

Proposed second airport bonanza for infra development at Nelamangala

The proposed second airport at Nelamangala, located northwest of Bengaluru, has created a buzz in the real estate market and is poised to have a significant impact on infrastructure development in the region.

The airport is expected to transform the once relatively quiet region into a bustling hub. With better connectivity and infrastructural developments, Nelamangala could become a prime area for real estate investment. Vikram Rao, a Bengaluru-based real estate investor, said, "We have seen it happen before. When the international airport was established in Devanahalli, property prices skyrocketed. I expect the same to happen here. The proximity of Nelamangala to the central areas of Bengaluru gives it a unique advantage. Homebuyers are looking for more



Interiors of the newly inaugurated Terminal 2 of KIA (File photo)

affordable housing options outside the city without compromising on connectivity. Nelamangala's strategic location could make it a highly sought-after destination for buyers and investors alike."

Anjali Prasad, another realtor added, "Beyond real estate, the second airport is expected to boost infrastructure development in and around Nelamangala.

The government is likely to invest heavily in upgrading these facilities once the project gets underway. With plans for new highways, flyovers, and upgraded public transport options, travel time to the heart of Bengaluru could be significantly reduced. Moreover, the presence of an international airport often leads to the development of supporting infrastructure, including hotels, retail outlets, logistics hubs, and even educational institutions."

Residents are also optimistic about the airport's impact. Swati Narayan, who owns property in the area, said, "It's not just good for business, but also for the people living here. With increased interest from buyers, developers, and the government, Nelamangala could emerge as the next big growth corridor in Bengaluru."

-Prakash VL



GMR AIRPORTS IN NEWSWEEK'S MOST TRUSTED COMPANIES

FC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, SEPT. 20

GMR Airports Limited, formerly GMR Airports Infrastructure Limited, has clinched the fifth position globally in the transport, logistics and packaging category in Newsweek's World's Most Trusted Companies survey 2024.

"Being recognised among the top 5 most trustworthy companies globally by Newsweek is a testament to our commitment to safety, innovation, and operational excellence. This achievement inspires us to continually elevate the standards of airport infrastructure and passenger experience," said GBS Raju, chairman of GMR Airports.

The ranking is derived from evaluations encompassing customer feedback, employee sentiment, investor confidence, and social media analysis, a release said.

Conducted in collaboration with Statista, a global data and business intelligence platform, the survey evaluated over 1,000 companies across 23 industries and 20 countries. Others in the list alongside include the likes of Singapore Airlines, United Parcel Service, Rolls-Royce, and Central Japan Railway Company.

"This list celebrates companies that have earned the trust of stakeholders through their consistent delivery of quality products, fair employment practices," said Nancy Cooper, Global Editor-in-Chief of Newsweek.



Tech takes wings at airports globally

Can long queues at airports be a thing of the past?

VAISHALI DAR

CAN WE EVER think of navigating an airport check-in counter without a queue or breezing through security? Airports around the world are upgrading technology to end many such woes.

New York's JFK Airport is working on a \$19-billion transformation for the new Terminal One with a 23-gate state-of-the-art terminal for state-of-the-art baggage handling system and new security checkpoints. Pittsburgh International Airport is building a new terminal with more streamlined ticketing stations and baggage claim systems.

In July, the Airport Authority Hong Kong (AAHK) introduced a new smart security screening system at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA). The new system will be put into service in phases but HKIA will be the world's first to operate smart security screening channels in the entire airport. Passengers using the new smart security screening channels can keep their electronic devices, including laptop computers and mobile phones, as well as liquids, aerosols and gels in their carry-on luggage, without having to take them out for screening as required by existing protocol. The streamlined procedure is enabled by the latest 3D and 360-degree CT-based X-ray scanning technology, as opposed to the existing system's 2D capability. The new system also includes other passenger-friendly functions like auto tray recirculation, in-built tray sterilisation, and automatic alert to passengers for uncollected items on the tray.

"The upgraded security screening not only enhances overall screening performance, but makes mandatory airport procedures pleasant to passengers, with the existing aviation security standards and requirements remaining intact," says Steven Yiu, executive director, airport operations, AAHK. Shanghai Pudong



A smart security screening system at the Hong Kong International Airport allows passengers to keep their electronic devices, liquids and gels in carry-on luggage without taking them out for screening

International Airport, one of the busiest international hubs in China, is soon installing SITA's common-use self-service bag drops (SBD) and kiosks for foreign airlines and their passengers to speed up passenger processing. SITA Airport IT specialises in innovative and cost-efficient communication and IT solutions for the aviation industry. There will be deployment of 52 kiosks and 14 SBDs across the airport, allowing international passengers to independently check in early before counters open. Sumesh Patel, president, SITA APAC, says, "As air travel booms globally, and airports see a massive surge in travellers, there is an increased need for technology that can speed up the boarding process, reducing delays and traffic for passengers."

