



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE PIONEER

LUCKNOW

28 SEPTEMBER 2026

Airport babu too bureaucratic?

A few days back, the Airport Authority of India (AAI) chief was shunted to the Ministry of Rural Development as Additional Secretary. But nobody has been replaced for the top job at AAI. Rumors are abuzz

about who will be the new AAI chief and why the current chief was suddenly shunted. The grapevine says the top office's displeasure led to the immediate shift, citing slow movement of files on airport privatisation and complaints from private operators and a top industrialist that the airport babu was too bureaucratic.



Services Struggle To Be Viable Due To Low Occupancy & Rising Costs UDAN loses altitude in Hyd, one in 4 routes yet to take off or defunct

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Hyderabad: The Centre's flagship regional air-connectivity scheme, Ude Desh Ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN), is struggling to keep several routes from Hyderabad airborne despite hundreds of crores of rupees in viability-gap funding (VGF). One in four sanctioned route sectors is either yet to take off or is no longer operational.

According to an RTI filed by TOI Hyderabad with the Airports Authority of India (AAI), 14 of the 60 route sectors under UDAN are either non-operational or yet to commence. Of the 60 sectors listed by the AAI, 12 are marked 'non-operational', while two seaplane sectors have not commenced because the required water aerodromes are not ready.

The stalled or discontinued connectivity includes routes linking Hyderabad with Vidyanagar, Jamnagar, Gwalior, Kishangarh and Gondia.

The Hyderabad-Vidyanagar sector is particularly striking. It was awarded in the first round of UDAN in 2017 to a regional airline that subsequently ceased operations. The route was awarded again in 2022, this time to a Delhi-based airline, but the service re-

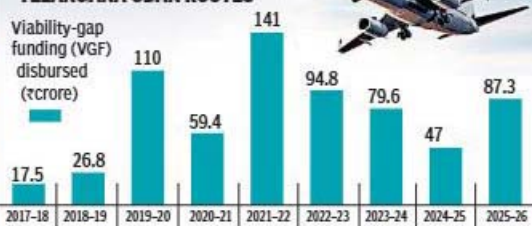
CRORES IN SUPPORT, BUT CONNECTIVITY FRAGILE

PASSENGER TRAFFIC ON HYDERABAD'S UDAN ROUTES

Financial year	Passenger traffic (lakh)
2017-18	0.5
2018-19	1.1
2019-20	3.5
2020-21	3.6
2021-22	2.3
2022-23	2.3
2023-24	1.3
2024-25	0.9
2025-26	1.6

Over the past nine years, Hyderabad's UDAN routes have received ₹664 crore in govt support, while passenger traffic has remained well below its peak

GOVT SUPPORT FOR TELANGANA UDAN ROUTES



mained non-operational.

The proposed Hyderabad-Prakasam Barrage seaplane service, awarded in Aug 2022, also remains on paper. The required water aerodrome is yet to be made ready. The route was novated in March 2026 from a Haryana-based aviation firm to a seaplane operator, but the service has still not commenced.

Sources said several UDAN services have struggled to remain viable, with airlines withdrawing from routes that fail to generate sufficient passenger demand. Low occupancy, limited aircraft

availability and rising operating costs have made it difficult to sustain flights to several tier-2 and tier-3 cities, where demand for air travel remains limited.

"To ensure continuity of services under the UDAN scheme, state govts have been entrusted with identifying and prioritising high-potential aerodromes, while airlines are required to submit business plans before award of routes," minister of state for civil aviation Murlidhar Mohol said recently in the Rajya Sabha. He added that the next phase of UDAN would streng-

then route sustainability through longer-duration VGF support with a tapered mechanism, giving routes more time to mature.

Passenger traffic red flag

According to the data, the number of passengers using operational UDAN routes from Hyderabad rose from 51,000 in 2017-18 to 3.56 lakh in 2019-20, before reaching 3.61 lakh in 2020-21.

However, traffic fell sharply to 0.96 lakh passengers in 2024-25, before recovering to 1.6 lakh in 2025-26.

Even after the latest reco-

very passenger traffic remained less than half the 2019-20 peak. At 1.6 lakh passengers, traffic in 2025-26 was about 53% below the 3.56-lakh level recorded in 2019-20.

