोद एयरपोर्ट का रनवे डेढ़ से बढ़ाकर द्वादस किमी किया जाएगा, जिससे कार्गो की सुविधाएं बढ़ेंगी और सौराष्ट्र के तटीय इलाके को बहुत फायदा होगा।



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK JAGRAN

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

नई दिल्ली से रवाना होने वाली दो तिहाई उड़ानों पर कोहरे की मार

जागरण संवाददाता, नई दिल्ली: कोहरे का असर रविवार को भी उड़ानों पर देखने को मिला। रविवार को नई दिल्ली के इंदिरा गांधी अंतरराष्ट्रीय आइजीआइ एयरपोर्ट से विभिन्न घरेलू व अंतरराष्ट्रीय गंतव्यों को जाने वाली करीब दो तिहाई उड़ानें विलंबित रहीं। विलंबित उड़ानों में औसत विलंब करीब आधा घंटे का रहा। हालांकि रद की गई उड़ानों की संख्या पिछले दिनों के मुकाबले काफी कम रही।

रविवार को सिर्फ आठ उड़ानों को रद किया गया। रद की गई उड़ानों में से पांच उड़ानें एलाइंस एयर की

50 से 100 मीटर के बीच रनवे पर दर्ज की गई दृश्यता, आठ उड़ानें रद की गईं

हैं। शेष में एक उड़ान एअर इंडिया तथा एक उड़ान इंडिगो की है। जिन उड़ानों को रद किया गया, उन्हें गोरखपुर, कुल्लू, जबलपुर, हिसार, धर्मशाला, वाराणसी, मुंबई व चंडीगढ़ जाना था।

सबसे ज्यादा उड़ानें देर रात 12 बजे से तड़के चार बजे तक विलंबित रहीं। इस दौरान रनवे पर 50 से 100 मीटर के बीच दृश्यता

दर्ज की गई। इस अवधि में शायद ही कोई ऐसी उड़ान रही जिसके प्रस्थान में एक घंटा का विलंब नहीं देखा गया।

रविवार को तड़के चार बजे के

बाद स्थिति में थोड़ा सुधार हुआ। एयरलाइंस तथा आइजीआइ एयरपोर्ट की संचालन कंपनी डायल द्वारा पूरे दिन यात्रियों के लिए एडवाइजरी जारी होती रही।



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK JAGRAN

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

आइजीआइ एयरपोर्ट पर एअर इंडिया बनाएगी दो महाराजा लाउंज

गौतम कुमार मिश्रा • जगज्जण

नई दिल्ली: एअर इंडिया के प्रीमियम यात्रियों के लिए आइकानिक स्पेस रहा महाराजा लाउंज, अब ग्लोबल स्टैंडर्ड्स के साथ अपग्रेड हो रहा है। नए वर्ष में एअर इंडिया कई नए लाउंज खोलने और अपग्रेड करने की जा रहा है। इसमें नई दिल्ली का आइजीआइ एयरपोर्ट पर दो नए महाराजा लाउंज बनाए जाएंगे। जबकि न्यूयार्क, सैन फ्रांसिस्को में इसे अपग्रेड किया जाएगा।

आइजीआइ एयरपोर्ट के टर्मिनल-3 पर प्रीमियम यात्रियों के लिए ये दोनों लाउंज खोले जाएंगे। इनमें एक घरेलू व दूसरा अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानों के



एअर इंडिया का महाराजा लाउंज • प्रतीकात्मक तस्वीर

यात्रियों के लिए होगा। अंतरराष्ट्रीय यात्रियों का लाउंज 2024 में बंद कर दिया गया था। इसे पिछले साल दिसंबर में देवारा खोलने की तैयारी थी, इसमें विलंब हुआ है। संभावना है कि इस महीने के अंत तक इसे खोल

दिया जाए। इसके बाद इस वर्ष के मध्य तक घरेलू यात्रियों के लिए खोला जा सकता है।

अमेरिका पर एअर इंडिया का सबसे ज्यादा फोकस: अधिकारियों की मानें तो एअर इंडिया का ग्लोबल

हब पर फोकस कर रहा है। इसमें अमेरिका के ज्यादा प्राथमिकता दी जा रही है। इसकी शुरुआत नई दिल्ली, न्यूयार्क व सैन फ्रांसिस्को से की जा रही है। सैन फ्रांसिस्को एयरपोर्ट पर नया लाउंज फरवरी 2026 तक तैयार किया जा सकता है। यह लाउंज, दिल्ली, मुंबई और बंगलुरु से कनेक्ट होने वाली उड़ानों के यात्रियों को सुविधा प्रदान करेगा। यह एअर इंडिया का अमेरिका में न्यूयार्क के जेएफके एयरपोर्ट के बाद दूसरा लाउंज होगा। न्यूयार्क के जेएफके एयरपोर्ट पर मौजूदा महाराजा लाउंज का अपग्रेड इस वर्ष मार्च तक तैयार हो जाएगा।

ये होंगी सुविधाएं: हार्ड स्पीड वाई-

फाई, प्राइवेट वर्क स्टेशन, शावर सूट्स और मसाज चेंयर्स उपलब्ध होंगे। डाइनिंग में इंडियन और इंटरनेशनल कुजीन का मिक्स है, जैसे तंदूरी डिशेज, फ्रेश सलाद्स, वाइन सेलेक्शन और स्पेशल काकटेल। नए लाउंज में योगा जॉन व क्वाइट जॉन भी जोड़ गया है।

महाराजा लाउंज इसलिए किया जा रहा अपग्रेड: टटा समूह के अधिग्रहण के बाद शुरू हुई ट्रांसफॉर्मेशन योजना विधान के बाद एअर इंडिया को विश्वस्तरीय एयरलाइन बनाने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है। इसी कड़ी में जिन महत्वपूर्ण एयरपोर्ट पर यह सुविधा नहीं है। वहां इसे खोला जा रहा है।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

New airport every 50 days, says Naidu

NITIN KUMAR
Bhogapuram (Andhra Pradesh), January 4

THE COUNTRY'S AIRPORT expansion is gathering pace, with a new airport being added roughly every 50 days as the government is pushing

to ease capacity constraints and expand air connectivity, Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu said on Sunday.

Speaking after a successful validation flight at the upcoming Bhogapuram Airport near Visakhapatnam on Saturday, Naidu said the next

set of greenfield airports are nearing operational readiness. Following the launch of Navi Mumbai Airport, the Noida International Airport at Jewar is set to begin operations in February, while Bhogapuram is expected to open by June.

"We have fast-tracked the project for operations by May or June 2026, well ahead of the original schedule. The Noida International Airport at Jewar will be ready by February," the minister said.

Continued on Page 5

New airport....

BHOGAPURAM'S OPERATOR, GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport, said the validation flight marked a key regulatory milestone ahead of the airport's inauguration, scheduled for June.

The exercise is a mandatory step in securing an aerodrome licence from the aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, and is required before commercial flight operations can commence.

Developed under a public-private partnership on a design, build, finance, operate and transfer basis, the Bhogapuram project is being executed by the GMR Group.

The validation flight assessed airside infrastructure, including runway systems and navigational aids, as well as overall operational readiness against DGCA standards.

GMR Group Deputy Managing Director, P Prabhakar Rao said construction is more than 90% complete and progressing ahead of stipulated timelines.

The greenfield airport is being developed in phases, with an initial passenger handling capacity of 6 million passengers per annum, to be expanded in line with traffic growth.

Naidu said India currently operates a fleet of 843 aircraft. In 2025, airlines added 80 planes, and another 106 aircraft are expected to join fleets in 2026.

He added that regional carrier Star Air is planning additional aircraft orders, which would further lift capacity.

The ministry, he said, is encouraging states to develop



Developed under a public-private partnership on a design, build, finance, operate and transfer basis, the Bhogapuram project is being executed by the GMR Group

multiple airports in regions where existing facilities are nearing saturation.

The earlier 150-kilometre rule that limited the construction of a second airport no longer applies once capacity at the first airport is fully utilised.

"The policy ensures the operational stability of the first airport, but it does not restrict the development of another airport once capacity has been saturated," Naidu said.

On international connectivity, the minister said 18 airports are covered under the Open Sky policy, facilitating the launch of overseas routes.

Visakhapatnam is among those included.

On IndiGo, Naidu said the ministry is reviewing the DGCA report to impose a strict penalty, adding that any action taken must act as a lesson and deterrent to prevent a repeat of similar disruptions.

(The correspondent was in Bhogapuram at the invitation of GMR Group)

Corporate Communications Directorate

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

● RAMANATHAN RAJAMANI, CEO, AIR INDIA SATS AIRPORT SERVICES

We plan to invest up to ₹5,000 crore in Noida airport cargo infra'

Air India SATS Airport Services (AISATS) is sharpening its focus on cargo and logistics as a long-term growth engine, alongside its core ground-handling business. The company plans phased investments of up to ₹5,000 crore to develop integrated cargo infrastructure at Noida International Airport. AISATS CEO Ramanathan Rajamani speaks with Yaruqullah Khan about the strategy, policy gaps, and how the company is positioning itself for the next phase of air cargo growth. Excerpts:

AISATS has been eyeing a deeper play in cargo infrastructure and warehousing services. How much of future growth do you expect to come from integrated cargo solutions versus tradi-

tional ground handling? What new revenue models are emerging?

Cargo and logistics are becoming an increasingly important pillar of our long-term growth strategy as air cargo market shifts from a largely metro-centric model to a more distributed, network-led ecosystem. Over the medium term, integrated cargo solutions will account for a growing share of incremental growth, while ground handling remains a stable core business. We are building end-to-end cargo ecosystems that connect major gateways with emerging hubs and secondary airports. This is being driven by manufacturing growth, e-commerce, pharmaceuticals, perishables, and regional exports. Revenue

streams are also evolving. Beyond per-tonne handling charges, we are seeing greater contribution from long-term infrastructure concessions, warehouse and logistics rentals, and airline-agnostic cargo platforms.

AISATS is undertaking debt-funded investments under a build-operate-transfer model for an integrated cargo terminal and warehousing zone at Noida International Airport. How

large is this investment?

The integrated cargo terminal and the integrated warehousing and logistics zone are being developed in phases, aligned with airport commissioning timelines and cargo volume growth. For Phase 1, the planned investment is estimated at around ₹700 crore. As the airport

scales up, our cumulative investment across phases could go up to about ₹5,000 crore by the final phase.

The government has not finalised a national ground-handling policy despite a draft being introduced in 2015. How does this affect the industry?

The absence of a final national framework creates operational uncertainty rather than direct regulatory risk. For service providers, this can complicate long-term planning around capital investment, manpower deployment, and technology adoption, especially

at airports where concession terms or scope are periodically reviewed. A clear national policy would provide predictability, uniform safety benchmarks, and clarity on competition and market structure.

What is the strategic and financial rationale for expanding into cargo hubs and secondary airports?

