

प्रगति यात्रा • मधुबनी में 1100 करोड़ की योजनाओं का शिलान्यास-उद्घाटन जल्द चालू होगा मधुबनी हवाई अड्डा, फुलहर बनेगा पर्यटन स्थल: नीतीश

भास्कर न्यूज | झंझारपुर

प्रगति यात्रा के क्रम में रविवार को मधुबनी पहुंचे मुख्यमंत्री ने कहा कि बहुत जल्द मधुबनी हवाई अड्डा चालू हो जाएगा। साथ ही मां सीता व प्रभु श्रीराम के प्रथम मिलन स्थल फुलहर स्थान को पर्यटन स्थल के रूप में विकसित किया जाएगा। मुख्यमंत्री ने जिले में 1100 करोड़ की 140 योजनाओं का रिमोट से उद्घाटन और शिलान्यास किया। मिथिला हाट के बैकवेंट हॉल में आयोजित बैठक में कहा कि मधुबनी शहर को जाम से निजात दिलाने के लिए रिंग रोड निर्माण के साथ अंतर राज्य स्तरीय बस अड्डा का निर्माण किया जाएगा। मधुबनी जिले में और कोई भी जरूरत होगी, उसको भी कराया जाएगा। बिहार के हर क्षेत्र में काम हो रहा है, आगे और तेजी से काम होगा।

प्रगति यात्रा के दौरान मुख्यमंत्री सबसे पहले खुटीना प्रखंड के दुर्गापट्टी पहुंचे जहां सात योजनाओं का उद्घाटन किया। सीएम मिथिला हाट के बैकवेंट हॉल में अधिकारियों और मंत्रियों के साथ समीक्षा बैठक की। सीएम के साथ मुख्यमंत्री सम्राट चौधरी, खाद एवं उपभोक्ता मंत्री लेसी सिंह भी शामिल थे।

मुख्यमंत्री की घोषणाएं



- कमला नदी से भरने कमला-पुरानी कमला-जीवछ नदी के इंटर लिंकिंग का कार्य होगा। इससे बाढ़ नियंत्रण के साथ सिंचाई की सुविधा होगी।
- पश्चिमी कोशी नहर के बिदेश्वरस्थान उप शाखा नहर व उग्रनाथ शाखा नहर का सुदृढ़ीकरण किया जाएगा।
- झंझारपुर के अरारिया संग्राम के मिथिला हाट का और विस्तारीकरण किया जाएगा।
- मधुबनी में अंतर राज्यीय बस

- अड्डे का निर्माण होगा, इससे लोगों को आवागमन में सहूलियत होगी।
- जयनगर में शहीद चौक के पास और मधुबनी 13 नंबर गुमटी पर आरओबी का निर्माण होगा। मधुबनी शहर के लिए रिंग रोड का निर्माण कनकपुर से जगतपुर तक किया जाएगा जिसे पंडौल बाइपास से जोड़ा जाएगा।
- एनएच-27 के समीप लौकही प्रखंड में बनगामा के समीप लगभग 500 एकड़ जमीन में औद्योगिक क्षेत्र का विकास होगा।



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK BHASKAR

JAIPUR

12 JANUARY 2025

जयपुर एयरपोर्ट पर गड़बड़ाया फ्लाइट्स का शेड्यूल, 1 रद्द और 5 हुई घंटों लेट

एयरपोर्ट पर कैट-3बी तकनीक, फिर भी 7 दिन में 30 से अधिक फ्लाइट्स हुईं लेट

एविएशन रिपोर्टर | जयपुर

जयपुर एयरपोर्ट पर शुक्रवार को फ्लाइट संचालन एक बार फिर गड़बड़ा गया। वाराणसी की उड़ान रद्द होने पर यात्रियों के लिए दूसरी फ्लाइट की व्यवस्था नहीं करने पर 68 यात्रियों को परेशानी का सामना करना पड़ा। वहीं 5 फ्लाइट्स 1 से 3 घंटे तक लेट रहीं। जिसकी वजह से इन फ्लाइट्स के भी करीब 650 से अधिक यात्रियों को एयरपोर्ट पर परेशान होना पड़ा। एयरपोर्ट से मिली जानकारी के अनुसार जयपुर में एक फ्लाइट में उड़ान से पहले तकनीकी

खराबी का पता चला। मामला स्पाइसजेट की सुबह 11:45 बजे जयपुर से वाराणसी जा रही फ्लाइट एसजी-2958 का है।

फ्लाइट में वाराणसी जाने के लिए 68 यात्री बैठ गए थे, लेकिन तभी पायलट को फ्लाइट में तकनीकी खराबी लगी। इसकी सूचना उसने तुरंत एटीसी और एयरलाइंस की ग्राउंड टेक्निकल टीम को दी। इसके बाद यात्रियों को फ्लाइट से उतारकर टर्मिनल बिल्डिंग के अंदर भेज दिया गया। 3 घंटे बाद भी ठीक नहीं होने पर फ्लाइट को रद्द कर दिया गया। ऐसे में यात्री दूसरी फ्लाइट की मांग कर

रहे थे, लेकिन एयरलाइन ने व्यवस्था नहीं की और यात्रियों को रिफंड लेने के लिए कहा। इसी प्रकार एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस की दिल्ली फ्लाइट आईएक्स-1199 1.50 घंटे, इंडिगो की चेन्नई फ्लाइट 6ई-694 जयपुर से दोपहर 2:25 की बजाय शाम 4:30 बजे, स्पाइसजेट की अहमदाबाद फ्लाइट एसजी-2961 जयपुर से शाम 5:05 की बजाय रात 8:10 बजे, एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस की मुंबई फ्लाइट आईएक्स-1219 शाम 6 की बजाय 7:50 बजे और इंडिगो की पुणे फ्लाइट 6ई-6116 रात 9:35 की बजाय 10:55 बजे रवाना हो सकी।



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK NAVJYOTI

JAIPUR

11 JANUARY 2025

कम दृश्यता के कारण हवाई यातायात प्रभावित, कई फ्लाइट्स जयपुर डायवर्ट



नवज्योति, जयपुर। लखनऊ और अमृतसर एयरपोर्ट पर कम दृश्यता के कारण फ्लाइट्स को जयपुर एयरपोर्ट पर डायवर्ट किया गया। इंडिगो की फ्लाइट दमाम से लखनऊ आई थी। यहां मौसम खराब होने के कारण एटीसी ने विमान को लैंड करने की अनुमति नहीं देते हुए कुछ देर होल्ड पर रखा। इसके बाद जयपुर एयरपोर्ट पर डायवर्ट किया गया। अमृतसर एयरपोर्ट पर भी कम दृश्यता से एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस को शारजाह से अमृतसर जा रही फ्लाइट लैंड नहीं हो सकी। इस फ्लाइट को भी जयपुर डायवर्ट किया गया। जयपुर में विमान को सुरक्षित लैंड कराया गया। अमृतसर एटीसी से अनुमति मिलने के बाद यह फ्लाइट वापस अमृतसर गई।

दिल्ली की फ्लाइट लेट: जयपुर से दिल्ली जाने वाली फ्लाइट देरी से रवाना हुई। इंडिगो की फ्लाइट जयपुर से सुबह 7.45 बजे दिल्ली के लिए जाती है। यह फ्लाइट मौसम खराब होने के कारण सुबह 9 बजे रवाना हुई।



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN TIMES

MUMBAI

12 JANUARY 2025

{ THEFT DURING FLIGHT LAYOVER }

Dubai-based flier loses pouch with ₹7L gold at city airport

Dev Kotak

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MUMBAI: A passenger who was travelling from Vadodara to Dubai lost gold ornaments worth ₹7 lakh at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), where there was a layover for over 12 hours, on December 31, 2024. A case was registered on Friday against an unknown person in connection with the theft.

