

Expansion project of Mysuru Airport to take off soon

SHILPA P
MYSURU, DHNS

The expansion and upgrading project of Mysuru Airport has gained momentum, with the completion of the land acquisition with the Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board (KIADB) completing land acquisition.

The KSIIDC (Karnataka State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation), the nodal agency, is expected to hand over the land to the Airports Authority of India (AAI), once the KIADB ensures that the land is free from any encumbrance, by clearing all pending compensation.

While 240 acres is required for the expansion of the runway of the Airport, the KIADB has acquired 206.12 acres. The rest is government land.

Special Land Acquisition Officer (SLO) of KIADB N C Venkatraju said that they got 181.12 acres of land with the consent of landowners.

For the remaining 18 acres land, they have written to the head office of the KIADB, to get an approval for payment of compensation. Once this process is completed, the land will be handed over to the AAI via KSIIDC, he said.

Re-survey

Mysuru Airport Director P V Usha Kumari said, that the KSIIDC, KIADB, CNIL, KPTCL, and NHAI, conducted a re-survey of the land in Mandakalli and Marashe villages in the presence of AAI officials from February 9 to 12.

"There are plans for underground cabling of HT and LT electric lines of the KPTCL and construction of UG box tunnels for five canals of the Irrigation department in the land needed for Airport expansion. They have planned a diversion of NH-766, with NHAI funds near Mysuru-Nanjangud



Mysuru is expected to attract more investors and tourists with its upgradation as Greater Mysuru. DH FILE PHOTO

Road. The primary security clearance is obtained for all the works. For expert clearance, the authorities have written to BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security)."

The existing 1,740-metre runway can accommodate ATR-72 type of aircraft (with 72-seat capacity). Now it is planned to expand it up to 2,300 metres in the first phase and up to 2,750 metres in the second phase.

With this, the Airport can handle Airbus 320, wide-bodied Boeing-737, Globemaster and similar national and international aircraft with over 180-seat capacity.

The Airports Authority of India confirmed the master plan for the Airport on October 6, 2025. Once the land is handed over, it will come up with a DPR, develop the land and take up the expansion and upgrading process.

Currently two Indigo flights are operating from Mysuru Airport to Chennai and Hyderabad, with 100% occupancy.

Usha Kumari said that there is a demand for flights to Kochi, Goa, Mumbai, Calicut, Mangaluru and Tirupati. The Civil Aviation Ministry has given clearance for All India Air operation. The Ministry will give clearance for slots to different sectors, once it begins operations, likely in September."



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

'Relook Schengen entry/exit system'

Airports Council International (ACI) Europe, Airlines for Europe (A4E) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) have warned that the Schengen entry/exit system (EES) continues to cause significant delays for passengers. In the absence of immediate action to provide sufficient flexibility, severe disruptions are likely over the peak summer months, with queues potentially involving four-hour waits or more.



In a letter to Magnus Brunner, EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, airports and airlines, ACI said waiting times reached up to two hours at airport border control as the current stage of the EES progressive rollout mandated that 35 per cent of all third country nationals entering the Schengen zone must be registered. It urged the European Commission to confirm that Schengen member states will retain the ability to partially or totally suspend EES until end-October 2026.



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BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

DoT directs Noida airport to allow telecom firms to set up mobile network infrastructure

Vallari Sanzgiri
Mumbai

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has directed the Noida airport authorities to allow telecom companies to set up mobile network infrastructure, recognising the airport as a public entity. This comes shortly after the government instructed the Navi Mumbai airport authorities to do the same.

"It is clarified that, in terms of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, Noida International Airport qualifies as a public entity for the purpose of the said Act and the rules framed thereunder. Accordingly, the obligations



and responsibilities prescribed for public entities under the Act are applicable," said the DoT in its letter to the Yamuna International Airport (YIAPL), granting right of way (RoW) to telcos. The letter concludes another clash between telecom bodies and public entity authorities that

have resisted telcos' RoW. Such issues have cropped up over the last 20 years, with some public entities arguing for their own or third-party infrastructure.

COAI WRITES TO DOT

The Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) has also written to DoT regarding the difficulties faced by licensed telecom service providers (TSPs) in establishing telecom infrastructure as authorities asked TSPs to use in-building telecom network at charges deemed unreasonably high.

In its latest order, the DoT said the Telecommunications Act, 2023, read with the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024,

provides a statutory framework for grant of RoW permissions to licensed TSPs for establishment, operation and maintenance of telecommunication networks.

"The provisions mandate non-discriminatory, fair and transparent processing of RoW applications within the prescribed timelines and conditions," it said.

The COAI had also asked the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to cap costs for in-building telecom infrastructure in public spaces, stating that cost-based price ceilings help avoid rent-seeking behaviour, delays in network rollout and direct consumer harm, especially when a single entity controls the access to an essential service.