There are both strategic and financial drivers. From a financial perspective, secondary airports typically offer lower operating costs, longer concession tenures, and greater flexibility in infrastructure design. This allows for more sustainable returns over the asset lifecycle. Strategically, it helps diversify our network and brings capabilities closer to emerging production and

consumption centres.

With India targeting a \$2-trillion export economy by 2030, how is AISATS aligning its investments to support higher export-linked air freight?

Our focus is on capacity creation, process efficiency, and reliability across the cargo value chain. Cold-chain and specialised cargo infrastructure is a priority, particularly for pharmaceuticals, perishables, and high-value manufacturing exports, where temperature control and handling precision are critical. We are also investing in automation and digital systems to improve throughput, reduce dwell times, and provide better end-to-end visibility for airlines and logistics partners.

What steps is AISATS taking to strengthen training, safety, and workforce retention?

Workforce development is a strategic priority for us. We have strengthened structured training and recurrent certification programmes, combining classroom learning, on-the-job mentoring, and simulator-based modules. We operate dedicated training centres in Delhi, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Thiruvananthapuram. On safety, we rely on standardised operating procedures, regular audits, and data-led monitoring. To address attrition, the focus is on better job design and workforce well-being, including improved shift planning, ergonomic interventions, clear career progression pathways, and performance-linked incentives.



CARGO AND LOGISTICS ARE BECOMING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT PILLAR OF OUR LONG-TERM GROWTH STRATEGY





Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

4 JANUARY 2026

Sindhudurg airport is 24/7 & all-weather

Sweety Bhagwat

MUMBAI

IRB Sindhudurg Airport has received approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to operate 24x7, all-weather flights. The airport has also been certified for Instrument Flight Rules (IFR), allowing aircraft to operate during low visibility and adverse weather conditions. As part of the clearance, the airport has published satellite-based Required Navigation Performance (RNP) procedures along with a backup navigation aid. These systems provide instrument approach guidance to pilots and ensure a reliable non-satellite alternative, enabling safer landings and more consistent operations.

The DGCA approval comes at a time of rising passenger traffic at Sindhudurg Airport. In December, the airport recorded close to 11,000 passenger movements for the first time and is expected to feature among the country's top 75 airports in terms of monthly passenger footfall. To accommodate the growing demand, aircraft parking stands have been doubled from three to six.

Confident that the approval will boost economic and tourism development across the Konkan region, Captain Jai S Sadana, the airport's chief adviser and head, said that the Mumbai-Sindhudurg route under the state's regional connectivity scheme is expected to begin in the coming months.

Location
Parule-Chipi
in Vengurla

OPERATED BY
IRB Infrastructure Developers

Developed, operated and maintained nearly **20,500** lane kilometres in India in over **25 years**

Key aviation gateway to the Konkan belt and South Goa

21 KM from Kudal

56 KM from Mopa in Goa

SPREAD ACROSS 13 states

Asset base of around **₹94,000cr**





Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

नोएडा एयरपोर्ट आखिरी प्रक्रिया में: नायडू

विशाखापट्टनम, एजेंसी। केंद्रीय नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री राम मोहन नायडू ने रविवार को कहा कि जेवर में बन रहा नोएडा इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट लाइसेंस मिलने की आखिरी प्रक्रिया में है। सरकार का लक्ष्य इसी महीने के अंत में या फरवरी की शुरुआत में इसका उद्घाटन करने का है।

वहीं, भोगापुरम एयरपोर्ट (आंध्र प्रदेश) का उद्घाटन मई या जून में हो सकता है। विशाखापट्टनम के पास भोगापुरम एयरपोर्ट पर पहली ट्रायल फ्लाइट से उतरने के बाद उन्होंने मीडिया से

अमरावती में नया एयरपोर्ट

मुख्यमंत्री चंद्रबाबू नायडू के अमरावती में नए इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट के प्रस्ताव पर उन्होंने कहा कि यह राज्य की राजधानी को विश्वस्तरीय और आधुनिक बनाने की दिशा में एक बड़ा कदम है।

बातचीत में ये बातें कहीं। पुराने एयरपोर्ट की क्षमता पूरी होने पर '150 किमी की दूरी' वाला नियम लागू नहीं होगा: उन्होंने कहा कि दो एयरपोर्ट के बीच '150 किलोमीटर की हवाई दूरी' वाला नियम

हादसों की जांच चल रही

अहमदाबाद में हुए विमान हादसे पर उन्होंने कहा कि इसकी जांच पेशेवर तरीके से चल रही है। इसमें कई देशों की टीम शामिल है और अंतरराष्ट्रीय मानकों का पालन किया जा रहा है।

अब रुकावट नहीं बनेगा, बशर्ते पुराने एयरपोर्ट की क्षमता पूरी तरह भर चुकी हो। मौजूदा नियमों के अनुसार, किसी भी पुराने एयरपोर्ट के 150 किमी के दायरे में नया प्राइवेट या ग्रीनफील्ड एयरपोर्ट नहीं बनाया जा सकता।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Over 130 arrested in 2025 for passport and visa fraud at IGI

Jignasa Sinha

jignasa.sinha@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: In a large-scale crackdown on visa and passport fraud, the IGI Airport unit of Delhi Police arrested more than 130 people in 2025, including travel agents and facilitators allegedly involved in illegal immigration networks operating across the country, police said on Saturday.

Police said the year-long operation targeted syndicates engaged in sending people abroad using forged visas, fake passports and manipulated documents.

Apart from immigration-related fraud, the unit also intensified action against touts and baggage theft at the airport. More than 300 cases were registered against touts, leading to over 400 arrests, while around 60 people were arrested in cases linked to theft of passenger baggage and cargo. Ground-handling staff of airlines were questioned in several cases to trace possible internal links, police said.

Senior officers said the operation was different this year, as the IGI Airport unit, for the

first time, focused on financial investigations to dismantle the economic backbone of organised fraud networks. Investigators traced money trails, identified suspicious banking activity and initiated action to seize properties believed to have been acquired using proceeds of crime.

Police said cases were referred to them mainly from the US, France, Canada, the Philippines and other countries, where agents had sent people on fake visas. Many passengers were unaware that they were being duped and realised it only after they were deported or arrested abroad, police said.

DCP (IGI airport) Vichitra Veer said one of the major challenges in these cases was large cash transactions. "We have still identified over 100 bank accounts linked to agents and frozen them after detecting suspicious transactions. In at least one case, authorities have already moved court seeking attachment of property under provisions related to proceeds of crime. Similar action is being prepared against other agents," he said.

THE HINDU

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Centre will allow multiple airports in major cities, says Civil Aviation Minister

K. Srinivasa Rao
VIZIANAGARAM

Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu said on Sunday that the Union government would allow functioning of two or more airports each in major cities in view of increased air passenger traffic across the country.

“The Centre will review the existing policy that bars the functioning of two airports within a 150-km radius,” Mr. Rammohan Naidu said after the successful first test flight at the new Alluri Sitharama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram in Vizianagaram of Andhra Pradesh.

To a query, he said the Centre was already taking steps for the construction



Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu at the Bhogapuram airport near Visakhapatnam on Sunday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

of new airports in Mumbai, Ghaziabad in Uttar Pradesh (located about 42 km from New Delhi), Bengaluru, Parandur in Chennai, and other cities.

“The government will accept the proposals for new airports when the ex-

isting airports reach saturation levels,” he said.

The Union government was according top priority to the aviation sector by promoting new airports, along with maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities, to spur economic

activity and ensure direct and indirect employment to many, Mr. Rammohan Naidu said.

Recalling the success story of the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport at Shamshabad in Telangana that was established on 5,000 acres of land, the Minister lauded the initiative taken by N. Chandrababu Naidu when he was the Chief Minister of unified Andhra Pradesh between 1995 and 2003.

He said the government would accord equal priority to developing multiple access roads to all airports as they too would indirectly spur economic activity and industrial progress.

Trial flight successfully lands at Bhogapuram; 96% work done, says operator

The Hindu Bureau
VIZIANAGARAM

A validation flight was successfully completed at the Bhogapuram International Airport in Vizianagaram district of Andhra Pradesh on Sunday.

An aircraft of Air India, with Union Civil Aviation Minister K. Rammohan Naidu and Vizianagaram MP Kalisetti Appala Naidu aboard, landed on the airport's 3.8-km runway around 11.10 a.m. The aircraft was given a grand welcome with a water salute.

District Collector S. Ramsundar Reddy, Joint Collector Sedhu Madhavan, and representatives of the GMR Group welcomed the Minister and others.

Mr. Rammohan Naidu



Air India's first trial flight landed successfully at Bhogapuram International Airport near Visakhapatnam. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

said it was a historic day in the aviation sector and hoped that the new airport spurred the economic activity across the north Andhra region. He exuded confidence that the GMR Group would adhere to the deadline of June 30 set for the full-fledged operations of the airport. He said the government was taking steps to widen the roads to

the airport.

GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Ltd. (GVIAL) is constructing the greenfield airport, around 50 km from Visakhapatnam city, on 2,200 acres at an estimated cost of ₹4,725 crore. GMR Group deputy managing director I. Prabhakara Rao said 96% of the work on the airport had been completed.



Corporate Communications Directorate

LOKSATYA

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

आंध्र प्रदेश के भोगापुरम एयरपोर्ट पर उतरी पहली टेस्ट फ्लाइट

उपलब्धि

विशाखापत्तनम, लोकसत्य। उत्तर आंध्र प्रदेश के विजयनगरम जिले में बने भोगापुरम एयरपोर्ट पर रविवार को पहली वैलिडेशन फ्लाइट ने लैंड किया। इस फ्लाइट से केंद्रीय नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री के. राममोहन नायडू व विजयनगरम के सांसद के. अम्पलानायुडी और अन्य शीर्ष अधिकारी नई दिल्ली से भोगापुरम एयरपोर्ट पर पहुंचे। मुख्यमंत्री चंद्रबाबू नायडू ने भोगापुरम में पहली फ्लाइट की लैंडिंग को एयरपोर्ट के इतिहास में मील का पत्थर बताया। इस ग्रीनफील्ड इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट का उद्घाटन 26 जून को होगा। इस मौके पर मुख्यमंत्री चंद्रबाबू नायडू ने भोगापुरम एयरपोर्ट पर



पहली फ्लाइट की लैंडिंग पर प्रतिक्रिया देते हुए कहा कि आंध्र प्रदेश के नागरिक उड्डयन सेवाओं को लेकर एक और ऐतिहासिक मील का पत्थर बना। पहला वैलिडेशन फ्लाइट का सफलतापूर्वक उतरना एक अच्छा परिणाम है। उन्होंने उत्तर

