



# Corporate Communications Directorate

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AMAR UJALA

DELHI

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## ड्रोन उड़ाने की घटना के बाद नोएडा एयरपोर्ट के आसपास निगरानी बढ़ाई

यमुना सिटी। सीएम योगी इसी सप्ताह यमुना सिटी आएंगे और रबूपुरा में जनसभा करेंगे। सीएम के आने से पहले पुलिस पूरी तरह से अलर्ट हो गई है और चप्पे-चप्पे पर नजर रखी जा रही है। जेवर एयरपोर्ट और इसके आसपास के इलाकों में निगरानी बढ़ा दी गई है। संदिग्ध लोगों पर भी पुलिस नजर रखे हुए है। जेवर इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट केंद्र सरकार और राज्य सरकार की महत्वकांक्षी योजनाओं में शामिल है। जल्दी ही इसकी शुरुआत होनी है, जिसके लिए तेजी से एयरपोर्ट के काम को पूरा किया जा रहा है। बीते दिनों एयरपोर्ट और इसके आसपास के क्षेत्र में संदिग्ध ड्रोन उड़ने का मामला सामने आया था।

## Bengaluru airport to restore bus bays at Terminal 1

**BMTC will get back all 14 bus bays in 15-20 days, says transport minister**



**ASRA MAVAD**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

**T**he Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) will restore dedicated BMTC bus bays at Terminal 1 (T1) in the next 15 to 20 days, Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy has confirmed.

In January, Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) faced criticism after bus bays at T1 were reduced from 14 to six, with one lane reassigned to a private taxi operator.

This reduction squeezed operations for the BMTC's Vayu Vajra fleet, forcing them to depart quickly to avoid congestion, leaving many passengers stranded or waiting longer for the next service.

"We are getting back the number of bus bays we had before. The civil work is currently underway, and in another 15 to 20 days, the bays are likely to be back," said the minister, who had sharply criticised BIAL for the reduction in bus bays.

The state government holds a 13% stake in the airport.

The reduction in bus bays also impacted the daily ridership of the Vayu Vajra service. The daily ridership, which fell by over 1,000 people, is

expected to be restored once the bays are rebuilt, a senior BMTC official said.

"At the airport, unless passengers see the bus, they are not going to approach the service," the official said. "If you tell them they have to wait 20 minutes for the next bus, they will not want to take the bus. If we have more bays, our wait time per bus increases, and as a result, we will be able to bring in more passengers and operate at full capacity. Right now, not all of our buses are operating at full capacity."

Before the bus bays were reduced, the daily Vayu Vajra ridership averaged 12,000 and peaked at 14,000.

While a larger bus terminal exists at T2, about 80 per cent of Vayu Vajra's traffic comes from domestic passengers at T1. All domestic flights by IndiGo, the largest airline, are operated through T1.

The limited bus bay capacity also forced the BMTC to reconsider plans to expand the popular Vayu Vajra service. "Once the operations stabilise, we will study the demand and look into the expansion," he added.

At present, the fleet of buses remains one of the most affordable forms of public transport to and from the airport.

BIAL did not comment on the matter.

# Quitol set to fly; aero sports, aviation hub gets approval

## IPB GRANTS IN-PRINCIPLE NOD TO SKYDIVING ADVENTURES

THE GOAN NETWORK

### MARGAO

In a significant development that may raise many an eyebrow amongst the local populace inhabiting the Quitol-Betul plateau in South Goa, the Goa Investment Promotion and Facilitation Board has granted in-principle approval for mega aero sports & aviation hub at Quitol Industrial Estate.

The Goa-IPB has granted in-principle approval to M/s Skydiving Adventures Pvt Ltd for a largescale integrated aero sports and aviation project. The proposal involves the allotment of a sprawling 2,45,459 square metres plot at the Quitol Industrial Estate under the Goa Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC).

The Issociam-Bogmalo-based company plans to establish an integrated aero sports and aviation ecosystem encompassing adventure tourism, aviation training, drone manufacturing, and hospitality facilities.

A letter addressed by the Chief Executive Officer Goa



Land acquired by Goa Industrial Development Corporation. (File photo)

Investment Promotion & Facilitation Board, Asvin Chandru dated January 9, 2026 to Ms Skydiving Adventures Pvt Ltd shows that the Board will recommend to the GIDC for allotment of suitable plot admeasuring 2,45,459 square meters in Quitol Industrial estate, South Goa.

The Board has further decided to recommend to the Electricity Department to release power requirement of 3000 KVA to the proposed unit in the plot as per the relevant Act/ Rules in force.

The Board further recommended to GIDC to release water requirements of 3,5 KLD to the proposed unit in the plot as per the relevant Act/ Rules

in force. If supply is not possible, investor is to proceed by making their own arrangement, the letter stated.

"The proposal has been duly examined by Goa-IPB in its 40th Board meeting held on 23/12/2025 and after due deliberation and discussion, has decided to grant in-principle approval to M/s Skydiving Adventures Pvt Ltd to establish an integrated aero sports and aviation ecosystem that features adventure tourism, aviation training, drone manufacturing and hospitality at Quitol Industrial Estate, South Goa", the Board stated.

The Board shall recommend to the concerned authorities/ departments of the

■ **Product type:** Integrated aero sports and aviation ecosystem that features adventure tourism, aviation training, drone manufacturing and hospitality.

■ **Details of land:** Plot admeasuring 2,45,459 sq mts in Quitol Industrial Estate, South Goa.