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BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

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‘हवाईअड्डे पर मुहैया कराई जाए दूरसंचार फर्मों की कनेक्टिविटी’

दूरसंचार विभाग ने नोएडा इंटरनैशनल एयरपोर्ट से कहा है कि वह लाइसेंस प्राप्त दूरसंचार सेवा प्रदाताओं को दूरसंचार अधिनियम 2023 के अनुसार अपना नेटवर्क स्थापित करने की इजाजत दे।

ज्यूरिख एयरपोर्ट इंटरनैशनल एजी की 100 प्रतिशत स्वामित्व वाली सहायक कंपनी यमुना इंटरनैशनल एयरपोर्ट प्राइवेट लिमिटेड (वाईआईएपीएल) को 19 फरवरी को लिख पत्र में यह निर्देश जारी किया गया है। कंपनी उत्तर प्रदेश के जेवर में हवाईअड्डे का परिचालन करती है। इससे कुछ दिन पहले ही नवी मुंबई इंटरनैशनल एयरपोर्ट लिमिटेड को इसी तरह के निर्देश जारी किए गए थे।

बीएस



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BUSINESS STANDARD

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Commercial ops begin at new terminal of Guwahati airport

The new terminal at Lokapriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport (LGBIA) in Guwahati began commercial operations on Sunday, with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma welcoming the first batch of passengers. The new terminal was ceremonially inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 20 last. The operationalisation followed phased live trials covering check-in, baggage handling, security and aircraft turnaround before full deployment. The commencement of operations was marked by the issuance of a ceremonial boarding pass to the first departing passenger and the arrival of an Akasa Air flight from Mumbai. en

Allow telco networks: DoT to Jewar airport

Says airport is public entity, YIAPL must grant RoW permission

GULVEEN AULAKH
New Delhi, 22 February

The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked Noida International Airport to allow licensed telecom service providers to set up their networks in accordance with the Telecommunications Act, 2023.

The direction was issued to Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL), a wholly owned subsidiary of Zurich Airport International AG that operates the airport in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh. The letter, dated February 19, was sent a few days after a similar communication to Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited.

This is aimed at ensuring that customers do not face mobile connectivity issues once commercial flights begin in the coming months. This will also prevent a repeat of the situation at Navi Mumbai International Airport, where hundreds of flyers had to rely solely on Wi-Fi within the terminal when operations began in December last year due to the absence of mobile network coverage.

In its letter, the DoT directed YIAPL to grant right of way (RoW) permissions within the airport premises to licensed telecom operators and sought compliance with the RoW rules under the Act, explicitly stating that the airport qualifies as a public entity.

"It is clarified that, in terms of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, Noida International Airport qualifies as a 'public entity' for the purposes of the said Act and the rules framed thereunder. Accordingly, the obligations and responsibilities prescribed



Telecom access

- RoW permissions must follow fair, transparent statutory framework
- Move aims to prevent connectivity issues at airport launch
- Dispute over high in-building charges continues with operators
- COAI seeks Trai cost-based pricing framework for infrastructure

for public entities under the Act are applicable," the letter noted. A copy of the communication was seen by *Business Standard*.

The DoT added that the Telecommunications Act, 2023, read with the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024, provides a statutory framework for granting permissions to facility providers, including telecom service providers, for the establishment, operation and maintenance of telecom networks. "The provisions mandate non-discriminatory, fair and transparent processing of RoW applications within the prescribed timelines and conditions," the department said.

"You are requested to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023,

and the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024 while processing applications for grant of RoW permissions within your premises, and to take necessary action to facilitate the establishment of telecom infrastructure in accordance with the statutory framework," the letter stated.

YIAPL had not responded to queries from *Business Standard* until the time of going to press.

This is the second such intervention by the DoT amid an ongoing dispute involving Adani Airport Holdings Limited, which operates the Navi Mumbai airport. The operator had asked carriers Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea to pay charges to run services inside the airport, which the telecom players termed as "unreasonably high".

Telecom companies argued that the charges were grossly disproportionate to the underlying costs and significantly exceeded the capital and operating expenditure typically required to deploy an independent in-building network solution.

Sources said the two sides were back on the negotiating table following the DoT's February 16 letter, with efforts under way to resolve the issue. They added that telecom players were also negotiating with the Noida airport operator along similar lines.

Meanwhile, industry body Cellular Operators Association of India has sought the intervention of Telecom Regulatory Authority of India to develop a cost-based pricing framework, including ceilings for in-building telecom infrastructure at public or captive premises, such as metro stations and airports.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

DoT Asks Noida Airport to Let Telcos Build Networks

Says intl airport a public entity, seeks non-discriminatory access for telcos; move to help avoid Navi Mumbai-like standoff

Our Bureau

New Delhi: The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has asked the upcoming Noida International Airport to allow telecom operators to set up in-building networks in a non-discriminatory, fair, and transparent manner in a bid to avoid a standoff similar to the one at the Navi Mumbai airport. DoT said the Noida airport is a public entity under the Telecommunications Act.

DoT issued the note after the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), a lobby group of telecom companies, sought pre-emptive clarification on right of way (RoW) per-

missions at Noida airport. The Navi Mumbai airport authorities didn't allow the companies to install their own infrastructure, turning the airport into a no-network zone.