Even airlines are pitching in. British Airways (BA) has unveiled a \$8.9-billion investment in artificial intelligence-aided baggage handling, and a new website. Back home, Kempegowda International Airport is preparing for a ₹200-crore overhaul of its air traffic control facilities to integrate advanced technologies. Delhi International Airport, a GMR airport infrastructure-led consortium, opened its revamped

Terminal 1 last month with 'Q Buster-Mobile Check-in service' for enhanced pax experience. This will help passengers avoid long queues at check in counters, besides automated tray retrieval system, aerobridges, check-in counters including self baggage drop kiosks, etc. Recently, Adani Airports Holdings (AAHL), a subsidiary of Adani Enterprises, launched an app, aviio, to access real-time data and updates on security checks, wait times, gate change and bags on belts. "This app is all set to transform the way passengers transit through airports. It will help AAHL improve capacity planning, operational efficiencies and real-time resource management" says Arun Bansal, CEO, AAHL.

The government's DigiYatra facility using facial recognition technology to streamline terminal entry and security clearance at airports is now available at nine Airport Authority of India (AAI) airports — Bhubaneswar, Coimbatore, Dabolim, Indore, Bagdogra, Ranchi, Patna, Raipur and Visakhapatnam — for contactless experience at entry points, security checks, and aircraft boarding making the process hassle-free and paperless.





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AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

Corporate Communications Directorate

HARI BHUMI

NEW DELHI

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

केंद्रीय उड्डयन
मंत्री से मिले
संजय झा

इंटरनेशनल बनेगा दरभंगा एयरपोर्ट दिल्ली-मुंबई के लिए शुरू होगी नई उड़ानें

एजेसी ॥ पटना

जनता दल यूनाइटेड के कार्यकारी अध्यक्ष और राज्यसभा सांसद संजय झा ने केंद्रीय उड्डयन मंत्री राम मोहन नायडू से मुलाकत की। और दरभंगा एयरपोर्ट और रनवे के विस्तार को लेकर विस्तृत ज्ञापन सौंपा।

जिस पर संज्ञान लेते हुए उड्डयन मंत्री ने दरभंगा एयरपोर्ट को इंटरनेशनल बनाने, दरभंगा से दिल्ली, मुंबई, बंगलोर और हैदराबाद के बीच उड़ान सेवा शुरू करने का प्रस्ताव तैयार करने के लिए विभाग को निर्देश दिया है। इसकी



जानकारी संजय झा ने अपने सोशल मीडिया अकाउंट एक्स पर साझा की है।

संजय झा ने एक्स पर पोस्ट करके बताया

कि दरभंगा उड़ान योजना के तहत एक अत्यंत सफल एयरपोर्ट है, जो प्रतिवर्ष 5 लाख से अधिक यात्रियों को सेवाएं प्रदान कर रहा है। वर्तमान में यहां से स्पाइस जेट एयरलाइंस मुख्य रूप से दरभंगा से दिल्ली, मुंबई, बंगलुरु, हैदराबाद जैसे मार्गों पर अपनी सेवाएं दे रही हैं। लेकिन, इस एयरलाइंस के परिचालन समय में अनिश्चितता और उड़ानों को अचानक रद्द कर दिये जाने से यात्रियों को काफी कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ रहा है। यहां से उड़ानों की संख्या कम होने के कारण किराये में भी काफी वृद्धि होती रहती है।

उड्डयन मंत्री ने दरभंगा एयरपोर्ट को इंटरनेशनल बनाने, दरभंगा से दिल्ली, मुंबई, बंगलोर और हैदराबाद के बीच उड़ान सेवा शुरू करने का प्रस्ताव तैयार करने के लिए विभाग को निर्देश दिया है।

Corporate Communications Directorate

LOKSATYA

NEW DELHI

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

IGI एयरपोर्ट पुलिस ने इंडिगो एयरलाइंस के साथ 'ऑलवेज केयरिंग' का आयोजन किया

नई दिल्ली, लोकसत्या

अपने कर्मियों के कौशल को बढ़ाने और सभी यात्रियों के लिए एक सुरक्षित, स्वागत योग्य वातावरण सुनिश्चित करने की अपनी निरंतर प्रतिबद्धता के अनुरूप, आईजीआई एयरपोर्ट पुलिस ने इंडिगो एयरलाइंस के साथ साझेदारी में 20 सितंबर, 2024 को ऑलवेज केयरिंग नामक एक सॉफ्ट स्किल प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम का सफलतापूर्वक आयोजन किया। इसके तहत आईजीआई एयरपोर्ट पुलिस बेहतर सार्वजनिक सेवा के लिए पारस्परिक कौशल को बढ़ाती है। साइबर अपराध और आतंकवाद जैसी उभरती चुनौतियों से निपटने के लिए अधिकारी सुसज्जित रहते हैं। सॉफ्ट स्किल प्रशिक्षण विविध हवाई अड्डा सेटिंग में सकारात्मक बातचीत को बढ़ावा देता है।