■ **Power:** To recommend to Electricity Dept to release of 3000 KVA to the pro-

posed unit as per relevant Act/ Rules in force.

■ **Water:** To recommend to release water requirements of 3,5 KLD to the proposed unit. If supply is not possible, investor is to proceed by making own arrangement.

■ **Validity:** In-principle approval to be valid for 2 years from date of plot allotment.

**SCOPE OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

State Government and Central Government to grant necessary permissions/clearances for the project proposal as per the relevant Act/ Rules in force and Goa-IPB shall facilitate the project proponent to obtain all such requisite permissions.

The in-principle approval is only valid for the above activity as described in the Application. No other commercial activity or development can be

undertaken on the said land under any circumstances by firm and their legal successors, heirs or assigns.

No other use can be permitted by GIDC and Goa State Pollution Control Board while providing building plan approval and consent to establish / consent to operate respectively. Any change or addition in utilization of the said land shall require fresh approval from Goa-IPB.



## Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TRIBUNE

DELHI

18 FEBRUARY 2026

# SIT to probe all shady land deals near airport zones: Sukhu

Govt vows zero tolerance on benami transactions as Assembly flags relief, disability backlog and public asset mismanagement

**PRATIBHA CHAUHAN**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

**SHIMLA, FEBRUARY 17**

The Himachal Pradesh Government has announced the formation of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to examine suspected benami land transactions involving non-residents, particularly in Una's Gagret area and Kangra's Gaggal region, where land is being acquired for airport expansion. Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu made the announcement during Question Hour in the Vidhan Sabha, responding to

concerns raised by legislators.

The issue came to the fore after Gagret MLA Rakesh Kalia questioned the compensation disbursed for land acquisition linked to the expansion of Gaggal airport. Sukhu reiterated that under Section 118 of the Himachal Pradesh Land Reform and Tenancy Act, outsiders cannot purchase land in the state without prior government approval. He urged legislators to furnish documentary proof of illegal transactions, assuring that the Director General of

Police would register FIRs and initiate criminal investigations wherever violations are established.

The Chief Minister further said any land found to be part of benami deals would not be acquired by the government, not only for airport expansion but for any other public project. He promised stringent action against those found guilty of illegal purchases or corruption, underlining the government's intent to protect state land laws from misuse.

The government has already disbursed Rs

1,460.09 crore as compensation to 4,649 beneficiaries under the Himachal Pradesh Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, for the Gaggal airport expansion project. However, allegations persist that certain individuals from Uttarakhand acquired land in violation of norms in Gagret. Kalia claimed that despite court cases and formal complaints, enforcement agencies had failed to act. He also alleged that

some of these individuals played a role in attempts to destabilise the Congress government in the state.

The Assembly also witnessed a debate on the backlog of reserved government posts for persons with disabilities. Health Minister Dhani Ram Shandil informed the House that recruitment drives are conducted twice annually, with specific categories earmarked for visually impaired, hearing impaired, persons with low vision, locomotive disabilities and

multiple disabilities. He acknowledged that a shortage of eligible candidates has hampered the filling of vacancies and cautioned that relaxation of norms often leads to litigation.

So far, 101 posts have been filled, while efforts continue to address the remaining vacancies. Legislators, including Una MLA Satpal Singh Satti and Nachan MLA Vinod Kumar, pressed for a more compassionate approach, arguing that 1,459 posts remain vacant and must be filled within a fixed

timeline. They criticised the government for failing to adequately address concerns of disabled protesters who have been demonstrating even during harsh winter conditions.

In another matter, the Chief Minister disclosed that nearly 600 government buildings are currently lying vacant. The government plans to relocate 30 boards and corporations functioning from rented premises into these unused structures to reduce expenditure and improve administrative efficiency.



# Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

18 FEBRUARY 2026

## Air India, Lufthansa group plan joint biz agreement to deepen collaboration

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
New Delhi, 17 February

Air India and the Lufthansa group plan to enter into a joint business agreement wherein the two sides will collaborate on multiple strategic areas, including coordinated route planning and flight schedules in specific markets.

On Tuesday, both sides entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for a joint business agreement, which will cover Air India, Air India Express, as well as Lufthansa Group carriers and subsidiaries. Those include Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, ITA Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) and other affiliated airlines.

The proposed deeper collaboration with Germany's Lufthansa Group is also aimed at tapping opportunities from the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement that was finalised in January.

"Subject to requisite regulatory and anti-trust approvals, the carriers intend to collaborate across multiple strategic areas, including coordinated route planning and flight schedules in specific markets for greater customer convenience and enhanced connectivity, as well as joint sales, marketing and distribution initiatives."

"Further cooperation would encompass the joint development and coordination for improved customer experiences in areas

such as frequent flyer programmes, IT infrastructure—customer journey, quality assurance, and other mutually beneficial initiatives—to enhance the ease of travel for our customers," Air India said in a release on Tuesday.

The MoU would initially focus on increasing passenger traffic flows between India and Lufthansa Group's core home market region, encompassing Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, and Switzerland. They would also look to include the rest of Europe and the Indian subcontinent.

Air India said the precise scope, including specific routes and markets, would be finalised upon the formation of a comprehensive joint business agreement, subject to regulatory approvals.

Currently, Air India and Lufthansa Group carriers have codeshare pacts for 145 routes across 15 Indian, 29 European cities and 20 countries. In February 2025, the two sides also announced the expansion of the codeshare agreements between Air India, Lufthansa, SWISS and Austrian Airlines.

Tata Group-owned Air India has 24 codeshare partnerships and nearly 100 interline agreements with various carriers.