"It is clarified, in terms of the Telecommunications Act, 2023, Noida International Airport qualifies as a 'public entity' for the purposes of the said Act and the rules framed thereunder," DoT said in a letter sent to the CEO of Yamuna International Airport Pvt.Ltd., the operator of the airport, on February 19. "Accordingly, the obligations and responsibilities prescribed for the public entities under the Act are applicable."

Making the Net-Work

Navi Mumbai airport authorities didn't allow telcos to install infra

Airport turned into no-network zone

Passengers have to log in to public WiFi to use internet



DoT writes to Yamuna Intl Airport Pvt Ltd

Says Noida airport a public entity under Telecom Act, 2023

Provisions mandate non-discriminatory, fair & transparent processing of RoW applications

ET has seen a copy of the letter. Passengers using the Navi Mumbai airport haven't been able to access mobile networks and have to instead log in to public WiFi to use the internet. The letter to Noida airport ad-

ded that the rules under the act provides a statutory framework to grant RoW permissions to facility providers including licensed operators to establish, operate and maintain telecom networks within the

premises of a public building. "The provisions mandate non-discriminatory, fair, and transparent processing of RoW applications within the prescribed timeline and conditions," the letter said.

A similar letter was sent to Navi Mumbai airport authorities earlier in February providing the same clarification. Telcos expect authorities at that airport to soon grant the necessary permissions needed to set up their own infrastructure.

The Adani-run Navi Mumbai airport had asked telcos to use its exclusive in-building telecom network. The telecom companies said the charges for this were unreasonably high.

Similar issues are being faced by telcos at the newly inaugurated Aqua Line of the Mumbai Metro, where a third party has set up the network and wants telcos to pay for its use. Telecom operators have so far refused, stating that the charges being sought are exorbitant and commercially untenable. They have approached other privately run airport authorities to prevent any similar conflicts from arising and had asked DoT to intervene in a meeting on December 30.

The COAI, in an earlier letter sent to the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India in January, said the Navi Mumbai issue was not an isolated case.

Jewar airport asked to clear telecom RoW

URVI MALVANIA &
YARUQHULLAH KHAN
Mumbai/New Delhi,
February 22

THE DEPARTMENT OF Telecommunications (DoT) has informed Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL), operator of the upcoming Noida International Airport at Jewar, that it qualifies as a "public entity" under the Telecommunications Act, 2023, and must process Right of Way (RoW) applications from telecom service providers in accordance with the law.

In a letter dated February 19, which FE has seen a copy of, the DoT said the Telecommunications Act, 2023, read with the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024, provides a statutory framework for granting RoW permissions to licensed telecom operators and other facility providers for the establishment, operation and maintenance of telecom networks.

The communication also clarifies that the obligations prescribed for public entities under the Act apply to the Jewar airport operator, including fair, transparent and non-discriminatory processing of RoW applications within prescribed timelines.

"In view of the above, you are requested to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Telecommunications Act, 2023 and the Telecommunications (Right of Way) Rules, 2024 while processing applications for grant of RoW permissions within your premises..."

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FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Jewar airport asked to clear telecom RoW

...AND TO TAKE necessary action to facilitate establishment of telecom infrastructure in accordance with the statutory framework," the letter signed by AS Negi, under secretary to the Government of India read.

The missive was addressed to the chief executive officer, Yamuna International Airport Private Limited and a copy was marked to the secretary at the ministry of civil aviation.

Executives from Yamuna International Airport told FE that the airport is in contact with telecom operators and will work with operators to deploy mobile networks across the airport. "Deployment of telecom networks at Noida International Airport will not take long; telecom operators will need 10-15 days to deploy their in-building solutions (IBS) networks across the airport," a senior executive from the airport told FE.

Noida International Airport had earlier planned a third-party telecom system, charging operators about ₹67 lakh monthly each (around ₹32.16 crore annually for the three private telcos, and BSNL). The airport also signed Tech Mahindra in December 2025 for a NOC-SOC. Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea had opposed limits on deploying their own IBS networks. It is yet unclear what role Tech Mahindra will

play in the mix now.

This directive follows a similar letter sent to Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited (NMIAL). In that case, the DoT referred to a representation from the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI) regarding difficulties faced by telecom service providers in establishing infrastructure at the Navi Mumbai airport. The department noted that RoW permissions had allegedly not been granted and that operators were instead required to use an exclusive in-building telecom network.

The DoT similarly clarified that Navi Mumbai International Airport qualifies as a public entity under the Telecommunications Act and directed the airport operator to ensure compliance with the Act and the RoW Rules while processing applications and facilitating telecom infrastructure.

The twin communications come amid ongoing friction between telecom operators and infrastructure operators at new transport hubs over control of in-building networks and access terms.

A separate dispute between telecom operators and Mumbai Metro Rail Corporation, which operates Mumbai's Aqualine Metro, over telecom infrastructure access, remains unresolved.