Meanwhile, the govt has continued to provide substantial financial support to airlines operating UDAN routes from Telangana. RTI data shows that over ₹660 crore in VGF claims was disbursed between 2017-18 and 2025-26. The highest annual VGF payout was ₹141.50 crore in 2021-22, a period when passenger traffic stood at 2.39 lakh.

Airlines changed

Several routes initially awarded to TruJet, SpiceJet, Alliance Air and Big Charter have since changed operators. The Hyderabad-Kadapa route, for instance, was originally awarded to TruJet but is now operated commercially by IndiGo. Similarly, Hyderabad-Puducherry, initially awarded to SpiceJet, is listed as commercially operational by IndiGo.

Many other sectors, including Hyderabad-Belgaum, Hyderabad-Mysore, Hyderabad-Hubli and Hyderabad-Nashik, have survived beyond their original UDAN period and are listed as commercial or non-RCS operations.



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Air India, AAHL launch online duty-free service for global flyers

Air India and Adani Airport Holdings on Monday launched an online duty-free shopping service for international travellers. The international passengers on Air India flights can use it through the airline's official website and app at select airports. "The digital service is available for passengers travelling to and from major airports with duty-free hubs at Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thiruvananthapuram," a release said. Passengers departing from or arriving at these airports can pre-order and make payments for duty-free items before their journey. ¶¶

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DECCAN HERALD

BANGALORE

28 SEPTEMBER 2026

Experts moot plan for bioenergy, waste-to-energy projects at airports

BENGALURU, DHNS

A potential collaboration in the areas of bioenergy, waste-to-energy, sustainable energy solutions for airport infrastructure and circular economy models was extensively discussed by stakeholders at a meeting.

The meeting between S E Sudheendra, chairman of Karnataka State Bioenergy Development Board (KSDBB) and V Prem Watsa, founder, chairman and CEO of Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited, revolved around the formulation of the new bioenergy policy and expected investment in bioenergy sector.

He briefed Watsa on the various initiatives being undertaken in Karnataka to promote the

production and utilisation of biofuels by making effective use of different types of feedstocks and bio-resources available.

Sudheendra particularly highlighted sustainable utilisation of bio-resources, compressed biogas, biodiesel, other biofuels and renewable energy solutions.

The meeting explored the potential for waste-to-energy projects at airports, involving scientific management of waste generated on airport premises and conversion of suitable organic and other waste streams into energy.

These initiatives could reduce the quantity of waste sent to landfills while promoting efficient resource utilisation, energy recovery and development of environmentally sustainable

airports.

Sudheendra proposed the development of an 'airport bio-energy and circular economy model', under which resources generated within airport ecosystems could be integrated into a comprehensive sustainable energy framework.

He said used cooking oil generated by restaurants, hotels and canteens at airports could be collected and utilised for biodiesel production, while food waste and other suitable green waste could be scientifically processed for production of compressed biogas.

The discussions covered various dimensions of airport-based biofuel and waste-to-energy projects, including investment opportunities, technology col-

laboration, project development and knowledge exchange.

The possibility of developing pilot models that could be implemented in Karnataka and subsequently replicated at other airports across the country was also explored.

The chairman emphasised that Karnataka had immense potential in bioenergy sector.

Strategic partnerships with global investors and organisations having experience in airport and infrastructure sectors could accelerate development of clean-energy projects, circular economy initiatives and sustainable energy systems, he said.

Fr Victor Lobo, vice-chancellor, St Joseph's University, and Dancil Lobo, pro-vice-chancellor were present on the occasion.



Fr Danzil Lobo S J, pro vice-chancellor St Joseph's University, V Prem Watsa, founder, chairman and CEO of Fairfax Financial Holdings, and S E Sudheendra, chairman of the Karnataka State Bioenergy Development Board, and Fr Victor Lobo S J, vice chancellor of St Joseph University, at a meeting in Bengaluru.



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THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

**Air India, Adani
Airports launch
duty-free service**



AIR INDIA AND
Adani Airport
Holdings have
launched an
integrated online duty-free
shopping platform for
international travelers.