A codeshare partnership allows passengers to travel on a single ticket on different flights.

Lufthansa Group is the fourth-largest airline group in the world in terms of revenue and fleet size.

## Baramati plane crash: AAIB seeks NTSB's assistance to retrieve data

**DEEPAK PATEL**  
New Delhi, 17 February

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) on Tuesday said it has sought assistance from the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) to retrieve data from the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) of the Learjet 45 aircraft that crashed in Baramati on January 28.

The plane crash had killed all five people on board, including Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar.

According to the AAIB, the aircraft was equipped with two independent flight recorders, both of which were exposed to intense heat for a prolonged period during the accident and sustained fire damage.

The Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR), manufactured by L3Harris Technologies (formerly L3-Communications), has been successfully downloaded at the AAIB Flight Recorder Laboratory in India, the Bureau said in a statement.

However, the CVR—manufactured by Honeywell—is undergoing detailed technical examination. The AAIB said it has sought assistance from the "Accredited Representative of the State of Manufacture" for specialised support in data retrieval from the CVR.

In seeking assistance from the Accredited Representative of the State of Manufacture, the AAIB is effectively referring to the US's NTSB, since the Learjet 45 was manufactured in the United States.

Under ICAO Annex 13 provisions, the US is entitled to nominate an accredited representative to support the probe. In this case, the NTSB would provide technical expertise, particularly in retrieving and interpreting data from the US-manufactured CVR while the investigation



FILE: PTI

### The case file

- Five people were killed in Baramati crash, including Maharashtra Deputy CM Ajit Pawar
- DFDR data downloaded in India, but fire-damaged CVR needs specialised support
- Probe led by AAIB under ICAO norms; stakeholders urged to avoid speculation

itself continues to be led by India's AAIB.

The AAIB said it is diligently following all prescribed technical and procedural protocols to ensure a "comprehensive, objective and evidence-based" investigation. It added that it remains fully committed to transparency and will share further information at an appropriate stage of the investigation.

The AAIB also requested all stakeholders to avoid speculation and allow the investigation process to proceed in accordance with established procedures.

## अजीत पवार के दुर्घटनाग्रस्त विमान के दोनों रिकार्डर हुए क्षतिग्रस्त

**जागरण न्यूज नेटवर्क, नई दिल्ली**

विमान दुर्घटनाओं की जांच करने वाली एर्जेसी एएआइबी ने मंगलवार को कहा कि ब्रारमती में गत माह दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हुए 'लीयरजेट 45' विमान में दो फ्लाइट रिकार्डर लगे थे। दोनों दुर्घटना के बाद आग से क्षतिग्रस्त हो गए। प्रेट्र के अनुसार दुर्घटना जांच ब्यूरो (एएआइबी) ने काकपिट वायस रिकार्डर (सीबीआर) से डाटा प्राप्त करने के लिए विशेष सहायता मांगी है। 28 जनवरी को हुई विमान दुर्घटना में महाराष्ट्र के उपमुख्यमंत्री अजित पवार व चार अन्य लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। यह विमान वोएसआर वेंचर्स का था।

एएआइबी के अनुसार, एल3-कम्युनिकेशंस द्वारा निर्मित डिजिटल फ्लाइट डाटा रिकार्डर (डीएफडीआर) को फ्लाइट रिकार्डर प्रयोगशाला में सफलतापूर्वक डाउनलोड किया गया है। कहा, हनीवेल द्वारा निर्मित सीबीआर की तकनीकी जांच की जा रही है। डाटा पुनः प्राप्त करने में विशेष सहायता के लिए निर्माता देश के मान्यता प्राप्त प्रतिनिधि से मदद मांगी गई है। इस मामले में सीबीआर अमेरिका में बना है।

सभी हितधारकों से अटकलों से बचने का अनुरोध करते हुए एएआइबी ने कहा कि वह व्यापक, साक्ष्य-आधारित

- ▶ एएआइबी ने काकपिट वायस रिकार्डर से डाटा के लिए मांगी मदद
- ▶ फिठले महीने विमान दुर्घटना में अजीत पवार की हो गई थी मौत



दुर्घटनाग्रस्त विमान। फाइल

जांच सुनिश्चित करने के लिए सभी निर्धारित तकनीकी और प्रक्रियात्मक प्रोटोकाल का पालन कर रहा है।

**रोहित पवार ने जांच में 20 दिन की देरी पर उठाए सवाल :** एएआइबी के अनुसार राकांपा (शरद पवार) के विधायक रोहित पवार ने विमान दुर्घटना की जांच की धीमी गति पर सवाल उठाया है। रोहित ने एक्स पर पोस्ट किया, दुर्भाग्यपूर्ण दुर्घटना के 20 दिन बीत चुके हैं, फिर भी जांच में कोई गति नहीं आई है। क्या यह देरी सिर्फ वोएसआर कंपनी को साक्ष्य नष्ट करने की अनुमति देने के लिए है? यह सवाल आम नागरिकों के मन में उठ रहा है। जानकारी सामने आई है कि ब्लैक

### सुनेत्रा को चुना गया राकांपा का राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष

राकांपा की बैठक में सुनेत्रा पवार को पार्टी का राष्ट्रीय अध्यक्ष चुन लिया गया। उनके नाम का प्रस्ताव कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष प्रफुल पटेल ने रखा, जिसका सभी विधायकों एवं संगठन के पदाधिकारियों ने समर्थन किया। कुछ विधायकों ने राकांपा के दोनों घटकों के विलय का मुद्दा भी उठाया पर वरिष्ठ नेताओं इस मुद्दे को यह कहकर टाल दिया कि यह पवार परिवार का आंतरिक मसला है। इस बैठक में इस मुद्दे पर चर्चा नहीं हो सकती।