Japan Sheth, 38, hails from Vadodara and moved to Dubai for work in 2022. According to the FIR, he travelled to India in December 2024 with his family for his 1.5-year-old son's tonsuring ceremony. When they were returning to Dubai on December 31, there was a long layover at

CSMIA. Hours after he reached his Dubai house, when he was looking to restore the jewellery in his cupboard, he could not find them. He returned to India and could not find them at his Vadodara house too.

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at Vadodara airport checked the baggage scanning images. A black pouch in one of the nine bags they carried had gold earrings, necklaces, a bracelet, a ring, and a pendant, all worth ₹7.2 lakh. Then the CISF at Mumbai airport reviewed their baggage scanning images and saw there was no pouch.

A case was registered against unknown person at the Sahar Police station under section 303(2) (theft) of the Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita.

UP to link Noida airport with U'khand and MP via NH-34

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Noida: Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) is exploring options to connect Noida International Airport in Jewar with NH-34, which runs through Sikandrabad in Bulandshahr.

Officials said they had initiated discussions with National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) on potential route alignments and started work on preparing a detailed proposal.

Before land was acquired for the airport project, Jewar was already connected with Sikandrabad road. But when the govt began acquiring 1,334 hectares across six Jewar villages for the first phase of the airport, it included a 3km stretch of the Jewar-Sikandrabad road as well. This cut all access to Sikandrabad as YEIDA notified areas along the internal road.

But over the next few years, an alternative route to Sikandrabad was laid via Jahangirpur and Jhajhar. This road, however, passes through several villages and involves making a detour of several kilometres.

Although the authorities are yet to come out with any route map, there is a possibility

NH-34 spans from Gangotri Dham in Uttarakhand to Lakhnadon in Madhya Pradesh, serves as a crucial artery connecting major cities like Haridwar, Meerut, and Bulandshahr

ty of building a link road between the airport and Khurja, through which NH-34 passes.

“The final route, however, will depend on a feasibility study and the detailed project report,” an official said.

The new connection is crucial for enhancing accessibility to the airport from other districts. NH-34, which spans from Gangotri Dham in Uttarakhand to Lakhnadon in Madhya Pradesh, serves as a crucial artery connecting major cities like Haridwar, Meerut, and Bulandshahr.

“While our initial discussions have been promising, the DPR will determine crucial aspects of the project, like route alignment, budget, and length of the link road,” said Shailendra Bhatia, officer on special duty at YEIDA.

As of now, the govt’s connectivity network includes a

nearly complete 31km stretch linking the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway with the airport from Ballabgarh near Faridabad.

Additionally, UP Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEDA) has proposed a new speedway connecting Ganga Expressway with the airport.

This proposed expressway will interface with Yamuna Expressway via NH-34. It will pass through several notified villages of YEIDA region and New Noida before meeting the Yamuna Expressway near the proposed Film City.

Officials said they were carefully considering the alignment to avoid an overlap with the new NH-34 connection.

Officials asserted that closing the NH-34 connectivity gap was a top priority for YEIDA as it would create a comprehensive transportation network around the airport, supporting both passenger convenience and regional development.

“The initiative is part of UP govt’s broader strategy to enhance regional connectivity,” an official said.

The Noida airport’s first phase is likely to handle 12 million passengers annually, which makes a robust road connectivity all the more crucial.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

MUMBAI

12 JANUARY 2025

₹26cr weed seized from four flyers at airport

Mumbai: In three different cases of drug smuggling, the Customs arrested four persons, including two Thai women, for smuggling around 12kg of marijuana/ weed worth Rs 26 crore from Bangkok. The four arrested youths said they were unaware of the contraband and were fooled by the syndicates.

In the first case, the Air Intelligence Unit at Chhat-

Drugs found in 2 sellers' shoes

Mumbai: Two men who allegedly sold drugs hidden in footwear were arrested with heroin worth Rs 37.4 lakh in Borivli. The duo, Shoeb Ansari (24), and Abhishek Kumar (25), were booked under the NDPS Act. On Jan 5, police held one Parvez Ansari with 87 gm of heroin, also in Borivli. Later, they arrested Irfaan Khan, 35, in Naigaon-Nalasopara with 1 gm heroin. 7NN

rapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, Mumbai, on Saturday intercepted two Thai women, identified as Supatsara Sunawong and Rungnapa Munprakob, on suspicion. They were found carrying 18kg of weed worth Rs 18.44cr. In another case, a Mumbra resident, Mohammed Shaikh, who arrived from Bangkok, was found with 3.976kg of ganja. In a similar case, 4kg of weed worth Rs 4cr was recovered from the baggage of Saeeda Akhlaq Zari, a Thane resident. 7NN



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THE TIMES OF INDIA

MUMBAI

12 JANUARY 2025

₹7L jewellery stolen from handbag at city airport

Mumbai: An executive director with a UAE-based company lodged a police complaint after jewellery worth Rs 7.2 lakh was stolen from his handbag at the Mumbai international airport. The 38-year-old complainant and his family were to fly to Dubai when the incident occurred.

The complainant, his wife, two kids and a domestic help reached Mumbai from their hometown in Vadodara around 10.20 pm. They were carrying five suitcases and nine handbags.

The family checked in the suitcases and were carrying the handbags on them. The jewellery including necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, nose pins etc, were placed in one of the bags. On Dec 31, the family boarded a flight from Mumbai airport to Dubai around 2 am. On reaching their home in Dubai, they opened their bag to keep the jewellery in their locker. But the the jewellery was missing. On Jan 3, the complainant returned to Gujarat to look for the ornaments at his hometown, but to no avail. He went to the Vadodara airport and sought assistance from the CISF to check their camera footage. The jewellery could be seen in one of the handbags in the footage. But the footage at the Mumbai airport did not show the jewellery in the handbags. TNN



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

13 JANUARY 2025

Air India aims to double I-to-I segment in 2-3 years

Rohit Vaid
Anesh Phadnis
New Delhi

To double international transit passenger count, Tata Group-promoted Air India plans to further optimise its network by adding more overseas flight options and codeshare to destinations in South-east and Far East Asia, as well as Europe and continental US.

Besides new flights, Air India has recently re-timed several of its flights to and from Europe and Australia, and introduced new flights to Southeast Asia to enable convenient connections for those travelling between these regions via Air India's Delhi hub.

FRESH INVESTMENTS

Even fresh investments have been made to strengthen the distribution network to make the airline's inventory more widely available globally.

The move, said Air India's Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal, will allow the airline to connect more international passengers from South-east and Far East Asia to Europe and the US.

It will enable travellers from the US as well as London, Paris and Frankfurt to easily take one-stop connections to Sydney and Melbourne in Australia and to points like Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Ho Chi Minh City in South-east



NEW FRONTIERS. The airline aims to double the size of the transit traffic segment over the next 2-3 years

Asia via New Delhi.

Currently, the international-to-international (I-to-I) segment constitutes around 10 per cent of its overall international passenger traffic.

FUTURE PLANS

According to Aggarwal, Air India aims to double the size of the transit traffic segment over the next 2-3 years.

The strategy will allow Air India to capture a sizeable portion of an addressable market size of the 130 million I to I passenger traffic that India can cater to every year. This number is expected to grow to 200 million by FY35. At present, the majority of this traffic is serviced by the Middle East-based airlines and hubs.

The process is also expected to transform Air India's three major operational bases in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru into mega international hubs.