FE BUREAU & AGENCIES



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TIMES OF INDIA

BANGALORE

28 SEPTEMBER 2026

Guwahati flight suffers tail strike at B'loru airport

An IndiGo flight from Guwahati to Bengaluru suffered a tail strike while landing at KIA Sunday. All passengers and crew are safe. The Airbus A321 (6E-6542) aborted landing on the first approach at the destination. During ascent, the flight suffered the strike. It landed safely in its second attempt.

In line with SoPs, the aircraft is undergoing maintenance checks before it resumes operations after securing clearances. DGCA is probing the tail-strike incident, which the airline called "an abnormal runway contact". The airline informed DGCA the focus on pilot training for this particular area has been enhanced. **TNN**

New Air India CEO puts focus on profitability and reliability

FIRST TOWNHALL. Safety, sustainable expansion among top priorities: Gebremariam

Our Bureau
New Delhi

Tata Group-led Air India will focus on improving revenue as well as cost performance while strengthening safety and operational reliability, said Tewolde Gebremariam, the airline's Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director-designate.

Speaking to employees at his first company-wide townhall, Gebremariam, who will assume charge after receiving all necessary regulatory approvals, said sustainable profitability remains a key objective.

Accordingly, revenue enhancement initiatives across the airline's international network, commercial activities and cargo business are under discussion.

Besides, Air India plans to introduce programmes to reward employee ideas that deliver measurable cost savings and operational efficiencies.

"We must improve both revenue and cost perform-



Air India plans to introduce programmes to reward employee ideas that deliver measurable cost savings and operational efficiencies

TEWOLDE GEBREMARIAM
CEO and MD-designate

ance. Revenue enhancement initiatives are already under discussion, including opportunities across our international network, commercial activities and cargo business," he said.

EXTERNAL FACTORS

While acknowledging that external factors have affected the airline's path to break-even, Gebremariam emphasised the need to maintain focus on financial performance. "Cost management is not just the responsibility of leadership, every employee can contribute to savings, and those savings



add up across an organisation of our scale," he said.

Notably, Gebremariam's remarks come as the airline navigates geopolitical developments, airspace restrictions affecting Indian carriers, elevated fuel prices and uncertainty in key international markets. On expansion, Gebremariam said scale is critical in an industry characterised by high capital investment, significant fixed costs and intense competition.

However, he pointed out that growth would need to be supported by readiness across the airline's people,

fleet and network. "Growth is the oxygen of business. But growth must also be profitable and sustainable. We will pursue expansion in a disciplined manner and ensure our people, fleet and network are ready to support it," he said.

Furthermore, Gebremariam said that Air India continues to evaluate opportunities to improve network efficiency, optimise fleet deployment and rebalance operations to strengthen its long-term competitiveness.

At the same time, Gebremariam identified safety as the airline's foremost priority, calling for a culture in which employees can raise concerns and report issues without hesitation. "The stronger our reporting culture, the stronger our safety culture," he said.

On operational reliability, he emphasised punctuality, baggage handling, transparent communication during disruptions and quicker service recovery as key to strengthening customer confidence.



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS LINE

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Air India will resume Delhi, Tel Aviv flights from Dec 1

Press Trust of India

Mumbai

Israel's Ministry of Tourism on Monday said that Air India will resume its direct flights between Delhi and Tel Aviv from December 1, 2026, restoring a key air link between India and Israel.

Air India will be the only airline operating non-stop flights between the two countries, with five weekly flights scheduled from Sunday through Thursday aboard Boeing 777 aircraft, the Israel Ministry of Tourism said.

The resumption of Air India's flights on December 1, is expected to provide further momentum to tourism ties between India and Israel and make the destination more accessible to new segments of Indian travellers.

"The return of Air India's direct flights is an important development for tourism. For Indian travellers, the restoration of a regular non-stop connection makes the journey more convenient and gives them greater flexibility when planning a visit to Israel," Israel Ministry of Tourism, India, Consul for Tourism Affairs Galit Hoffman said.

IMPORTANT MARKET

She said India remains an important market for Israel, and direct air connectivity has a significant role to play in supporting the growth of travel between our two countries. India was already a significant source market for Israel before the Covid-19 pandemic, with nearly 70,000 Indian visitors annually.