बाक्स क्षतिग्रस्त है, यह दर्शाता है कि जो संभावना मैंने पांच दिन पहले जताई थी, वह सच होती दिख रही है। फिर भी, हम तब तक नहीं रुकेंगे जब तक हमें यह जवाब नहीं मिल जाता कि यह एक दुर्घटना थी या हत्या। उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि वह अगले दो दिनों में प्रेस कान्फ्रेंस करेंगे।

**फडणवीस से मिली सुनेत्रा पवार, सीबीआइ जांच की मांग :** मुंबई राज्य ब्यूरो के अनुसार, महाराष्ट्र की उपमुख्यमंत्री एवं राकांपा नेता सुनेत्रा पवार ने राज्य के पूर्व उपमुख्यमंत्री एवं अपने पति अजीत पवार के विमान के दुर्घटनाग्रस्त होने के कारणों की

सीबीआइ जांच की मांग की है। मंगलवार को हुई राकांपा की एक बैठक के बाद सुनेत्रा ने मुख्यमंत्री देवेंद्र फडणवीस से मिलकर अजीत पवार की विमान दुर्घटना में मौत मामले की सीबीआइ जांच की मांग की।

सुनेत्रा पवार ने कहा कि यह पहली बार नहीं है जब राज्य के किसी बड़े नेता के विमान के साथ इस तरह की समस्या आई है। उन्होंने इंटरनेट मीडिया और प्रेस के माध्यम से अपनी बात रखते हुए कहा अजीत राज्य में महत्वपूर्ण पदों पर रहे और उनके खिलाफ कई राजनीतिक विरोधी सक्रिय हैं। विमान के रखरखाव में इतनी बड़ी चूक कैसे हो सकती है? हमें राज्य की जांच एजेंसियों पर भरोसा है, लेकिन मामले की गंभीरता और सुरक्षा के प्रोटोकाल को देखते हुए निष्पक्ष 'सीबीआइ जांच' अनिवार्य है। इस अवसर पर उनके साथ राकांपा के प्रदेश अध्यक्ष सुनील तटकरे भी उपस्थित थे। उन्होंने कहा कि इस घटना के पीछे के असली कारणों और किसी भी संभावित मानवीय हस्तक्षेप की जांच केंद्रीय स्तर पर होनी चाहिए ताकि दूध का दूध और पानी का पानी हो सके। प्रेट्र के अनुसार सुनील तटकरे ने कहा, मुख्यमंत्री ने हमें आश्वासन दिया है कि राज्य सरकार इस संबंध में केंद्रीय गृह मंत्रालय से संपर्क करेगी।



# Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

DELHI

18 FEBRUARY 2026

## Pawar Death: AAIB Seeks Co's Help to Retrieve Data from Voice Recorder

**New Delhi:** India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) on Tuesday said it has sought special assistance for retrieving data from the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) of the Learjet 45 business aircraft that crashed last month, killing Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar and four others.

Both recorders were exposed to intense heat for a pro-

longed period besides sustaining damage from fire, the probe agency said.

"The CVR, manufactured by Honeywell, is undergoing detailed technical examination," said AAIB. "Assistance has been sought from the Accredited Representative of the State of Manufacture for specialised support in data retrieval." —Our Bureau



## Air India and Lufthansa Sign MoU to Expand India-Europe Connectivity

**Mumbai:** Air India and Lufthansa have signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a framework for a joint business agreement covering their passenger airlines.

The agreement provides for coordination on route planning and flight schedules in specific markets, along with joint sales, marketing and distribution initiatives. The airlines will also explore coope-

ration on frequent-flyer programmes, IT systems, customer journey processes and quality standards.

The initial focus will be on traffic flows between India and Lufthansa's core European markets of Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland, with scope to expand to rest of Europe and Indian subcontinent. —Our Bureau





# Corporate Communications Directorate

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THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

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## AI, LUFTHANSA PLAN JOINT BIZ AGREEMENT



AIR INDIA  
AND the  
Lufthansa  
Group plan  
to enter into  
a joint

business pact wherein the  
two sides will collaborate  
on multiple areas, includ-  
ing coordinated route  
planning and flight sched-  
ules in specific marke-  
ts. The tie up is aimed at  
tapping opportunities  
from the India-EU FTA.



# Corporate Communications Directorate

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THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

18 FEBRUARY 2026

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## Scot boosts India capacity by 5% with larger aircraft

AKBAR MERCHANT  
Mumbai, February 17

**INDIA ACCOUNTED FOR** a year-on-year capacity increase of about 5% for Scoot, as the Singapore Airlines Group's low-cost carrier added seats on existing routes rather than launching new destinations.

Scot currently operates to six Indian cities—Amritsar, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Coimbatore, Tiruchirappalli and Visakhapatnam—and said demand from non-metro markets continues to support growth.

"India continues to be a very important market for us, and we are seeing strong demand not just from metros but increasingly from secondary cities," Brian Torrey, general manager for India and West Asia, told FE.

The airline has focused on adding capacity by deploying larger aircraft on existing services. Older Airbus A320s are being replaced with A321neo jets, adding 56 seats per flight and improving unit economics. "The strategy has been to invest in newer, larger aircraft where demand visibility is strong, rather than chase aggressive route expansion," Torrey said.

