



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

18 AUGUST 2026

AAI profit after tax declines 9.8% to ₹6,522 crore in FY26

Rohit Vaid
New Delhi

State-run Airports Authority of India's (AAI) net profit or profit after tax (PAT) declined by 9.8 per cent to ₹6,522.37 crore in FY2025-26 on a year-on-year basis.

The decline comes as AAI's expenses increased during the year, while its revenue remained broadly flat amid lower income from airport leases, even as other revenue streams recorded growth.

Besides, AAI recognised an exceptional item of ₹254.54 crore in FY2025-26 in connection with the alleged embezzlement of funds by an employee in respect of Dehradun and Jaipur airports. Notably, the decline in profitability comes after AAI's PAT had jumped 55.5 per cent to ₹7,233.28 crore in FY2024-25 from ₹4,651.31 crore a year earlier.

REVENUE AND PAT

As per AAI's financial statements reviewed by *business-line*, AAI's total revenue stood at ₹20,526.46 crore in FY2025-26, compared with



₹20,648.25 crore in the previous year. The airport operator's total expenditure, meanwhile, increased 6.34 per cent to ₹11,689.36 crore from ₹10,992.79 crore.

Profit before exceptional and extraordinary items and tax stood at ₹8,837.10 crore in FY2025-26, compared with ₹9,655.46 crore in the previous year.

Revenue from airport lease, including public-private partnership airports, declined to ₹5,824.99 crore during the year from ₹7,376.82 crore in FY2024-25. Other income increased to ₹1,329.47 crore from ₹1,175.71 crore. According to the financial statement, AAI's revenue had declined by ₹121.78 crore, or 0.59 per cent, from the previous year.

However, after excluding

an under-recovery amount of ₹2,231.80 crore from FY2024-25 revenue, the increase in revenue for FY2025-26 works out to ₹2,110.02 crore.

Further, the increase in expenses was led by employee benefits, operating expenses and administrative costs.

In FY26, employee benefits expenses rose to ₹4,873.69 crore from ₹4,767.76 crore, while operating expenses increased to ₹2,666.43 crore from ₹2,395.77 crore. Administrative and other expenses rose. The expense on this account increased to ₹1,126.21 crore from ₹854.60 crore.

AAI declared a dividend of ₹1,956.71 crore to the government, equivalent to 30 per cent of PAT for FY2025-26. Of this, an interim dividend of ₹852.39 crore had already been paid during the year. The airport operator appropriated ₹1,826.26 crore to its airport development reserve, equivalent to 40 per cent of profits after appropriation for dividend, while the balance ₹2,739.40 crore has been transferred to the general reserve.

LGBI Airport strengthens focus on rainwater harvesting

It is the first integrated project of its kind within the Adani Airport Holdings Limited network

STAFF REPORTER

GUWAHATI, Aug 17: The Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International (LGBI) Airport in Guwahati has strengthened its focus on rainwater harvesting and utilisation through an integrated water management approach across the airport ecosystem.

Guwahati receives approximately 1,800-2,200 mm of rainfall annually, making rainwater one of the airport's most valuable natural resource. The airport has already received approximately 1,320 mm of rainfall till August 9, creating a significant opportunity to transform rainwater from a runoff management challenge into a sustainable source of water.

As part of the initiative, LGBI airport has two large rainwater collection tanks with a combined capacity of 1,000 KL. The collected rainwater is treated through the airport's water treatment plant and subsequently utilised for various operational requirements, including drinking water fountains, equipment cleaning and cooling tower make-up water, among other uses.

For potable applications, the treated water undergoes advanced multi-stage treatment and purification processes designed to ensure that it meets the prescribed quality standards for drinking water.

In July 2026 alone, approximately 28% of the total water consumed at the newly-built Terminal 2 was fulfilled through harvested rainwater, demonstrating the

potential of the initiative to reduce dependence on external water sources while optimising the use of available natural resources.

The rainwater harvesting and utilisation initiative at LGBI Airport is the first integrated project of its kind within the Adani Airport Holdings Limited network, positioning LGBI airport as a pioneer in sustainable water stewardship.





Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

18 AUGUST 2026

Bhogapuram international airport launches commercial operations

Our Bureau
Hyderabad

The Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport in Bhogapuram, developed and operated by GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Limited (GVIAL), commenced commercial operations on Monday, marking the start of a new phase of air connectivity for north Andhra Pradesh.

The airport began operations with domestic and international flights connecting Visakhapatnam to destinations across India, West Asia and Southeast Asia.

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu ceremonially handed over boarding passes



CONNECTIVITY BOOST. Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, Civil Aviation Minister, handing over boarding passes to passengers at the Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport on Monday

to passengers on the inaugural IndiGo and Air India Express flights and presented commemorative mementoes. The first flight of the day was IndiGo's 6E 6408 from Hyderabad to Visakhapatnam, followed by 6E 9051 from Visakhapatnam to Hyderabad.

The first international flight by an Indian carrier was IndiGo's 6E 1443 from

Abu Dhabi to Visakhapatnam, followed by 6E 1444 from Visakhapatnam to Abu Dhabi.

FIRST FLIGHT

Scoot's flight TR 784 from Singapore to Visakhapatnam was the first international carrier flight, followed by TR 785 from Visakhapatnam to Singapore. The first arrivals of Air India Express, Air In-

dia, IndiGo, Scoot and India One received a ceremonial water cannon salute. The airport had 52 planned air traffic movements on the first day of operations.

"This achievement reflects years of meticulous planning, engineering excellence, regulatory compliance and operational preparedness by our teams and partners," Kanwarbir Singh Kalra, Chief Executive Officer, GVIAL, said.

Designed with the capacity to handle 6 million passengers annually, the airport has been master planned for phased expansion to handle more than 40 million passengers per annum.

The airport has a 3,800-metre Code 4E runway capable of handling wide-body aircraft.



Corporate Communications Directorate

DESHBANDHU

DELHI

19 AUGUST 2026

जेवर एयरपोर्ट का नाम महर्षि दयानंद सरस्वती रखने की मांग

ग्रेटर नोएडा, 18 अगस्त (देशबन्धु)। आर्य प्रतिनिधि सभा के तत्वावधान में जेवर एयरपोर्ट का नाम महर्षि दयानंद सरस्वती के नाम से रखे जाने को लेकर नोएडा अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डा नामकरण संघर्ष समिति ने बैठक की। जिसमें 22 अगस्त को आर्य समाज ग्रेटर कैलाश फेस-1 नई दिल्ली में आयोजित होने वाले आर्यों के महासम्मेलन की तैयारी को अंतिम रूप दिया गया। बैठक की अध्यक्षता सम्मेलन के संयोजक डॉ. राकेश कुमार आर्य ने की। डॉ. आर्य ने बताया कि इस सम्मेलन की अध्यक्षता राष्ट्र निर्माण पार्टी के संस्थापक अध्यक्ष ठाकुर विक्रम सिंह द्वारा की जाएगी। सम्मेलन में सांवदेशिक आर्य प्रतिनिधि सभा के प्रधान स्वामी आर्यवेश महाराज, अंतरराष्ट्रीय संत और उत्तर प्रदेश विद्या आर्य सभा के प्रधान स्वामी सचिदानंद महाराज, पूर्व केंद्रीय मंत्री डॉ. सतपाल सिंह व महात्मा जितेंद्र भाटिया सहित कई विद्वानों और आर्य नेताओं द्वारा संबोधन दिया जाएगा। डॉ. आर्य ने उपस्थित आर्यजनों को संबोधित करते हुए कहा कि हमारी यह मांग लंबे समय से चली आ रही है। जिस पर केंद्र सरकार और प्रदेश की योगी सरकार को ध्यान देना चाहिए। उन्होंने कहा कि आगामी 22 अगस्त को होने वाले महासम्मेलन में आंदोलन की अग्रिम रूपरेखा तैयार की



दिल्ली में 22 अगस्त को होने वाले आर्य महासम्मेलन को लेकर तैयारी

जाएगी। जिसमें प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और प्रदेश के मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ सहित उन सभी लोगों से मिलने का प्रयास किया जाएगा जिनके माध्यम से उपरोक्त कार्य संपन्न होना संभावित है। कार्यक्रम की भावी रूपरेखा उपरोक्त महासम्मेलन में ही तय की जाएगी।

इस बैठक में आर्य प्रतिनिधि सभा गौतम बुद्ध नगर के संरक्षक देवेंद्र सिंह आर्य, ब्रह्मचारी आर्य सागर, कार्यक्रम के सहसंयोजक डॉ. धर्मप्रकाश आर्य, देव मुनि जी महाराज, डॉ. युद्धवीर सिंह आर्य, डॉ. विद्यासागर वर्मा, चमन शास्त्री, सम्मेलन के कोषाध्यक्ष विजेंद्र सिंह आर्य, महावीर सिंह आर्य व मुकेश नागर एडवोकेट, मंत्री पंडित धर्मवीर आर्य, द्वारा विचार व्यक्त किए गए। बैठक में सम्मेलन के राजस्थान से हरिश्चंद्र शास्त्री, मास्टर विजेंद्र सिंह भमरोला, जगत सिंह नागर, अजय कुमार आर्य एडवोकेट (गाजियाबाद), बलबीर सिंह आर्य आदि लोग उपस्थित रहे।



Corporate Communications Directorate

DECCAN CHRONICLE

HYDERABAD

18 AUGUST 2026

Flight operations begin at Bhogapuram airport

ARUNA | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM AUG. 17

The Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport in Bhogapuram started commercial operations on Monday, marking a significant development for North Andhra Pradesh's aviation and economic landscape.