"We would like more Indian travellers to discover the many different sides of Israel, beyond its longstanding appeal for pilgrimage and spiritual travel," she added.

Air India Flight AI139 will depart Delhi at 5 am and arrive in Tel Aviv at 8.30 am, with a flight time of approximately seven hours.

सुरक्षा सबसे अहम: एअर इंडिया

टाउनहॉल बैठक में यात्री सुरक्षा, विश्वसनीयता व मुनाफे पर चर्चा

दीपक पटेल

नई दिल्ली, 28 सितंबर

एअर इंडिया के नए सीईओ और प्रबंध निदेशक टेवोल्डे ग्रेबेर्मरियम ने सोमवार को कहा कि एयरलाइन के बदलाव के अगले दौर में यात्रियों की सुरक्षा और परिचालन से जुड़ी विश्वसनीयता सबसे अहम प्राथमिकताएं होंगी। उन्होंने कहा कि ग्राहकों का भरोसा बढ़ाने के लिए मजबूत सुरक्षा संस्कृति और रुकावटों को बेहतर तरीके से दूर करने की जरूरत होगी।

सूत्रों के मुताबिक एअर इंडिया के कर्मचारियों के साथ अपनी पहली टाउनहॉल मीटिंग में टेवोल्डे ने यह भी कहा कि एअर इंडिया को राजस्व और लागत किफायत, दोनों को बेहतर बनाकर लंबे समय तक मुनाफा कमाने पर ध्यान देना चाहिए। पिछले तीन साल में एअर इंडिया का नुकसान तेजी से बढ़ा है। समूह ने वित्त वर्ष 2026 में 22,238 करोड़



रुपये का समेकित शुद्ध नुकसान दर्ज किया, जो वित्त वर्ष 2025 के 10,859 करोड़ रुपये के नुकसान की तुलना में दोगुना से भी ज्यादा है। वित्त वर्ष 2024 में एअर इंडिया का समेकित नुकसान 6,677 करोड़ रुपये था।

उन्होंने कहा कि अंतरराष्ट्रीय नेटवर्क, वाणिज्यिक गतिविधियों और कार्गो बिजनेस में राजस्व बढ़ाने के अवसरों पर ध्यान दिया जा रहा है, जबकि लागत नियंत्रण को एअरलाइन की संगठनात्मक संस्कृति का हिस्सा बनना होगा। एयरलाइन लागत बचत और परिचालन दक्षता के ऐसे विचारों के लिए कर्मचारियों को पुरस्कृत करने

की भी योजना बना रही है। टेवोल्डे ने कहा कि सुरक्षा बनाए रखने में हर कर्मचारी की भूमिका होती है और उन्हें बिना किसी हिचकिचाहट के चिंताएं जाहिर करने और समस्याएं बताने के लिए सक्षम बनाया जाना चाहिए। उन्होंने कहा, 'हम जो कुछ भी करें, वह सुरक्षित होना चाहिए।'

प्रबंध निदेशक ने पहले से बताने और लगातार सुधार करने की अहमियत बताई और कर्मचारियों से कहा कि जब उन्हें कोई समस्या दिखे, तो उन्हें उसके बारे में बात करनी चाहिए।

4 अगस्त को, फुकेत से दिल्ली जाने वाले विमान एआई2379 में तीनों हाइड्रोलिक सिस्टम कुछ देर के लिए बंद हो जाने के कारण अचानक ऊंचाई पर गड़बड़ी आ गई, जिससे 24 लोग घायल हो गए। इस उड़ान के पायलट का मारिजुआना टेस्ट पॉजीटिव आया जिसे बाद में उसे नौकरी से निकाल दिया गया।



Corporate Communications Directorate

BUSINESS STANDARD

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Safety, reliability and profitability our priorities: Incoming Air India chief

DEEPAK PATEL
New Delhi, 28 September

Passenger safety and operational reliability will be the Air India's foremost priorities as it enters the next phase of its transformation, with a stronger safety-reporting culture and better disruption recovery needed to improve customer confidence, the airline's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Managing Director (MD)-designate Tewolde Gebremariam said on Monday.