ऑलवेज केयरिंग कार्यक्रम अंतर-सांस्कृतिक बातचीत में समावेशिता को बढ़ावा देता है।

आईजीआई एयरपोर्ट की डीसीपी उषा रंगनानी के मुताबिक प्रशिक्षण सत्र के दौरान, लगभग 70 पुलिस कर्मियों को प्रभावी संचार, संघर्ष समाधान, सहानुभूति और ग्राहक सेवा सर्वोत्तम प्रथाओं के विभिन्न पहलुओं पर व्यापक प्रशिक्षण दिया गया।

गत 21 और 22 फरवरी 2024 को आयोजित पिछले सत्रों को यात्रियों से अत्यधिक सकारात्मक प्रतिक्रिया मिली, जिसके परिणामस्वरूप सेवा की गुणवत्ता और आगंतुक संतुष्टि में महत्वपूर्ण सुधार हुआ।

हवाई अड्डे हमारे शहरों और देशों के लिए प्रवेश द्वार के रूप में काम करते हैं, व्यस्त केंद्र जहाँ विभिन्न पृष्ठभूमि के लोग एकत्रित होते हैं,

जिनमें से प्रत्येक की अपनी जरूरतें, चिंताएँ और अपेक्षाएँ होती हैं। ऐसे गतिशील वातावरण में, पुलिस कर्मियों की भूमिका केवल कानून लागू करने से कहीं बढ़कर होती है; इसमें सहायता प्रदान करना, सुरक्षा सुनिश्चित करना और जनता के साथ सकारात्मक बातचीत को बढ़ावा देना शामिल है। हवाई अड्डों पर, पुलिस कर्मियों को कई तरह के लोगों से सामना करना पड़ता है - यात्री, पर्यटक, हवाई अड्डे के कर्मचारी, एयरलाइन चालक दल, और भी बहुत कुछ। प्रत्येक बातचीत न केवल सुरक्षा उपायों को लागू करने का अवसर प्रदान करती है, बल्कि सहायता प्रदान करने, मार्गदर्शन प्रदान करने और जनता में आत्मविश्वास और सुरक्षा की भावना पैदा करने का भी अवसर प्रदान करती है।

Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

NEW DELHI

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

IGI Airport police, IndiGO host event for soft skills upgrade

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The IGI Airport police, in collaboration with IndiGo Airlines, hosted the "Always Caring" soft skills training programme on Friday aimed at enhancing the interpersonal skills of its personnel.

The programme, focusing on improving communication, empathy and customer service, equips officers to engage effectively with diverse travellers at the airport. This training follows successful sessions held on February 21 and 22, which received positive feedback from the public, reflecting improvements in service quality.

The initiative emphasises the importance of positive interactions, inclusivity in cross-cultural settings and preparedness for emerging challenges like cybercrime and



"Always Caring" soft skills training programme underway.

terrorism. Through the programme, officers are better positioned to ensure public safety while fostering an atmosphere of trust and cooperation.

The police plans to extend this initiative, reaffirming their commitment to continuous improvement and excellence in public service. It underscores the airport's mission to provide not only security but also a welcoming environment for all.



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NAVODAYA TIMES

NEW DELHI

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

आईजीआई एयरपोर्ट पुलिस ने लिया सॉफ्ट स्किल प्रशिक्षण

■ इंडिगो एयरलाइंस के साथ साझेदारी में कार्यक्रम आयोजित

नई दिल्ली, 21 सितम्बर (नवोदय टाइम्स): आईजीआई एयरपोर्ट पुलिस ने इंडिगो एयरलाइंस के साथ साझेदारी करते हुए पुलिस कर्मियों के लिए ऑलवेज कैरिंग सॉफ्ट स्किल प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम आयोजित किया है।

प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम का उद्देश्य भाग लेने वाले अधिकारियों के पारस्परिक कौशल और ग्राहक सेवा क्षमताओं को बढ़ाना है। एयरपोर्ट पर विविध यात्री आधार के साथ जुड़ने की उनकी क्षमता में और सुधार हो सके। 21 व 22 सितम्बर को आयोजित इस दो दिवसीय

प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम के मुख्य विषय अधिकारियों को सशक्त बनाना, संबंध बनाना, वैश्विक तैयारी, सांस्कृतिक



सद्भाव और भविष्य का विस्तार हैं। डीसीपी उषा रंगनानी ने बताया कि प्रशिक्षण सत्र के पहले दिन लगभग 70 पुलिस कर्मियों को प्रभावी संचार, संघर्ष समाधान, सहानुभूति और ग्राहक सेवा के विभिन्न पहलुओं को कवर करने वाला व्यापक प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त