From 2023 onwards, Air India has added new flights from Delhi to Milan, Copenhagen, Vienna, Amsterdam and Zurich in Europe, which

are complemented by new flights to Phuket, Ho Chi Minh City and, most recently, Kuala Lumpur, along with frequency increases to Kathmandu, Colombo, Singapore and Bangkok.

The airline has added partnerships with 15 new entities in the last three years, and the traffic on its partner network has grown by 2.5x.

Further, Air India would like to leverage Singapore as an external hub, he said, while talking about the co-operation between the airline and its stakeholder Singapore Airlines. Air India is also in advanced talks with Lufthansa for an expanded codeshare partnership, confirmed Aggarwal.

FLIGHT FREQUENCIES

While the overall flight capacity has grown by 1.3x since the takeover, the domestic flight frequencies have increased from 445 to 855 in the last three years.

In terms of business development, the airline has completely revamped its corporate product as well as its pricing structure.



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

13 JANUARY 2025

IndiGo's cargo volume up 13.5%, eyes new alliances

Aneesh Phadnis
Mumbai

New planes and partnerships with carriers helped IndiGo carry 13.5 per cent more cargo on a year-on-year basis in CY2024. IndiGo's fleet size increased to over 400 aircraft (including wet leased planes) in December end-2024 compared to 358 in December 2023. The airline also stitched partnerships with Air France-KLM and FedEx enabling it to increase freight loads to 3.98 lakh tonnes in 2024.

"It was a strong year for cargo with a 13.5 per cent increase in tonnage year-on-year. On multiple occasions, we beat our monthly tonnage uplift records. The freighter utilisation is now approximately 9 hours per day, which is high for narrow body freighter operations," said Mark Sutch, Chief Commercial Officer (cargo), IndiGo.

Sutch said the airline witnessed growth across both business lines — belly space of passenger aircraft and freighters.

Freighters saw the highest growth as IndiGo added its third Airbus A321 freighter in November 2023. "As of date, partnerships are a small part of our business but we plan to grow this overtime in line with our growing international footprint. In 2024, we signed a comprehensive interline agreement with Air France-KLM-Martinair Cargo," he said.

Air India aims to double int'l transit traffic in three years

DEEPAK PATEL

New Delhi, 12 January

Nearly 10 per cent of Air India's total international passengers currently use Indian airports as transit hubs, and the Tata Group-owned airline aims to double this share in the next three years, Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal said on Sunday.

Approximately 130 million passengers fly over India annually, with about 10 per cent of this transit traffic handled by Dubai and 7.5 per cent by Doha.

In comparison, Delhi currently handles less than 1 per cent of this transit traffic, highlighting a significant growth opportunity, Aggarwal said during a press briefing.

"We've already increased our traffic to the west of India, but now need to enhance connectivity to the east, especially to Southeast Asia, to capture more international-to-international (I2I) traffic," he explained.

Aggarwal emphasised the untapped potential in the Europe-Australia corridor, which Indian carriers have largely overlooked.

"We have aligned our flight schedules to connect Western destinations like Frankfurt, London, and Paris with Eastern destinations like Melbourne and Sydney," he noted.

Currently, I2I traffic accounts for about 10 per cent of Air India's total international traffic. Aggarwal expects this share to grow to 15-20 per cent over the next three years. "That is our aspiration, and we are committed to achieving it," he added.

Since 2019-20, revenue from Air India's front cabins (business class and premium economy) has grown 2.3 times, while revenue from economy class has increased 1.6 times.

"We're increasing the number of front-cabin seats on our widebody planes for this reason. Once the retrofit is complete, the number of front-cabin seats will double compared to today. As a result, the yields from these planes will increase significantly," Aggarwal said.



GLOBAL SHARE

Current share of hubs in I2I transit traffic (%)

| | |
|-------|-----|
| Dubai | 10 |
| Doha | 7.5 |
| Delhi | <1 |

I2I: International-to-international
Source: Air India

'Weakening rupee puts pressure on Air India's cost structure'

Air India plans to begin retrofitting its existing widebody planes by July.

Air India has consistently opposed increasing bilateral rights for countries such as the UAE and Qatar, stating that their airlines use their hubs to carry a significant portion of traffic from India to North America and Europe. In the coming years, Air India plans to significantly increase its direct flights to North America and Europe. "We have already made our position very clear. If we aim to capture a larger share of the international market, we need to strengthen our hubs (Delhi, Mumbai, etc). The capacity being deployed is extending beyond these hubs (Dubai, Doha, etc.). The bilateral rights India has granted are more than sufficient for origin-destination (O-D) or point-to-point traffic," he explained. He added that while the final decision rests with the government, Air India is not "overly" concerned about the issue.

The government has recently allowed Indian carriers to wet lease planes on new routes to help them meet rising demand amid slow delivery of planes from manufacturers. Wet leasing involves renting an aircraft along with its crew, maintenance, and insurance, while dry leasing provides only the aircraft without crew or operational support. He clarified that Air India is not currently exploring wet leasing.

"We've found that wet leasing can be operationally challenging, especially when building a sustainable flight network around it. While wet leasing can be opportunistic for sudden demand surges, we are not focusing on it at the moment. We've placed orders for new planes," he elab-



rated. Currently, 20 per cent of Air India's international seats are sold directly via the airline's website or app, 40 per cent through domestic point-of-sales (PoS), and the remaining through foreign PoS.

When asked about increasing sales via foreign PoS, Aggarwal explained that it is difficult to pinpoint a specific strategy for higher per-seat revenue when seats are sold through foreign channels.

"It varies from market to market, and we focus on yield maximisation rather than targeting a specific PoS number," he noted. The recent depreciation of the rupee has put pressure on Air India's cost structure, as most of its costs are dollar-denominated, except for employee expenses.

"Air India has a natural hedge due to our significant international operations, as we charge in foreign currencies. However, half of our tickets are still sold in India in rupees, which impacts our profitability and fares," Aggarwal noted.

"The falling rupee increases fares, which in turn affects demand. It's a challenge for the entire industry, but we are addressing it by improving productivity and implementing various other measures," he added.



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK BHASKAR

JAIPUR

11 JANUARY 2025

3 इंटरनेशनल फ्लाइट जयपुर डायवर्ट, एक के पायलट की ड्यूटी पूरी, फ्लाइट छोड़ी

जयपुर | उत्तर भारत के कई एयरपोर्ट पर इन दिनों कोहरे का असर देखने को मिल रहा है। शुक्रवार को अमृतसर और लखनऊ एयरपोर्ट पर कोहरे के चलते फ्लाइट्स की लैंडिंग नहीं हो सकी। दोनों शहरों की तीन फ्लाइट्स को जयपुर डायवर्ट कर दिया गया। इंडिगो की फ्लाइट दमाम से लखनऊ आ रही थी, जबकि एयर इंडिया की बर्मिंघम से अमृतसर और एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस की शारजाह से अमृतसर आ रही थी। डायवर्जन के दो घंटे बाद इंडिगो की लखनऊ और एयर इंडिया की फ्लाइट अमृतसर वापस लौट गईं, लेकिन एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस की फ्लाइट पायलटों का ड्यूटी टाइम पूरा होने के चलते अटक गईं। पायलट ने विमान छोड़ दिया। इस कारण यात्री घंटों परेशान होते रहे।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

DELHI

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Better Planes, Seats, Connectivity: AI Gets Ready for Long Haul

Plans hub in Delhi in bid to win back overseas travellers it has been losing to Gulf carriers

Arindam Majumder

New Delhi: Better planes, more premium seats and convenient flight connections — Air India is trying to win back customers it had been losing for years to its Middle Eastern rivals.