Developed and operated by GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Ltd, the airport opened with inaugural domestic and international flights, connecting the region to destinations across India, the West Asia and Southeast Asia.

The launch included ceremonial events and a water-cannon salute for arriving aircraft, highlighting the importance of this transition for the state and its people.

Civil aviation minister Kijarapu Rammeban Naidu attended the event, interacting with passengers and distributing boarding passes for the inaugural flights. He remarked, "I personally spoke to the passengers, and they all said that they liked the ASR Airport. I thank the farmers who gave land for the airport. We will develop infrastructure at Vizag Airport. All efforts are being made to improve connectivity to this airport. It may, however, seem a bit difficult to

reach ASR Airport until you get used to it."

His comments reflected both optimism about the airport's future and acknowledgement of the immediate challenges faced by travellers adjusting to the new facility.

The first flights of the day included IndiGo's Hyderabad - Visakhapatnam service, followed by its return leg, and the first international services operated by IndiGo to Abu Dhabi and Scoot to Singapore. Air India Express, Air India, IndiGo, Scoot, and India One were among the first arrivals, each greeted with a ceremonial salute.

With 52 air traffic movements scheduled on Day One, the airport quickly established itself as a bustling hub, signalling its readiness to handle growing passenger volumes.

GVIAL chief executive officer Kanwarbir Singh Kalra stated, "The start of commercial operations at ASR international airport represents a crucial moment for north Andhra region and the beginning of a new chapter in the region's connectivity journey. We are pleased to welcome our first passengers and airline partners as the airport begins to serve the region with a safe and seamless travel experience." This airport, he said, aims to promote

trade, tourism, investment, and employment while enhancing regional and global connectivity and supporting economic growth in North Andhra Pradesh."

Inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on August 1, the airport is designed to handle 6 million passengers annually and this can be expanded to over 40 million. Its 3,600-meter Code 4E runway can accommodate wide-body aircraft, facilitating future growth in passenger and cargo operations. While many welcomed the launch, passenger feedback highlighted both benefits and concerns. A software engineer from A Revati shared, "The Vizag airport used to be more convenient. I travel from Bangalore to Vizag every few months. It was less expensive traveling from Pendurthi. Pedagadi Village to Vizag airport. Now, I wake up at 4am to reach ASR airport, which costs more time and money." Residents of Simhachalam, Revati Patmaikini and her family expressed concerns about the cost of transportation to the new airport, stating, "It would have been better if domestic airlines operated from Vizag airport and international flights from ASR airport. It cost us over ₹2000 to get here."



Air passengers come out of ASR International Airport upon their arrival at Bhogapuram, as the first flight from Hyderabad landed in Vizianagaram district on Monday morning.
— K. MURALI KRISHNA



Corporate Communications Directorate

DECCAN CHRONICLE

HYDERABAD

18 AUGUST 2026

Wake-up call for airport security

The accidental discharge of a licensed firearm at Varanasi's Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport on Sunday cannot be dismissed as a mere procedural lapse or accident — it is, in fact, a wake-up call for Indian aviation security.

According to reports, the passenger, who followed all standard declaration protocols, mistakenly believed that his pistol was unloaded and pulled the trigger, leaving two airport staff members wounded. This act, despite being unintentional, raises several questions: Does the airport not have a mechanism or technology to check whether a firearm is loaded? What prompted him to pull the trigger? How did this crucial security aspect escape scrutiny by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security?

Under the current Bureau of Civil Aviation Security rules, passengers are allowed to carry licensed firearms with up to 50 cartridges. The mandated procedure includes advance intimation to the airline about the passenger's intention to carry a licensed gun as checked-in baggage, a declaration at check-in, and the screening and packing of the firearm after the cartridges have been separated from the weapon in an isolated bay at the airport.

Though the passenger followed all the rules and the incident occurred in the secluded, designated screening area, it is an undeniable fact that he passed through the check-in area, which was crowded with general passengers, airline employees and airport staff. If a person with malicious intentions had such access to the airport, they could have created mayhem.

When passengers are not allowed to carry matches in their carry-on luggage, how can the airport allow them to enter check-in bays with guns—loaded or unloaded? It is time to treat all firearms with absolute caution by removing them entirely from the general airport environment. If passengers want to carry firearms, CISF personnel should take possession of the firearms outside the airport complex and hand them over to the airport logistics team. The goal of airport security is to mitigate risk, not merely manage the aftermath when security fails. Let this be the last time a "declaration" at an airline counter results in a trip to the trauma centre.

Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK JAGRAN

DELHI

19 AUGUST 2026

विशाखापट्टनम एयरपोर्ट से कमर्शियल उड़ानें शुरू, दिल्ली आने वालों को राहत



स्किल सेंटर के उद्घाटन पर मौजूद श्री श्री रविशंकरसौ • डायल

वि. नई दिल्ली: आंध्र प्रदेश से दिल्ली यात्रा करने वाले यात्रियों के लिए जीएमआर विशाखापट्टनम इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट लिमिटेड द्वारा विकसित अल्लूरी सीताराम राजू इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट से कमर्शियल उड़ानों का परिचालन आधिकारिक तौर पर शुरू हो गया है।

इस अवसर पर केंद्रीय नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री के. राममोहन नायडू और जीवीआइएएल के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी कंवरबीर सिंह कालरा ने पहली उड़ानों के यात्रियों को बोर्डिंग पास सौंपकर रवाना किया। आइजीआई एयरपोर्ट का

संचालन करने वाले जीएमआर ग्रुप द्वारा तैयार यह नया एयरपोर्ट दिल्ली समेत एनसीआर के व्यवसायियों, पर्यटकों और आम यात्रियों के लिए विशाखापट्टनम तथा उत्तर आंध्र प्रदेश की यात्रा को सुविधाजनक और तेज बनाएगा।

स्किल डेवलपमेंट सेंटर का उद्घाटन: आर्ट ऑफ लिविंग के संस्थापक श्री श्री रवि शंकर ने भोगपुरम में जीएमआर वरलक्ष्मी फंडेशन के नए स्किल डेवलपमेंट सेंटर का उद्घाटन किया। जीएमआर ग्रुप के चेयरमैन जी.एम. राव भी मौजूद रहे।

Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK NAVJYOTI

JAIPUR

17 AUGUST 2026

इंचियोन एयरपोर्ट: आसमान में बदल रहा है दुनिया का नक्शा

दक्षिण कोरिया का इंचियोन एयरपोर्ट पहली बार दुनिया का सबसे व्यस्त अंतरराष्ट्रीय एयरपोर्ट बना है...

लंदन के हीथ्रो और सिंगापुर चांगी को पीछे छोड़ा...

दुनिया में यात्रियों की माँजलें बदलें न बदलें, लेकिन उनके रास्ते अब तेजी से बदल रहे हैं। कभी लंदन, पेरिस और न्यूयॉर्क जैसे शहर वैश्विक हवाई संपर्क के बड़े केंद्र माने जाते थे। अब एशिया के एयरपोर्ट इस तस्वीर को बदल रहे हैं। इसका ताजा उदाहरण दक्षिण कोरिया का इंचियोन एयरपोर्ट है, जिसने 2026 की पहली छमाही में अंतरराष्ट्रीय यात्रियों की संख्या के मामले में लंदन के हीथ्रो और सिंगापुर चांगी को पीछे छोड़ दिया।

जनवरी से जून 2026 के दौरान इंचियोन एयरपोर्ट ने करीब 3.84 करोड़ अंतरराष्ट्रीय यात्रियों को



संभाला। हीथ्रो करीब 3.78 करोड़ यात्रियों के साथ दूसरे और सिंगापुर चांगी करीब 3.45 करोड़ यात्रियों के साथ तीसरे स्थान पर रहा। यह उपलब्धि इसलिए भी खास है क्योंकि इंचियोन को बने अभी करीब 25 साल ही हुए हैं।

एशिया की ओर मुड़ती हवाई राहें

इंचियोन की सफलता के पीछे के बल दक्षिण कोरिया की अर्थव्यवस्था नहीं, बल्कि पूरे एशिया में बढ़ती हवाई आवाजाही है। चीन, जापान, दक्षिण कोरिया और दक्षिण-पूर्व एशिया में पर्यटन, कारोबार, शिक्षा और रोजगार के लिए यात्राएं बढ़ी हैं। जापान और चीन के साथ दक्षिण कोरिया के मजबूत हवाई संपर्क ने भी इंचियोन को फायदा पहुंचाया है। एशिया में बड़ी आबादी के साथ तेजी से बढ़ता मध्यम वर्ग भी विमानन उद्योग के लिए बड़ा बाजार बन रहा है।

Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

18 AUGUST 2026

Ozar Airport terminal work fast-tracked ahead of Mela

FPJ News Service

NASHIK

With Nashik (Ozar) Airport expected to play a crucial role in handling increased passenger movement during the MahaSimhashta Kumbh Mela 2027, the Nashik-Trimbakeshwar Kumbh Mela Authority (NTKMA) has directed agencies to accelerate work on the airport terminal and associated connectivity infrastructure.

NTKMA Commissioner Shekhar Singh reviewed the progress of the New Integrated Terminal Building at Ozar Airport on Saturday and directed the implementing agency to fast-track construction and explore possibilities of compressing the project timeline. The terminal has been targeted for completion by March 31, 2027.