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

गुवाहाटी एयरपोर्ट के नए टर्मिनल से उड़ानें शुरू

गुवाहाटी। गुवाहाटी के गोपीनाथ बोरदोलोई अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डे के नए टर्मिनल से रविवार को व्यावसायिक ऑपरेशन शुरू हो गए। असम के मुख्यमंत्री हिमंत बिस्वा सरमा ने यात्रियों के पहले बैच का स्वागत किया। नए टर्मिनल का बीते 20 दिसंबर को प्रधानमंत्री नरेन्द्र मोदी ने उद्घाटन किया था। हवाई अड्डे का संचालन अडाणी एयरपोर्ट होल्डिंग्स लिमिटेड करती है।

FARE FRAUD | Recent incidents include overcharging & drivers linked to app-based aggregators accepting illegal bookings

How passengers fall prey at Mumbai's int'l airport

Megha Kuchik
MUMBAI

Over the past few years, repeated complaints of taxi and auto-rickshaw drivers allegedly cheating passengers outside Mumbai's international airport have raised serious concerns about passenger safety and regulation. Despite incidents involving both Indian and foreign travellers, the problem persists with limited long-term enforcement.

In the most recent case, a foreign national was charged around Rs18,000 for a taxi ride to a hotel just 400 metres from the terminal.

Recent incidents also include overcharging and drivers linked to app-based aggregators accepting illegal offline bookings. Passenger accounts and complaints over the last two to three years suggest incidents are increasing. Many victims share experiences only on social media without formal police complaints, complicating enforcement.

Individual drivers are occasionally booked, but no special or sustained drive targets those cheating outside the airport.

Late-night or long-haul international arrivals are especially vulnerable due to fatigue, unfamiliarity with fares, and long waits for app-based cabs — often 30 minutes or more. Regulations bar aggregator drivers from approaching passengers in designated areas; rides must go through authorised apps or prepaid counters. Yet, unauthorised drivers exploit waits by offering rides at inflated rates — sometimes double the normal fare — and many passengers accept for quicker departures.

A couple returning from Thailand was approached out-



Common scams
Overcharging
Fake fare apps
Tampered meters
Illegal offline bookings
Long routes (long-hauling)
Forced fare negotiation

How to stay safe
Use prepaid counters
Book through official apps
Avoid touts
Check meter
Pay digitally
Report complaints



side the terminal for a ride to Wadala. After agreeing on a fare, another person joined and demanded immediate payment; they paid 1,000 Thai Baht (around Rs3,300).

In December 2024, an Australian NRI businessman arriving around midnight was charged Rs2,800 via a counterfeit fare app for a 10-minute trip to Vile Parle.

Another December 2024 case saw a 19-year-old student from the US charged Rs3,500 by an auto-rickshaw driver to Dadar, despite the meter showing only Rs106.

In October 2024, a driver was arrested for using a tampered meter with a hidden switch to inflate fares, exposed by a viral social media video.

Urish Kamath, Co-Convenor of the Mumbai North Central District Forum (MNCDF), has raised the issue for nearly two years, submitting multiple complaints.

He alleges a nexus between certain taxi/auto-rickshaw drivers, police, and authorities. "A month ago, we filed a complaint against an auto driver who demanded higher fare after 100 metres or asked

the passenger to alight. Such cases happen frequently outside the airport, but no action follows," Kamath said.

Police state they act on complaints, conduct regular patrols, remove unlicensed or illegal drivers, and coordinate with aggregators. "We take proactive steps, though many passengers don't lodge formal complaints," an officer said.

Shashank Rao of the Mumbai Auto-Rickshaw Taximen's Union called for strict action: "Passengers should not be cheated. Authorities and airport security must act against unauthorised drivers."

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) authority advises using metered taxis, app-based cabs, or car rentals at designated pick-up points. Auto-rickshaws are metered, operate in suburbs, and show fare charts. The airport warns against unauthorised agents and urges use of official facilities.

Despite periodic action and repeated complaints, fare scams continue. Experts call for stronger enforcement, better monitoring, and traveller awareness to curb the issue.



Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

GANGA-YAMUNA E-WAY LINK MOVES AHEAD UP sanctions Rs 1,204 cr for link e-way to Noida Airport

DIPIKA KIROLA

GREATER NOIDA: The Uttar Pradesh Government has sanctioned Rs 1,204 crore for land acquisition for a 74.3 km access-controlled green-field expressway that will link the Ganga Expressway with the Yamuna Expressway, providing faster connectivity to the upcoming Noida International Airport.

The funds were approved with the Governor's consent and released by the Infrastructure and Industrial Development Department for the 2025-26 financial year, following a proposal submitted by the Uttar Pradesh Express-

ways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA). The sanctioned amount will be utilised to acquire land within the notified area of the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA).

Officials said UPEIDA will act as the nodal executing agency for the project. After YEIDA completes land acquisition within its jurisdiction and the Bulandshahr district administration finalises acquisition proceedings in its area, the land will be transferred to UPEIDA for detailed design, tendering and construction. The authority will also ensure seamless integration of the new corridor with the exist-

ing expressway network, while adhering to prescribed timelines and cost parameters.