“Currently, foreign airlines dominate the international long-haul market from India with over 80% share. Almost 85% of the connecting traffic from India travelling to Europe, North America and Australia connect at non-Indian airport hubs like those in the Middle East. We want to change this scenario by flying those passengers through Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru,” Nipun Aggarwal, chief commercial officer at Air India, said.

Around 10% of Air India’s total international passengers use Indian airports as a transfer option and the airline aims to double this share in three years.

Aggarwal and his team are revamping its long-haul flight schedules to build a bank structure where flights are timed to arrive in a cluster at its hub in Delhi Airport, allowing passengers to connect to flights to popular destinations like Europe and Australia, minimising the waiting time at the airport.

The Middle East has a natural geographic advantage as around two-thirds of the world’s population live within a 4 hour flight of Dubai which lies at a crossroads connecting Europe, Asia and Africa. But, Air India feels that it enjoys a similar advantage to Australia and Far East.

For instance, for multiple flights

from mega European cities like Frankfurt, Paris which lacks direct connectivity to Australia, South East Asia and neighboring South Asian countries, Air India offers the fastest connecting flight.

“We cannot take back the entire 85% transfer traffic as we cannot fly to all destinations that Middle Eastern carriers do, but we have identified some natural geographical advantage markets to which the shortest flight will be via India and also has a large diaspora of Indians,” Aggarwal said.

For other destinations, Air India would like to leverage Singapore Airlines’ — which holds a 26% stake in Air India — hub at Changi airport. The airline has revamped its domestic and short-haul network by adding more flights on routes which have potential to feed traffic on long-haul network.

For example, the number of weekly flights to South East Asia and SAARC destinations have increased to 264 and 182 as compared to 29 and 66 before privatisation.

“We have turned a point-point network to an increasingly hub-focused operation on metro routes while transferring the other routes to Air India Express, our low cost subsidiary, like there are more flights between Bengaluru and Delhi which have the potential to have traffic to long-haul destinations,” Aggarwal said.

Air India set to expand its wings 3 years after Tata came on board

SWARAJ BAGGONKAR
Mumbai, January 12

NEARLY THREE YEARS after it took over Air India, the Tata Group has firmed up plans for its expansion and consolidation that involve precisely segregating the focus of its two carriers, building multiple hubs within the country and challenging foreign carriers on international routes.

With a combined group fleet of almost 300 aircraft, full-service carrier Air India will serve the international market and the domestic routes with demand for premium traffic, while low-cost carrier Air India Express will focus on the remaining domestic and short-haul international routes.

The company is realigning the

FIGHT FOR SUPREMACY

■ Air India's strategy is to focus on hubs in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru

■ Air India wants to bring passengers from South East Asia and Saarc countries and aggregate them at its hubs before taking them to Europe, US and Canada



■ Around 26 million passengers flew on long-haul routes in FY24 and generated \$16 billion in revenue

■ Share of Indian carriers in long-haul segment stood at just 21%

network and segregating the market for the two carriers which has already resulted in a reduction in overlaps. In percentage terms, the overlap on all routes has come down

from 20% to 12%. In the short-haul segment, the overlap has come down from 26% to 5%.

Continued on Page 5

Air India set to expand its wings

Nipun Aggarwal, chief commercial officer, Air India, said, "We are looking at it (Air India and Air India Express) as an integrated operation. Air India's strategy is to focus on the hubs — Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru."

Air India wants to bring traffic from South East Asia, Far East and Saarc and aggregate them at its hubs before taking them to long-haul and ultra-long-haul markets of Europe, US and Canada. This will make its India hubs compete with hubs of West Asia such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha.

"We will focus on building strong corridors at our hubs and all other point-to-point opportunities," Aggarwal added. Around 26 million passengers flew on the long-haul routes in FY24 and generated \$16 billion in revenue.

The India-hub strategy of Air India is designed on the basis of the skewed flying pattern of customers. At least 76%, or 20 million, of long-haul international flyers were those catching a connecting flight, while only 6 million passengers undertook non-stop flights. According to Air India, which has a monopoly on the long-haul segment flying to western Europe, mainland US and Canada, the share of Indian carriers in this segment stood at just 21%, or 6 million passengers. "The 21% share in long-haul contributes more than 50% in revenue for Air India," Aggarwal added.

The capacity addition plan



of Air India will come from the addition of 570 planes in the next 10 years to be supplied by Boeing and Airbus. It added just over 90 planes over the last three years, including 50 narrow body, six wide body and 45 leased. The pace of aircraft addition by Air India was faster than that by Vistara in its nearly 10 years of operation.

"We will have a common group loyalty programme. The programme we have today is just for the Air India customers but very soon we will be including Air India Express in this. Our enrolment has gone up from 30,000 per month to 150,000 per month," Aggarwal said.

— Air India's domestic hub strategy will be influenced by the two upcoming greenfield airports near Delhi and Mumbai. The company said it is working closely with the operators of Noida airport and New Mumbai airport to chart a strategy. "It is definitely a challenge, when you have a hub-and-spoke model, to operate from two different airports in the same region. But we can look at things more creatively given the capacity challenges at Delhi and Mumbai airports. We have to balance the capacity that we have and the level of optimisation that we will be able to do," Aggarwal added.



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Flyers caught with ₹30 cr narcotics, hidden gold

Dharmesh Thakkar

MUMBAI

Alert customs officials of the Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) made a seizure of 1.257kg gold provisionally valued at Rs91.43 lakh, 30.36kg narcotics worth Rs30 crore and foreign currency equivalent to Rs17.46 lakh in different cases. Six international flyers were arrested in these cases on Friday night.

A passenger arriving from Ras Al-Khaimah and two passengers arriving from Bangkok were intercepted on arrival at CSMIA and searched, leading to seizure of 24 carat crude gold dust in wax and 24 carat crude gold chains weighing 1.257kg, concealed inside the body cavity of the flyer as well as inside socks and shoes worn by the passengers.

In the second case, three passengers arriving from Bangkok were intercepted and 11.918kg of suspected marijuana worth nearly Rs12 crore was found concealed in double-layered transparent plastic packets kept inside trolley bags. Another set of two passengers from Bangkok were intercepted with 18.442kg of marijuana valued at Rs18.5 crore, concealed in double layered transparent plastic packets inside trolley bags. All five were arrested for drug smuggling.

Air India to offer 1,000 premium economy seats daily

Neha LM Tripathi

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NEW DELHI: Air India will offer close to 1,000 premium economy class seats to passengers daily, as the airline aims to retrofit 85% of its narrow body aircraft by the second half of 2025.

“We serve around 63 million customers, most of whom fly domestic or short-haul routes on our narrow-body fleet. Narrow-body aircraft make up two-thirds of our total capacity, while wide-body aircraft account for the rest. By the second half of this year, our entire narrow-body fleet—serving nearly 80% of these 63 million customers will be upgraded with modern, retrofitted aircraft,” Nipun Aggarwal, chief commercial and transformation officer of Air India said.

“This means that 80-85% of Air India passengers will experience a significantly improved



the airline aims to retrofit 85% of its narrow body aircraft by the second half of 2025.

REUTERS

product, marking a major transformation for the airline,” he added.

Air India has 120 narrow body aircraft (flying to short haul routes). 70 of the narrow body aircraft belonged to Vis-

tara (which are already in good shape) and Air India had 50 aircraft out of which 41 will be retrofitted by June this year. Another nine narrow bodies (which are A321 CEO aircraft) will be retrofitted in another 12

months, the airline said.

“Out of the 41 A320neo legacy aircraft, 14 of them have been retrofitted, 27 will be done by the middle of this year. Once these legacy aircraft are retrofitted almost the entire Air India’s narrow body fleet, would have been modernised,” Aggarwal said, adding that all “retrofitted aircraft will have three class configurations (business, premium economy and economy class)”.