हुआ। एयरपोर्ट पर, पुलिस कर्मियों का सामना कई तरह के व्यक्तियों से होता है - यात्री, पर्यटक, एयरपोर्ट कर्मचारी, एयरलाइन चालक दल और भी बहुत कुछ। प्रत्येक बातचीत न केवल सुरक्षा उपायों को लागू करने का अवसर प्रदान करती है, बल्कि सहायता प्रदान करने, मार्गदर्शन प्रदान करने और जनता में आत्मविश्वास और सुरक्षा की भावना पैदा करने का भी अवसर प्रदान करती है।

सॉफ्ट स्किल्स तालमेल बनाने, तनावपूर्ण स्थितियों को कम करने और एक सकारात्मक माहौल को बढ़ावा देने में महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाते हैं जो समग्र एयरपोर्ट के अनुभव को बढ़ाता है। इसमें पुलिस कर्मियों को विविध

सांस्कृतिक पृष्ठभूमि के व्यक्तियों के साथ सम्मानपूर्वक और प्रभावी ढंग से बातचीत करने के लिए आवश्यक उपकरण और मानसिकता से लैस करता है, जिससे समावेशिता और समझ को बढ़ावा मिलता है।

इसके अलावा, सॉफ्ट स्किल साइबर अपराध, मानव तस्करी और आतंकवाद जैसी उभरती चुनौतियों से निपटने में सहायक होते हैं। उन्होंने बताया कि इस प्रशिक्षण कार्यक्रम के माध्यम से हम अपने अधिकारियों को उनकी भूमिकाओं में उत्कृष्टता प्राप्त करने और व्यावसायिकता और सेवा के उच्चतम मानकों को बनाए रखने के लिए आवश्यक उपकरणों और क्षमताओं से लैस करने की अपनी प्रतिबद्धता की पुष्टि करते हैं।



Corporate Communications Directorate

ASSAM TRIBUNE

GUWAHATI

21 SEPTEMBER 2024

Qatar Airways prohibits pagers, walkie-talkies in Lebanon flights

DOHA, Sept 20: Qatar Airways has prohibited passengers travelling from Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport from bringing pagers and walkie-talkies on flights.

The move comes after several walkie-talkies and pagers exploded in Lebanon, post which the country issued a directive prohibiting such things on flights.

On Thursday, the airline, on social media platform X, said that the regulations would be in place until further notice.

“Effective immediately: Following the directive received from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation of the Repub-

lic of Lebanon, all passengers flying from Beirut Rafic Hariri International Airport (BEY) are prohibited from carrying pagers and walkie-talkies on board flights,” Qatar Airways posted on X.

Qatar Airways said that the ban applies to both checked-and carry-on luggage, as well as cargo, and will be enforced until further notice.

Lebanese authorities on Thursday banned walkie-talkies and pagers from being taken on flights from Beirut airport, the National News Agency reported, after thousands of such devices exploded during a deadly attack on Hezbollah this week. – IANS

Corporate Communications Directorate

ECONOMIC TIMES

NEW DELHI

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

SpiceJet Raises ₹3,000 cr from Domestic, Overseas Investors

Tata MF, Goldman Sachs among investors who subscribed to airline's QIP issue

Our Bureau

New Delhi: Cash-strapped airline SpiceJet has got a lifeline with a ₹3,000 crore share sale to Indian and overseas institutional investors, said the airline.

The company said 87 investors, including Tata Mutual Fund, Discovery Global, Sanjay Dagi's Authum Investment and Goldman Sachs, bet on the revival of SpiceJet, with the demand being higher than the amount the airline had planned to raise.

"SpiceJet, due to its inherent nature, has a very low-cost base. It was due to unforeseen circumstances like grounding of Boeing 737 Max planes and Covid-19 that the airline became cash-strapped. With this funding, we are now back in a position to pay off our vendors who have supported us," said a senior executive of the airline, who did not wish to be identi-



FILE PHOTO

fied. "The cost of capital will also come down significantly and with the upcoming festive season driving demand we will be in a better position by the end of the year."

The shares will be issued at ₹61.60 apiece, lower than the closing price of ₹66.16 on Friday, when the scrip ended the session with a decline of 3.25% on the BSE.

SpiceJet promoter Ajay Singh's shareholding in the company will reduce to 34.96% from 47.8% stake he currently holds. He will remain the largest shareholder.

"The airline business is booming in India. Traffic growth is phenomenal. A sizable infusion at this stage in the airline can not only revive it but also help it to increase its market share," a person whose fund has invested in the equity financing said on con-

dition of anonymity. "SpiceJet needs new aircraft and upgradation of existing fleet which will not only increase its revenue but also reduce its cost. Both of these are possible now with the fundraising."

The carrier was in desperate need of funding to salvage operations as it had defaulted on payment to vendors, including aircraft lessors, some of whom had filed petitions in courts to declare the airline bankrupt. It has been unable to get new planes while rival airlines have cornered market share.

At the end of August, the airline had a little over 2% share of India's domestic aviation market. It has pending repayments of ₹601.5 crore, including statutory dues such as provident fund and tax deducted on source while another ₹750 crore is payable to lessors.