Tewolde — during his first townhall with Air India's employees — also said Air India must focus on achieving sustainable profitability by improving both revenue and cost performance, according to sources.

Tewolde will formally assume the role of Air India CEO and MD after all necessary regulatory approvals are received, sources said.

Air India's losses have widened sharply over the past three years, with the group reporting a consolidated net loss of ₹22,238 crore in FY26, more than double the ₹10,859 crore loss in FY25. In FY24, Air



Air India CEO & MD-designate Tewolde Gebremariam urged employees to speak up when they identify a concern

India's consolidated loss stood at ₹6,677 crore.

Revenue enhancement opportunities were being examined across the international network, commercial activities and cargo business, while cost discipline would have to become part of the airline's organisational culture, he said. The airline was also planning programmes to reward employees for ideas that generate measurable cost savings and operational efficiencies.

Tewolde said every employee has a role to play in maintaining safety and should be empowered to raise con-

cerns and report issues without hesitation, according to sources. "Everything we do must be safe. Safety is a shared responsibility, and every Air Indian has a role to play," he said, according to sources.

The MD pointed out the importance of proactive reporting and continuous improvement, telling employees that they should speak up when they identify a concern. "If you see something, say something. The stronger our reporting culture, the stronger our safety culture," he said, according to sources.

During the last couple of months, Air India has faced several safety-related incidents. On August 4, flight AI2379 from Phuket to Delhi suffered a sudden altitude upset after all three hydraulic systems briefly failed, injuring 24 people. The pilot of this flight tested positive for marijuana, and was later sacked. On September 6, another pilot was removed from Zurich-Delhi flight AI151 after failing a breath-alysar test for alcohol.

On operational performance, Tewolde said customers should remember Air India for its reliability. He said the airline

should ensure that flights depart and arrive on time, baggage travels with passengers and disruptions are communicated transparently. Air India should also recover quickly when disruptions occur, he said.

While some disruptions caused by factors such as weather and technical issues cannot be avoided, Tewolde pointed out the need to minimise their impact and ensure that service recovery processes meet global standards, sources said. He also called for greater support and empowerment for frontline employees so they can take quicker decisions to resolve customer issues.

"Wherever you are in the organisation, you will be empowered to make decisions that help our customers and supported in delivering the right outcomes," he said, according to sources.

On profitability, Tewolde stated Air India could not lose focus on financial performance even as external factors have affected its path to breakeven, according to sources.

More on business-standard.com



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK BHASKAR

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

टाटा: विमान इंजन के लिए कनाडा की कंपनी से करार

नई दिल्ली। टाटा प्रोजेक्ट्स ने कनाडा की कंपनी एमडीएस एयरो से हाथ मिलाया है। दोनों कंपनियां भारत में विमानों के इंजन का टेस्टिंग सेंटर बनाएंगी। इसमें टाटा प्रोजेक्ट्स कंस्ट्रक्शन, पाइपलाइन और हाई-प्रेसर सिस्टम का काम देखेगी। वहीं कनाडाई कंपनी नई टेक्नोलॉजी और सपोर्ट मुहैया कराएगी। इससे भारत के एयरोस्पेस और डिफेंस सेक्टर को बढ़ावा मिलेगा। एमडीएस 27 से ज्यादा देशों में ऐसे कई बड़े प्रोजेक्ट्स पूरे कर चुकी है।

Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Air India's New Chief Sets Sights on Higher Revenue, Cost Curbs

Gebremariam to also focus on greater group synergies, safety and operational reliability

Our Bureau

Mumbai: Air India's new chief executive Tewolde Gebremariam is shifting the focus of the airline's next phase towards improving financial performance, with higher revenue, tighter costs and greater synergies across the enlarged group emerging as key priorities.

In his first town hall with employees, Gebremariam said Air India needs to boost "topline, middle line and bottom line" with revenue improvement, including a focus on raising revenue per available seat kilometre, or RASK, a key measure of how much an airline earns from the capacity it operates.

"We need to control the middle line, top line and bottom line needs to improve," Gebremariam said, according to employees present at the meeting.