Singh, accompanied by Maharashtra State Infrastructure Development Corporation (MSIDC)



Managing Director Dr Brijesh Dixit and NTKMA Deputy Commissioner Yogendra Chaudhari, among other officials, also reviewed proposed artworks and murals for the terminal interiors.

"Ozar Airport will be an important gateway for Nashik during MahaSimhashta. It is therefore not enough for the

terminal to progress in isolation. The approach roads and highway safety infrastructure must also be ready in time," Singh said.

He subsequently inspected road strengthening works on the Ozar-Janori road in Dindori taluka, an important link connecting the airport. Finding the pace of work

below the required level, Singh directed Public Works Department officials to accelerate execution and complete the work by March 31, 2027.

The Commissioner also inspected 12 standalone safety structures, including a flyover, being constructed at Dahava Mail on NH-3. National Highways Authority of India officials informed him that the work was progressing as scheduled and was expected to be completed by December 2026.

Singh directed all implementing agencies to coordinate closely, remove bottlenecks and submit weekly progress reports to NTKMA until the respective works are completed.

The authority said the focus was on ensuring that airport capacity is supported by reliable road connectivity and safety infrastructure before the expected increase in pilgrim and visitor movement during MahaSimhashta.



Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

18 AUGUST 2026

BHOGAPURAM

Commercial flight ops at new airport

Commercial flight operations commenced at the Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram here on Monday, with the first flight operated by IndiGo arriving from Hyderabad. The operations commenced a fortnight after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the modern facility equipped with a number of features. The airport, developed and operated by GMR Visakhapatnam International Airport Limited (GVIAL), is expected to strengthen Andhra Pradesh's position as the "Gateway of the East" for domestic and international travel.



Corporate Communications Directorate

GREATER KASHMIR

SRINAGAR

17 AUGUST 2026

Delhi airport plans to increase annual passenger handling capacity to 125 million

Press Trust of India

New Delhi, Aug 16

Delhi airport plans to increase its annual passenger handling capacity to 125 million from the current level of 106 million under the proposed ten-year master plan, according to a source.

As part of the expansion under the master plan, DIAL also proposes to build Pier E at Terminal 3 (T3) with a capacity of 10 million by April 2030.

For now, no decision has been firmed up on having Terminal 4 or building the Automatic Passenger Mover

(APM).

The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) in the national capital is operated by the Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL).

IGIA, also the country's biggest airport, has three terminals - T1, T2 and T3 - and international flight operations are only from T3.

The source told PTI that the master plan for 10 years till 2036 will be finalised after consultations with the stakeholders.

In the first phase, the proposal is to increase the annual passenger handling capacity to 116 million by

April 2030. The capacity will be further raised to 125 million by 2032, the source said.

At present, the airport has an annual passenger handling capacity of 106 million spread across the three terminals. The capacity is 42 million, 14 million and 50 million at T1, T2 and T3, respectively.

At T3, there is domestic capacity of 19 million and international capacity of 31 million.

Currently, T3 has four piers -- Pier A and B for international operations while C and D are for domestic operations. Pier C has now been converted

for international operations.

Pier E is to be constructed at T3 by April 2030.

Generally, a pier at an airport is a long and narrow structure or transfer facility from the main terminal building and allows passengers to use aerobridges to enter an aircraft.

While there are no immediate plans, a 7.5-kilometre right of way will be earmarked for the APM (Automated People Mover) system in the master plan, the source said.

The earlier plan was to build an elevated cum at-grade system at the airport on the design, build, finance,

operate and transfer model to provide seamless connectivity for passengers between T1 and the two other terminals.

Regarding T4, the source said that depending on the passenger traffic, if there is a need to have more capacity, then conversion of T2 to T4 could be looked at.

Delhi airport, operated by GMR Group-led consortium DIAL, witnessed passenger traffic of 6 million in July, an increase of 3.7 per cent compared to the year-ago period.

In the current financial year 2026-27 till July, the passenger traffic stood at 26.4 million.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

CHENNAI

18 AUGUST 2026

Bid to smuggle \$18,000 foiled at city airport

Chennai: Sleuths from Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) on Sunday intercepted two men in possession of foreign currency worth ₹17.65 lakh and thwarted their bid to smuggle the cash to Bahrain. Based on a tip-off, the officials camped at Chennai airport and intercepted two men who were scheduled to fly to Bahrain on a Gulf Air flight. Their luggage was checked, and the sleuths found US dollars hidden amid clothes. In total, \$18,000 worth ₹17.65 lakh was seized from the duo. Since the passengers did not possess any valid documents, the duo were handed over to Chennai Customs for further investigation. The money was seized, and further probe is on. **TNN**



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

18 AUGUST 2026

NCLT pulls up SpiceJet for 'wasting' time

Reuters
New Delhi

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Monday rebuked SpiceJet over a last-minute settlement with one of eight aircraft lessors whose bankruptcy petitions were due for rulings.

Saying that it wasted judicial time in the latest sign of financial stress at the country's fourth-largest carrier, the tribunal pressed SpiceJet on whether more deals were coming. "It makes a mockery of the entire thing," one of the NCLT judges said, criticising the parties for waiting until the day of the ruling to disclose the settlement. "It's not right."

The hearing took place as years of legal disputes between SpiceJet and the firms that lease it aircraft appeared set to culminate in rulings on eight bankruptcy petitions.

The cases have put SpiceJet's finances under renewed scrutiny, with admission of even one bankruptcy petition potentially triggering a court-supervised resolution

SpiceJet



process under which an independent professional would take control of the airline while creditors considered a restructuring.

The tribunal judges said substantial time had already been spent hearing arguments and preparing a judgment, but agreed to defer it until Wednesday after the parties asked for time to put the settlement agreement before it.

INTENSE PRESSURE

The tribunal also grappled with whether that development affected seven other SpiceJet insolvency cases that were also due for judgment but in which there had been no settlement. Lawyers for some of the other lessors repeatedly urged it to pronounce its rulings.



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

18 AUGUST 2026

Two Air India pilots fail preliminary drug tests

GROUNDLED. While confirmatory results are awaited, both have been de-rostered

Rohit Vaid
New Delhi

Two pilots of the Air India Group have failed preliminary (screening) tests for consumption of psychoactive substances as part of the ongoing mandatory testing exercise, sources told *businessline*.

Accordingly, confirmatory results are now awaited to establish the consumption of prohibited substances. However, pending the confirmatory test results both pilots have been de-rostered.

"Till now, around 400 pilots have been screened, out of which two have been detected as non-negative," sources told *businessline*.

"Secondary tests are required to validate the initial results. These results are awaited," they said.

According to sources, the non-negative results might well be linked to the consumption of medication.



SAFETY MEASURE. Air India aims to enhance safety and professionalism through the initiative, which aligns with regulatory standards observed in major aviation markets

"We will have a detailed investigation done into the cases. Only after ascertaining the facts will the regulator be informed of the final outcome and action taken thereafter," sources said.

The testing exercise follows the August 4 Phuket-Delhi flight incident involving an Air India Airbus A320neo, which suffered a sudden altitude variation during cruise before stabilising and landing safely in Delhi.

SCREENING RESULT

The pilot-in-command of the flight had earlier returned a screening result re-

quiring confirmatory testing. The final result has not been officially confirmed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) or Air India.

Meanwhile, Air India on August 13 announced that it would conduct mandatory screening of all group pilots for substances or medications not permitted under prevailing regulations.

Per an internal communication reviewed by *businessline*, the testing began on August 13 and is being conducted concurrently with training at the airline's Gurugram Academy, post-

flight at flight briefing centres and Air India offices, or at locations provided by respective bases.

Air India's internal communication said the airline already fully complies with regulatory requirements prescribed by the DGCA, which it said are similar to those followed in other major aviation jurisdictions, including Europe and the US.

The airline said the initiative goes beyond existing regulatory requirements and is aimed at upholding safety and professionalism and providing reassurance to passengers, stakeholders and the wider community.