The airline had told investors while pitching for equity funding that despite shrinking in 2023-24, it had more than 50% of seat capacity at eight airports and a monopoly on 40 routes. Due to the shortage of spares, SpiceJet has around 36 grounded planes including a few Q400 planes, which it had bought from Export Development Canada in March 2014.

Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

21 SEPTEMBER 2024

offgrid

Airline bans pager & walkie-talkie

Dharmesh Thakkar

MUMBAI

The aviation and hospitality industries, still trying to regain their footing after the Covid pandemic shutdown, are now bracing for the newest challenge – the security nightmare posed by the screening of personal electronic gadgets in daily use, including smartphones, tablets, smartwatches and other wearables used on flights, following the deadly pager and walkie-talkie blasts in Lebanon earlier



Daily-use digital devices or weapons of mass destruction?

this week, allegedly targeting the Hezbollah.

The prospect of explosives in daily electronic devices has triggered panic in the airlines and hotel industry, with security experts warning of new restrictions on devices like mobiles and laptops that can be booby-trapped to explode remotely with a code, time or geofencing.

Qatar Airways has banned the carrying of pagers and walkie-talkies on board its flights from Lebanon and other airlines will follow suit

at other airports, fear aviation experts. "The ban will be extended to personal electronic gadgets, including smartphones and laptops, by other airlines," fears Vijay Singh, security adviser for several airlines.

While Qatar Airways has banned pagers and walkie-talkies on flights from Lebanon, aviation experts have warned that personal electronic gadgets will soon be on the prohibited list for flyers in coming weeks.

► **Contd on | nation**

Airline bans pager...

"Hezbollah attacks have shaken our trust in communication equipment, and enhanced risk factors, be it walkie-talkies, pagers, cellphones and other e-equipment," warned aviation expert Vipul Saxena, adding, till such time the government comes out with some safety check measures, airlines and airport operations will experience major disruption.

Personal electronic devices vital for communication in the fast-paced modern economy will be on the list of stringent security checks, adding to the long queues and delays.

"The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security will introduce more stringent security protocols to restrict the range of walkie-talkies to local range and jammers for long-range frequency bands with a basic handset model will be enforced at most airports," added Saxena.

According to aviation security experts, the explosion highlights the limitations of current security protocols. "While airport security focusses on preventing conventional threats like metallic objects, liquid explosives, or concealed firearms with significant strides in detecting and preventing the smuggling of traditional weapons and explosives, the methods used to conceal explosives within electronic devices represent a new frontier in security threats," said a senior BCAS official.

"Battery-operated devices like smartphones, tablets, laptops and wearables are now an emerging threat, with dire consequences for air travel safety," said senior CISF officials on duty at Mumbai Airport for security checks.

The Hezbollah pager explosions have illustrated that even the most benign-looking electronic devices can be transformed into weapons in the wrong hands.



भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण
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FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

21 SEPTEMBER 2024

Air India hired 9K employees in two years: Campbell Wilson



PTI

NEW DELHI

Air India has hired 9,000 employees, including 5,000 crew members, in the last two years to meet the workforce requirement for its expanding fleet and network, the airline's chief Campbell Wilson said on Friday.

In a message to staff, he said the airline's domestic market share rose from 24 per cent in FY23 to 27 per cent in FY24 and the international market share climbed from 21 per cent to 24 per cent during the same period, on the back of network expansion and service improvements.

The airline has completed two years of its five-year ambitious transformation plan Vihaan.AI.

On a consolidated basis, the Tata Group-owned airline recorded a 25 per cent rise in operating revenues and a more than 50 per cent reduction in loss in the last financial year.

"When we consider that the FY in question covered only the early part of our transformation programme, before most of the initiatives we have been working on were implemented, these early results should encourage us that the effort is bearing fruit," Wilson said.

Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN TIMES

MUMBAI

21 SEPTEMBER 2024

‘Air India to upgrade its entire narrow-body fleet by mid-2025’

Neha LM Tripathi

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NEW DELHI: Air India, which will soon have its sister airline Vistara merge into it, aims to upgrade all its narrow-body aircraft by mid-2025, chief executive officer Campbell Wilson said in an internal communication to staff on Friday.

Narrow-body aircraft are the mainstay of domestic airline operations for most airlines, with wide-body ones typically flown on long-haul routes.

“First, we commenced the refit of 67 narrow-body aircraft with new cabin configurations and seats. With three to four aircraft to be retrofitted each month, the entire narrow-body fleet should be upgraded by mid-2025,” his email read.

Work on upgrading Air India’s 40 legacy 787 and 777



Air India completed two years on September 15 since it embarked on a five-year Vihaan.AI transformation plan. REUTERS

aircraft—which are wide-body jets—on long-haul routes to the UK and US, will follow as soon as the seats, which have been selected, are certified and delivered, the mail added.

Air India completed two years on September 15 since it embarked on a five-year

Vihaan.AI transformation plan.