The total project cost is estimated at around Rs 4,000 crore. Land acquisition will cover approximately 740 acres across 56 villages — 16 in Gautam Budh Nagar district and the remainder in Bulandshahr district, including villages in the Khurja, Syana and Shikarpur tehsils.

The expressway will begin at the 44.3 km mark of the Ganga Expressway near Syana and join the Yamuna Expressway at the 24.8 km point near YEIDA Sector 21, with about 20 km, including 9 km elevated, within YEIDA limits.



Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

KOLKATA

22 FEBRUARY 2026

Navi Mumbai airport launches DigiYatra at its facility

MUMBAI: Navi Mumbai International Airport (NMIA) has announced the launch of DigiYatra at its facility, nearly two months after the commencement of commercial operations.

NMIA digitally joined the Civil Aviation Ministry's nationwide DigiYatra rollout alongside five other airports across the country, the private airport operator said in a statement on Friday.

The inauguration was conducted remotely, with the proceedings streamed live inside the terminal for visiting passengers, it said, adding that to mark the occasion, three passengers ceremonially used the DigiYatra e-gates and performed a ribbon-cutting at the biometric entry points.

DigiYatra leverages facial recognition technology to enable contactless and paperless passenger processing at airport checkpoints, reducing wait times while incorporating robust data privacy and security safeguards, NMIA said. PTI



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE PIONEER

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

RUSSIA

All 4 Moscow airports closed

All four international airports of the Russian capital were closed due to safety concerns on Sunday afternoon until further notice, as air defence forces shot down 11 Ukrainian drones within an hour.

The Russian civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia said in a press release that air traffic restrictions have been imposed at all four international airports - Domodedovo, Vnukovo, Zhukovsky and Sheremetyevo – due to safety concerns.

"Air defences have intercepted another UAV flying towards Moscow," Mayor Sergey Sobyenin said on his Max channel.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ASIAN AGE

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

Initial report on Ajit crash by Feb. 28

■ *NCP-SP cites safety violation* ■ *'DGCA addressed all concerns'*

BHAGWAN PARAB
MUMBAI, FEB. 22

In a major announcement, Union minister of state for civil aviation Murlidhar Mohol on Sunday said that the preliminary report on the Learjet 45 plane crash in Baramati, in which NCP leader Ajit Pawar and four others died, will be released on or before February 28. The report assumes significance following the allegations of NCP(SP) MLA Rohit Pawar, who has accused

the VSR Ventures company that owned the aircraft of violating safety norms.

"The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has already released a press statement stating that it is mandatory to submit a report as per the rules within a month. Therefore, the preliminary report on Ajit Pawar's plane crash will come out before February 28. It will be appropriate to talk more about this incident only after that report comes," said Mr Mohol in Pune.

▶ **THE NCP(SP) MLA has raised concerns about potential irregularities linked to the aircraft's ownership and operation, calling for a comprehensive probe**

The NCP(SP) MLA has raised concerns about potential irregularities linked to the aircraft's ownership and operation, calling for a comprehensive probe. He has suggested connections between the aircraft company and civil aviation

minister Ram Mohan Naidu's party, demanding Mr Naidu's resignation pending investigation completion.

"Serious questions have been raised about the company VSR and its links with Rammohan Naidu's party (the TDP). These links must be investigated by an independent and competent authority, preferably in collaboration with international agencies," Ms Pawar wrote in a letter to Union home minister Amit

■ **Turn to Page 4**

Initial report on Ajit crash by Feb. 28

■ **Continued from Page 1**
Shah. The civil aviation ministry insists that the DGCA has already addressed all concerns. "The regulatory bodies remain fully committed to transparency, safety oversight and accountability. Stakeholders are requested to refrain from speculation and allow the statutory investigation and regulatory processes to proceed in accordance with established procedures," it has said.

According to ICAO norms, the preliminary report on the investigation into the Learjet 45 (VT-SSK) crash at Baramati has to be issued within 30 days of the occurrence of the accident. The final report will follow in due course, the ministry said.

Ajit Pawar and four others were killed on January 28 after their Learjet 45 crashed some distance away from Baramati airport.