By capacity, Amritsar is Scot's largest Indian station, supported by long-haul connectivity to Australia. Scot operates Boeing 787 Dreamliners on Amritsar and Chennai in high-density, single-class configurations.

# Air India, IndiGo increase flights to Asian countries

● Tourist demand shifts away from Western countries due to falling rupee

YARUQHULLAH KHAN  
New Delhi, February 17

**AIR INDIA AND** IndiGo are re-deploying aircraft from some long-haul routes to Europe and North America towards Asian destinations, as a weakening rupee nudges Indian travellers towards shorter, more affordable holidays closer to home.

“A falling rupee, coupled with longer flight durations, has dampened sentiment among Indians planning travel to the US and Europe ahead of the summer season. Airlines are realigning schedules to cater to growing demand for Asian countries,” a senior Air India executive said.

He added that demand for Europe and the US is expected to spike later in the summer, particularly with the FIFA World Cup 2026 approaching, but in the near term the focus has shifted eastward.

IndiGo echoed that view. “The falling rupee is pushing Indian tourists towards budget-friendly destinations such as Vietnam and Sri Lanka instead of Europe. Thailand, Indonesia and other nearby markets are seeing increased traffic because they offer better value in the current exchange-rate environment,” a senior IndiGo executive said.

The schedule data for April 2026 reflects that recalibration. Air India plans to trim weekly frequencies on selected secondary European routes compared with April 2025.

These include reductions on Amritsar–Birmingham and Amritsar–London Gatwick, a scaled-back Ahmedabad–London Gatwick service, and the withdrawal of Goa–London Gatwick. Core trunk routes such

## EXPLORING ALTERNATIVES



	Air India express asean	IndiGo asean	Air India asean	Air India Europe	IndiGo Europe
Total Weekly Frequencies	37	277	145	116	11
New Routes	2	6	2	1	0
Discontinued Routes	3	5	2	1	2
Net Change	-8	38	15	-5	-5

■ Air India operated 72 weekly non-stop flights between India and North America in May '25

■ The airline's frequency of flights to the US has fallen to around 54 flights ahead of March '26

■ IndiGo is linking tier-II cities like Vijayawada and Trichy to Singapore

■ Indian visitors to Thailand rose 8.6% to 2 mn in '24 while Malaysia saw a jump of 54% to 1.1 mn

as Delhi–London, Delhi–Paris and Delhi–Frankfurt will retain high frequencies.

At the same time, the airline is strengthening its Asian network. From April 2026, Air India will add six weekly flights on the Delhi–Singapore route, taking the total to 27. Chennai–Singapore will double to 14 weekly services. The carrier is also expanding or introducing flights from Delhi to Denpasar, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Ho Chi Minh City and Yangon, operating between seven and ten weekly services on several of these routes — significantly higher than a year ago.

Air India Express, the group's low-cost arm, is reinforcing the pivot, particularly from non-metro India. Its April 2026 Asean schedule shows new or expanded routes such as Bengaluru–Bangkok and Pune–Bangkok, along with higher frequencies on Hyderabad–Phuket. At the same time, earlier links such as Amritsar–Bangkok and Lucknow–Bangkok have been dropped compared with April 2025, effectively shifting capacity from northern gate-

ways to southern and western leisure markets.

IndiGo's schedules point in a similar direction. While the airline continues to build a long-haul footprint with planned services to Manchester, Copenhagen and London Gatwick, much of its incremental capacity is being deployed into regional holiday markets including Bangkok, Phuket, Krabi, Singapore, Denpasar, Jakarta and Vietnam.

The carrier is also linking secondary cities such as Tiruchirappalli and Vijayawada to Singapore and adding connections to destinations such as Siem Reap (Cambodia) and secondary Malaysian islands, deepening its presence in short- and medium-haul Asian tourism flows.

Aviation analysts say airlines are navigating a delicate balance: robust demand for short breaks, constrained availability of wide-body aircraft, and the need to preserve yields on long-haul routes. The result is measured growth to Europe and North America, alongside an aggressive build-out in fast-growing Asian markets.

Data from aviation analyt-

ics firm Official Aviation Guide (OAG) underscores the trend. Scheduled seats from India to Southeast Asia in 2025 are projected to be 29% above 2019 levels.

Thailand received around 2 million Indian visitors in 2024 — 8.6% higher than 2019 — while Malaysia saw Indian arrivals jump 54% to more than 1.1 million. Vietnam has nearly tripled Indian arrivals compared with 2019 levels, OAG said.

“Southeast Asian countries are actively targeting the Indian market to diversify their tourism base beyond traditional source markets,” OAG noted in its report.

The firm also observed that IndiGo is increasingly connecting secondary Indian cities to secondary Southeast Asian destinations — a pattern that mirrors both the rise of India's middle class and the relative economics of short- and medium-haul flying.

For now, as currency pressures weigh on long-haul travel budgets, airlines appear to be betting that Asia — closer, cheaper and quicker — offers the stronger near-term yield.



# India's aviation is in need of data-driven oversight

IndiGo, India's largest airline, faced an operational crisis in December 2025, leading to a surge in fares across the country. This episode underscored a broader issue: India is becoming the world's third-largest aviation market without building the data systems required to oversee it.

In this case, regulators quickly stepped in to protect consumer interests. The Ministry of Civil Aviation imposed temporary price caps on domestic flights and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), prompted by the Competition Commission of India, requested average fare data from IndiGo, Air India, SpiceJet and Akasa between December 1-15, 2025, to investigate potential abuse of market dominance.