आंध्र के लोगों को बधाई देते हुए कहा कि इससे क्षेत्रीय संपर्क मजबूत होगा और उत्तरांध्र के विकास को काफी बढ़ावा मिलेगा उन्होंने कहा कि इस एयरपोर्ट से इस साल जून से कमर्शियल फ्लाइट सर्विस शुरू हो जाएंगी।



Corporate Communications Directorate

SWATANTRA BHARAT

LUCKNOW

4 JANUARY 2026

नेपाल में एयरपोर्ट पर रनवे से फिसला विमान

बाल-बाल बचे सभी यात्री

काठमांडू, नेपाल में शुक्रवार शाम बड़ा हादसा होने से बच गया। बुद्ध एयर का एक विमान भद्रपुर एयरपोर्ट पर लैंडिंग के दौरान रनवे से फिसल गया और करीब 200 मीटर दूर घास वाले इलाके में जा रुका। राहत की बात यह है कि विमान में सवार सभी 51 यात्री और चालक दल के 4 सदस्य पूरी तरह सुरक्षित हैं। जानकारी के अनुसार पास ही में एक नदी भी थी, अगर विमान नहीं रुकता तो बड़ा हादसा हो सकता था। बता दें कि विमान काठमांडू से उड़ान भर रहा था। बुद्ध एयर की फ्लाइट संख्या 901 काठमांडू से रात 8:23 बजे रवाना हुई थी। विमान का पायलट कैप्टन शैलेश लिंबू थे। विमान रात करीब 9:08 बजे भद्रपुर एयरपोर्ट पर उतरा। लैंडिंग के दौरान विमान अपना संतुलन खो बैठा और रनवे पार करते हुए किनारे स्थित घास के मैदान में जाकर रुका।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE STATESMAN

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Cochin Airport revives 'Kalangan' Art Arcade at domestic terminal:

Kochi: Kalangan, The Kerala Art Arcade, has been reopened in a renovated and relocated space at the Domestic Terminal of Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL). The cultural installation is situated near Gate 7 in the Domestic Security Hold Area and is aimed at enhancing the terminal's interior with traditional art forms that showcase Kerala's rich artistic heritage. The initiative has converted an unused area of the terminal into a vibrant cultural corner. Designed in a temple-inspired setting, the installation features a striking depiction of Duryodhanavadham from Kathakali, along with representations of renowned Kerala art forms such as Theyyam, Chakyar Koothu, Nangyar Koothu and Ottamthullal, among others. The facility was inaugurated by S. Suhas, Managing Director of CIAL, in the presence of Executive Directors Jayarajan V. and Saji K. George, Chief Financial Officer Saji Daniel, Airport Director Manu G., project consultant P. Rajasekhar, and senior department heads of CIAL.





Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

MUMBAI

4 JANUARY 2026

Sindhudurg airport gets nod for 24x7 flight ops

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Sindhudurg airport has received approval from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for 24x7 day-and-night, all-weather flight operations, the airport operator said on Saturday.

The approval enables Instrument Flight Rules (IFR) operations, allowing aircraft to operate during low visibility and adverse weather conditions.

The clearance includes satellite-based Required Navigation Performance (RNP) procedures and a

backup non-satellite navigation aid, enhancing approach guidance and operational reliability.

The development comes amid rising passenger traffic at the Konkan-region airport, which recorded close to 11,000 passenger movements in December for the first time.

To support growth, aircraft parking capacity has been increased from three to six stands. Sindhudurg airport is operated by IRB Infrastructure Developers Ltd, and is part of the govt's UDAN regional connectivity scheme.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ASIAN AGE

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

No power banks in overhead bins: DGCA issues new rules

Use or charging banned onboard to prevent fire risks

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JAN. 4

Power banks and spare batteries can be carried only in hand baggage during air travel and these shall not be placed in overhead bins of the aircraft. In the wake of incidents relating to fire due to power banks, the Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has asked all airlines and airport operators to ensure safety related to fire and explosion due to power banks and batteries and educate passengers that using or charging power banks and laptops is not allowed during flight.

The DGCA order added that power banks and spare batteries should not be placed in overhead bins because a fire may not be visible due to storage away from passenger and crew visibility.

▶ **THE AIRLINES** and airport operators need to report safety issues and occurrences related to lithium battery incidents

Passengers need to immediately inform cabin crew if any device emits heat, smoke, or an unusual odour. The airlines and airport operators need to report all safety issues and occurrences related to lithium battery incidents to the DGCA immediately.

The DGCA said the widespread usage of lithium batteries in various rechargeable devices has led to an increase in carriage of lithium batteries by air. Power banks, portable chargers, and similar devices containing lithium batteries can act as ignition sources and potentially initiate on-board fires.

"Lithium batteries

placed in overhead stowage bins or within carry-on baggage may be obscured, difficult to access, or not readily monitored by passengers or crewmembers. This may result in delayed detection of smoke or fire and response actions, increasing the potential hazard to flight safety," the DGCA order said.

"This circular is issued to all air operators and airport operators to review and reinforce their safety risk management processes pertaining to the carriage and handling of lithium batteries, rechargeable lithium batteries (power banks etc.), and rechargeable devices containing lithium batteries (laptops, cell phones, tablets etc.) and adopt appropriate risk mitigation strategies to minimise lithium batteries thermal runaway events.

Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ASIAN AGE

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Pradeep S.
Mehta



The IndiGo mess and the misplaced narrative over competition law

Flight cancellations, capacity shortages and abnormally high surge in airfares have once again brought India's aviation sector under scrutiny, with IndiGo at the centre of the debate. Having scrapped nearly a quarter of its 17,000-plus domestic flights in the first week of December, the situation has triggered renewed calls for competition law action against IndiGo. However, framing this episode as a competition law issue is conceptually flawed. What transpired was not an abuse of dominance under the Competition Act 2002, but a failure of regulatory compliance and, more fundamentally, a breakdown in competition policy implementation. Treating every market disruption as an antitrust problem risks diluting competition law and obscuring deeper institutional shortcomings.

The immediate trigger was IndiGo's non-compliance with the DGCA's revised Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms, introduced nearly two years ago to align Indian aviation safety standards with global benchmarks and address persistent pilot fatigue. These rules, which increased weekly rest from 36 to 48 hours and reduced permissible night landings from six to two, were backed by a phased implementation timeline with clear deadlines in June and November. While some carriers, including Air India, indicated compliance, IndiGo admitted it could not fully implement the norms reflecting its ability, by virtue of scale and market position, to

operate relatively independently of competitors. IndiGo apparently had a shortage of pilots and was therefore making the existing pilots work overtime.

The more serious question, however, is how the regulator allowed this situation to escalate. The transition was foreseeable, yet enforcement remained weak until disruptions became alarming. This concern was echoed by the Delhi high court, where a bench comprising Justices Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Tushar Rao Gedela questioned the regulator's role, noting that the authorities appeared to let the situation precipitate. Beyond operational chaos, such regulatory lapses impose real economic costs disrupting travel, business activity and consumer confidence.

Much public outrage focused on "opportunistic" or "surge" pricing. Yet, such pricing is not inherently anti-competitive. Competition law does not prohibit firms from responding to demand-supply imbalances by adjusting prices, even sharply. Opportunistic pricing becomes problematic only when it is enabled or sustained by exclusionary conduct or market foreclosure. In this case, the price hike was a market response to a regulatory-induced supply disruption. Treating surge pricing, by itself, as evidence of abuse would stretch the scope of Section 4 of the Competition Act.

Indeed, Section 4 targets conduct that is exploitative or exclusionary such as denial of market access, imposi-

tion of unfair conditions, or price manipulation decoupled from market fundamentals. IndiGo's conduct does not fall within this framework. There is no evidence that it used its dominance to foreclose competitors or to impose unfair pricing unrelated to supply constraints.

Equally important is the labour dimension of the crisis. One argument advanced is that IndiGo could have hired foreign pilots to cope with the shortage of pilots, like the now-defunct Jet Airways and Kingfisher. The Indian labour market has structural rigidities. Pilots in India typically operate under notice periods ranging from six to twelve months, an unusually long duration that significantly hampers workforce mobility and timely capacity adjustments. Such restrictions are not conducive to a competitive environment and merit re-assessment. However, these are labour and sectoral policy issues, not competition law violations, though there is currently some talk globally on labour conditions and competition law. Currently, the responsibility for addressing such constraints lies primarily with DGCA.

That said, the episode raises serious competition policy concerns. Competition policy operates at a broader level, focusing on how regulatory design, enforcement consistency and institutional coordination affect competitive outcomes. Here, the failure lies in delayed enforcement and regulatory retreat. The FDTL norms were foreseeable and announced well in advance.

IndiGo's claim that the disruption was "unforeseeable" is difficult to accept.

Instead, as the disruptions worsened, IndiGo was granted a one-time exemption, which was then followed by a broader postponement of the norms until February 2026. Rolling back safety-focused regulations in response to market instability weakens regulatory credibility and creates clear moral hazard, especially in an industry where fatigue can have serious, even fatal consequences. It also sends a troubling signal that size can soften accountability, a message that ultimately harms both competition and safety.

This is where competition policy, rather than competition law, must intervene. Competition policy works upstream: it shapes the structure of the market, not punishing firms after the effect. If a single airline's compliance failure can disrupt the entire sector, it points to deeper policy weaknesses: high entry and expansion barriers, rigid labour rules and limited avenues for new or smaller players to scale up quickly. By easing regulatory and technical barriers, encouraging broader participation and making the market less dependent on a few large incumbents, competition policy can improve resilience without diluting safety standards.

Pradeep S. Mehta is the secretary-general of CUTS International, a leading public policy research group

AMAR UJALA

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

बैटरी में आग से सबक...विमान में पावर बैंक चार्ज करने पर रोक

नई दिल्ली। नागरिक उड्डयन महानिदेशालय (डीजीसीए) ने विमान में पावर बैंक चार्ज करने और सीट के पावर सिस्टम से जोड़ने पर रोक लगा दी है। लिथियम बैटरी में आग लगने की घटनाओं के बाद यह नियम लागू किया गया है। पावर बैंक सिर्फ हैंड बैग में रखा जा सकता है, लेकिन फ्लाइट में चार्ज करना पूरी तरह से मना है।

■ डीजीसीए की ओर से जारी एडवाइजरी जारी में कहा गया है कि लिथियम बैटरी आग लगने का बड़ा कारण बन सकती है। ओवरहेड बिन में रखे पावर बैंक तक पहुंचना मुश्किल होता है, जिससे आग लगने पर समय पर कार्रवाई नहीं हो पाती। बैटरी में खराब क्वालिटी, ओवरचार्जिंग या शॉर्ट सर्किट से आग लग सकती है। ब्यूरो

जयपुर से मुंबई जा रहे एअर इंडिया के विमान में ईंधन रिसाव, दहशत

जयपुर। राजस्थान के जयपुर अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डे पर बड़ा हादसा बच गया। शनिवार शाम मुंबई जा रही एअर इंडिया की फ्लाइट एआई-622 में तेल लीक होने लगा। रनवे



पर जाते समय इसका संकेत मिलने पर पायलट ने तुरंत टेकऑफ़ रोक दिया। सुरक्षा को ध्यान में रखते हुए विमान में सवार सभी यात्रियों को सुरक्षित तरीके से नीचे उतारा

गया और वापस टर्मिनल बिल्डिंग में ले जाया गया। अचानक हुई इस घटना से कुछ देर के लिए यात्रियों में दहशत फैल गई। बाद में यात्रियों को दूसरे विमान से भेजा गया। ब्यूरो



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

'Power banks barred from use on board aircraft'

Our Bureau
New Delhi

The in-flight use of power banks, including recharging them using the aircraft's power supply, has been barred, India's civil aviation safety regulator said in its guidelines.