Corporate Communications Directorate

AMAR UJALA

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

धूल भरी आंधी से इंडिगो की फ्लाइट इंपाल डायवर्ट

डिब्रुगढ़। असम के डिब्रुगढ़ हवाई अड्डे पर तेज धूल भरी आंधी की वजह से अहमदाबाद से 144 यात्रियों को लेकर आ रही इंडिगो की फ्लाइट को रविवार को इंपाल डायवर्ट कर दिया गया। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि आंधी की वजह से दृश्यता बेहद कम हो गई थी। अचानक इस तरह से मौसम बदलने की वजह से चालक दल ने तुरंत फ्लाइट 6ई-6457 का रास्ता बदलकर उसे डिब्रुगढ़ के सबसे पास मणिपुर की राजधानी इंपाल ले जाने का फैसला लिया। डिब्रुगढ़ हवाई अड्डे के निदेशक बंगजीत साहा के मुताबिक, अहमदाबाद से गुवाहाटी होते हुए डिब्रुगढ़ आने वाली फ्लाइट 6ई-6457 सुबह 10.20 बजे गुवाहाटी के मशहूर गोपीनाथ बोरोदोलोई अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डे से रवाना हुई। उन्होंने कहा, इसे सुबह 11.15 बजे डिब्रुगढ़ हवाई अड्डे पर उतरना था। लेकिन धूल भरी तेज आंधी आ गई। व्यरो



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RS DAINIK JAGRAN

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

28 फरवरी को जारी होगी पवार के विमान हादसे की पहली रिपोर्ट

पुणे, प्रेट : केंद्रीय नागर विमानन राज्य मंत्रों और पुणे के सांसद मुरलीधर मोहोल ने कहा कि रकांपा नेता अजीत पवार की जान लेने वाले विमान हादसे की प्रारंभिक रिपोर्ट 28 फरवरी को य इससे पहले जारी होगी। अजीत पवार और चार अन्य लोगों की 28 जनवरी को बारमती हवाई अड्डे के निकट एक विमान दुर्घटना में मृत्यु हो गई थी। मीडिया से बात करते हुए उन्होंने कहा कि प्रारंभिक रिपोर्ट घटन के दिन से एक महीने के भीतर 28 फरवरी को या उससे पहले जारी कर दी जाएगी। इस घटन को लेकर कई तरह के कयास लगाए जा रहे हैं। शरद पवार के भतीजे रोहित पवार ने विमान कंपनी से जुड़ी कुछ अनियमितताओं और अन्य तकनीकी गड़बड़ियों का टाका किया था। उन्होंने साजिश की भी आशंका जताई थी। शनिवार को रोहित पवार ने प्रधानमंत्री

► इस घटना को लेकर लगाए जा रहे कई तरह के कयास



रोहित पवार
नागर विमानन
मंत्री के इस्तीफे
की कर चुके हैं
मांग

मुरलीधर मोहोल।

नरेन्द्र मोदी को पत्र लिखकर मांग की है कि दुर्घटना की जांच पूरी होने तक नागर विमानन मंत्री के. राम मोहन नायडू को पद से इस्तीफा देने के लिए कहा जाए। उन्होंने पत्र में कहा कि वाॅपसआर कंपनी और राममोहन नायडू की पार्टी (तेदेपा) से इसके संबंधों को लेकर गंभीर सवाल उठाए गए हैं। इन संबंधों की जांच एक स्वतंत्र और सक्षम प्राधिकार द्वारा की जानी चाहिए।

AFTER \$3B DEAL FOR ARMED 31 SEA AND SKYGUARDIAN MQ9B UAVS

GA Open to Offering MQ9Bs With Airborne Early Warning, Says Lall

Pranab Dhal Samanta

New Delhi: General Atomics, which already has a \$3b deal with India to supply armed 31 Sea/SkyGuardian MQ9B UAVs, is open to offering India its soon-to-be launched MQ9B version with Airborne Early Warning (AEW) capabilities as an option to improve upon the aircraft-based AWACS, GA Chief Executive Vivek Lall told *The Economic Times*.

The MQ9B-AEW marks the first attempt to integrate airborne early warning systems onto a UAV rather than a larger radar-equipped aircraft, enabling deeper, more persistent surveillance of air threats in enemy skies — an need also felt during Op Sindoor.

For a “winning approach” in today’s battlefield, Lall said India must invest not only in large strategic drones but also in a “layered ecosystem” spanning communications, indigenous payloads and a training pipeline that produces “operators and analysts as fast as platforms.”

As the maker of the SeaGuardian and SkyGuardian MQ9B — a high-altitude, long-endurance UAV — Lall said GA views India as a long-term strategic hub.

“The opportunity in India is not just to build platforms. It is to build an ecosystem — components, sub-assemblies, payload integration, software, training and long-term sustainment. If those fundamentals are in place, India will be more than a customer; it will be a strategic hub,” he said, pointing to GA’s partnership with L&T to manufacture Medium Altitude Long Endurance UAVs in India.

On how Sea/SkyGuardian class drones would have made a difference in Op Sindoor, Lall said such operations underscore the value of “persistent, high-quality intelligence and fast targeting,” particularly when the requirement is “precision, restraint and clear battle damage assessment.” The Sea/SkyGuardian platform, he added, is designed to “separate noise from signal.”

“That matters when the political and op-

MQ-9B Drone With AEW Capability



- **Detects and tracks** air threats at long range
- **Operates** in contested airspace without crew risk
- **Enables** persistent surveillance and faster targeting
- **Offers AWACS-like** capability at lower cost

On Op Sindoor: Modern conflict rewards persistent ISR, faster targeting loops and seamless cross-domain integration.