While this reactive approach protects air passengers in the short term, it highlights a larger regulatory gap. Even with the requested data, regulators may still lack the visibility needed to act effectively. Without a consistent, analytical framework to study fares over time, it becomes difficult to distinguish between a legitimate, demand-driven spike and a surge that crosses into an abuse of market power.

## Airline data in the U.S. creates a digital trail

These events are an opportunity to shift the DGCA's role from crisis response to steady oversight by learning from examples of the more mature airline market in the United States. Specifically, the way the U.S. Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) collects and publishes airline data.

The BTS maintains the Airline Origin and Destination survey, more commonly known as the DBIB database. Unlike the DGCA, which primarily tracks passenger volumes and freight traffic, the DBIB database publishes ticket-level data, including fares, for a 10% random sample of all domestic tickets sold each quarter since 1995.

This is not a mere academic exercise. By



**Prerna Rakheja**

is an Antitrust and Competition Economist at Bates White, Washington DC

The December 2025 IndiGo crisis highlights India's lack of a data-driven aviation framework and a regulatory gap

collecting data on actual prices paid, itinerary details such as route flown, and carrier information, the BTS creates a usable digital trail. For India, adopting a similar 10% sampling framework would signal a new era of transparency, expanding the DGCA's role from tracking volumes to monitoring market behaviour. Much like a speed camera on a highway, the objective is not necessarily to issue penalties, but to encourage long-term compliance and maintain market hygiene.

## The effect of transparency on pricing

Greater transparency also pushes airlines to self-regulate their pricing algorithms. When fare data are open to the public or regulatory scrutiny, carriers are more likely to build ethical guardrails into their revenue management systems, preventing both opportunistic and algorithm-driven price spikes that can trigger public backlash and legal challenges, such as the ongoing Public Interest Litigation before the Supreme Court of India.

The availability of historical pricing data can also strengthen research and policy. For example, over 30 years of US airline data is publicly available through the DBIB database. Academic researchers have used these data to identify the "Southwest Effect" – a phenomenon in the U.S. where the entry of Southwest Airlines, a low-cost U.S. carrier, into a new route leads to a drop in average fares and a corresponding spike in average passenger traffic.

A similar dataset in India can allow regulators to observe competitive behaviour, or the lack of it, across routes, time periods and market structures.

First, comparing fares on different routes. If routes dominated by a single airline consistently show higher fares than those with multiple players, it may indicate market power.

Second, tracking fare changes when

competitors enter or exit a route. A sharp rise in fares after a competitor exits, or a drop when one enters, signals that the remaining carriers can exercise market power.

Third, assessing fare behaviour during demand spikes. If an airline raises prices more aggressively on routes where it has a larger market share during holidays or peak periods, it may be leveraging its dominance.

The usual resistance to data transparency stems from concerns over proprietary information, claims that data sharing creates a technical load, and fear of implicit coordination among competitors.

## A 10% random sample is reasonable

Airlines might argue that their revenue management algorithms are their "secret sauce" and should be protected. A 10% random sample is a practical middle ground. By design, this framework collects a fraction of the data. This helps to protect the "how", i.e., the proprietary logic and code behind the algorithms while monitoring the "what", i.e., the price at which tickets were sold in the marketplace. And given the limited size of the sample, supplying this data should not pose a significant technical burden.

Critics may also fear that transparency allows airlines to track each other's prices. In the age of real-time data scraping, this is simply the status quo, as airlines already have a good sense of what their competitors are charging. By releasing the 10% sample on a quarterly delay, regulators can reduce the chance of immediate fare alignment while preserving the dataset's usefulness for long-term policy planning.

Thus, the DGCA must pivot from ad hoc fare caps and investigations to a data-first framework. It is time to let the algorithms compete but also let the regulator and the public keep score.



## Corporate Communications Directorate

THE INDIAN EXPRESS

DELHI

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### • AVIATION

# Despite damage, black boxes hold key to Pawar air crash probe

**Anagha Jayakumar**  
*New Delhi, February 17*

WEEKS AFTER the Learjet 45 aircraft carrying Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar and four others crashed on January 28, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) said Tuesday that both flight recorders or “black boxes” had sustained fire damage. While data was successfully retrieved from one recorder, the agency has sought foreign technical assistance for the rest.

“Both recorders were exposed to intense heat for a prolonged period during the accident and sustained fire damage. The Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR), manufactured by L3-Communications, has been successfully downloaded at the AAIB Flight Recorder Laboratory. The Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR), manufactured by Honeywell, is undergoing detailed technical examination. Assistance has

been sought from the Accredited Representative of the State of Manufacture for specialised support in data retrieval,” the AAIB said.

Initial information from the crash site indicated that low visibility conditions in the area might have played a role in the accident. The data from the recorders, along with the wreckage, are expected to help reconstruct the events leading up to the crash, whose cause remains unknown.

#### What are black boxes?

The black box, or aircraft flight recorder, has been around in some form since the 1930s, when French engineer François Hussenot originated a data recorder equipped with sensors that would optically project around 10 parameters onto a photographic film. The film ran continuously in a box constructed to prevent any light from entering it, lending it the name “black box”. The name has endured ever since,

#### The two recorders

- Aircraft today typically have two black boxes: the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and the Flight Data Recorder (FDR).
- The CVR records radio transmissions and other sounds in the cockpit, including flight crew noises and engine noises.
- The FDR records technical details such as altitude, air-speed, vertical acceleration, etc.

even though the external metal casing has always been orange, to help its speedy identification and retrieval.