These aircraft will have 24 premium economy and eight business class seats.

Until the entire Air India fleet is modernised and retrofitted, the airline has chosen to prioritise Vistara aircraft on key corporate and premium routes. However, as the Air India upgrades are completed, its retrofitted aircraft will gradually be introduced on these prime routes as well.

The airline is also set to com-

mence retrofitting of its 40 widebody jets starting this year and the first 787-9 should rolled out in the later part of the year, the official indicated.

The airline’s plan of retrofitting their widebody aircraft that fly on long haul and ultra long haul routes has been delayed because of supply chain issues and challenges that seat manufacturers are facing globally, the airline official said.

“We are a full-service airline aiming to become a world-class carrier, and we see great potential in this segment. Revenue growth in the back cabin (economy class) has been 1.6 times, while the front cabin (business and premium economy class) has grown by 2.3 times. This success comes from better pricing, enhanced airport and in-flight experiences, improved meal quality, and an overall stronger brand perception,” he said.

Akasa's unique dilemma: too many pilots, too little flying



Problem of plenty: Akasa Air operates a fleet of 26 aircraft, but employs far more pilots than needed for its operations. FILE PHOTO

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

The global shortage of new aircraft has disrupted Akasa Air's expansion plans, creating a surplus of hundreds of pilots.

With Boeing 737 MAX deliveries slowing in 2024, nearly 400 of Akasa's 850 pilots remain grounded. Originally scheduled for 12 months, post-joining training timelines have stretched to 18 months, with some pilots fearing a further delay of 6 months.

Akasa currently operates a fleet of 26 aircraft but employs far more pilots than needed for its operations. The airline offers grounded pilots a salary equivalent to 40 flying hours, resulting in incomes 50% lower than peers involved in active flying. This financial strain affects both mid-career pilots and new recruits burdened by training loans of ₹60 lakh to ₹1.2 crore.

In response to a detailed questionnaire from *The Hindu*, the airline's spokesperson said, "Despite the changes in the aircraft delivery schedules, more than 60% of our pilots have begun to accumulate flying hours." The airline added that by the end of 2025, it would be able to ensure a vast majority of pilots start

flying. Since launching in August 2022, Akasa had ambitious plans to grow its fleet to 72 Boeing 737 MAX 8s within five years. However, supply chain disruptions and regulatory issues in the U.S. in 2024 limited its fleet growth to just three aircraft last year, down from the initial pace of one aircraft per month in 2022 and 2023. By March 2025, Akasa expects to have 27 aircraft – 15 fewer than planned.

But the airline has been on a spree to recruit pilots in large numbers from the "very beginning" in what some call a "calculated risk". Three years since the launch it seems "the worst case scenario has played out for the airline", said a former executive of the airline. The person explained that Akasa needs nearly 18 pilots per aircraft keeping in mind the pace with which it planned to double its fleet. This would mean that with 26 aircraft the airline needs only 468 cockpit crew of the nearly 850 it has employed.

Aspects of pilot training have now come under scrutiny with complaints of favouritism in pilot release schedules and training lapses leading to fines and suspensions by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

I-TO-I PASSENGERS ACCOUNT FOR 10% OF AIR INDIA'S LONG-HAUL TRAFFIC

Ai looks to double int'l connecting traffic in 3 years, bets big on premium classes

SUKALP SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JANUARY 12

AIR INDIA views international-to-international (I-to-I) transit passenger traffic—or connecting at Indian airports passengers flying from one foreign country to another—as a huge growth opportunity and has been actively strategising and taking steps to attract more transit passengers on its international flights. According to airline's chief commercial officer Nipun Aggarwal, the efforts, which include network expansion and realignment at the Air India group level and tweaking flight schedules to facilitate better flight connections, have started bearing fruit.

"Almost 10 per cent of the traffic that we carry on our long-haul, wide-body aircraft is now I-to-I traffic... (when the Tata group took over Air India in January 2022) this must have been very low," Aggarwal said in a recent interaction with reporters, adding that he expects the I-to-I traffic share to double to 20 per cent in three years.

Aggarwal also said that Air India has seen growing demand and revenue in premium seats—business and premium economy classes—and has decided to double premium seats on its legacy wide-body aircraft that will start going for retrofitting later this year. Air India is already adding premium economy seats to its legacy narrow-body aircraft,



File

which so far had a standard two-class cabin. The airline is also developing a first-class product for some of its future Airbus A350-1000 wide-body jets for select long-haul routes.

I-to-I opportunity

According to Aggarwal, the I-to-I market size overflying India was estimated at 130 million passengers as of 2023-24, but India's largest airport—Delhi—accounted for less than 1 per cent of this, while mega hubs Dubai and Doha accounted for 10 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively. Key international corridors that overfly India include Australia and New Zealand to Europe, Europe-Southeast Asia and South Asia, North America-Southeast Asia, and Middle East-South Asia.

This I-to-I opportunity is a key consideration in the Air India group's network development. In the overseas routes, Air India will focus on medium- and long-haul routes, along with a few short-haul routes that have enough demand for a premium product. Air India Express will service other

short-haul routes.

"Even for Air India Express, the first objective when they fly overseas is to see how they can feed our network as a priority," Aggarwal said.

The airlines' short-haul network, earlier focussed more on the India-Middle East routes, is now being rebalanced by adding more flights to the east of India.

"We want to bring traffic from Southeast Asia and Far East and SAARC, and aggregate that traffic at our hubs, and then take them to Europe, US, Canada and those markets. So, we will focus on building strong I-to-I corridors at our hubs, and all other point-to-point opportunities which are there will be served by Air India Express," Aggarwal said.

The airline has also been realigning its international flight schedule to facilitate better and more connection opportunities for international flyers at its hubs—Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru—with Delhi being the foremost.

"If you see this Europe to Australia corridor, which is called

the kangaroo corridor, it's one of the largest corridors globally, and it compares with the transatlantic corridor. We were hardly able to capitalise on this corridor, even though we have flights going to Australia and to Europe and the US...we have tried to align the flight timings that were going to Australia with the flights which were going to Europe. And now we will be able to connect the flights which are coming in from Frankfurt, Paris, London with the flights which are going to Melbourne, Sydney, and vice versa," Aggarwal said.

Air India is doing similar realignments between Southeast Asia and Europe, South Asia and Europe, Southeast Asia and South Asia and North America.

"So SAARC (South Asia), Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, all the big markets to the east of India are slowly being connected with the markets that we fly to on the west of India. And that is a conscious strategy we are working on," Aggarwal said.

Betting big on premium classes

Air India's decision to double premium seats on its wide-body aircraft is not without reason. As compared to the pre-pandemic period, the airline has seen front cabin (premium classes) revenue grow 2.3 times, while the back cabin, or economy class, revenue has expanded 1.6 times.

"I feel the front cabin gives more revenue, especially in the

case of full-service airlines, and the back cabin basically helps you to fill the plane, particularly on long-haul flights... in all the aircraft that we are adding in Air India, whether narrow-body or wide-body, we are putting a three-class product—premium economy, business, and economy," Aggarwal said.

"The premium segment has been a big focus for Air India. We are a full-service airline. We want to be a world-class airline, and this is a segment that we are very focussed on, we very much like, and see huge opportunity in," he added.

On being asked why Air India has decided to have a first-class on some of its yet-to-be delivered A350-1000 aircraft, Aggarwal said: "We are building an aspirational and world-class airline...most of the top airlines still have a very niche first-class product on some of their large and prominent routes...if you want to compete with the best airlines that are out there, you need to have a first-class product. It is an aspirational product. It defines how you run and build an airline."