Notably, passengers have been advised not to plug power banks into seat charging facilities during flights.

Besides, charging other devices such as mobile phones has also been prohibited. As per the guidelines issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) following incidents involving power banks

catching fire on board aircraft, such devices are also not permitted to be stored in overhead bins.

The instructions have been issued through DGCA's 'Dangerous Goods Advisory Circular' which focuses on minimising risks associated with lithium batteries and devices carried by passengers and crew members.

STORAGE DEVICES

According to the DGCA, most modern energy storage devices use lithium batteries due to their high energy density and efficiency. However, the widespread use of such batteries has led to increased carriage by air, raising potential safety risks.

दक्षिण के आसमान में फिर ऊंची उड़ान

शाइन जेकब
चेन्नई, 4 जनवरी

जब 1990 के दशक की शुरुआत में भारत ने अपना आसमान निजी क्षेत्र की विमानन कंपनियों के लिए खोला तो सबसे पहले तिरुवनंतपुरम की ईस्ट वेस्ट एयरलाइंस ने अपने पंख फैलाए। समय गुजरता गया और दक्षिण भारत ने कई विमानन कंपनियों का उत्थान और पतन देखा जिनमें किंगफिशर, एयर डेक्कन, एयर पेगासस, एयर कार्निवाल, पैरामाउंट और टूजेट आदि शामिल हैं। अब हाल यह है कि दक्षिण भारत की कंपनियों ने देश के विमानन मानचित्र पर अपना वजूद लगभग खो दिया है।

हालांकि, दिसंबर 2025 के अंत में केंद्रीय नागर विमानन मंत्री के राममोहन नायडू ने कहा कि केरल स्थित अल हिंद एयर और हैदराबाद स्थित फ्लाईएक्सप्रेस को उनके मंत्रालय से अनापत्ति प्रमाण पत्र मिल गए हैं। नायडू की इस घोषणा के बाद दक्षिण भारत से उड़ान भरने वाली नई पीढ़ी की कंपनियों की सूची में नई जान आ गई। अन्य कंपनियों में मैसूर स्थित मेडटेक की दिग्गज कंपनी स्कैनरे का विमानन उद्यम और केरल की ही एक अन्य कंपनी एयर केरल शामिल हैं। जब बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड ने उनसे संपर्क साधा तो अल हिंद और स्कैनरे दोनों के अधिकारियों ने 2026 के मध्य तक परिचालन शुरू करने की उम्मीद जताई।

इतना ही नहीं, इस क्षेत्र में चेन्नई स्थित द ईप्लेन कंपनी (वीटीओएल, एयर टैक्सी), हैदराबाद स्थित ब्लूजे एयरोस्पेस (हाइड्रोजन-इलेक्ट्रिक



■ नई विमानन कंपनियां, इलेक्ट्रिक एयर टैक्सियां फिर दिलाएंगी दक्षिण भारत को पहचान

■ छोटे-मझोले शहरों में भी एयर टैक्सी सेवाओं की दिलचस्पी

■ इलेक्ट्रिक एयरक्राफ्ट के साथ टर्बोप्रॉप भी भर रहे उड़ान

■ दक्षिण भारत में दस्तक देने के लिए तैयार अल हिंद एयर, फ्लाईएक्सप्रेस, एयर केरल और स्कैनरे

वीटीओएल) और बेंगलूरु स्थित सरला एविएशन जैसी नई पीढ़ी की इलेक्ट्रिक प्लेन कंपनियां भी उड़ान भरने के लिए कतार में खड़ी हैं। इनमें अधिकांश कंपनियों के छह महीने से एक साल के भीतर परिचालन शुरू करने की उम्मीद है

जो कहीं न कहीं इस बात का संकेत है कि दक्षिण भारत के आसमान के सुनहरे दिन फिर वापस आने वाले हैं।

अल हिंद एयर के एक वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड को बताया कि कंपनी छह महीने के भीतर परिचालन शुरू कर सकती है। समूह के एक वरिष्ठ कार्यकारी नूरुद्दीन अहमद ने कहा, 'हम विमान और एयर ऑपरेटर सर्टिफिकेट (एओसी) मिलने का इंतजार कर रहे हैं। कोच्चि हमारा प्रमुख केंद्र होगा और शुरुआत में हम मंगलूरु, तिरुवनंतपुरम, कालीकट, बेंगलूरु, मैसूर और चेन्नई जैसे सभी आस-पास के हवाई अड्डों के लिए सेवाएं शुरू करेंगे।' एओसी नागर विमानन महानिदेशालय से एक औपचारिक अनुमोदन है जो किसी कंपनी को वाणिज्यिक हवाई परिवहन संचालित करने का अधिकार देता है। अल हिंद एटीआर 72-600 मॉडल के विमानों के बेड़े के साथ अपनी उड़ान शुरू करेगी जो शुरू में कुशल और विश्वसनीय घरेलू हवाई यात्रा प्रदान करने पर ध्यान केंद्रित करेगा। वर्ष 1992 में एक ट्रेवल एंड टूर ऑपरेटर कंपनी के रूप में शुरू हुए इस समूह की वेबसाइट में 10 लाख ग्राहकों के साथ 20,000 करोड़ रुपये का कारोबार हासिल करने का दावा किया गया है।

खबरों के अनुसार हैदराबाद स्थित फ्लाईएक्सप्रेस को लॉजिस्टिक, कोरियर और माल वहन संचालन में व्यापक अनुभव वाले प्रवर्तकों का समर्थन प्राप्त है। कंपनी इस साल परिचालन शुरू कर सकती है और यह टियर-2 व टियर-3 शहरों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करेगी।

(शेष पृष्ठ 2 पर)

दक्षिण के आसमान में फिर ऊंची उड़ान

पृष्ठ 1 का शेष

मैसूर की एक अन्य कंपनी स्कैनरे एनओसी हासिल करने से जुड़ी औपचारिकताएं पूरी कर रही है। स्कैनरे मेडटेक क्षेत्र में अग्रणी खिलाड़ियों में से एक है जो रेडियोलॉजी और क्रिटिकल केयर सेगमेंट में उत्पादों की एक श्रृंखला में उच्च गुणवत्ता वाले, लागत प्रभावी समाधान प्रदान करती है। इसके सात देशों में विनिर्माण और अनुसंधान एवं विकास केंद्र भी हैं।

कंपनी ने कोविड महामारी के दौरान आठ हफ्तों में देश में 42,000 उन्नत आईसीयू वेंटिलेटर की आपूर्ति कर एक विश्व रिकॉर्ड बनाया था। स्कैनरे टेक्नॉलजीज के प्रबंध निदेशक विश्वप्रसाद अल्वा ने बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड को बताया, 'हम इस साल अप्रैल-मई तक परिचालन शुरू करने की तैयारी कर रहे हैं और लाइसेंस के लिए आवेदन कर दिया है। हम मैसूर से हैदराबाद, गोवा, मंगलूरु, कोच्चि, चेन्नई, तिरुपति और मुंबई तक तीन एटीआर 72 विमानों के साथ सेवाओं की शुरुआत करने की योजना तैयार कर रहे हैं। एक साल के भीतर हम इन विमानों की संख्या बढ़ाकर छह तक कर लेंगे।'

उन्होंने कहा, 'विमानन क्षेत्र काफी आकर्षक लग रहा है इसलिए नई कंपनियां दस्तक दे रही



हैं। हम तीन विमानों के साथ आगे बढ़ रहे हैं जिनमें प्रत्येक 10 घंटे तक उड़ान भरेगी। हमने पहले ही एक मजबूत तंत्र स्थापित कर लिया है और एक यूरोपीय भागीदार की भी तलाश कर रहे हैं। शहर तक संपर्क तंत्र मजबूत बनाने के लिए मैसूर हमारा केंद्र होगा और अगले चरण में हम राष्ट्रीय संपर्क के लिए आंध्र प्रदेश को केंद्र बनाएंगे।' कंपनी 150-200 करोड़ रुपये के शुरुआती निवेश करने की योजना बना रही है।

दुबई स्थित जेट फ्लाई एविएशन समर्थित एयर केरल को भी सरकार से एनओसी मिल गया है। यह शुरू में छोटे और मध्यम लंबाई के घरेलू मार्गों पर तीन एटीआर 72-600 विमान तैनात करने की योजना बना रही है जिसमें कोच्चि को हब बनाया जाएगा और बाद में अंतरराष्ट्रीय स्तर पर विस्तार किया जाएगा। घरेलू एयरलाइंस की वर्तमान सूची में स्टार एयर का मुख्यालय बेंगलूरु में है और फ्लाई91 का

गोवा में जो इसी क्षेत्र का प्रतिनिधित्व करते हैं। इलेक्ट्रिक वर्टिकल टेक-ऑफ एंड लैंडिंग खंड (ईवीटीओएल) में कई नई पीढ़ी की कंपनियां भी उन्नत चरणों में हैं। पिछले हफ्ते सरला एविएशन ने अपनी बेंगलूरु संयंत्र में एसवाईएल-एक्स1 के लिए जमीनी परीक्षण शुरू करने की घोषणा की है। एसवाईएल-एक्स1 फिलहाल भारत में अपनी तरह का सबसे बड़ा और सबसे उन्नत निजी ईवीटीओएल प्रदर्शक है। चेन्नई स्थित द ईप्लेन कंपनी भी इस साल की दूसरी छमाही तक यात्रियों के लिए इलेक्ट्रिक फ्लाईंग टैक्सी लेकर आने की तैयारी कर रही है।

सरला एविएशन के सह-संस्थापक और मुख्य प्रौद्योगिकी अधिकारी राकेश गावंकर ने कहा, 'हम कभी सबसे पहले कदम आगे बढ़ाने की ललक के पीछे नहीं भागे। हमारा ध्यान मजबूती से टिके रहने और विमानन क्षेत्र की दिग्गज कंपनी बनने पर है। हम कुछ ऐसा बना रहे हैं जिस पर भारत को गर्व हो सकता है। यह एक ऐसा प्लेटफॉर्म है जिसे प्रमाणित, उत्पादित और सुरक्षित रूप से संचालित किया जा सकता है। इसका खाका पूरी तरह भारत में तैयार किया गया है। हमारा लक्ष्य भारत के लिए विमानन प्रौद्योगिकी के इस नए युग के अंतिम पड़ाव तक पहुंचना और इसे भारत लाना है।'