The invention of the box, however, is credited to Australian jet fuel expert David Ronald de Mey Warren, who was reportedly inspired by a miniature recorder he had seen at a trade fair. In 1956, he created a prototype he called the ARL Flight Memory Unit, which could store up to four hours of voice and flight instrument data.

#### How do black boxes help understand plane crashes?

Most aircraft today are mandatorily equipped with two black boxes, the cockpit voice recorder (CVR) and the flight data recorder (FDR). The CVR records radio transmissions and other sounds in the cockpit. The FDR, on the other hand, records more than 80 different types of technical details pertaining to the flight itself.

The FDR data helps investigators to re-

construct the flight by generating a video simulation. This helps them visualise the aircraft’s altitude, power settings, instrument readings and other flight characteristics. It typically takes 10-15 days to analyse the data recovered from the black boxes after a crash.

#### How do black boxes withstand crashes?

The recorders are stored inside a unit made of a strong material such as steel or titanium, and are insulated from extreme heat, cold, and wetness. These boxes are equipped towards the tail end of the aircraft, which usually sustains the least impact from a crash.

These recorders are equipped with a beacon that can send out ultrasound signals for 30 days, which becomes handy when planes crash into water bodies. However, in some cases, like the Malaysian Airlines MH370 flight, the recorders weren’t found.

## IndiGo cuts summer flight goal amid crew constraints

Airline seeks nod for 8% more daily flights; revised number 15% lower than original target

Abhishek Law  
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 NEW DELHI

India's largest airline, IndiGo, has sought approval to operate at least 275 additional daily flights, about a 15% increase over its current 1,900-odd departures, during the summer schedule from April to October, according to a presentation made to the Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

If approved, the airline would operate around 2,175 daily flights—about 8% higher than the 2,022 last summer.

The revised target is roughly 15% lower than its earlier ambition of scaling up to 2,550 daily departures, reflecting a more cautious approach amid pilot hiring requirements and stricter flight duty time limitation (FDTL) norms.

In its submission to the DGCA, IndiGo indicated a range of 2,175 to 2,310 daily departures for the summer season. The airline has told the regulator it is "revisiting the schedule" and that "final numbers (are) likely to be closer to the lower end of the range," a senior government official said. Documents reviewed by *Mint* confirm it.

The moderated outlook marks a step back from its earlier projections of 2,370 to 2,550 daily flights, which were based on expected fleet additions and higher aircraft utilization. It also reflects operational constraints, particularly around pilot availability, attrition, and compliance with revised FDTL safety norms.

Due to the slower expansion, IndiGo is expecting a mid-single-digit growth in unit cost (excluding fuel and forex) for FY26. Management expects available seat per kilometre (ASK)—a measure of passenger capacity—to grow 10% in the fourth quarter, driven primarily by international destinations.

However, a low-to-mid-single-digit decline in passenger revenue per available seat kilometre (PRASK) is expected on a high year-ago base owing to Maha Kumbh-related traffic, Motilal Oswal said after IndiGo's Q3 earnings.



It reflects operational constraints, particularly around pilot availability. APR

"Despite near-term challenges in the form of reduced capacity, capped prices,

IndiGo remains India's largest airline with a 59.6% market share. The Tata-backed Air India group—comprising Air India and Air India Express—is the second-largest with nearly 30% share. Akasa Air and SpiceJet trail behind.

tailored IndiGo's domestic departures by 10% after the airline cancelled 4,500 flights in the first week of the month, stranding thousands of passengers.

For the summer season, IndiGo plans to operate about 1,875-1,950 daily flights through its Airbus narrow-body fleet, down from an earlier plan of 2,000-2,175. About 280-330 departures are expected to be operated by its ATR turboprop aircraft as against about 350 planned earlier. Around 20-30 flights will run under wet leases, according to documents reviewed by *Mint*.

As of 31 December 2025, IndiGo's total fleet stood at about 440 aircraft, including Airbus, ATR and wet-leased planes. About 10% remain grounded due to Pratt & Whitney engine issues.

"Around 1,800-1,900 departures through its narrow-body fleet of Airbus looks achievable. And practical too. But the airline will still face capacity constraints as it has to create an adequate crew buffer considering in the revised FDTL norms, account for pilot leaves, vacations and other factors like sick leaves and crew not reporting for duty. The airline needs to have 8 sets of crew per airline (8 pilots and 8 co-pilots) if its aircraft utilization needs to be increased to 15-odd hours," said Mark D Martin, aviation expert and chief executive at Gurugram-based Martin Consulting.

Crew availability remains a key monitorable. IndiGo told the DGCA it had 2,398 captains as of 10 February—57 more than the minimum required under revised FDTL norms. It expects to increase this to 2,409 by end-April, training about 20 captains monthly.

The airline is bracing for 81 attritions over the next six months and 19 retirements in the next 12 months. In January, IndiGo hired 100 trainee first officers to bolster cockpit strength and support expansion, it told the regulator.

For an extended version of this story, go to [livemint.com](https://www.livemint.com).

### SUMMER SURGE

**INDIGO** has sought approval to operate at least 275 additional daily flights this summer

**IF** cleared, the airline would scale up to around 2,175 daily departures, up 8% from last summer

**THE** airline plans around 1,875-1,950 daily flights this summer with its Airbus fleet

**INDIGO** is expecting a mid-single-digit growth in unit cost (excluding fuel and forex) for FY26

rupee depreciation, and rising damp leases, IndiGo remains confident in its growth strategy as India's domestic network remains the backbone, with expanding international connectivity," the brokerage said.