“In our just published financial results, we also reported that consolidated losses reduced by over 50% year-on-year, and consolidated operating revenues rose by 25% to the highest-ever level,” the CEO said.

Corporate Communications Directorate

HONDUSTAN TIMES

MUMBAI

21 SEPTEMBER 2024

SPICEJET FACES SETBACK AS SC BACKS ORDER TO GROUND ENGINES

Utkarsh Anand

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday upheld the Delhi high court's directive requiring SpiceJet to ground and return three aircraft engines leased from French companies due to non-payment of dues, dismissing the airline's appeal and suggesting it independently negotiate with the lessors.

A bench, led by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y. Chandrachud, observed that SpiceJet was free to engage in negotiations with the lessors, Team France 01 SAS and Sunbird France 02 SAS, over the weekend, but refused to interfere with the high court's September 11 order. The high court had directed the low-cost airline to ground three engines and return them within 15 days after SpiceJet failed to pay outstanding lease rentals.

"If you don't comply, then you have to return the engines," the bench, also comprising justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, warned the airline during the hearing.

In response, SpiceJet informed the court that it was already in discussions to settle the payments and was prepared to make payments immediately. The airline added that while two engines were already grounded, arranging a stand to return the engines would take at least a month, even though they were required to be handed over within 15 days.

But the bench refused to entertain the petition any further and affirmed the high court directive. It further observed that the airline was at liberty to approach the high court for modification of the deadline in appropriate proceedings.

The development follows a string of judicial decisions against SpiceJet. Earlier this month, a division bench of the Delhi high court had declined to overturn a single judge's August 14 order directing the grounding of the engines leased by the two France-based lessors.

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INDIAN EXPRESS

NEW DELHI

22 SEPTEMBER 2024

Air India refunds fare to Indian-American CEO after his 'worst first-class cabin' video

ENSECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 21

AIR INDIA has issued a full fare refund to Anip Patel, a passenger whose video of the shabby state of the first-class cabin on a Chicago-Delhi flight went viral recently.

In the video, which Patel posted on Instagram earlier this week, he had said that his first class seat in the flight was priced at \$6,300. Patel, founder of a Chicago-based venture capital firm, later wrote in the comments section of the video that Air India reached out to him and refunded the fare.

"I did not file any complaint with @airindia but through social media they saw this video—they called me today and refunded my entire flight...they did make it right and it's worth noting," Patel commented on his Instagram video. The airline has not yet commented on the incident or the refund to Patel.

The video—which showed the cabin in a poor state with damaged interiors, dirty carpets, and broken in-flight entertainment system—clocked over eight million views on Instagram and caused embarrassment to the Tata group carrier, which is in the process of upgrading its fleet and product,



and aims to become a "world class airline". A number of people who commented on the video asked if the airline refunded the fare just because the video had gone viral, and it they do the same for all passengers who go through such an experience. Although Air India has taken on lease a number of newer wide-body aircraft with upgraded cabins and inducted a handful of its own new planes as well, a number of the airline's long-haul and ultra-long-haul flights are still being operated by its old legacy aircraft from the airline's government ownership days. The Boeing 777 operating the Chicago-Delhi flight in this case is one such aircraft.

The airline recently started its \$400-million refit programme to upgrade the cabins of its legacy fleet and spruce up the product. However, this exer-

cise will first see the old narrow-body planes being retrofitted and upgraded first, and the process for the old wide-body jets—40 in number—is expected to start only after a few months. This means that it will be a while before long-haul flights operated by the legacy aircraft will have an upgraded cabin.

In his video, Patel started by saying, "Come with me on the worst first-class cabin I've ever been on." He said that his one-way flight cost \$6,300, and then proceeded to highlight the various issues he faced during the journey. "Look at how gross this is," he said, pointing to the worn and damaged state of the cabin. "There were things moving in every compartment, everything was ripped, or had little wear on it. I understand regular wear and tear, but this was next level."

His frustration extended to the food service. "This was the food menu. It looked very promising, but of course, 30 per cent of its items were not available. They only had one of each item. Four of us were in the entire cabin, and it was basically first come, first served," he said.

Patel was also miffed as the in-flight entertainment system did not work during the 15-hour flight from Chicago to Delhi.

FULL REPORT ON
www.indianexpress.com

AI hired 9,000 employees in 2 years: CEO



NEW DELHI: Air India has hired 9,000 employees, including 5,000 crew members, in the last two years to meet the workforce requirement for its expanding fleet and network, the airline's chief Campbell Wilson said on Friday.

In a message to staff, he said the airline's domestic market share rose from 24 per cent in FY23 to 27 per cent in FY24 and the international market share climbed from 21 per cent to 24 per cent during the same period, on the back of network expansion and service improvements.