विमानन: सरकारी वर्चस्व से निजी क्षेत्र की मजबूती तक

दीपक पटेल

नई दिल्ली, 18 अगस्त

साल 1991 के आर्थिक सुधारों के बाद से भारत के विमानन क्षेत्र में जबरदस्त बदलाव आया है। सरकारी नियंत्रण वाले क्षेत्र से निकलकर यह दुनिया के सबसे तेजी से बढ़ते विमानन बाजारों में शामिल हो गया है। हालांकि विमानन क्षेत्र का यह सफर आसान नहीं रहा। तीन दशकों में यात्री संख्या में तेज वृद्धि के साथ कई विमानन कंपनियों का बंद होना, कड़ी प्रतिस्पर्धा और लगातार यह सवाल भी बना रहा कि क्या भारत में विमानन कारोबार स्थायी रूप से लाभदायक बन पाएगा।

1953 में ‘एयर कॉरपोरेशंस ऐक्ट’ लागू होने के बाद लगभग चार दशक तक भारत में अनुसूचित वाणिज्यिक हवाई सेवाओं पर एयर इंडिया और इंडियन एयरलाइंस का दबदबा रहा। हवाई यात्रा महंगी थी और मुख्य रूप से कारोबार करने वालों, सरकारी अधिकारियों तथा संपन्न वर्ग तक सीमित थी। 1991 में केंद्र सरकार ने एयर टैक्सी योजना शुरू की, जिसके तहत निजी कंपनियों को गैर-अनुसूचित विमान सेवाओं के रूप में प्रवेश की अनुमति मिली। 1994 में एयर कॉरपोरेशंस ऐक्ट समाप्त कर दिया गया और निजी विमान कंपनियों के लिए अनुसूचित वाणिज्यिक उड़ानों का रास्ता औपचारिक रूप से खुल गया।

विमानन क्षेत्र की सलाहकार कंपनी सीएपीए इंडिया के मुख्य कार्याधिकारी और निदेशक कपिल कौल के अनुसार, ‘1991 के सुधार बेहद महत्वपूर्ण थे क्योंकि पहली बार निजी विमान कंपनियों को देश में परिचालन की अनुमति मिली। उस समय यह बहुत बड़ा फैसला था। इसी से जेट एयरवेज जैसी विश्व-स्तरीय विमान कंपनी सामने आ सकी और इसने विमानन क्षेत्र में भारतीय निजी क्षेत्र की काबिलियत को साबित किया।’

इन सुधारों की वजह से निजी विमान कंपनियों की पहली खेप आई, जिनमें ईस्ट-वेस्ट एयरलाइंस, दमानिया



पर देश का सबसे बड़ा विमानन नेटवर्क बनाया। शुरुआती विफलताओं ने भारतीय विमानन क्षेत्र की उन संरचनात्मक कमजोरियों को उजागर किया जो आगे भी इस उद्योग को प्रभावित करती रहीं। महंगा विमानन ईंधन, अपर्याप्त बुनियादी ढांचा, सीमित पूंजी और लगातार बदलते निम-कायदे विमानन कंपनियों के लिए बड़ी चुनौतियां बने रहे।

कौल कहते हैं, ‘1991 में निजी विमान कंपनियों को अनुमति मिलने के बाद से सबसे बड़ी समस्या कम पूंजी की रही है। कंपनियां पर्याप्त वित्तीय मजबूती के बिना बाजार में उतरीं और बाद में उन्हें समझ आया कि विमानन कारोबार को लगातार पूंजी की जरूरत होती है। यह चुनौती आज भी बनी हुई है।’

किफायती हवाई यात्रा का दौर

विमानन क्षेत्र में अगला बड़ा बदलाव 2000 के दशक की शुरुआत में आया, जब हवाई यात्रा धीरे-धीरे मध्यम वर्ग की पहुंच में आने लगी। कैप्टन जी आर गोपीनाथ की एयर डेक्कन ने भारत में सफल किफायती विमानन मॉडल पेश किया।

(शेष पृष्ठ 9 पर)

विमानन: सरकारी वर्चस्व से निजी क्षेत्र की मजबूती तक का सफर

पृष्ठ 1 का शेष

इस दौर में विमानन क्षेत्र से जुड़े कई महत्वपूर्ण नीतिगत बदलाव भी हुए। दिल्ली और मुंबई हवाई अड्डों का निजीकरण हुआ, बेंगलूर और हैदराबाद में नए हवाई अड्डों ने बुनियादी ढांचे के विकास का नया मॉडल पेश किया। एअर इंडिया ने बड़े पैमाने पर बेड़े के विस्तार की योजना बनाई। भारतीय विमान कंपनियों ने अंतरराष्ट्रीय बाजार में भी अपनी मौजूदगी बढ़ानी शुरू की।

हालांकि उस समय अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानों के विस्तार पर 5/20 नियम लागू था। इसके तहत किसी भारतीय विमान कंपनी को अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ान शुरू करने के लिए कम से कम 5 साल उड़ान का अनुभव और 20 विमानों का बेड़ा होना जरूरी था। 2016 में इस नियम को हटाकर 0/20 व्यवस्था लागू की गई।

कौल के मुताबिक, ‘2004 के बाद किफायती विमान कंपनियों को प्रोत्साहन मिला, एअर इंडिया को बड़े पैमाने पर बेड़े के नवीनीकरण की अनुमति दी गई, भारतीय विमान कंपनियों को वैश्विक विस्तार का अवसर मिला और हवाई अड्डों के निजीकरण ने गति पकड़ी। इस दौर ने भारतीय विमानन की तस्वीर मूल रूप से बदल दी।’ यात्रियों की संख्या तेजी से बढ़ी लेकिन विमान कंपनियों के लिए मुनाफा कमाना अब भी मुश्किल बना रहा। किराये को लेकर कड़ी प्रतिस्पर्धा के बीच ईंधन की कीमतें और

परिचालन लागत बढ़ती गईं।

इस दौर की सबसे बड़ी विफलताओं में किंगफिशर एअरलाइंस शामिल रही। 2005 में शुरू हुई इस विमान कंपनी ने तेजी से विस्तार के लिए 2007 में एअर डेक्कन का अधिग्रहण किया। इसका उद्देश्य अंतरराष्ट्रीय उड़ानों के लिए जरूरी पात्रता हासिल करना भी था। लेकिन भारी कर्ज, आक्रामक विस्तार, दोनों कंपनियों के एकीकरण की चुनौतियां, ईंधन की बढ़ती कीमतें और वैश्विक वित्तीय संकट ने कंपनी की मुश्किलें बढ़ा दीं। अंततः 2012 में किंगफिशर एअरलाइंस का परिचालन बंद हो गया।

एअर सहारा का अधिग्रहण कर देश की अग्रणी निजी विमान कंपनी बनने वाली जेट एअरवेज भी बढ़ते कर्ज और तीव्र प्रतिस्पर्धा का सामना नहीं कर सकी। अप्रैल 2019 में उसने अपनी उड़ानें बंद कर दीं।

35 साल उदारीकरण के

विमानन क्षेत्र में एकीकरण

इसके बाद भारतीय विमानन बाजार में एकीकरण की प्रक्रिया तेज हुई। लंबे समय से वित्तीय संकट से जूझ रही गो फर्स्ट ने 2023 में परिचालन बंद कर दिया। टाटा समूह ने अपने विमानन कारोबार को मजबूत करने की दिशा में एअर इंडिया और विस्तारा का विलय किया।

2022 में एअर इंडिया की टाटा समूह में वापसी भारतीय विमानन के इतिहास की एक महत्वपूर्ण घटना रही। इससे लगभग सात दशक



का सरकारी स्वामित्व समाप्त हुआ और एअर इंडिया के बड़े बदलाव की शुरुआत हुई। कपिल कौल इसे भारतीय विमानन के इतिहास का सबसे अहम फैसला मानते हैं। उनके अनुसार, ‘मैं एअर इंडिया के निजीकरण को भारतीय विमानन का सबसे ऐतिहासिक फैसला मानता हूँ। यह एक साहसिक और बेहद सकारात्मक सुधार था। ईमानदारी से कहूं तो मजबूत राजनीतिक इच्छाशक्ति के बिना ऐसा फैसला लेना संभव नहीं था।’

भारतीय विमानन क्षेत्र का विस्तार असाधारण रहा है। घरेलू यात्री यातायात 2004-05 के

करीब 1.4 करोड़ से बढ़कर आज लगभग 16.8 करोड़ हो गया है। निजी हवाई अड्डा संचालकों ने क्षमता बढ़ाई है, विमान कंपनियों ने रिकॉर्ड संख्या में विमानों के ऑर्डर दिए हैं और भारत दुनिया के सबसे बड़े विमानन बाजारों में शामिल हो गया है। लेकिन वित्तीय तस्वीर इतनी उत्साहजनक नहीं है।

कौल के अनुसार, ‘भारत ने विकास और हवाई अड्डा बुनियादी ढांचे के विस्तार के मामले में जबरदस्त प्रगति की है लेकिन 2004 के बाद से विमान कंपनियों को करीब 25 अरब डॉलर का नुकसान हुआ है। चुनौती केवल विमानन को

बढ़ाना नहीं बल्कि विमानन कारोबार को आर्थिक रूप से व्यवहार्य बनाना भी है।’

वह कहते हैं, ‘हमें अधिक हवाई अड्डे, ज्यादा विमान, बेहतर कनेक्टिविटी और अधिक लंबी दूरी की उड़ानें चाहिए। लेकिन हमें यह भी सोचना होगा कि विमान कंपनियों को आर्थिक रूप से टिकाऊ कैसे बनाया जाए।’

विमानन उद्योग की लागत संरचना आज भी उसकी सबसे बड़ी चुनौतियों में से एक है। ईंधन और उस पर लगने वाले कर विमानन खर्च का बड़ा हिस्सा हैं। इसके अलावा नियामकीय आवश्यकताएं, सुरक्षा संबंधी दायित्व, बाजार तक पहुंच के नियम और उपभोक्ता संरक्षण से जुड़ी व्यवस्थाएं भी अप्रत्यक्ष लागत बढ़ाती हैं।

कौल का कहना है कि विमानन कंपनी शुरू करने के लिए नियामकीय स्तर पर आवश्यक पूंजी और वास्तविक व्यावसायिक जरूरत के बीच भी बड़ा अंतर है। उनके अनुसार, ‘अगर आपके पास करीब 50 करोड़ रुपये की चुकता पूंजी है तो आप तकनीकी रूप से विमानन उद्यम शुरू कर सकते हैं। लेकिन अगर आप बाजार में टिकना और प्रतिस्पर्धा करना चाहते हैं तो शायद आपको करीब 10,000 करोड़ रुपये पूंजीकरण की दरकार होगी। नियामकीय जरूरत और व्यावसायिक वास्तविकता के बीच यह अंतर बहुत बड़ा है।’