Owned by InterGlobe Aviation,

In a plan shared with the regulator, IndiGo referred to a potential reduction of up to 250 flights per day from April 2026 to ensure full FDTL compliance.

The recalibration follows an operational meltdown in December, when the country's civil aviation regulator cur-



# Corporate Communications Directorate

MINT

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18 FEBRUARY 2026

## Air India, Lufthansa to deepen partnership



The proposal also aims to tap opportunities from the India-EU FTA that was finalized in January.

**A**ir India and the Lufthansa Group plan to enter a joint business agreement, wherein the two sides will collaborate on multiple strategic areas, including coordinated route planning and flight schedules in specific markets.

On Tuesday, both sides entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for a joint business agreement, which will cover Air India, Air India Express, as well as Lufthansa Group carriers and subsidiaries. Those include Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, ITA Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) and other affiliated airlines. The proposed deeper collaboration with Germany's Lufthansa Group is also aimed at tapping opportunities from the India-European Union (EU) free trade agreement (FTA) that was finalized in January.

"Further cooperation would encompass the joint development and coordination for improved customer experiences in areas such as frequent flyer programmes, IT infrastructure—customer journey, quality assurance, and other mutually beneficial initiatives—to enhance the ease of travel for our customers," Air India said in a release on Tuesday.

PTI



# Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

DELHI

18 FEBRUARY 2026

## Air India & Lufthansa plan joint biz pact to deepen collaboration

*Proposed deeper collaboration with Lufthansa Group is also aimed at tapping opportunities from the India-EU FTA*

**NEW DELHI:** Air India and the Lufthansa Group plan to enter into a joint business agreement wherein the two sides will collaborate on multiple strategic areas, including coordinated route planning and flight schedules in specific markets.

On Tuesday, both sides entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to establish a framework for a joint business agreement, which will cover Air India, Air India Express, as well as Lufthansa Group carriers and subsidiaries. Those include Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, ITA Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss Inter-

national Air Lines (SWISS) and other affiliated airlines.

The proposed deeper collaboration with Germany's Lufthansa Group is also aimed at tapping opportunities from the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement that was finalised in January.

"Subject to requisite regulatory and anti-trust approvals, the carriers intend to collaborate across multiple strategic areas, including coordinated route planning and flight schedules in specific markets for greater customer convenience and enhanced connectivity, as well as joint sales, marketing

### CLOSER LOOK

- » On Tuesday, both sides entered into an MoU to establish a framework for a joint business agreement
- » This will cover Air India, Air India Express, as well as Lufthansa Group carriers and subsidiaries
- » Those include Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, ITA Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS) and other affiliated airlines

and distribution initiatives.

"Further cooperation would encompass the joint development and coordination for improved customer experiences in areas such as frequent flyer programmes, IT infra-

structure - customer journey, quality assurance, and other mutually beneficial initiatives - to enhance the ease of travel for our customers," Air India said in a release on Tuesday.

The MoU would initially

focus on increasing passenger traffic flows between India and Lufthansa Group's core home market region, encompassing Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, and Switzerland.

They would also look to include the rest of Europe and the Indian subcontinent.

Air India said the precise scope, including specific routes and markets, would be finalised upon the formation of a comprehensive joint business agreement, subject to regulatory approvals.

Currently, Air India and Lufthansa Group carriers have codeshare pacts for 145 routes

across 15 Indian, 29 European cities and 20 countries. In February 2025, the two sides also announced the expansion of the codeshare agreements between Air India, Lufthansa, SWISS and Austrian Airlines.

Tata Group-owned Air India has 24 codeshare partnerships and nearly 100 interline agreements with various carriers.

A codeshare partnership allows passengers to travel on a single ticket on different flights.

Lufthansa Group is the fourth-largest airline group in the world in terms of revenue and fleet size.



# Corporate Communications Directorate

THE MORNING STANDARD

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18 FEBRUARY 2026



## Lufthansa, Air India to boost India, EU network

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

AIR INDIA and German aviation major Lufthansa Group are collaborating to explore increasing connectivity and travel experiences between India and Europe. The two leading carriers intend to partner across multiple strategic areas, including coordinated route planning and flight schedules in specific markets as well as joint sales, marketing and distribution initiatives.

Further cooperation would encompass the joint development and coordination for improved customer experiences in areas such as frequent flyer programmes, IT infrastructure, customer journey, quality assurance, and other mutually beneficial initiatives.

Air India and Lufthansa Group on Tuesday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), establishing the framework for a joint business agreement between their carriers and subsidiaries, including Air India Express, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines, ITA Airways, Lufthansa, Swiss International Air Lines (SWISS), and other affiliated airlines.

The MoU initially focuses on increasing passenger traffic flows between Air India's home market of India and Lufthansa Group's core home market region, encompassing Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy and Switzerland. It proposes to include the rest of Europe and the Indian subcontinent, creating opportunities for future expansion. The precise scope, including specific routes and markets, will be finalised upon the formation of a comprehensive joint business agreement, subject to regulatory approvals.

Carsten Spohr, chairman of the Executive Board of Deutsche Lufthansa AG and CEO of the Lufthansa Group said the agreement is a strong signal of mutual determination to open a new chapter in aviation between the EU and India following the landmark trade agreement between both economic regions.

### FOCUS AREAS

- 1 MoU initially focuses on increasing passenger traffic between India & EU
- 2 The carriers intend to partner across multiple strategic areas
- 3 Coordination for better customer experiences