While Aggarwal did not indicate when the new first-class product will be launched, he said that it is likely to be deployed on routes to global megacities like New York and London, which do have demand for such a top-end cabin class. Some of Air India's Boeing 777 aircraft have a first-class cabin, but it is seen as far inferior to first-class products offered by top international airlines.



एयर इंडिया के ए350-1000 विमानों में प्रथम श्रेणी का लक्जरी अनुभव कराएगी

● दो वर्षों में शामिल किए जाने की उम्मीद

नई दिल्ली, लोकसत्य

एयर इंडिया के बड़े आकार वाले ए350-1000 विमानों में प्रथम श्रेणी की सीटें उपलब्ध होंगी। एयरलाइन को अपने वैश्विक नेटवर्क में इन सीटों की संभावनाओं और मांग के नए अवसर दिखाई दे रहे हैं। यह पहल एयर इंडिया की वैश्विक स्तर पर अपनी उपस्थिति बढ़ाने और आकाशीय हिस्सेदारी में वृद्धि में लगी हुई है।

एयर इंडिया के मुख्य वाणिज्यिक अधिकारी (सीसीओ) निपुण अग्रवाल ने कहा कि प्रथम श्रेणी ऐसी चीज है जो अधिकांश शीर्ष एयरलाइनों के पास अभी भी कुछ बड़े और प्रमुख मार्गों पर एक विशेष स्थान रखती है। उन्होंने संवाददाताओं



से कहा कि यह ऐसा उत्पाद नहीं है जो खत्म होने वाला है। कई शीर्ष एयरलाइनें अपनी अगली पीढ़ी के प्रथम श्रेणी के उत्पाद बना रही हैं। हम अकेले ऐसा नहीं कर रहे हैं। हमें लगता है कि हमारे नेटवर्क में कुछ ऐसे अवसर हैं जहां वह उत्पाद अच्छा काम करेगा।

एयर इंडिया के बेड़े में अब 202 विमान हैं, जिनमें 67 बड़े आकार वाले विमान शामिल हैं। इनमें से 27 बी777 और 40 बी787 हैं। 67

वाइड बॉडी विमानों में से सभी लीगेसी बी777 और कुछ पट्टे पर लिए गए बी777 विमानों में प्रथम श्रेणी की सीटें हैं। उन्होंने कहा कि सर्वश्रेष्ठ एयरलाइनों के साथ प्रतिस्पर्धा करने के लिए आपके पास प्रथम श्रेणी की सुविधा होनी चाहिए। यह एक महत्वाकांक्षी उत्पाद है, यह परिभाषित करता है कि आप एयरलाइन कैसे चलाते हैं और उसका निर्माण कैसे करते हैं। हम इसे ए350-1000 विमानों में लगा रहे हैं उनमें से कुछ में यह उत्पाद होगा। उत्पाद विकसित करने में समय लगेगा। बड़े आकार वाले विमान- ए350-1000 और बी777X - में 325-400 सीटें होंगी। इन विमानों को आने वाले वर्षों में शामिल किया जाना है और ए350-1000 को अगले दो वर्षों में शामिल किए जाने की उम्मीद है।

Air India gung-ho on long-haul transit traffic opportunity

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Air India sees a lucrative opportunity in international transit traffic by flying people from North America and Europe to Asian destinations through India, expanding its share of a market dominated by foreign airlines.

Many flyers prefer hubs such as Doha, Dubai, Istanbul and Singapore, chief commercial officer Nipun Aggarwal said, pointing to the need to strengthen local aviation hubs.

"We need to ensure that we can capture a greater flow of the different share of the connecting traffic, and this is what we are trying to do. Our share in long-haul traffic is very low, and this segment is more than 50% of the total market opportunity. Which is why we believe that we can grow at a very high growth rate for the next 10-15 years," Aggarwal said in a media roundtable.

The airline said after the Tata Group acquired it in January 2022, passenger revenue has grown 1.6 times, cargo revenue 1.9 times, and ancillary revenue 2.6 times. As per Air India data, foreign airlines have 80% market share in long-haul transit traffic; Indian carriers have less than 15% share.

Aggarwal said there is 60% of organic growth opportunity out there. "Even if we don't do anything and just go with the market, we can grow 6-7% annually in this segment. So, there is an opportunity to gain market share and deploy much more capacity in the interna-



The Tata Group acquired Air India in January 2022. [@GODWIN](#)

tional market. So, we have a lot of headroom for growth."

Aviation expert and chief executive of Avialax Consultants Sanjay Lazar sees Air India's plans as a significant step for the airline's future. "Air India has tweaked the timings of its European and South Asian flights so as to create free flow of transit traffic from America and Europe to South Asia, Thailand and Australia. It will position Air India as the quickest one-stop airline from

Foreign airlines enjoy 80% market share in long-haul transit traffic, while Indian airlines have less than 15%

Europe to South Asia and Australia, through Delhi. These routes will attract a significant percentage of expats and leisure travellers where there is a large market."

Air India has become a material business for the Tata Group, Aggarwal said. "Our revenues which were less than \$1 billion in FY20 have grown to almost 10 times today. Our available seat km (ASKM) has grown almost six times today, and on top of this, we have a fleet order of almost 600 aircraft which will join us in the next 10 years."



Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

DELHI

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Falling rupee puts pressure on Air India's cost structure, int'l flights provide hedge: Official

NEW DELHI: Falling rupee puts pressure on Air India's cost structure and profitability but the airline has some natural hedge as it can charge more for international flights where tickets are priced in foreign currencies, according to a senior company official.

In recent weeks, Indian rupee has been on a decline and touched a record low of 86.04 against the US dollar on January 10. A weak rupee results in higher operational expenses for airlines as most of their costs are in dollars.

Air India's Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal said the declining rupee definitely poses a challenge to the industry and to Air India, and the situation has to be dealt with by improving productivity and taking other initiatives.

"Falling rupee does put pressure on our cost structure because most of our cost is dollarised barring the manpower

Air India operates 1,168 daily flights, including 313 to int'l destinations. Of those, 244 are short haul and 69 are long haul

cost which is in local currency. The more the rupee falls, the more the pressure it puts on our cost structure, on our profitability," he said at a media briefing this week.

Air India Group operates 1,168 daily flights, including 313 services to international destinations. Of those overseas flights, 244 are short haul and 69 are long haul. The group comprises Air India and low-cost carrier Air India Express.

Last year, Air India merged Vistara with itself and AIX Connect was integrated with Air

India Express.

According to Aggarwal, the airline has some natural hedge as it flies international lot more than other airlines.

"So, we are able to charge in international currency for international flights and we are able to pass on some of that impact to our customers because we are pricing in dollars or whatever currency is there," he said.

At the same time, Aggarwal noted that not everything is priced in overseas currencies.

"Even on international flights, we do have some impact but some of those are mitigated with the hedge we have but it impacts our profitability and puts pressure on the fares in the market".

Increasing airfares is not easy as the industry is very competitive and the demand is sensitive to pricing, Aggarwal said, seeking to highlight the low profitability of the airline industry. "We do have to

fill the aircraft and if we had so much pricing power, the airline industry's profitability would not be what it is today. This makes it very challenging for us to operate... it (falling rupee) will put pressure on our cost structure, impact profitability and demand," he noted.

In December, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) projected global airline industry's net profit at \$36.6 billion this year for a 3.6 per cent net profit margin.

"Average net profit per passenger is expected to be \$7 (below the \$7.9 high in 2023 but an improvement from \$6.4 in 2024)," IATA said in its financial outlook for 2025. Air India is an IATA member. Aggarwal also pointed out that the rupee has been depreciating around 2-3 per cent every year for the last many years, and not just the airline industry but many other sectors have become used to the situation.