आज भारतीय विमानन बाजार उदारीकरण के बाद किसी भी समय की तुलना में अधिक एकीकृत नजर आता है। इंडिगो ने लागत पर नियंत्रण और मजबूत वित्तीय स्थिति के दम पर बाजार में अपना दबदबा कायम किया है।

टाटा समूह के स्वामित्व वाली एअर इंडिया बड़े पैमाने पर बेड़े के नवीनीकरण और नेटवर्क विस्तार में निवेश कर रही है। स्पाइसजेट लगातार वित्तीय चुनौतियों से जूझ रही है और उसे बढ़ती प्रतिस्पर्धा का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।

विमानन क्षेत्र के विस्तार के साथ सरकार और नियामकों के सामने नई चुनौतियां हैं। यात्रियों की संख्या, विमानों के बेड़े और हवाई अड्डों में निवेश में तेज वृद्धि ने नियामकीय संस्थाओं पर दबाव बढ़ाया है। उद्योग विशेषज्ञों का मानना है कि विमानन क्षेत्र के अगले चरण का विकास केवल बाजार की मांग पर निर्भर नहीं करेगा बल्कि संस्थागत क्षमता भी उतनी ही महत्वपूर्ण होगी।

कौल कहते हैं, ‘विमानन क्षेत्र इतना बड़ा हो गया है कि आज सबसे अहम मुद्दा विमान सुरक्षा है। विमान सुरक्षा के लिए पूरी तरह नई नियामकीय व्यवस्था की जरूरत है। इस स्तर की वृद्धि के साथ मौजूदा सुरक्षा नियामकीय ढांचे के सहारे आगे नहीं बढ़ा जा सकता। हमें दुनिया के अग्रणी विमानन नियामकों की तर्ज पर डीजीसीए का पूरी तरह आधुनिकीकरण और पुनर्गठन करना होगा।’

अब सुधार केवल सुरक्षा निगरानी तक सीमित नहीं रह सकते। विमानन सुरक्षा, यात्रियों की सुरक्षा, प्रतिस्पर्धा नीति और तकनीक आधारित नियमन को भी मजबूत करने की जरूरत है। जैसे-जैसे बाजार कुछ बड़ी विमान कंपनियों और हवाई अड्डा संचालकों के इर्द-गिर्द सिमट रहा है, मजबूत और सक्षम नियामकीय संस्थाएं निष्पक्ष प्रतिस्पर्धा सुनिश्चित करने तथा यात्रियों के हितों की रक्षा के लिए पहले से कहीं अधिक जरूरी हो गई हैं।

पायलटों ने किया ड्रग जांच 25 प्रतिशत तक बढ़ाने का आग्रह

दीपक पटेल

नई दिल्ली, 18 अगस्त

फेडरेशन ऑफ इंडियन पायलट्स (एफआईपी) ने सोमवार को नागर विमानन महानिदेशालय (डीजीसीए) से पायलटों के बीच आकस्मिक ड्रग जांच बढ़ाने का आग्रह किया। उसका कहना है कि देश के तेजी से बढ़ते विमानन क्षेत्र के लिए मौजूदा न्यूनतम 10 प्रतिशत वार्षिक का दायरा पर्याप्त नहीं है।

पायलटों के संगठन ने प्रस्ताव दिया है कि हर वर्ष कम से कम 25 प्रतिशत पायलटों की आकस्मिक जांच की जाए और इसमें पायलटों को एक से अधिक बार चुने जाने की अनुमति भी दी जाए। डीजीसीए के मौजूदा नियमों के तहत शड्यूल वाणिज्यिक विमान परिचालकों और एयर नेविगेशन सेवा प्रदाताओं को अपने विमानन कर्मियों में से कम से कम 10 प्रतिशत का हर साल आकस्मिक साइकोएक्टिव (मादक) पदार्थ परीक्षण करना जरूरी है। एफआईपी ने 17 अगस्त 2026 को लिखे पत्र में कहा, 'यात्रियों और चालक दल की जान की ज़िम्मेदारी संभालने वाले पायलटों के लिए मादक पदार्थों की आकस्मिक जांच पर्याप्त रूप से बार-बार,



वास्तव में आकस्मिक और अप्रत्याशित होनी चाहिए ताकि सार्थक रोकथाम और निरंतर सुरक्षा का आश्वासन मिल सके।'

इसमें यह भी कहा गया, 'मकसद केवल आंकड़ों का सालाना लक्ष्य हासिल करना नहीं, बल्कि जांच की ऐसी व्यवस्था बनाना होना चाहिए जिसमें पूरे साल चुने जाने की संभावना विश्वसनीय बनी रहे।' संगठन ने कहा, 'इसलिए एफआईपी डीजीसीए को सुझाव देता है कि वह पायलटों की मौजूदा कम से कम 10 प्रतिशत सालाना आकस्मिक जांच का दायरा बढ़ाकर 25 प्रतिशत करने पर विचार करे। साथ ही इसमें एक ही व्यक्ति को दोबारा शामिल होने दिया जाए और जहां भी जरूरी हो, वहां अतिरिक्त जांच के लिए जोखिम-आधारित तरीका अपनाया जाए।'



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

19 AUGUST 2026

Raise drug testing coverage from 10% to 25%: Pilots' body

DEEPAK PATEL
New Delhi, 18 August

The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) on Monday urged the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to increase random drug testing among pilots, saying the current minimum coverage of 10 per cent a year is no longer sufficient for India's rapidly expanding aviation sector. The pilots' body proposed that at least 25 per cent of pilots be randomly tested each year, with pilots allowed to be selected more than once.

Under the existing rules, scheduled commercial aircraft operators and air navigation service providers are required to conduct random psychoactive substance testing of at least 10 per cent of their aviation personnel per year.

"For pilots entrusted with the lives of passengers and crew, random psychoactive substance testing must be sufficiently frequent, genuinely random, and unpredictable to provide meaningful deterrence and continuous safety assurance," FIP said in its letter



Key suggestions

- Introduce oral-fluid, or saliva testing alongside the existing urine-based system
- A 12-month pilot programme to test whether oral-fluid testing can work reliably

dated August 17. "The objective should not merely be to achieve an annual numerical target but to establish a testing regime in which the possibility of selection remains credible throughout the year," it said.

FIP's representation comes after the August 4 incident involving Air India's AI 2379 Phuket-Delhi flight, which suddenly lost about 300 feet of altitude, injuring 24 flyers. The pilot-in-com-

mand subsequently tested positive for marijuana.

FIP also asked the regulator to introduce oral fluid, or saliva, testing alongside the existing urine-based system. It said the additional testing method could make random checks faster and easier to conduct at airports, allowing the regulator and airlines to test more pilots without causing major disruption to operations.

The body proposed using saliva testing for random, targeted, and high-volume screening while retaining urine testing in cases where its longer detection window or other medical and regulatory requirements make it more suitable.

"While the existing urine testing system has an established regulatory and laboratory framework, FIP believes that the increasing scale of Indian aviation operations warrants consideration of additional testing methodologies that can increase testing capacity, reduce operational disruption, and facilitate rapid testing at airports and other operational locations," the federation said.

Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

19 AUGUST 2026



DEEPAK PATEL
New Delhi, 18 August

India's aviation sector has transformed dramatically since the economic reforms of 1991, evolving from a state-controlled sector into one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets. The journey, however, has been anything but smooth. Three decades of rapid passenger growth have been accompanied by repeated airline failures, bruising competition and persistent questions over whether India's airline business can ever become consistently profitable.

For nearly four decades after the Air Corporations Act came into force in 1953, scheduled commercial air services were dominated by Air India and Indian Airlines. Air travel remained expensive and was largely confined to business travellers, government officials and affluent Indians. That changed in 1991, when the Centre introduced the Air Taxi Scheme, allowing private operators to enter the sector as non-scheduled carriers. The Air Corporations Act was repealed in 1994, formally opening the market to scheduled private airlines.

"The 1991 reforms were extremely remarkable because private airlines were allowed to operate. That was a very big decision at the time and it enabled a world-class airline like Jet Airways to emerge. It demonstrated the quality of Indian private enterprise in aviation," says Kapil Kaul, chief executive officer and director at aviation consultancy firm CAPA India.

The reforms triggered the first wave of private airlines. Including East-West Airlines, Daman Airways and Modi-Luft. The new entrants broke the state-run duopoly and introduced greater competition and improved service standards. Yet, most entered a business that demanded far deeper financial resources than anticipated. East-West shut down after financial troubles worsened following the assassination of founder Thakurdeen Wahid in 1995. Daman Airways and Modi-Luft also exited within a few years. Jet Airways and Sahara Airlines emerged as the principal survivors, with Jet eventually building one of India's largest domestic and international networks.

The early failures highlighted structural weaknesses that would continue to

Aviation: How reforms gave wings to private sector

The reforms of 1991 triggered the first wave of private airlines, yet most entered a sector that demanded far deeper financial resources than anticipated



FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

define Indian aviation. Airlines operated in a high-cost environment characterised by expensive aviation turbine fuel, inadequate airport infrastructure, limited capital and evolving regulation.

"From the time private airlines were allowed in 1991, the core issue has been under-capitalisation. Airlines entered the market without sufficient financial strength and then discovered that this business requires a continuous flow of capital. That challenge has remained one of the defining characteristics of Indian aviation," Kaul says.