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Expanding AI's punctuality woes leave flyers frustrated

Delay In Int'l Flights Testing Patience Of Loyal Customers

Saurabh.Sinha
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: "Set your watches boys, we are right on schedule." A beaming J R D Tata had remarked when Air India's (AI) maiden international flight, which left Bombay on June 8, 1948, for London via Cairo and Geneva, reached its destination the next day. That's folklore for AI passengers now, especially those taking its USP medium to ultra long hauls, due to frequent long delays.

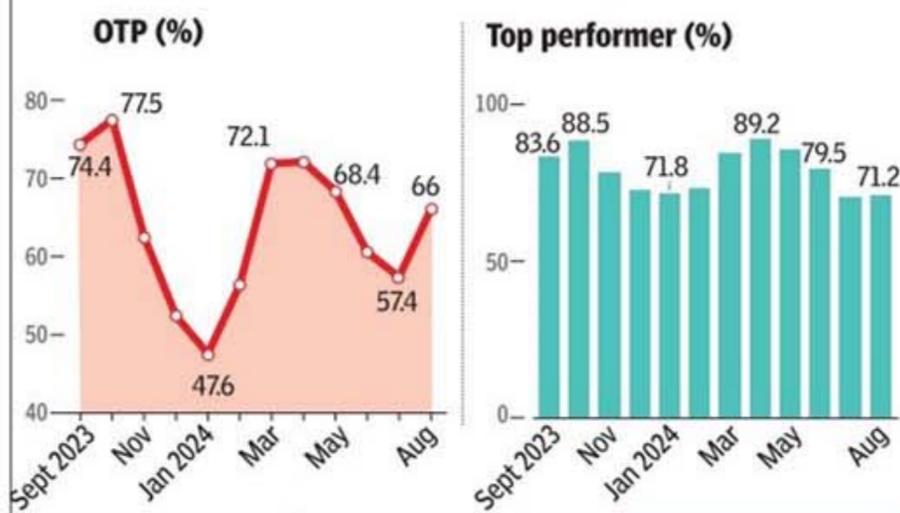
While nobody expected miracles within two-and-a-half years of the airline returning to founder Tata Group in Jan 2022 after nearly seven decades as a PSU, AI's poor on time performance (OTP) is now irking and inconveniencing passengers who prefer not to look at their watches on delayed flights. Vistara, which was more punctual, will be merged into AI on Nov 12.

Sample this: On Aug 31, 2024, Mumbai-London AI 129 left nearly nine hours after its scheduled departure time of 5.15am. The same day, Mumbai-New York (JFK) left after a 12-hour delay. AI 129, flight tracking sites show, left after 2pm on Aug 28, 29 and 30. And on Aug 23 and 24, it left after 8am. The list of delays is an endless one. A flight operating within 15 minutes of its scheduled departure/arrival time is considered on time.

AI's domestic punctuality is also in the pits. Only struggling-to-survive SpiceJet and Alliance Air have seen worse OTP than it in recent months, as per DGCA data (see box). But passengers have options on domestic routes. AI's domestic market share in CY

TURBULENT TIMES

AI's domestic on-time performance: Only Alliance Air and SpiceJet fare worse in most months



AI 129: Mumbai-London. Scheduled departure time: **5.15am**

> Since July 24, 2024, over 2 hour delays on 14 days. About nine-hour delays between Aug 28 & Sept 1

AI 119: Mumbai-JFK. Scheduled departure time: **1.40am**

> Since July 23, 2024, over 3 hour delays on 5 days. On Aug 31, left at 3.20pm, on Aug 25 at 9am

The long delays

- > Mumbai-SFO AI 179 of Aug 26 went next day
- > Mumbai-SFO AI 179 of May 24 delayed by 18 hours
- > Delhi-SFO of May 30 by over 30 hours
- > June 1 Delhi-Vancouver by over 20 hours

Source: DGCA, Flightaware

2023 was 9.7%. International, however, is another story. AI offers the maximum medium to ultra long haul nonstops to North America, Europe, Far East and Australia.

On many routes like Delhi-Chicago/San Francisco

so crucial for the airline.

According to OAG, the top three airlines for international capacity share from India in April 2024 were Air India (20%), IndiGo (17%) and Emirates (7%).

Comments were sought

Stakeholders say the common reasons for AI's poor performance include engineering and maintenance issues that are leading to poor technical dispatch reliability; frequent grounding of aircraft due to snags; spare shortage and poor crew planning

(SFO)/Washington; Mumbai-New York/SFO and Bengaluru-SFO, AI is the only direct service. For North America, AI direct flights are the fastest option as the airline overflies Russia and takes the shortest route. Delay of these flights is testing the patience of the loyal customer base of diaspora and Indian globetrotters that are

from AI on its international flight delays — why they are happening with such regularity and what is being about the same — and were awaited till the time of going to press.

Recently, DGCA had to intervene after three back-to-back really long delays this summer: Mumbai-SFO AI 179 of May 24 by 18 hours; Delhi-SFO of May 30 by over

30 hours and June 1 Delhi-Vancouver by over 20 hours. "AI is time and again failing in taking due care of passengers," the DGCA notice at that time said. DGCA does not give OTP figures for international flights.