विमान में नहीं कर सकेंगे पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल

दीपक पटेल

विमान में सफर के दौरान अब पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल नहीं कर सकेंगे। इस संबंध में तमाम एयरलाइंस दिशानिर्देश जारी कर यात्रियों को सचेत करने लगी हैं। हालांकि वे यह भी स्पष्ट कर रही हैं कि बोर्डिंग गेट पर चेक-इन के लिए हैंड बैग तो लिया सकता है लेकिन यह उपकरण यात्रियों के पास ही रहेगा।

यह कदम नागरिक उड्डयन महानिदेशालय (डीजीसीए) द्वारा 11 नवंबर को जारी सर्कुलर के बाद उठाया गया है, जिसमें उड़ानों के दौरान लीथियम बैटरी से आग के खतरे के प्रति आगा किया गया है। पावर बैंक में लीथियम बैटरी इस्तेमाल होती है। सर्कुलर में विमानन नियामक ने चेतावनी दी है कि पोर्टेबल इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरणों में लीथियम बैटरी के बढ़ते उपयोग से विमान पर सुरक्षा जोखिम बढ़ गया है। इसमें कहा गया है कि लीथियम बैटरी वाले पावर बैंक, पोर्टेबल चार्जर और इसी तरह के अन्य उपकरणों से आग लगने का खतरा अधिक होता है।

इस सर्कुलर के बारे में एयरलाइंस ने बिजनेस स्टैंडर्ड द्वारा पूछे गए सवाल का जवाब नहीं दिया। लेकिन एक वरिष्ठ कार्यकारी ने कहा कि केबिन क्रू ने विमान में घोषणाएं करना शुरू कर दिया है, जिसमें यात्रियों से पावर बैंक का उपयोग न करने या विमान के यूएसबी पोर्ट का उपयोग कर उन्हें चार्ज न करने को कहा जा रहा है। साथ ही यह भी सुनिश्चित करने के लिए कहा गया है कि पावर बैंक को ओवरहेड बिन में न रखें, बल्कि उन्हें अपने पास ही रखा जाए।

डीजीसीए ने अपने 11 नवंबर के सर्कुलर में कहा था कि ओवरहेड बिन में या केबिन बैगेज के अंदर जमा लीथियम बैटरी तक पहुंचना मुश्किल होता है। यात्री या क्रू मेंबर्स भी इसकी आसानी से निगरानी नहीं कर सकते। इससे इनमें से धुएं या आग का पता लगाने में देरी हो सकती है और उड़ान सुरक्षा के लिए जोखिम बढ़ सकता है।

सर्कुलर के अनुसार लीथियम बैटरी की आग बहुत तेज फैलती है। इससे डिवाइस में विस्फोट भी हो सकता है। ज्यादा गरम या चार्ज होने, दबाव पड़ने,



आंतरिक शॉर्ट सर्किट होने, खराब निर्माण गुणवत्ता या गलत तरीके से रखे जाने के कारण इसमें आग लग सकती है।

नियामक में विश्व स्तर पर हाल के दिनों में विमानों में हुई कई घटनाओं का उदाहरण दिया गया है, जिनमें आग का संभावित कारण लीथियम बैटरी को बताया गया था। डीजीसीए ने एयरलाइंस और हवाई अड्डा संचालकों को लीथियम बैटरी और लैपटॉप, मोबाइल फोन और टैबलेट जैसे रिचार्जेबल उपकरणों के रखरखाव से संबंधित अपनी सुरक्षा जोखिम प्रबंधन प्रक्रिया की समीक्षा और उन्हें मजबूत करने का निर्देश दिया है।

एयरलाइंस के लिए निर्धारित उपायों के तहत डीजीसीए ने ऑपरेटरों को लीथियम बैटरी से संबंधित जोखिम आकलन को बढ़ाने, केबिन में आग लगने की संभावना को कम करने के लिए कदम उठाने और विमान में शीघ्र पता लगाने तथा आग बुझाने की प्रभावी तकनीक सुनिश्चित करने के लिए भी कहा है।

सर्कुलर में क्रू प्रशिक्षण पर विशेष जोर दिया गया है। इसमें एयरलाइंस से सुरक्षा और आपातकालीन प्रक्रियाओं तथा खतरनाक सामान को ले जाने की व्यवस्था को मजबूत करने को कहा गया है। इसके अलावा क्रू मेंबर्स को लीथियम बैटरी के थर्मल रनअवे के शुरुआती संकेतों जैसे अत्यधिक गर्म होना, धुआं या आग को पहचानने, धुएं में सांस लेने जैसे खतरों की पहचान करने और आग बुझाने के उपकरण और आग नियंत्रण किट सुलभ और सेवा योग्य बनाने का प्रशिक्षण देने को भी कहा है।

South India back on aviation runway

New airlines and eVTOL startups plan regional and electric takeoffs

SHINE JACOB
Chennai, 4 January

In the early 1990s, when India opened its skies to the private sector, the first airline to become operational was Thiruvananthapuram-based East-West Airlines. Over the years, South India witnessed the rise and fade-out of several carriers — including Kingfisher Airlines, Air Deccan, Air Pegasus, Air Carnival, Paramount Airways, and TruJet — with the region's airlines losing their prominence on the aviation map.

However, in late December 2025, when Union Minister of Civil Aviation K Ram Mohan Naidu announced that Kerala-based AlHind Air and Hyderabad-based FlyExpress had received no-objection certificates (NOCs) from his ministry, it injected momentum into a new wave of aviation firms emerging from South India. Others include a Mysore-based aviation venture by medical technology (medtech) major Skanray Technologies and another Kerala-based carrier, Air Kerala. When *Business Standard* contacted them, officials from AlHind Air and Skanray said they hope to begin operations by mid-2026.

The region is also seeing a surge of electric aircraft startups, including Chennai-based The ePlane Company



Clear skies

Why it matters

- New entrants return after a wave of airline exits
- Clearer regulatory signals from New Delhi

What's changing

- Routes tilt towards Tier-II and Tier-III cities
- Lean fleet replace expansion-era excess
- Turboprops fly alongside electric aircraft bets

(electric vertical takeoff and landing, or eVTOL, air taxis), Hyderabad-based BluJ Aerospace (hydrogen eVTOLs), and Bengaluru-based Sarla-Aviation. Most of these firms expect to begin operations within six months to a year, pointing to a renewed phase for South Indian aviation.

A senior leader at AlHind Air told *Business Standard* the airline is likely to launch within six months. "We are in the

process of acquiring aircraft and securing an air operator's certificate (AOC). Kochi will be our hub, and initially we plan to operate services to nearby airports such as Mangalore, Thiruvananthapuram, Calicut, Bengaluru, Mandakalli (Mysore), and Chennai," said Noorudhin Ahamed, a senior executive with the AlHind group.

Upcoming from South India

- AlHind Air
- FlyExpress
- Air Kerala
- Skanray

Domestic airlines

- IndiGo
- Air India | Air India Express
- Alliance Air
- Akasa Air
- SpiceJet
- Star Air
- Fly91
- IndiaOne Air

South India back on aviation runway

An AOC is the formal approval issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, authorising a company to conduct commercial air transport operations. AlHind will begin with a fleet of ATR 72-600 aircraft, focusing on domestic routes.

The group, which started as a travel and tour operator in 1992, claims a turnover of ₹20,000 crore and a customer base of 1 million, according to its website. FlyExpress is reportedly backed by promoters with experience in logistics, courier, and cargo operations. The airline is expected to begin operations this year, with a focus on Tier-II and Tier-III cities. Another entrant, Skanray, is in the process of securing an NOC. Skanray is a major player in the medtech sector, supplying products in radiology and critical care, with manufacturing and research and development facilities across seven countries.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the company created a record by delivering 42,000 advanced intensive care unit ventilators across India within

eight weeks. "We plan to be operational by April-May this year and have applied for the licence. We intend to start with three ATR 72 aircraft operating from Mysore to Hyderabad, Goa, Mangalore, Kochi, Chennai, Tirupati, and Mumbai, before expanding to six aircraft within a year," Vishwasprasad Alva, managing director of Skanray, told *Business Standard*.

"Aviation has become more viable with UDAN. We plan to operate three aircraft for 10 hours each. We have established a network and are also exploring a European partnership. Mysore will be our hub for regional connectivity, and in the next phase, Andhra Pradesh will serve as the hub for national routes," he said. The company is looking at an initial investment of ₹150-200 crore.

Air Kerala, backed by Dubai-based Zettfly Aviation, has also received an NOC from the government. The airline plans to deploy three ATR 72-600 aircraft on short- and medium-haul domestic

routes, with Kochi as its hub, before expanding internationally.

Among existing domestic airlines, Star Air is headquartered in Bengaluru, while Fly91 is based in Goa, representing the region.

Several eVTOL companies are also in advanced stages of development. Last week, Sarla-Aviation announced the start of ground testing for SYL-X1 — its flagship eVTOL demonstrator — at its Bengaluru facility. The ePlane Company is also working towards launching electric flying taxis for passengers in the second half of this year.

"Our focus has never been on being first, but on building something that lasts — an aviation platform that can be certified, produced, and safely operated, and that is designed and owned in India. Our goal is to take this new era of aviation technology across the finish line for India and bring it home," said Rakesh Gaonkar, cofounder and chief technology officer at Sarla-Aviation.

Airlines ask passengers not to use power banks during flight

Directions follow DGCA circular that warns of fire risks posed by lithium batteries

DEEPAK PATEL
New Delhi, 4 January

Airlines have begun asking passengers not to use power banks on board and are ensuring that such devices remain with passengers if hand baggage is taken at the boarding gate for check-in.

The move follows a Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) circular issued on November 11 which warned that the growing use of lithium batteries in portable electronic devices had increased safety risks on board aircraft. "Power banks, portable chargers, and similar devices" containing lithium batteries can act as ignition sources and potentially trigger onboard fires, the regulator said. Airlines did not respond to *Business Standard's* queries on the circular. However, a senior airline executive said cabin crew had begun making in-flight announcements asking passengers not to use power banks or charge them using aircraft USB ports, and to ensure that power banks are kept on their person and not placed in overhead bins.

In its circular, the DGCA stated that lithium batteries stored in overhead bins or inside cabin baggage were difficult to access or monitor by pas-

ILLUSTRATION: AJAYA KUMAR MOHANTY



sengers or crew, which could delay the detection of smoke or fire and heighten risks to flight safety.

"Lithium battery fires are very energetic and can result in the explosion of the device," the circular said, adding that such fires might be triggered by overheating, overcharging, crushing, internal short circuits, poor manufacturing quality, or damage due to mishandling.