Affordability pivot

The next major phase of growth began in the early 2000s, when flying started becoming affordable for the middle class. Captain G R Gopinath's Air Deccan introduced India's first successful low-cost carrier model and popularised promotional fares at just ₹1. Budget airlines such as SpiceJet, GoAir and IndiGo expanded rapidly, forcing full-service carriers to lower fares and widening access to air travel.

The period also witnessed impor-

tant policy changes. Airport privatisation gathered pace with Delhi and Mumbai being handed to private operators, while greenfield airports at Bengaluru and Hyderabad created a new model for infrastructure development. Air India embarked on a major fleet expansion, and Indian carriers gradually strengthened their international presence, although overseas operations remained governed by the 5/20 rule (you can operate international flights only if you have five years of experience and 20 planes) until it was replaced by the 0/20 norm in 2016.

"From 2004, low-cost airlines were encouraged, Air India was allowed a major fleet renewal, Indian carriers were permitted to expand globally and airport privatisation gathered momentum. That period fundamentally reshaped Indian aviation," Kaul says.

Passenger numbers surged, but profitability remained elusive. Fierce fare competition coincided with rising fuel prices and increasing operating costs. Airlines continued to earn revenues in a highly price-sensitive market

while many of their expenses, including aircraft leases and maintenance, remained linked to the dollar.

Kingfisher Airlines became the biggest casualty of the period. Launched in 2005, it acquired Air Deccan two years later to accelerate expansion and qualify for international operations. Heavy borrowing, aggressive growth, integration challenges, rising fuel costs and the global financial crisis eventually pushed the airline into collapse in 2012. Jet Airways, despite acquiring Air Sahara and building India's leading private airline, also succumbed to mounting debt and intense competition, suspending operations in 2019.

Market consolidation

Subsequent years brought further consolidation. Go First suspended operations in 2023 after prolonged financial stress, while Vistara was merged into Air India as the Tata Group consolidated its airline business. The return of Air India to the Tata Group in 2022 marked another landmark reform, ending nearly seven decades of state ownership and

setting the stage for one of the industry's biggest turnaround efforts.

"Treat Air India's privatisation as the most historic decision in Indian aviation. It was a bold reform, it required courage and it was an extremely positive reform. Honestly, I do not think such a decision could have been taken without strong political conviction," Kaul says.

The sector's growth has nevertheless been extraordinary. Domestic passenger traffic has increased from about 14 million in 2004-05 to around 168 million today. Private airport operators have expanded capacity, airlines have placed record aircraft orders and India has emerged as one of the world's largest aviation markets.

The financial record tells a different story. "While India has made tremendous progress in growth, scale and airport development, airlines have lost about \$25 billion since 2004. The challenge is not just to grow aviation, but to make the airline business economically viable. We want more airports, more aircraft, more connectivity and more long-haul operations. But we also have to ask

As the industry expands, attention is shifting from growth to governance. Passenger traffic, fleet sizes, and airport investments have increased, placing greater demands on regulators. The next phase of aviation growth will depend as much on capacity as on market demand

how we make airlines financially sustainable. Growth without viability cannot be the long-term answer," Kaul says.

The industry's cost structure remains one of its biggest hurdles. Fuel and taxation account for a significant share of airline expenditure, while regulatory requirements, security obligations, market access rules and consumer protection requirements add indirect costs that are less visible but equally significant.

Kaul also points to the disconnect between regulatory entry requirements and the capital actually needed to survive. "If you have a paid-up capital of ₹50 crore, you can technically start an airline. But if you want to survive and compete in India today, you probably need a capitalisation plan of around ₹10,000 crore. The gap between regulatory requirements and commercial realities is enormous," he says.

Today's market is more consolidated than at any point since liberalisation. IndiGo has established itself as the dominant airline through disciplined cost management and a strong balance sheet. Air India, backed by the Tata group, is investing heavily in fleet renewal and network expansion, while SpiceJet continues to battle financial challenges in an increasingly competitive market.

As the industry expands, attention is shifting from growth to governance. Passenger traffic, fleet sizes and airport investments have increased sharply, placing greater demands on regulators. Industry executives say that the next phase of aviation growth will depend as much on institutional capacity as on market demand.

"The sector has become so large that the most important issue today is air safety. Air safety requires a completely new regulatory regime. You cannot continue growing at this scale with the existing safety regulatory structure. We need to completely modernise and revamp DGCA along the lines of leading global regulators," Kaul says.

The reforms now must go beyond safety oversight to include aviation security, consumer protection, competition policy and technology-led regulation. As the market consolidates around fewer airlines and airport operators, stronger institutions will be essential to ensure fair competition and protect passenger interests.



Corporate Communications Directorate

DECCAN HERALD

BANGALORE

18 AUGUST 2026

Air India Express starts 2 daily B'luru-Vizag flights

BENGALURU, DHNS: Air India Express on Monday commenced flight operations from the newly inaugurated Alluri Sitarama Raju International Airport at Bhogapuram in Andhra Pradesh, with Bengaluru among the first three cities to be connected.

The airline has introduced two daily flights between Bengaluru and Visakhapat-

nam, with additional services on Thursdays and Saturdays.

The inaugural flight from Visakhapatnam departed at 8 am and arrived in Bengaluru at 9.45 am. As per the schedule, the Bengaluru-Visakhapatnam flight departs at 4.50 pm and arrives at 6.30 pm.

The return service departs from Visakhapatnam at 8 am

and reaches Bengaluru at 9.45 am. Another service departs from Visakhapatnam at 10.10 pm and arrives in Bengaluru at 11.50 pm.

The new connectivity is part of Air India Express' ongoing network expansion. The airline currently operates flights to 48 domestic and 16 international destinations.



Corporate Communications Directorate

DECCAN HERALD

BANGALORE

18 AUGUST 2026

2 more AI pilots fail drug test after Phuket flight fiasco

NEW DELHI, PTI: Two pilots of the Air India Group have failed the initial drug test as their results came "non-negative" and their samples have been sent for confirmatory tests, according to a source.

On August 13, Air India and Air India Express started mandatory psychoactive substance testing of all their pilots, expanding checks beyond regulatory requirements.

These tests were made mandatory following the August 4 incident, when the captain of an Air India Phuket-Delhi flight that suddenly lost altitude tested positive for marijuana.

The source on Monday said psychoactive substance tests have been completed for around 400 pilots of the Air India Group so far.

Of them, the initial screening test results have come back "non-negative" for two pilots, the source said.

Specific details could not be immediately ascertained.

There was no official comment from Air India.

The two Tata Group-owned airlines have more than 5,000 pilots.



Corporate Communications Directorate

DECCAN HERALD

BANGALORE

18 AUGUST 2026

Fast-tracked framing of airfare rules, top court told

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Centre on Monday told the Supreme Court that it has fast-tracked the framing of rules under the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, which is aimed at modernising India's aviation sector, and that the same would be finalised within three weeks.

The government placed the draft rules before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta in a sealed cover and said some final discussions are going on.

"You publish this within seven days," the bench said, adding, "If airlines are not complying, ground them."

Additional Solicitor General Anil Kaushik, appearing in the matter for the Centre, said, "We have fast-tracked the framing of rules. Give us three weeks, we will come out with the finalised version."

The court was hearing a plea filed by social activist S Laxminarayanan, who has sought a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

हवाई किराए पर लगाम के लिए नए नियम जल्द, केंद्र ने मांगा समय

नई दिल्ली, प्रेटर: यात्री विमान किराए में पारदर्शिता और यात्रियों के हितों की सुरक्षा से जुड़ी जनहित याचिका पर सुनवाई के दौरान केंद्र सरकार ने सोमवार को सुप्रीम कोर्ट को बताया कि भारतीय वायुयान अधिनियम, 2024 के मसौदा नियमों को तेजी से अंतिम रूप दिया जा रहा है। सरकार ने कहा कि इन नियमों का मकसद भारतीय विमानन क्षेत्र को आधुनिक बनाना और यात्रियों के हितों की



रक्षा करना है। केंद्र ने नियमों को अंतिम रूप देने के लिए तीन सप्ताह का समय मांगा, लेकिन सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने इसे एक सप्ताह में पूरा करने को कहा।

Fare-Capping Would Be Unfair to Air



M C Govardhana Rangan

In the mid-90s, it cost about ₹6,000 to fly between Chennai and Mumbai. In 2026, it's hovering around the same price.

This, despite crude soaring to \$85 a barrel from \$20, and without judicial intervention on pricing. The number of planes in Indian airspace has grown 4×, one Indian airline featuring among the world's Top 10 by market value. India's also the third-largest aviation market, with some of the swankiest airports in the world.

In this landscape, an issue pending in the Supreme Court pertains to a demand to cap airfares and come up with a consumer-facing regulatory body. GoI has promised the court that a policy is round the corner. This comes at a crucial juncture when India's on a drive to promote tourism and improve air connectivity. Can price controls help this agenda?

Price control rhetoric is politically popular across the world. India's hardly new to price control either. Liberalisation is partly the freedom from controls that crippled entrepreneurship for decades.

Demand for capping airfares falls in the 'zero-sum' fallacy category, where someone is believed to be gaining at the cost of someone. Air travel is an economic transaction between airlines and flyers. Such voluntary transactions wouldn't take place unless both parties were better off making these transactions, than not making them at all.