On China: The real competition lies not in individual UAV platforms but in China’s scale, ecosystem depth and rapid industrial iteration.



erational requirement is to be decisive without being reckless. They enable a cleaner chain — find, fix, track and, when authorised, engage — while maintaining a verified operational picture for commanders.”

The lesson from Op Sindoor, Lall said, is that modern conflict “rewards speed, integration and clarity of command”. UAVs, sensors, electronic warfare, air defence and precision fires must be fused into a single operational picture that commanders can act on swiftly across services, he added.

“When integration is strong, you get decisive effects with better control over escalation and collateral risk. When it is weak, decisions slow down and effort gets duplicated.”

Can UAVs swing battle outcomes? Lall said they can — but not in isolation. “What they really do is compress time. They shorten the sense-decide-act loop, expose movements that were once hidden, and make it harder for any force to mass, manoeuvre or resupply without being detected and struck.”

At the tactical level, he said, small drones and loitering munitions can dominate trenches, armour and artillery through persistent surveillance and rapid targeting. At the operational level, long-endurance UAVs enable wide-area coverage, including maritime domains, and provide deep-strike support at a “fraction of the cost” of manned platforms.

“That said, these aircraft do not replace combined arms. If an adversary fields competent electronic warfare, air defences, deception and disciplined emissions control, drones become more vulnerable. The side that prevails is typically the one that integrates drones into a broader kill chain — intelligence, targeting, fires and battle damage assessment — while also investing in robust counter-drone and electronic protection.”

According to Lall, India needs UAVs in scale that can operate across the Himalayas, deserts, dense urban terrain and expansive maritime approaches. “The right mix is not a single platform but layers: small, expendable systems near the front; medium platforms for brigade and division-level ISR; long-endurance systems that persist over land and sea; and a counter-drone architecture to protect bases, critical infrastructure and manoeuvre forces.”

Lall cautioned that while China’s closest equivalents to the Sky/SeaGuardian are medium-altitude, long-endurance strike and ISR platforms such as the Wing Loong family and the CH series, the larger challenge lies in Beijing’s ecosystem play. “The key point is that competition is not just a platform comparison. China is building breadth — multiple UAV types produced at scale, integrated with electronic warfare, data networks and an industrial base designed to iterate rapidly. That ecosystem is what makes them a serious competitor, even if individual subsystems differ in maturity.”

INDIA CAN BE HUB: LALL

The opportunity in India is not just to build platforms. It is to build an ecosystem. India could be a strategic hub: Lall



DEC FLIGHT DISRUPTION

IndiGo Replaces Head of Ops Control Centre

Press Trust of India

New Delhi: IndiGo has appointed Captain Rohit Rikhye as the new head of operations control centre (OCC) in place of Jason Herter, the first rejig at the airline's senior management level after the massive operational disruptions in December last year.

In January, aviation regulator DGCA took various actions against the airline, including imposing penalties totalling ₹22 crore and asking dismissal of a senior vice-president, in relation to the operational disruptions. In an internal communication on Friday, the airline



said Rohit Rikhye has been appointed as the Head of OCC with immediate effect. He would report to chief operating officer (COO) Isidre Porqueras.

Rikhye, who has been with the airline for over 11 years, was serving as chief pilot-standards, QA & Ops Safety.

Meanwhile, Herter is moving out of the airline.

According to the communication, Rikhye would lead the OCC, which manages real-time coordination and oversight of flight operations, including flight planning, tracking, and dispatch, in compliance with regulatory requirements like air traffic control rules and safety guidelines. He would also oversee crew scheduling and rostering.



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

इंडिगो की उड़ान आंधी के कारण इंफाल डायवर्ट

डिब्रूगढ़। अहमदाबाद से डिब्रूगढ़ जा रही इंडिगो की उड़ान को रविवार को आंधी के कारण इंफाल डायवर्ट करना पड़ा। विमान में कुल 144 यात्री सवार थे। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि डिब्रूगढ़ हवाई अड्डे पर दृश्यता अत्यंत कम हो जाने के कारण यह निर्णय लिया गया। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि फ्लाइट संख्या 6ई-6457 अहमदाबाद से गुवाहाटी होते हुए डिब्रूगढ़ जा रही थी।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE PIONEER

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

Air India cancels New York, Newark flights due to severe winter storm

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

in New Delhi

In view of forecasts of a severe winter storm expected in large parts of the US East Coast, Air India on Sunday cancelled all flights to and from New York and Newark scheduled for February 23.

The airline said heavy snowfall across New York, New Jersey and adjoining regions on February 22 and 23 is likely to significantly disrupt flight operations, prompting precautionary cancellations.

In a travel advisory, Air India said the decision was taken keeping passenger and crew safety in mind. "In view of the safety, well-being and convenience of our passengers and crew, all Air India flights to and from New York and Newark have been cancelled on 23 February," the airline said, adding that ded-



icated teams are assisting affected passengers with rebooking and travel support.

US carrier Delta Air Lines also announced flight cancellations ahead of the approaching winter storm, identified as Winter Storm Hernando.