According to the regulator, there have been "numerous" safety occurrences globally in recent times in which lithium batteries carried on board aircraft were suspected to be the cause.

Change in the air

- Airport operators asked to display notices and videos across terminals
- Airlines directing passengers to carry power banks and spare batteries only in hand baggage and not to use them on board
- Passengers must immediately inform cabin crew if any device emits heat, smoke, or an unusual odour

The DGCA directed airlines and airport operators to review and strengthen their safety risk management processes related to the handling of lithium batteries and rechargeable devices, including laptops, mobile phones, and tablets.

As part of the measures outlined for airlines, the DGCA asked operators to enhance risk assessments related to lithium batteries, adopt mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood of cabin fires, and ensure early detection and effective firefighting capabilities on board.

Airlines have also been asked to review the

adequacy of emergency equipment, including personal protective equipment for cabin crew, and align operating procedures with guidance issued by the International Civil Aviation Organization, aircraft manufacturers, and the DGCA.

The circular places significant emphasis on crew training, asking airlines to reinforce competencies through safety, emergency procedures, and dangerous goods training. Crew members should be trained "to recognise early signs of lithium battery thermal runaway (for example, overheating, smoke, or flames), identify secondary hazards including smoke inhalation, and ensure firefighting equipment and fire containment kits are accessible and serviceable.

For passengers, the DGCA told airlines to strengthen communication through announcements, signage, and digital messaging. These include cabin announcements advising passengers to "carry power banks and spare batteries only in hand baggage", that "using or charging power banks is not permitted during flight", and that "immediately inform cabin crew if any device emits heat, smoke, or an unusual odour".

The regulator also directed airlines to ensure that cabin crew informed passengers that power banks and spare batteries must not be placed in overhead bins. Airport operators, meanwhile, were asked to display clear notices and videos across terminals, check-in counters, lounges, boarding gates, and security checkpoints to raise awareness of lithium battery fire risks. They were told to caution passengers against charging such devices prior to boarding.

The DGCA directed airlines to promptly report all safety issues and occurrences related to lithium battery incidents.



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK BHASKAR

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

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जयपुर-मुंबई फ्लाइट का फ्यूल लीक; रन-वे से लौटा विमान

भास्कर न्यूज़ | जयपुर

जयपुर एयरपोर्ट पर एयर इंडिया की फ्लाइट एआई-622 को उड़ान से ठीक पहले इंजन से लीकेज के चलते टेकऑफ से रोक दिया गया। फ्लाइट शनिवार शाम 7:55 बजे जयपुर से मुंबई के लिए रवाना होने वाली थी। विमान रनवे की ओर बढ़ रहा था। इसी बीच पायलट को इंजन में खराबी का पता लगा। पायलट की सूचना पर एटीसी ने सुरक्षा को देखते

हुए टेकऑफ को कैंसिल कर दिया।

जांच में पता लगा कि इंजन से फ्यूल लीकेज हो रहा है। बाद में, यात्रियों को एयरपोर्ट टर्मिनल बिल्डिंग में लाया गया। यात्रियों ने एयरलाइंस से वैकल्पिक फ्लाइट की मांग की। करीब 3 घंटे बाद रात 11:35 बजे दूसरी फ्लाइट से यात्रियों को मुंबई भेजा गया। दो माह पहले इंडिगो की फ्लाइट में फ्यूल लीक होने के चलते वाराणसी में इमरजेंसी लैंडिंग कराई गई थी।

Air India Set to Say Tata to CEO Wilson in Cockpit Reset

Chandra talks with CEOs of UK, US carriers for Air India; change at Air India Express helm likely too

Kala Vijayraghavan & Arindam Majumder

Mumbai | New Delhi: Air India owner Tata Sons has held discussions with top global aviation executives in its search for a new set of leaders for its airlines business, officials close to the development said. Group chairman N Chandrasekaran has held discussions with chief executives of at least two leading UK-



and US-based international carriers as potential candidates to take over from Air India CEO Campbell Wilson. The group's top executive, who is also chairman of Air India, has grown impatient with the pace of ex-

ecution and improvement on ground, these officials said. These deliberations come as Wilson's term is set to conclude in June 2027. Air India Express, the group's low-cost carrier, is expected to see si-

milar leadership changes, the persons cited above said. The term of its current chief executive, Alok Singh, too, will end in 2027.

Air India could see a new captain in the deck well ahead of the completion of Wilson's term, people in the know said. Chandrasekaran is also understood to have held regular performance review discussions with Wilson over recent months.

Tata Sons did not comment. A person close to Wilson said the executive is part of the succession planning and has already shared with the board his inability to continue beyond 2027. Group officials contested this characterisation, saying no discussion of this nature has happened at the board level.

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Mixed Bag of Execution

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They said the leadership transition is being driven directly by the group chairman.

Wilson, a New Zealander, joined Air India in July 2022 and laid out a five-year transformation plan to turn the airline into a global competitor, while improving its financial performance. His report card remains a mixed bag.

Under Wilson's watch, a critical part of the plan, that of merging Vistara into Air India, was completed smoothly, while the airline significantly increased its fleet, even overtaking market leader IndiGo on some key metro routes.

However, the transformation plan has been materially constrained by a prolonged global supply chain crisis that delayed the induction of new aircraft, while delaying refurbishment of older ones.

As a result, the airline's service standards and on-time performance have come under pressure, with repeated technical issues affecting its wide-body fleet, which flies to key markets such as Europe and North America.

"We should have received 28 brand new aircraft by now. But the actual number of new aircraft that we have received has been heavily challenged,"

The airline's operations have also been under heightened scrutiny since a crash last year that killed 260 people, though a preliminary investigation hasn't indicated any fault with the aircraft or the airline's engineering practices.

In the aftermath of the crash, however, senior government officials sidestepped Wilson, choosing to deal directly with Tata group's top leadership. This is also understood

to have been a factor in the viability of the executive's continuation.

Multiple senior officials, including Wilson, have been issued show-cause notices by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation for alleged violations and non-compliance, including an incident where the airline operated an aircraft with an expired licence.

The airline's path to profitability has been significantly impacted due to an airspace closure by Pakistan, which forces it to take longer routes. Air India, along with its subsidiary Air India Express, posted a loss of Rs 10,859 crore in FY25—the highest loss maker in the Tata group—on a revenue of Rs 78,636 crore.

With the critical phase of consolidation, integration and brand revival following the airline's return to the Tata fold largely in place, the Tata Sons chairman is learnt to be seeking greater leadership heft, sharper executional depth and a stronger customer-centric orientation to steer Air India into its next phase of growth, global competitiveness and sustained profitability.



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THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

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5 JANUARY 2026

Flights grounded in Greece on radio frequency loss

FLIGHTS ACROSS GREECE were grounded on Sunday after a collapse of radio frequencies crippled air traffic communication, stranding thousands of travellers and bringing airport operations to a halt. There was little clarity on what caused the disruption, which began early Sunday and quickly escalated. Some overflights across Greek and regional airspace were still being serviced, but restrictions were imposed on airport operations for safety reasons, Greece's civil aviation authority said.

Dozens of flights were disrupted. "For some reason all frequencies were suddenly lost. We could not communicate with aircraft in the sky," Panagiotis Psaros, chair of the Association

of Greek Air Traffic Controllers, told state broadcaster ERT.

He said the problem seemed to be a collapse of central radio frequency systems at the Athens and Macedonia area control systems, the largest air control facility in the country based in Athens. It monitors the Athens Flight Information Region, a vast expanse of airspace under the control of Greek authorities.

Flight trackers showed Greek airspace was largely empty. ERT said airport arrivals and departures were suspended at 9 a.m. local time, reporting from a departures terminal at Athens' Eleftherios Venizelos airport crowded with travellers. —REUTERS



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HINDUSTAN

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

विमान में पावर बैंक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी। हवाई सफर के दौरान यात्री अब पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल नहीं कर सकेंगे। नागर विमानन महानिदेशालय (डीजीसीए) ने इस पर रोक लगा दी है। डीजीसीए ने रविवार को कहा कि उड़ान के दौरान यात्री पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल मोबाइल फोन या अन्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक डिवाइस को चार्ज करने के लिए नहीं कर सकते। यह फैसला यात्रियों की सुरक्षा को ध्यान में रखकर लिया गया है। > P07



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फ्लाइट में पावर बैंक का प्रयोग नहीं कर पाएंगे

सख्ती

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी। हवाई यात्रा के दौरान यात्री अब पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल नहीं कर सकेंगे। नागरिक विमानन महानिदेशालय (डीजीसीए) ने इसपर रोक लगा दी है।

डीजीसीए ने रविवार को कहा कि उड़ान के दौरान यात्री पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल मोबाइल फोन या किसी भी अन्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक डिवाइस को चार्ज करने के लिए नहीं कर सकते। यह फैसला यात्रियों की सुरक्षा को ध्यान में रखकर लिया गया है।

चार्ज नहीं कर सकते : डीजीसीए ने बयान जारी कर कहा है कि उड़ान के दौरान गैजेट्स को चार्ज करने के लिए किसी भी हालत में पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल नहीं किया जा सकता है, चाहे वह एयरक्राफ्ट की सीट में लगे पावर सॉकेट के जरिए ही क्यों न हो। यह फैसला दुनिया के कई देशों में हुए उन हादसों के बाद लिया गया है, जिनमें विमानों में चार्जिंग के दौरान लिथियम बैटरियां ज्यादा गर्म हो गईं या उनमें आग लग गई। ऐसे मामलों ने विमान यात्रा की सुरक्षा को लेकर चिंता बढ़ा दी है।

नवंबर में भी जारी हुई थी चेतावनी : डीजीसीए ने इससे पहले

क्या है नियम

मौजूदा एविएशन सेफ्टी गाइडलाइंस के अनुसार, पावर बैंक सिर्फ केबिन बैगेज में ले जाने की इजाजत है, चेक-इन लगेज में नहीं। हालांकि, यात्रियों को फ्लाइट के दौरान पावर बैंक से डिवाइस चार्ज करने की इजाजत नहीं है। एयरलाइंस ने अब बोर्डिंग अनाउंसमेंट और फ्लाइट के दौरान ब्रीफिंग के जरिए यात्रियों को इस बारे में याद दिलाना शुरू कर दिया है। कई घरेलू एयरलाइंस ने केबिन क्रू को फ्लाइट के दौरान पावर बैंक के इस्तेमाल पर नजर रखने का निर्देश दिया गया है।

क्या करें यात्री

1. बोर्डिंग से पहले अपने डिवाइस को पूरी तरह चार्ज कर लें।
2. पावर बैंक ले जाने की इजाजत है, लेकिन हवा में उनका इस्तेमाल करने की इजाजत नहीं है।
3. मंत्रालय ने यात्रियों से सहयोग करने की अपील की है, और इस बात पर जोर दिया है कि यह नियम पूरी तरह से फ्लाइट की सुरक्षा के हित में है।

नवंबर महीने में चेतावनी जारी की थी, जिसमें कहा गया था कि पावर बैंक और अतिरिक्त लिथियम बैटरियां केवल हैंड बैगेज में ही रखी जा सकती हैं।

Air India pilot was arrested in Canada over alcohol use

Anirudh Bhattacharyya

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TORONTO: An Air India pilot removed from a plane on December 23 for being under the influence of alcohol was placed under arrest, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) announced Friday. He was sent to India the following day.