Millions of Indians travelling by air underlines a mutual benefit, and that current terms are acceptable to both. Some disagreeing to those terms and seeking intervention isn't helpful for flyers willing to pay market fares and an industry that directly employs lakhs.

Look no further than rent control to see the long-term impact of price caps. Almost every big city — from NYC to Melbourne to Mumbai — froze rents to help people from forever-rising prices. It probably helped those already settled into those homes from stumping up more. But what they were left with after a few years was crumbling

buildings and housing shortages, as few came forward to build new apartments. Scarcity deprived people willing to pay higher rents. So, an occasional pop-up of exorbitant prices on travel portals, or an irritating demand for ₹100 more for seat selection, shouldn't be a trigger to make an essential industry commercially unviable.

What India's aviation industry needs is a bigger policy push to expand and add more players, than threaten new entrepreneurs with restrictions. Air India, once a state-owned monopoly, is reeling under losses of thousands of crores of rupees, some fearing whether it'll survive in its current shape. SpiceJet has been in ICU for a long time, with not only sliding passenger trust but also litigation and financial woes.

The list of airlines in India that went bust is long. There are a few trying to take off. But if policymakers take a misstep at this crucial stage, they would be leaving the ground open for a near-monopoly for an already dominant IndiGo. And even the 'best-run' airline can see its fortunes slide. IndiGo reported losses for two straight quarters, thanks to spike in crude oil prices. Seeking judicial intervention in a world throwing up so many challenges, which even some of the best in the business can't get on top of, is misplaced.

Air travel is today accessible to the middle-classes, and even to the less well-off in emergencies. Courts and the government, neither of which has control over crude oil prices or aeroplane lease terms, are at a disadvantage. Just a government nudge has had desired impact whenever there were sharp spikes.

If the objective is to connect more cities and make air travel affordable, the solution is not in price caps that would drive entrepreneurs away, but to lure more to get into the airline business. Price caps would do the opposite of luring them.



Caps mean cutbacks



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FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

18 AUGUST 2026

2 more Air India pilots fail initial dope test

Dhairya Gajara

MUMBAI

At least two more Air India pilots have failed preliminary drug tests during the airline's mandatory, carrier-wide screening drive following the fallout from a severe mid-air incident on Phuket-Delhi flight. Both pilots were immediately de-rostered pending final confirmation as the airline's internal sources claim that more crew members might be flagged for substance abuse.

Following scrutiny from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Air India Group ordered an unprecedented, mandatory one-time psychoactive substance test covering approximately 5,000 pilots across both Air India and Air India Express.

According to sources, the airline had tested over 300 pilots by Monday – four days



since the rollout began on August 13. Notably, preliminary urine samples from at least two flight crew members tested "non-negative" during initial screening. Sources said that the samples were dispatched for confirmatory testing.

The ongoing screening exercise is being conducted during regular training sessions at the airline's Gurugram academy, as well as post-flight at flight briefing centres and regional bases across the country. The drive goes beyond the DGCA standard regulatory requirement, which mandates routine annual testing for only 10% of flight crew.

MINT

DELHI

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Air India's flight takes a plunge: what happened?

BY ABHISHEK LAW

The Air India flight from Phuket to Delhi on 4 August suddenly lost altitude, injuring 20 passengers and four crew members. What caused the incident is unclear—pilot error or a mechanical failure, or both. *Mint* looks at the issue closely based on the available information.

REUTERS



1 What does the initial report say?

At 04:02:44 GMT (09:32:44am IST), the aircraft recorded low pressure in its Green hydraulic system, one of the three systems that provide power to move flight controls. Within a second, the two other hydraulic systems—Blue and Yellow—were also affected. The report shows flight-control surfaces were lost for about four seconds. At 04:02:46 GMT, Autopilot 2, the system that automatically controls the aircraft's flight path, disconnected. The aircraft pitched up and lost altitude. Hydraulic systems then recovered and control surfaces became responsive. Airbus has not issued an official statement yet.

BLOOMBERG



2 Is this a serious concern for Airbus?

It is a serious event, but it is too early to say whether it represents a wider A320 problem. The A320 family is central to India's airline fleet. India's two largest airlines, IndiGo and Air India have over 400 of them and substantial part of the 900-odd planes pending order-book are from Airbus. As aviation safety experts explained, the A320 has three hydraulic systems precisely to provide redundancy, that is a backup system designed to keep the aircraft controllable if one system fails. What makes this incident unusual is that all three systems appeared to be affected within seconds.

3 What are investigators looking at?

Investigators will reconstruct the incident using flight-data recorder and cockpit voice recorder. They will examine the aircraft's maintenance history and test its hydraulic systems, pressure switches and transducers. Airbus has also called for checks of wiring and leak-measurement switches that help detect hydraulic leakage.

4 Can the pilot be blamed for this?

A positive drug test does not explain a hydraulic-pressure failure. The Airbus data shows the aircraft's technical issue occurred independently of the pilot's corrective actions. One of the two pilot associations said the pilot-in-command and co-pilot followed the "rulebook to the T", and the pilot-in-command testing positive for a banned substance and technical fault of the aircraft are two separate incidents. Experts, however, say the pilot's condition could be relevant to how the emergency was handled.

5 What is being probed, and what follows next?

Airbus has recommended detailed checks of the hydraulic systems and their pressure-monitoring components. The outcome will determine whether any component needs repair, replacement or wider inspection across other A320s. On the pilot side, Air India has ordered screening of all its pilots for prohibited substances, going beyond its existing testing arrangements. It remains to be seen if these rules get tightened. The preliminary report is expected within 30 days of the incident.



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MINT DELHI 19 AUGUST 2026



FIP urged AAIB to consider further examination. [@sumas](#)

Pilots' body requests to be heard before final crash report

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The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), one of India's two pilot bodies, has asked the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) for a formal technical hearing before it closes its investigation into the Air India AI-171 crash in June 2025 that claimed 260 lives.

The 5,000-member federation is seeking a meeting with the investigating team by 15 September and has proposed areas that its "technical interaction" would cover, including simulator configuration, assumptions and methodology, reconstruction of the sequence of events; and correlation of flight-data recorder, cockpit voice recorder, air traffic control and maintenance information.

The discussions would also cover crew performance, workload, human-machine interaction, cockpit alerts, aircraft systems, system logic, protections and failure modes, flight maintenance and technical records, and operational and regulatory oversight.

The FIP has urged the AAIB to consider further examination, simulation, or specialist analysis wherever its submissions raise questions that require additional evidence.

In a letter dated 17 August to AAIB director general G.V.G. Yuggandhar, FIP president C.S. Bandhawa invoked a 28 July Supreme Court order in which the government assured the court that the federation's inputs and suggestions would be considered in the ongoing investigation. *Mint* has reviewed a copy of the letter.

The association had earlier raised concerns with the investigation and sought to submit its findings as an independent professional body. This time, however, it is asking the AAIB to give those concerns a formal place in the probe.

"The FIP respectfully submits that consideration of inputs from an established professional pilot organization would contribute to the technical robustness, completeness and safety value of the investigation," it wrote. The letter quotes solicitor general Tushar Mehta's assurance given to the Supreme Court verbatim: "The inputs and suggestions given by the Federation of Indian Pilots will be duly taken into consideration in the process."

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

PLEA ON 'UNPREDICTABLE FLUCTUATIONS' IN AIRFARES

Aviation Rules to be finalised in 3 weeks: Centre tells Supreme Court

OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, August 17

The Centre told the Supreme Court on Monday that it has fast-tracked the framing of rules under the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, which is aimed at modernising India's aviation sector, and that the same would be finalised within three weeks.

The government placed the draft rules before a bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta in a sealed cover, and said some final discussions are going on.

"You publish this within seven days," the bench said, adding, "if airlines are not complying, ground them."

Additional Solicitor General Anil Kaushik, appearing in the matter for the Centre, told the bench that the rules would be finalised within three weeks.

"We have fast-tracked the framing of rules. Give us three weeks, we will come out with the finalised version," he said.

The court was hearing a plea filed by social activist S Laxminarayanan,



THE GOVERNMENT PLACED THE DRAFT RULES BEFORE A BENCH OF JUSTICES VIKRAM NATH AND SANDEEP MEHTA IN A SEALED COVER

who has sought a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector and regulatory guidelines to control the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfare and ancillary charges imposed by private airlines in India.

Senior advocate Ravindra Srivastava, appearing in the matter for the petitioner, told the bench that till the time the new rules come into force, the old rules are operating.

KEY POINTS

- » 'You publish this within seven days, the bench said, adding, if airlines are not complying, ground them'
- » Additional Solicitor General Anil Kaushik, appearing in the matter for the Centre, told the bench that the rules would be finalised within three weeks
- » 'We have fast-tracked the framing of rules. Give us three weeks, we will come out with the finalised version,' he said

Questioning the "lack of willingness" on the part of authorities and the effectiveness of the existing mechanism, he argued that airlines are charging exorbitant fares.

Referring to a statement of the civil aviation minister in Parliament, Srivastava contended it was said that the government cannot cap airfares.

Kaushik assured the bench that the process of finalising the rules would be completed within three weeks.

The bench perused the draft rules placed before it in the sealed cover.

"There is a mechanism suggested but regulator, we are not sure," it observed.

It noted that Kaushik has requested for some more time to get the draft rules finalised and place before the bench within three weeks and posted the matter for hearing on September 7.