The airline said it is taking proactive steps to minimise disruption beginning Sunday and extending through Monday, while encouraging customers to modify travel plans without changing fees.

Delta confirmed cancella-

tions at several major East Coast airports, including its hubs at Boston (BOS) and New York's John F Kennedy (JFK) and LaGuardia (LGA), to ensure operational safety for passengers and staff.

Blizzard warnings were issued for New York City and parts of New Jersey and Connecticut as the powerful storm is forecast to impact a large swathe of the East Coast.

According to the National Weather Service, snow and storm warnings remain in effect from the Mid-Atlantic to the Northeast, with heavy snowfall and strong winds expected between Sunday and Monday.

Authorities have forecast up to 1.5 feet (46 cm) of snow in and around New York City, including Long Island, marking the city's first blizzard warning since 2017.



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PUNJAB KESARI

DELHI

23 FEBRUARY 2026

विमान हादसे की सीबीआई जांच के लिए शाह से अनुरोध

मुंबई, (पंजाब केसरी):महाराष्ट्र सरकार ने केंद्रीय गृह मंत्री अमित शाह से पिछले महीने उपमुख्यमंत्री अजित पवार के विमान हादसे की केंद्रीय अन्वेषण ब्यूरो (सीबीआई) से जांच का आदेश देने का अनुरोध किया है। मुख्यमंत्री देवेंद्र फडणवीस ने रविवार को यह जानकारी दी। महाराष्ट्र विधानमंडल के बजट सत्र की पूर्व संध्या पर संवाददाता सम्मेलन को संबोधित करते हुए, फडणवीस ने कहा कि 'महायुति' सरकार यह सुनिश्चित करेगी कि विमान दुर्घटना के संबंध में सभी संदेह दूर हो जाएं। उन्होंने कहा, 'मुझे राकांपा (भाजपा की



सहयोगी पार्टी) से एक पत्र मिला था, जिसमें विमान दुर्घटना की सीबीआई जांच की मांग की गई थी और मैंने गृह मंत्री अमित शाह से बात की है। डीजीसीए (नागर विमानन महानिदेशालय) और राज्य सीआईडी (अपराध जांच विभाग) को जांच के साथ-साथ सीबीआई भी जांच करेगी। पुणे जिले में बारमती के पास उतरने का प्रयास करते समय विमान के दुर्घटनाग्रस्त हो जाने से अजित पवार और उसमें सवार चार अन्य लोगों की मौत हो गई थी। यह दुर्घटना 28 जनवरी को हुई थी।

Pilot duty exemptions weigh in heavy on DGCA's summer plan

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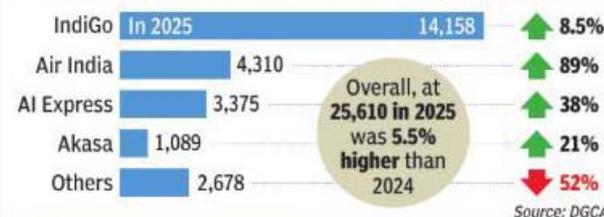
New Delhi: Aviation authorities have begun the process of determining how many flights — both domestic and international — will operate this summer. DGCA will weigh in pilot availability while approving summer schedules, effective March 29 to avoid a crisis like the one seen by IndiGo two months ago.

Determining pilot availability, however, is proving to be a tightrope walk as all major Indian carriers have got regulatory exemption from certain clauses of flight duty time limitation (FDTL) rules for cockpit crew. These exemptions lapse next month end. Airlines have sought an extension for the same and DGCA is reviewing their requests.

Airlines' ability to operate any given number of flights will depend on that decision. Withdrawing FDTL exemptions will mean fewer flights in peak summer travel season, higher fares and public outcry — something govt will be keen to avoid. And extending them will lead to concerns over fatigued crew stretching themselves, something that

QUESTION MARK OVER SUMMER 2026

Weekly domestic departures in summer schedule with FDTL exemptions



COCKPIT CREW AS OF DEC 2025



affects flight safety.

Air India, for instance, has been taking longer routes on its flights to and from the West due to geopolitical reasons. As per rules, they need three pilots for flights that are over 10 hours long. Since all flights between north India (Delhi being AI's primary hub) and the West are impacted due to Pakistan airspace closure, they have an exemption for having two pilots on flights that take up to 10.5 hours. "Due to infra crunch, IndiGo and Akasa mostly get night slots at busy hubs in India. They have sought exemption from nighttime utilisation of pilots as oth-

erwise the number of flights will not grow to cope with rising traffic but decline," said a person in the know.

Pilots said the current situation has arisen primarily due to the fact that airlines have almost always had their way with the DGCA for getting exemptions. "Airlines went slow on pilot hiring and career progression of pilots to keep their wage bill in check... Fatigue and inhuman rosters had become a reality till everyone was forced to wake up," said a senior captain. IndiGo and AI recently resumed hiring at trainee first officer-level after almost 1.5 years.