The Richmond detachment of the RCMP said it arrested the pilot at Vancouver International Airport "following a report of concern involving a crew member preparing to report for duty".

The pilot allegedly failed two breathalyser tests conducted by local police and was detained for smelling of liquor before being declared unfit for duty, Reuters reported. The incident delayed Air India Flight 186 to New Delhi by several hours before it departed safely that afternoon with a replacement pilot. While the RCMP did not identify the airline



The pilot was restrained from boarding after being declared unfit to fly. REUTERS

in its statement, Canadian media and people in New Delhi aware of the matter confirmed the incident involved the Air India flight. The pilot has not been named.

Canadian civil aviation authorities have raised the matter with their Indian counterparts. Transport Canada has written to Air India requesting findings and details of steps to prevent future occurrences by January 26, according to an unnamed Canadian official cited by Reuters.

A Transport Canada spokesper-

son told CTV News the agency contacted Indian authorities "to ensure appropriate follow-up actions are taken" against the pilot.

Air India confirmed Canadian authorities raised concerns over the pilot's fitness for duty. "Air India regrets the inconvenience caused to its passengers and is fully co-operating with the local authorities," the airline said in a statement shortly after the incident was first reported.

The carrier added that the pilot "has been taken off flying duties during the process of enquiry" and that it "maintains a zero-tolerance policy towards any violation of applicable rules and regulations".

Air India is expected to submit a detailed report to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), which could lead to action against the pilot or airline. Canadian civil aviation norms bar pilots from consuming alcohol within 12 hours of flying. The RCMP said its investigation is ongoing.

Greek flights grounded after radio systems fail

ATHENS: Flights across Greece were grounded for several hours on Sunday after a collapse of radio frequencies crippled air traffic communication, stranding thousands of travellers and bringing airport operations to a virtual standstill.

There was little clarity on what caused the disruption, which began early Sunday and quickly escalated, affecting travel plans of thousands on the busy last weekend of the holiday period.

Some overflights across Greek and regional airspace were still being serviced, but restrictions

continued on →



An image from flight-tracking service FlightRadar24 showing clear airspace over Greece.

GREECE FLIGHTS

tion of Greek Air Traffic Controllers, told state broadcaster ERT.

The association later said the breakdown affected all frequencies used on the ground, and some frequencies used by Athens Approach, an air traffic control unit responsible for managing aircraft arriving in and departing from Athens's Eleftherios Venizelos airport.

Among its responsibilities is radar monitoring for safe separation of aircraft in the sky as well as issuing instructions on speed, and altitude levels.

The Air Traffic Controllers Association said controllers were using all means at their disposal to ensure the safety of flights, calling the scale of Sunday's incident "unprecedented and unacceptable" for an air traffic control system.

Psarros said the problem seemed to be a collapse of central radio frequency systems at the Athens and Macedonia area control systems, the largest air control facility in the country. It monitors the Athens Flight Information Region, a vast expanse of airspace under the control of Greek authorities.

"We haven't been informed about the cause of this problem... certainly the equipment we have is virtually ancient. We have raised this many times in the past," Psarros said.

फ्लाइट में पावर बैक सिर्फ हैड बैग में ले जा सकेंगे



■ NBT रिपोर्ट

फ्लाइट में यात्रा करने वाले यात्रियों के लिए पावर बैक से जुड़े नियम सख्त कर दिए गए हैं। अब विमान के अंदर पावर बैक से मोबाइल या अन्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक उपकरण चार्ज करना मना कर दिया गया है। इसके अलावा, सीट में लगे पावर सॉकेट से पावर बैक को चार्ज करने की भी अनुमति नहीं होगी। पावर बैक और अतिरिक्त बैटरियां केवल हैडबैग में रखने की इजाजत होगी। इन्हें ओवरहेड बिन में रखने पर भी रोक लगा दी गई है।

TOL के अनुसार, यह फैसला उड़ान के दौरान लिथियम बैटरियों में आग लगने की घटनाओं पर हुआ। हाल ही में इंडिगो फ्लाइट में आग की घटना के बाद इस पर विचार किया गया। विमानन महानिदेशालय (DGCA) ने यात्रियों

और क्रू द्वारा ले जाए जाने वाले लिथियम बैटरी वाले उपकरणों से होने वाले खतरे को कम करने के लिए 'डेंजरस गुड्स एडवाइजरी सर्कुलर' जारी किया है।

DGCA ने एयरलाइनों को निर्देश दिया कि वे फ्लाइट के दौरान इन नए नियमों की घोषणा करें। नियमों के अनुसार, अगर किसी भी डिवाइस से गर्मी, धुआं या अजीब गंध आती है, तो यात्री को तुरंत केबिन क्रू को जानकारी देनी होगी। एयरलाइनों को लिथियम

**लिथियम
बैटरी में आग
लगने की
घटनाओं पर
हुआ फैसला**

बैटरी से जुड़ी हर सुरक्षा घटना की रिपोर्ट तुरंत DGCA को देनी होगी। विमानन विशेषज्ञों ने चेतावनी दी है कि अब "एक यात्री, एक हैडबैग" के नियम को सख्ती से लागू करना जरूरी है। अक्सर ओवरहेड बिन भर जाने पर एयरलाइंस यात्रियों के हैडबैग गेट पर लेकर विमान के बैगेज होल्ड में रख देती है।



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NAVODAYA TIMES

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एयरपोर्ट पर 8 फ्लाइट कैंसिल, 600 डिले

इंदिरा गांधी इंटरनेशनल (आईजीआई) एयरपोर्ट पर कोहरे के चलते रविवार को एयरपोर्ट पर 8 फ्लाइट कैंसिल की गई। कैंसिल फ्लाइट की संख्या तो अन्य दिनों की अपेक्षा कम रही लेकिन धरेलू व इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट के डिले होने की संख्या 600 पहुंच गई। डिले होने वाली फ्लाइट का औसत समय 50 मिनट तक रहा। कुछ फ्लाइट तो एक से डेढ़ घंटे देरी से उड़ी।

एयरपोर्ट के एक अधिकारी ने बताया कि जिन फ्लाइट को कैंसिल किया गया उनमें 5 एलाइंस एयर की जबकि शेष उड़ानें एयर इंडिया व इंडिगो की थी। जिन फ्लाइट को कैंसिल किया गया उनको गोरखपुर, कुल्लू, जबलपुर, हिसार, धर्मशाला, वाराणसी,

एक से डेढ़ घंटे देरी से उड़े जहाज

मुंबई व चंडीगढ़ जाना था। फ्लाइट डिले होने का सबसे ज्यादा प्रभाव देर रात से तड़के चार बजे के बीच देखा गया। इस अवधि में शायद ही कोई ऐसी ठंडान रही जिसके प्रस्थान में 50 मिनट की देरी न हुई हो। सुबह चार बजे के बाद स्थिति थोड़ी संभली लेकिन फ्लाइट डिले का सिलसिला जारी रहा। दिन में कुछ देर के लिए लगा कि अब स्थिति नियंत्रित हो जाएगी। मगर इसके बाद अन्य गंतव्यों से आने वाली फ्लाइट का डिले होना शुरू हो गया। समय सारिणी एक बार बिगड़ी तो वह पूरे दिन जारी रही। हालांकि एयरपोर्ट पर यात्रियों की मदद के लिए डायल तथा संबंधित एयरलाइंस के कर्मचारी मौजूद थे।

A regulator in turbulence: How the DGCA lost its way

FIRST
Column

As India enters a new year and nears a century of civil aviation regulation, the DGCA finds itself under unprecedented scrutiny. Once led by pioneering airmen and technocrats, the regulator is now exposed by airline mismanagement, regulatory inertia and repeated safety lapses. The IndiGo saga has underscored the urgent need to reform India's aviation sector



SANJAY LAZAR



As we herald another new year, almost a century after Lt Col (later Sir) Francis Claude Shelmerdine established India's Department of Civil Aviation in 1927 and went on to become the country's first Director General of Civil Aviation, he must surely be turning in his grave. The sordid IndiGo saga has exposed the tender underbelly of Indian aviation and the DGCA alike.

The year 2025 is one that Indian aviation would rather forget. Looked at more charitably, however, 2026 could yet prove to be a harbinger of much-needed change. That golden generation of airmen and aviation traditions—beginning with the great J.R.D. Tata, Aspi Engineer, Purshottam Kabali, Shelmerdine and Sir Victor Sassoon, and carried forward by Indian Air Force pilots and technical heads of the DGCA—has long since passed.

The glory years of the 1970s and 1980s, when Air Marshals such as Jafar Zaheer and Air Vice Marshal C.K. Shantaram Raje—both decorated and eminently distinguished Director Generals of Civil Aviation—led the regulator, effectively ended with the tenure of the last technical head, Mr Kanu Gohain, who demitted office in 2007.

A course correction under the UPA resulted in airmen and technocrats being permanently supplanted by IAS officers. Over the past 17 years, the post has effectively become a bureaucratic preserve and a plum posting. This is not to say that non-IAF officers did not serve with distinction in the interregnum. Some did so with great honour—among them Mr H.S. Khola, Mr M.R. Sivaraman, and Dr S.S. Sidhu, who later went on to become ICAO Secretary General.

In recent times, the DGCA has come under fire for numerous sins of commission and omission, despite—or perhaps because of—the fact that it is currently headed by an eminently distinguished bureaucrat. The AI-171 tragedy, incidents of GPS spoofing, Airbus software issues, the mess at IndiGo, and the alleged scams within the system have exposed long-festering cracks in the Directorate's armour. It took the bloodletting of both the Indian

INDIA URGENTLY NEEDS A CLEAR SEPARATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND TECHNICAL FUNCTIONS, WITH SEASONED AVIATORS AND PROFESSIONALS LEADING THE REGULATOR

populace and the political class to realise that the DGCA had perhaps become a large cesspool of red tape, shielded for years from public scrutiny under the guise of public safety. In 2025, that final veil was torn apart by a cascading series of failures that made Indian aviation appear farcical.

In an earlier article, we traced the IndiGo crisis and how blinkered—or creatively selective—vision at the regulator triggered a domino effect across the aviation market. The DGCA has grown too large, too unwieldy, and at times, dangerously dysfunctional.