TOI spoke to a cross section of stakeholders to find out the reason for AI's poor performance. The common reasons — engineering and maintenance issues that are leading to poor technical dispatch reliability; frequent grounding of aircraft due to snags; spare shortage and poor crew planning.

"In this backdrop, AI has bitten off more than it can chew in terms of having so many flights which it cannot operate without frequent delays or seeing cancellations. They are over-sweating the planes," said sources. AI has both added a number of international flights.

Multiple stakeholders spoke about a management disconnect with the ground realities and the new managers not taking the legacy team along. "They have antagonised the old key employees and keep criticising them. So many long-time employees now feel disconnected. Everything is on multiple apps and emails. If something is to be reported, do so by email. A reply may come a few days later," said multiple people.

Even AI insiders admit that these issues will not get resolved just by inducting new aircraft. AI Engineering Services Ltd (AIESL) was hived off when AI was privatised. "Systems and processes have to be in place. Our long hauls operate on the edge of the maximum carrying capacity and limit of aircraft. Even a small issue means leaving passengers or baggage behind; delaying or cancelling flights. Bombay House (Tata HQ) is seized of the matter; is watching the situation closely and is asking the questions that need to be asked," they said.

Corporate Communications Directorate

TIMES OF INDIA

HYDERABAD

21 SEPTEMBER 2024

Post 'worst 1st class' flight from US, AI refunds flyer

One-Way Trip Had Cost Man ₹5.3 Lakh

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Air India has issued a refund to a passenger who had the "worst first class" experience on a Chicago-Delhi flight that cost him \$6,300 (Rs 5.3 lakh) for a one-way ride.

The seats and carpet were extremely dirty and had stains; its inflight entertainment (IFE) didn't work during the 15-hour flight; "30%" of the food options on the menu weren't available, according to Anip Patel. Founder of a Chicago-based VC firm CaPatel Investments, Patel shot a video of his harrowing experience and posted it on Instagram. The video went viral, garnering thousands of views.

Complaints like these have been mounting, especially for passengers flying Air In-



Pic for representation

The Tata Group had taken over AI in Jan 2022

dia's old wide-body aircraft that are still some years from a desperately-needed revamp. On many international sectors, especially the US, AI is the only non-stop option for flyers who pay lakhs (up to Rs 16 lakh for return first class fare) to fly these monopoly routes.

The Tatas-owned AI has been issuing refunds to passengers of some flights in recent months delayed by many hours or even days. Now it has started issuing refunds for broken seats too, as with this latest case.

"I recently endured a 15-

hour non-stop flight from Chicago to Delhi, and it was far from pleasant. I had heard negative things about Air India in the past, but I was hoping the recent changes under new management would improve experience. Unfortunately, that wasn't the case.... IFE was down the entire flight. First class was in poor condition—unclean, with leftover food and trash still in the cabin and everything looked worn out or broken. It was a pretty frustrating experience overall. Be aware if you're flying with them," Patel said on Insta.

According to Patel, everything was "ripped, ruined". "(Meal service) was the first come first served for the four passengers in first class. I understand regular wear and tear. But this was next level. I did not file any complaint with Air India but through social media they saw this video. They called me and refunded my entire flight (fare)... they did make it right and it's worth noting," Patel said on Insta.

Comments were sought from AI on this most recent refund and reply awaited till the time of going to press.

Other unhappy AI fliers have also vented their ire. A passenger posted on X from handle @HumeraPathan on Sept 19 about another poor experience. "Terrible experience on Air India Mumbai-Newark (New York) flight. Broken tray, reading lights continuously blinking and no entertainment system on a 16-hour (flight). All this when AI is charging the highest fare for this sector," @HumeraPathan wrote.

After 'worst 1st class' flight from US, AI refunds flyer

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AIRING GRIEVANCE

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► 'Ripped and ruined', P 16

Everything was 'ripped, ruined' in first class on AI US flight: Patel

► From P 1

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This Monday (Sept 16), AI finally started implementing its \$400-million revamp programme for 27 Airbus A320neos and 40 widebody Boeing (777 and 787s) aircraft. In a phased manner, first the Airbus and then the Boeing planes will get new seats, carpets, curtains, upholstery and modern cabins. Upgradation of the full narrowbody fleet is expected by mid-2025, followed by widebody aircraft.

This means passengers who fly long-hauls on AI's old planes, still have a long wait before they can be assured of a decent onboard experience.

Post 'worst 1st class' flight from US, AI refunds flyer

One-Way Trip Cost Man ₹5.3L

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The Tata Group had taken over AI in Jan 2022 with its dilapidated fleet that had not seen any upkeep or renovation during its last few years as a cash-strapped PSU. Global supply chain issues created by Covid, and aggravated by Russia's war on Ukraine, means renovating the old fleet is taking much longer than anticipated. The airline's on-time performance has nosedived.