PII

Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

DELHI

13 JANUARY 2025

Air India to offer first class seats in wide body A350-1000 planes

The fleet size of Air India now is 202 planes, including 67 wide body ones. Among them, 27 are B777s, and 40 are B787s

NEW DELHI: Air India will have first class seats in its large wide body A350-1000 planes, with the airline seeing opportunities in the airline's network where these seats will work well as the airline pursues efforts to have a larger pie of the global skies.

Air India's Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal said first class is something that most of the top airlines still have a niche on some of the large and prominent routes.

"It is not a product that is going away. Many of the top airlines are building their next generation first class products. We are not the only ones doing it. We do feel that there are some opportunities in our network where that product will work well," he said at a media brief-

ing earlier this week.

The fleet size of Air India now is 202 planes, including 67 wide body ones. Among them, 27 are B777s, and 40 are B787s.

Of the 67 wide body planes, all legacy B777s and some leased B777s have first class seats.

"To compete with the best airlines you need to have first class, it is an aspirational product, it defines how you run and build an airline... we are putting it on A350-1000 aircraft... some of them will have the product.

"It takes time to develop the product," Aggarwal said.

The large wide body aircraft — A350-1000s and B777Xs — will have 325-400 seats. These planes are set to be inducted in the coming years and A350-1000 is anticipated in the next two years.



"It is important to have that product (first class) as it pulls the airline up... it will be mostly the mega cities; London, New York are good first class markets. Even if you have a private jet, you cannot fly to the US without one stop. If you have a first class product you can fly direct and reach faster," he said.

Air India also has three other

wide body planes. Medium wide body aircraft — A350-900 and B787-9 — that have 300-325 seats — and small wide body plane — B787-8 having 250-300 seats.

The retrofit of wide body planes, starting with Boeing 787s, will commence this year while the retrofit of 27 legacy Airbus 320 neos is expected

to be completed by the middle of 2025.

Air India serves around 63 million passengers and most of them fly domestic or short-haul international. These flights are operated with narrow body aircraft.

Almost the entire narrow bodies, which are serving almost 80 per cent of the customers, will see a new retrofitted and modern product. They will see good product in place by the second half of this year, Aggarwal said.

LEGACY BOEING 777 AIRCRAFT

There have been multiple instances of delays, cancellations and technical issues with some legacy Boeing 777 planes that are mostly used to operate ultra long haul flights to places

like Canada and the US.

While acknowledging that the legacy Boeing 777 planes have not performed as well as anticipated, Aggarwal said the airline has kept more buffer than earlier.

Air India has 27 Boeing 777 aircraft, including 16 legacy ones.

"We are watching every month and as and when we are confident about the aircraft performance, we will utilise them more. Till the time we have that confidence, we are keeping some buffer in the deployment so that if the aircraft goes down, we have alternatives available with us with which we can still maintain the flight," he noted.

Whether the curtailment of legacy Boeing 777 deploy-

ment could also mean fewer ultra long-haul flights, Aggarwal said, "Whatever we have we will maintain. We are not curtailing that."

He also mentioned that whether the airline will add more flights "will be a function of whether we can extract more performance out of the existing fleet or whether we get more aircraft".

The retrofit of legacy Boeing 777 aircraft will start early next year.

WIDE BODY PLANES

In response to queries on whether Air India is looking at dry leasing or wet leasing of aircraft, Aggarwal said the airline is looking for capacity and added that getting a wide body aircraft in the market is extremely challenging.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE PIONEER

DELHI

13 JANUARY 2025

Falling rupee puts pressure on Air India's cost structure, says company official

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Falling rupee puts pressure on Air India's cost structure and profitability but the airline has some natural hedge as it can charge more for international flights where tickets are priced in foreign currencies, according to a senior company official.

In recent weeks, Indian rupee has been on a decline and touched a record low of 86.04 against the US dollar on January 10. A weak rupee results in higher operational expenses for airlines as most of their costs are in dollars.

Air India's Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal said the declining rupee definitely poses a challenge to the industry and to Air India, and the situation has to be dealt with by improving productivity and taking other initiatives.

"Falling rupee does put pressure on our cost structure because most of our cost is dollarised barring the manpower cost which is in local currency. The more the rupee falls, the more the pressure it puts on our cost structure, on our profitability," he said at a media briefing this week.

Air India Group operates 1,168 daily



flights, including 313 services to international destinations. Of those overseas flights, 244 are short haul and 69 are long haul. The group comprises Air India and low-cost carrier Air India Express.

Last year, Air India merged Vistara with itself and AIX Connect was integrated with Air India Express.

According to Aggarwal, the airline has some natural hedge as it flies international lot more than other airlines.

"So, we are able to charge in international currency for international flights and we are able to pass on some of that impact to our customers because we are pricing in dollars or whatever currency is there," he

said. At the same time, Aggarwal noted that not everything is priced in overseas currencies.

"Even on international flights, we do have some impact but some of those are mitigated with the hedge we have but it impacts our profitability and puts pressure on the fares in the market."

Increasing airfares is not easy as the industry is very competitive and the demand is sensitive to pricing, Aggarwal said, seeking to highlight the low profitability of the airline industry.

"We do have to fill the aircraft and if we had so much pricing power, the airline industry's profitability would not be what it is today. This makes it very challenging for us to operate... It (falling rupee) will put pressure on our cost structure, impact profitability and demand," he noted.

In December, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) projected global airline industry's net profit at USD 36.6 billion this year for a 3.6 per cent net profit margin.

"Average net profit per passenger is expected to be USD 7 (below the USD 7.9 high in 2023 but an improvement from USD 6.4 in 2024)," IATA said in its financial outlook for 2025.



Corporate Communications Directorate

PUNJAB KESARI

DELHI

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एयर इंडिया ने अधिक प्रीमियम सीटें जोड़ने की योजना बनाई

नई दिल्ली, (पंजाब केसरी): एयरलाइन कंपनी एयर इंडिया 'वृद्धि के विशाल अवसरों' का लाभ उठाने के लिए अपने विमानों में प्रीमियम किफायती और व्यापारिक श्रेणी की सीटों की संख्या बढ़ाएगी। कंपनी अधिक कनेक्टिंग यातायात ले जाने के लिए उड़ान समय को पुनः व्यवस्थित करेगी तथा मनचाही क्षमता का उपयोग करने के लिए नेटवर्क को युक्तिसंगत बनाएगी।

कंपनी के एक वरिष्ठ अधिकारी के अनुसार जनवरी, 2022 से घाटे में चल रही एयर इंडिया का संचालन कर रहे टाटा समूह ने अपने एयरलाइन कारोबार को एकीकृत किया है और एयर इंडिया समूह का राजस्व वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में



● कंपनी अधिक कनेक्टिंग यातायात ले जाने के लिए उड़ान समय को पुनः व्यवस्थित करेगी

एक अरब डॉलर से भी कम की तुलना में लगभग 10 गुना होकर अब लगभग 10 अरब डॉलर हो गया है। एयर इंडिया समूह प्रतिदिन 1168 उड़ानें संचालित करता है, जिसमें अंतर्राष्ट्रीय गंतव्यों के लिए 313 सेवाएं शामिल हैं।

आम तौर पर छोटी दूरी की उड़ानों की अवधि पांच घंटे तक होती है, और पांच से आठ घंटे की अवधि वाली

उड़ानें लंबी दूरी की होती हैं। एयर इंडिया के मुख्य वाणिज्यिक अधिकारी (सीसीओ) निपुण अग्रवाल ने कहा कि चाहे प्रीमियम किफायती हो या वाणिज्यिक, यातायात बढ़ गया है और 'हम काफी तेजी देख रहे हैं।'