On July 13, the top court had asked the Centre to place the rules framed under the Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024, before it.

It had said the rules be placed before it in a sealed cover, irrespective of whether those have been placed before Parliament.

While hearing the plea on May 15, the apex court said there should be some rationalisation of airfares and asked the Centre to provide relief to flyers.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was then appearing in the matter for the Centre, had told the bench that the new enactment of 2024 had come into effect in January 2025

and the corresponding rules were in the process of being prepared.

On November 17 last year, the top court sought responses from the Centre and others on Laxminarayanan's plea seeking a robust and independent regulator that ensures transparency and passenger protection across the civil aviation sector.

While hearing the matter in January, the top court said it would interfere with the "unpredictable fluctuations" in airfares and flagged the exorbitant rise during festivals.

It had termed the exorbitant rise in airfares by the airlines "exploitation" and asked the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to file their replies on the plea.

The plea claims that all private airlines have, without any credible justification, reduced the free check-in baggage allowance for economy-class passengers from 25 kg to 15 kg, "thereby converting what was earlier part of the ticketed service into a new revenue stream".



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TELEGRAPH

KOLKATA

18 AUGUST 2026

Two AI pilots 'fail initial drug test'

New Delhi: Two pilots of the Air India Group have failed the initial drug test with "non-negative" results and their samples have been sent for confirmatory tests, according to a source.

On August 13, Air India and Air India Express started mandatory psychoactive substance testing of all their pilots, expanding checks beyond regulatory requirements.

These tests were made mandatory after the captain of an Air India Phuket-Delhi flight that suddenly lost altitude on August 4, injuring several passengers, tested positive for marijuana.

The source on Monday said psychoactive substance tests had been completed for around 400 pilots of the Air India Group so far.

Of them, the initial screening test results have come "non-negative" for two pilots, the source said.

Specific details could not be immediately ascertained. There was no official comment from Air India. The two Tata Group-owned airlines have more than 5,000 pilots.

The comprehensive screening covers substances and medications prohibited under prevailing aviation regulations.



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THE TIMES OF INDIA

AHMEDABAD

18 AUGUST 2026

2 Air India pilots have failed dope test so far

New Delhi: The ongoing one-time dope tests administered to all Air India group pilots beginning last Thursday have so far seen two non-negative results among the "300-400" cockpit crew members who have provided samples so far. According to sources, the two employees have been taken off flying duty as confirmatory tests are conducted and final report is awaited.

AI and AI Express together employ around 5,000 pilots. After the pilot of AI's badly rattled Aug 4 Phuket-Delhi flight

tested positive in a confirmatory test, the group had decided to conduct this one-time exercise on all its pilots to "protect and sustain the trust of millions of passengers" that AI has earned over decades.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) rules stipulate that a pilot who tests positive for consumption of psychoactive substances for the first time should be referred for de-addiction and rehabilitation. Such a crew member can return to active duty once he tests negative. **THE**

Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

HYDERABAD

18 AUGUST 2026

Passenger with ailing mother deboarded after flight fight

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Hyderabad: A 29-year-old passenger travelling with his cancer-patient mother from Hyderabad to Bagdogra was deboarded from a flight on Sunday after allegedly breaking a glass partition in the aircraft's galley and assaulting security personnel following an argument over a delay in the flight.

Following the incident, both the airline staff and the passenger filed complaints against each other. The RGI Airport police registered two FIRs. In his complaint to the police, the security manager of a private airline alleged that the passenger, who was seated in 2E on flight 6E6872, broke the galley partition window between two sections of the aircraft.

► **Continued on P3**

Flyer caused damage worth ₹1L: Airline staff

► **From P1**

The manager said it caused damage worth more than ₹1 lakh and delayed the flight's departure.

The complainant further alleged that even after the captain and the lead crew member asked the passenger to deboard for causing the delay, he refused to do so. "He created a disturbance for nearly 90 minutes despite requests from fellow passengers to disembark. He assaulted the manager of ramp operations and security staff before being escorted off the aircraft by security personnel along with CISF staff," the airline staff said.

Due to the incident, the flight, which was scheduled to take off at 8.15am, eventually departed at 9.43am. Based on the airline's complaint, police registered a case against the passenger under Sections 115(2) (voluntarily causing assault) and 324(5) (mischief causing loss or damage of ₹1 lakh or more) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). The passenger deboarded the aircraft along with his mother and was handed over to the RGI Airport police.

He subsequently lodged a counter-complaint against the airline staff, alleging that when he questioned the crew about the four-minute delay in the flight, they responded rudely.

"Instead of properly responding to my query or assisting us, they responded rudely. Despite the lack of assistance,



For Representation

FLIGHT DELAYED BY 1.5 HRS

ce, I managed to find our seats and helped my mother. When I began video recording the behaviour of the airline staff on my phone, I was asked to deboard. I was assaulted with a glass object by the airline staff and forcibly removed from the flight, causing distress to both me and my ailing mother," the passenger alleged.

Based on his complaint, police registered a case against the airline staff. "The passenger, who is a PG student from Kishanganj in Bihar, was angry because a few days ago he was not allowed to board a flight after arriving 10 minutes late. On Sunday, when the flight was delayed by four minutes, he picked up an argument with the staff. The airline representative alleged that the passenger damaged the galley partition of the aircraft and assaulted security staff. The passenger, in turn, alleged that he was assaulted by airline staff. We booked two cases. Notices will be issued to the accused," RGI outpost inspector B Kiran Kumar said.



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THE TIMES OF INDIA

MUMBAI

18 AUGUST 2026

SAS to launch flights between Copenhagen & Mum from Oct

Mumbai: After a bungled-up launch in June, Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) on Monday announced its much-awaited return to India on Oct 3 with direct, non-stop flights between Mumbai and Copenhagen. The launch Copenhagen-Mumbai flight will leave on Oct 1.

After an absence of 17 years, SAS was scheduled to recommence its India flights on June 4, but the inaugural flight had to turn back midway over regulatory issues. About four hours after departing Copenhagen, the A330 aircraft operating flight SK 969 was overhead in Azerbaijan when the aircraft turned back and diverted to Copenhagen. With the final regulatory clearance pending, the airline cancelled its flights to Mumbai, while offering passengers a refund or rebooking them on alternative flights.

In the current schedule, Scandinavian Airlines will operate the route five times weekly; with the new service set to offer connections to onward destinations, including New York, Boston, and Toronto. **TNN**



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THE TIMES OF INDIA

DELHI

19 AUGUST 2026

Ensure stricter dope testing, pilots' body urges DGCA

Mumbai: The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has written to Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) seeking the introduction of oral-fluid testing as a complementary method alongside urine-based screening. It further recommended that at least 20-25% of pilots undergo annual random psychoactive substance testing, up from the current minimum of 10%.

The FIP recommendation comes in wake of the positive drug test result for an Air India pilot who flew the Aug 03 Phuket to Delhi flight.

FIP proposed a "risk-based hybrid model" in which oral fluid is used in testing.

"While the existing urine-testing system has an established framework, FIP believes that the increasing scale of Indian aviation operations warrants consideration of additional testing methodologies that can increase testing capacity, reduce operational disruption and facilitate rapid testing..."the letter said. The pilots' body also called for a mandatory pilot sensitisation programme on medicines and psychoactive substances. **TNN**



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THE TRIBUNE

DELHI

19 AUGUST 2026

Pilots' body for tougher drug-testing regime, at least 25% random checks

Suggests oral-fluid screening to cut crew downtime

SHEKHAR SINGH

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, AUGUST 18

The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP) has asked the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to raise random psychoactive-substance testing of pilots from the existing 10 per cent annual minimum to at least 25 per cent, allow repeat testing of the same pilot and make checks genuinely random and unpredictable throughout the year.

It has also proposed oral-fluid testing, alongside urine tests, stronger post-occurrence and reasonable-suspicion testing, enhanced follow-up checks after confirmed cases and a 12-month controlled pilot programme before the new system is introduced across the nation.

FIP chief CS Randhawa said the existing 10 per cent requirement needed a review as India's aviation sector, pilot population, aircraft fleet and flight movements had expanded. It further added

SEEKS HEARING AHEAD OF AI CRASH REPORT

- The FIP has asked the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau for a personal hearing before the final report into the Air India crash in Ahmedabad is finalised
- In a letter to AAIB Director General, it has argued that its technical inputs could lose much of their value if considered after the investigation is concluded
- FIP chief Capt CS Randhawa referred to the SC order, in which the Solicitor General assured the court that the FIP's "inputs & suggestions" would be duly considered

that a pilot tested earlier in the year should remain eligible for selection again.

It proposal does not seek to replace urine testing, but seeks a hybrid system, in which oral-fluid tests are used for routine random, high-volume, airport-based, targeted and reasonable-suspicion

screening, while urine testing is retained where a longer detection window or medical and regulatory considerations make it more suitable.

The FIP said oral-fluid collection could reduce crew downtime and operational disruption because samples can generally be collected more quickly and directly at airports or workplaces. An illustrative study assuming 45 minutes for urine collection and 15 minutes for oral-fluid collection suggested a theoretical 66.7 per cent reduction in collection workload, although the FIP stressed that the figures must be validated through an Indian trial. The FIP cited Australia, the US and the UAE as international examples.

The federation has proposed that every non-negative screening result must undergo validated laboratory confirmation and medical review before any final regulatory, employment or medical decision. It stressed that detection of a substance was not, by itself, proof of impairment.