Today, the DGCA comprises 19 divisions, headed by officials of the rank of Economic Adviser (EA), Joint Director General (JDG), or Deputy Director General (DDG), all reporting upwards to the EA or DG. Each division is vested with

defined oversight responsibilities, yet when the system collapses, accountability is conspicuously absent.

The IndiGo crisis is a textbook example: its roots lie across multiple DGCA divisions, yet no one is ever found culpable. Schedules were approved by the DDG (AED) and his superior without verification, but no action followed—on the contrary, the approvals were quietly defended using antiquated rules.

The JDG (DAT) and the Chief Flight Operations Inspector were responsible for flight standards and pilot oversight at IndiGo, yet appeared unaware that 120 pilots had been let go or that recruitment had been paused as early as May.

The regulator conveniently forgot the airline's requests for deferment of Phase II of the CAR in September 2025, as well as the seven dispensations sought.

Either the left hand did not know what the right was doing—or plausible deniability was the chosen refuge. A recent transfer of a DGCA official appeared ominous amid the IndiGo crisis but turned out to be a routine, long-pending change.

The real questions remain unanswered: why do officers facing vigilance inquiries continue to occupy sensitive positions years beyond permissible norms? Why did previous DGs freeze serious investigations?

A genuine purge—post an independent external inquiry—would inevitably have to include senior JDGs, DDGs and the CFO, if the government has the will to clean its Augean stables. Political expediency, however, often weighs heavier.

At the heart of the problem lies the continued exploitation of archaic rules—most notably those governing pilot

strength per aircraft. CAR Section 5-III-C, Part II, Clause 8.4 mandates a minimum of three sets per aircraft (six pilots), despite the DGCA approving the national carrier's policy as far back as 2019 for a minimum of 6.5 sets (13 pilots) for narrow-body aircraft and 12.5 sets (50 pilots) for long-haul operations, excluding reserves.

The three-set concept is obsolete, incompatible with modern fatigue management and safety norms. Yet the DGCA persists with it, providing errant airlines a convenient fig leaf to cut costs and overwork pilots. Ironically, many DGCA systems in use today trace their origins to Shelmerdine himself nearly a century ago—from pilot and aircraft licensing to accident reporting and the drafting of the Aircraft Act, 1934.

Following ICAO and FAA audits in 2006, serious deficiencies were flagged and Parliament constituted the Kaw Committee to recommend reforms. The Kaw Committee proposed the creation of an Indian Civil Aviation Service, financial and administrative autonomy, and professional management of the regulator. Parliament subsequently recommended replacing the DGCA with an autonomous Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). The CAA Bill, 2013, passed committee scrutiny but lapsed after the 2014 elections.

Those reforms vanished without trace. Today, as India stands on the brink of becoming the world's third-largest aviation market, with nearly 2,000 aircraft and 250 airports, it continues to rely on regulatory mechanisms inherited from colonial times—long abandoned even by Britain and dozens of other nations.

Calls for radical reform may sound extreme, but the need to restructure and professionalise the DGCA is undeniable. Unfortunately, the Bharatiya Vayuyan Vidheyak, 2024, moves in the opposite direction, entrenching dysfunction rather than curing it.

India urgently needs a clear separation of administrative and technical functions, with seasoned aviators and professionals leading the regulator, as is the global norm.

The Prime Minister and the Aviation Minister owe it to the nation to purge, modernise and liberate aviation oversight through an independent CAA-style body—so that Indian aviation can truly fly high, without fear or favour.

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डीजीसीए का बड़ा फैसला, फ्लाइट में पावर बैंक के इस्तेमाल पर लगाई रोक

नई दिल्ली, (पंजाब केसरी): नागर विमानन महानिदेशालय (डीजीसीए) ने रविवार को कहा कि उड़ान के दौरान यात्री पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल मोबाइल फोन या किसी भी अन्य इलेक्ट्रॉनिक डिवाइस को चार्ज करने के लिए नहीं कर सकते। डीजीसीए ने साफ कहा कि पावर बैंक में लगी लिथियम बैटरियों से आग लगने का खतरा होता है, इसलिए यह फैसला यात्रियों की सुरक्षा को ध्यान में रखकर लिया गया है। एक बयान में विमानन नियामक ने कहा कि उड़ान के दौरान गैजेट्स को चार्ज करने के लिए किसी भी हालत में पावर बैंक का इस्तेमाल नहीं किया जा सकता है, चाहे वह एयरक्राफ्ट की सीट में लगे पावर सॉकेट के जरिए ही क्यों न हो। यह फैसला दुनिया के कई देशों में हुए उन हदसों के बाद लिया गया है, जिनमें विमानों में चार्जिंग के दौरान लिथियम बैटरियां ज्यादा गर्म हो गईं या उनमें आग लग गई। ऐसे मामलों ने विमान यात्रा की सुरक्षा को लेकर चिंता बढ़ा दी है। डीजीसीए ने इससे पहले नवंबर महीने में एक खतरनाक सामान संबंधी चेतावनी जारी की थी, जिसमें कहा गया था कि पावर बैंक और अतिरिक्त लिथियम बैटरियां केवल हैंड बैग में ही रखी जा सकती हैं। इन्हें ओवरहेड केबिन में रखने की अनुमति नहीं है, क्योंकि



पावर बैंक में लगी लिथियम बैटरियों से आग लगने का खतरा होता है

वहां आग लगने पर उसे जल्दी पहचानना और बुझाना मुश्किल होता है। डीजीसीए के अनुसार, आजकल रिचार्ज होने वाले उपकरणों में लिथियम बैटरियों का ज्यादा इस्तेमाल होने लगा है। इसी कारण हवाई यात्रा के दौरान यात्रियों के पास पावर बैंक और अतिरिक्त बैटरियों की संख्या भी बढ़ गई है। डीजीसीए ने चेतावनी दी कि ये बैटरियां आग लगने का कारण बन सकती हैं और उड़ान की सुरक्षा के लिए गंभीर खतरा पैदा कर सकती हैं।

नियामक संस्था ने बताया कि अगर लिथियम बैटरियां ओवरहेड स्टोरेज या कैरी-ऑन बैग में छुपी रहती हैं, तो धुआं या आग के शुरुआती संकेत दिखाई नहीं देते। इससे आपात स्थिति में तुरंत कार्रवाई करना मुश्किल हो जाता है और खतरा बढ़ सकता है।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE STATESMAN

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

BRIEFLY

DGCA bans use of power banks for charging during flights:

New Delhi: The Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Sunday clarified that passengers are not allowed to use power banks to charge mobile phones or any other electronic devices during flights, citing serious safety concerns linked to lithium batteries.

In a statement, the aviation regulator said power banks cannot be used for charging gadgets at any time during a flight, including through aircraft seat power outlets. The move comes after several incidents worldwide in which lithium batteries overheated or caught fire on board aircraft. The DGCA had earlier issued a Dangerous Goods Advisory Circular that allowed power banks and spare lithium batteries only in hand baggage. These items are prohibited from being stored in overhead compartments, as fires in overhead bins are difficult to detect and control.





Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

2 flights circle fog-hit Lucknow 28 times in 2 days, fail to land

Lucknow: For two winter mornings, dense fog over Lucknow turned the skies into a maze for an Air India Express Boeing 737 MAX 8 operating flight from Delhi.

On Jan 2 and Jan 4, the aircraft circled the city 28 times, spending around 171 minutes hovering above Lucknow, only to return to Delhi without landing. On Jan 4, IX217 flight reached Lucknow at 6.42 am. But the runway visual range (RVR) was only 125 metres, far below the DGCA-mandated minimum of 150 metres required for a safe landing.

Hoping the fog would clear, the pilots kept the aircraft in a holding pattern. For 78 minutes till 8.01 am, the jet looped over the city 11 times.

When conditions didn't improve, the aircraft turned back, landing in Delhi at 8.55 am.

On Jan 2, IX2171 faced nearly identical conditions. It reached Lucknow at 6.18 am, and for the next 93 minutes, it circled over the city 17 times, waiting for a break in the fog that never came. TNN



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TRIBUNE

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

No mid-air charging DGCA pulls the plug on power banks after fire scares

SHEKHAR SINGH
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 4

In a decisive move aimed at tightening cabin safety, India's aviation regulator has drawn a hard red line on the use of power banks during flights, signalling zero tolerance for risks posed by lithium battery-powered devices at 35,000 feet.

Citing a surge in global incidents involving overheating and in-flight fires, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has barred passengers from using power banks to charge phones or gadgets on board aircrafts, including through the seat power outlets.

The clampdown, issued through a Dangerous Goods Advisory Circular in November, reflects a growing alarm within the aviation safety circles over lithium batteries becoming ignition sources inside aircraft cabins. Passengers may still carry power banks and spare batteries, but the regulator has made it clear

that these devices must remain in hand baggage and not be stowed in overhead bins, spaces where smoke or fire can go unnoticed until it is too late.

The DGCA's warning is blunt. Lithium battery fires, it says, are not only intense but can also be self-sustaining, making them harder to extinguish than conventional on board fires. Uncontrolled heating, overcharging, crushing, poor manufacturing quality, ageing or internal short circuits can all trigger thermal runaway, turning everyday electronic accessories into airborne hazards. In extreme cases, devices can even explode.

Where these batteries are kept matters just as much as how they are used. Batteries tucked away in overhead compartments or buried inside carry-on bags are difficult to access and monitor, delaying detection and emergency response. That delay, the regulator has cautioned, can sharply escalate the threat to

flight safety.

The advisory places significant responsibility on airlines, directing them to rework safety risk assessments related to lithium batteries and adopt tougher preventive measures in aircraft cabins. Early detection and swift firefighting are central to the new approach.

Airlines have been instructed to ensure that on board firefighting equipment and protective gear are not only adequate, but readily accessible, while crew training must be sharpened to spot early warning signs such as unusual heat, smoke or odour, it added.

Cabin crew are expected to understand the dangers of smoke inhalation from battery fires and to use the correct firefighting techniques when seconds count. Passengers, too, are being pulled into the safety net. Mandatory inflight announcements will now spell out the risks, urging travellers to alert crew if any device shows signs of malfunction.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TRIBUNE

DELHI

5 JANUARY 2026

Air India begins probe into pilot's Vancouver fiasco

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 4

Air India has begun its probe into the recent allegations of a pilot being under the influence of alcohol at the Vancouver airport in Canada.

The airline is likely to submit a response to the Canadian aviation regulator, Transport Canada, after the latter, in a formal communication to the airline, said one of its pilots was "prevented from operating" a Vancouver-Delhi flight on December 23 following concerns that he was allegedly under the influence of alcohol, leading to his removal from the aircraft just before departure.

Sources told *The Tribune* that soon after reports of the incident surfaced, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation was informed and an internal inquiry committee was constituted by Air India. "An internal enquiry committee has probe was begun," the sources said, adding that the panel is expected to submit its report before January 26. — TNS