उन्होंने कहा-हम प्रीमियम खंड (प्रीमियम किफायती और वाणिज्यिक वर्ग) पर बहुत ध्यान केंद्रित कर रहे हैं और इसमें बहुत सारे अवसर हैं। आगे की केबिन में राजस्व वृद्धि लगभग 2.3 गुना और पीछे की केबिन में 1.3 गुना रही है। हम बेहतर टाइमिंग, एयरपोर्ट पर बेहतर अनुभव, उड़ान के दौरान और भोजन की बेहतर गुणवत्ता के माध्यम से इसे हासिल करने में सक्षम हैं।

Corporate Communications Directorate

RASHTRIYA SAHARA

DELHI

13 JANUARY 2025

एयर इंडिया की कमाई पर पड़ रहा है रुपया टूटने का असर

नई दिल्ली (भाषा)।

अमेरिकी डालर के मुकाबले रुपये में गिरावट से एयरलाइन एयर इंडिया की लागत संरचना और लाभप्रदता पर दबाव पड़ता है। कंपनी के एक वरिष्ठ अधिकारी ने कहा कि हालांकि, एयरलाइन के पास कुछ प्राकृतिक बचाव है क्योंकि यह उन अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानों के लिए अधिक किराया ले सकती है जहां टिकटों की कीमत विदेशी मुद्राओं में होती है।

हाल के सप्ताहों में भारतीय रुपया गिरता रहा है और 10 जनवरी को अमेरिकी डालर के मुकाबले 86.04 के रिकार्ड निचले स्तर पर पहुंच गया। कमजोर रुपये के कारण एयरलाइन कंपनियों के परिचालन खर्च बढ़ता है, क्योंकि उनकी अधिकांश लागत डॉलर में होती है। एयर

इंडिया के मुख्य वाणिज्यिक अधिकारी (सीसीओ) निपुण अग्रवाल ने कहा कि रुपये में गिरावट निश्चित रूप से उद्योग और एयर इंडिया के लिए एक चुनौती है, और उत्पादकता में सुधार और अन्य पहल करके स्थिति से निपटना होगा।

इसी सप्ताह उन्होंने संवाददाताओं से कहा, 'रुपये में गिरावट से हमारी लागत संरचना पर दबाव

प्रीमियम सीटें बढ़ाएगी कंपनी

नई दिल्ली (भाषा)। एयर इंडिया 'वृद्धि के विशाल अवसरों' का लाभ उठाने के लिए अपने विमानों में प्रीमियम, किफायती और व्यापारिक श्रेणी की सीटों की संख्या बढ़ाएगी। कंपनी अधिक कनेक्टिंग यातायात ले जाने के लिए उड़ान समय को पुनः व्यवस्थित करेगी तथा मनचाही क्षमता का उपयोग करने के लिए नेटवर्क को युक्तिसंगत बनाएगी। कंपनी के अनुसार, जनवरी, 2022 से घाटे में चल रही एयर इंडिया का संचालन कर रहे टाट समूह ने अपने एयरलाइन कारोबार को एकीकृत किया है और एयर इंडिया समूह का राजस्व वित्त वर्ष 2019-20 में एक अरब डॉलर से भी कम की तुलना में लगभग 10 गुना होकर अब लगभग 10 अरब डॉलर हो गया है।

पड़ता है क्योंकि हमारी अधिकांश लागत डालर में है, सिवाय मानव संसाधन लागत के जो स्थानीय मुद्रा में है। रुपये में जितनी गिरावट होगी, हमारी लागत संरचना और लाभप्रदता पर उतना ही अधिक दबाव पड़ेगा।

एयर इंडिया समूह प्रतिदिन 1,168 उड़ानें संचालित करता है, जिसमें अंतरराष्ट्रीय गंतव्यों के लिए 313

सेवाएं शामिल हैं। इन विदेशी उड़ानों में से 244 छोटी दूरी की और 69 लंबी दूरी की हैं। इस समूह में एयर इंडिया और कम लागत वाली एयरलाइन एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस शामिल हैं। पिछले साल, एयर इंडिया ने विस्तार को अपने साथ मिला लिया और एआईएक्स कनेक्ट को एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस के साथ एकीकृत कर दिया गया।

अग्रवाल के अनुसार, एयरलाइन के पास कुछ प्राकृतिक बचाव है क्योंकि यह अन्य एयरलाइनों की तुलना में बहुत अधिक अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानें भरती है। उन्होंने कहा, 'इसलिए, हम अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानों के लिए अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुद्रा में शुल्क ले सकते हैं और हम अपने ग्राहकों पर इसका कुछ प्रभाव डाल सकते हैं क्योंकि हम डालर या जो भी मुद्रा उपलब्ध है, उसमें मूल्य निर्धारण करते हैं।'



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

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Cabin retrofit: Air India bets on premium seats

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New Delhi: Air India will nearly double the premium cabins on its legacy wide body aircraft that are being sent for retrofitting, starting this year, and is also developing an all-new first class for the Maharaja's flagship Airbus A350 that will be rolled out in the next 2-3 years. Given the post Covid trend of premiumisation, the airline has seen its front-end revenue grow by 2.3 times after being taken over by the Tatas in Jan 2022 — compared to 1.6 times in economy, according to AI chief commercial officer (CCO) Nipun Aggarwal.

Instrumental in AI's record firm order for 570 aircraft placed since Feb 2023, Aggarwal said: "Pre-AI take-

“ That (falling rupee) puts pressure on our profitability and cost structure with most expenses being incurred in dollar. Air India has some hedge as we fly international more than others

“ A huge traffic overflies India between the west and the east & Australia via the hubs near us. Through connecting flight timings, we will increase our share in all these areas including international-to-international transfers which will be doubled in three years

— NIPUN AGGARWAL | CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, AI



over, Tata Group's presence in aviation was sub-optimal. The market share of our JVs, erstwhile Vistara and AirAsia India, was in low single digits with a combined fleet of 70 aircraft. AI was once in a lifetime opportunity for us to scale up the business and become viable.”

“We have added 92 aircraft since the takeover and many grounded (planes of AI) are flying again. Vistara reached

a fleet of 70 aircraft in under a decade. The combined fleet of full service AI (Vistara merged into it) and budget AI Express (AirAsia India merged into it) is now at 300. Revenue has grown over 10 times from \$1 million in FY20; routes and flights have already more than doubled. There is a meaningful and material aircraft order for the group now,” he added.

With India being the fastest growing aviation market glo-

bally and foreign airlines accounting for almost 80% of the long-haul traffic via their hubs abroad, AI is working to strengthen its hubs in Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru with AI Express working in tandem to provide the feed for wide bodies going to distant corners of the globe. By the end of next calendar year, AI and AI Express will have about 120 narrow-body planes each and the three hubs acting as the hub-and-spokes for transfer traffic.

“A huge traffic overflies India between the west and the east & Australia via the hubs near us. Through connecting flight timings, we will increase our share in all these areas including international-to-international transfers which will be doubled in three years,” Aggarwal said.

While the entire narrow

body fleet will be retrofitted this calendar year, the wide body programme will begin this year with the legacy Boeing 787s and in 2026 the B777s will see their much-awaited cabin upgrade.

On the falling rupee, Aggarwal said: “That puts pressure on our profitability and cost structure with most expenses being incurred in dollar. AI has some hedge as we fly international more than others. We charge in forex and are able to pass on the impact for about half the ticket sales that happens abroad.”

Will the falling rupee mean higher fares? “Demand is price sensitive. Raising fares impacts traffic and so we have to strike a balance. If airlines had that kind of pricing power, the industry profitability would not be like it is.”