The comments come as Air India seeks to strengthen its financial health after a fo-

ur-year transformation under the Tata Group that included the integration of Vistara and the creation of a larger airline group. Gebremariam is expected to assume the role of CEO and managing director after receiving the necessary regulatory approvals.

The airline's passenger footfall declined about 18% and booking demand fell more than 15% in the financial year ended March 2026, according to the company's board report filed with the ministry of corporate affairs.

Gebremariam said revenue opportunities are being explored across Air India's international network, commercial activities and cargo business. Improving RASK

would be central to increasing the returns generated from the airline's existing capacity, while better fleet and network deployment would help improve efficiency.

On costs, Gebremariam told employees that managing expenses can't be left solely to the finance function or senior management.

"Every employee needs to manage costs at his level," he said, underscoring the need for cost discipline across the organisation. He also called for Air India and its subsidiaries to operate as a single group, saying the airline needs to start functioning as "one Air India, one Air India Group". More synergies are being explored across the group, he said.

Asked by an employee whether a merger of the two airlines was being considered, Gebremariam said, "more synergies are being explored", without referring to a merger.

He also reiterated safety and operational reliability as priorities, saying the airline needs to improve punctuality, baggage handling and disruption recovery to rebuild customer confidence. Gebremariam said Air India would continue to pursue growth but in a disciplined manner, considering its fleet availability, network requirements and profitability.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Air India's key priorities: Safety, reliability, profit

AKBAR MERCHANT
Mumbai, September 28

AIR INDIA'S CHIEF Executive Officer and managing director designate Tewolde Gebremariam has identified safety, operational reliability and profitability as the airline's three key priorities as it moves from integration and stabilisation to execution and sustainable growth.

Addressing employees at a company-wide town hall, Gebremariam said Air India had made significant progress since returning to the Tata Group, but continued to operate in a challenging environment marked by geopolitical tensions, airspace restrictions, elevated fuel prices and uncertainty across key international markets.

Gebremariam was appointed Air India's CEO and MD in August, succeeding Campbell Wilson.

Safety, he said, would remain the airline's "foremost priority and guiding principle", while urging employees to speak up and report issues without hesitation.

"Everything we do must be safe. Safety is a shared responsibility, and every Air Indian has a role to play," he said.

TEWOLDE GEBREMARIAM,
CEO AND MD DESIGNATE,
AIR INDIA

Everything we do must be safe. Safety is a shared responsibility, and every Air Indian has a role to play



Operational reliability will be another key focus, with Gebremariam saying customers should associate Air India with consistent and dependable service. This includes improving on-time performance, ensuring baggage travels with passengers, communicating transparently during disruptions and strengthening recovery processes. "Our customers

737 MAX glitch had no impact on safety: Akasa

AKASA AIR ON Monday said a software issue affecting automated flight guidance on some Boeing 737 MAX aircraft had no impact on the safety of its operations and that it was coordinating with Boeing on the issue. Air India Express and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation are yet to comment.

"We are closely coordinating with Boeing and can confirm that there is no impact on the safety of Akasa Air operations," the airline said.

FE BUREAU

should remember Air India for its reliability," he said.

On profitability, Gebremariam said the airline needed to improve both revenue and cost performance. Air India is evaluating opportunities across its international network, commercial activities and cargo, while seeking greater cost discipline across the organisation.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE FINANCIAL EXPRESS

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

● GAURAV PATWARI, CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICER - AIR, CLEARTRIP

'Air travel slowdown may last 1-2 quarters'

Indian aviation has had a difficult year. The escalation of the West Asia conflict in February sent jet fuel prices soaring and disrupted some international airspace, leading airlines to cut flights and weighing on domestic passenger traffic. For Cleartrip, which still derives nearly 80% of its revenue from air travel, the response is diversification. Its latest bet is holiday packages, a market still dominated by local tour operators. **Gaurav Patwari**, Chief Business Officer - Air, spoke to **Anees Hussain** about the slowdown and the margin opportunity in holidays. Excerpts:

The industry has faced headwinds this year. What has been the impact?

Overall flown passengers, domestic and international combined, are largely flat year on year. Domestic capacity has been cut significantly over the

last two to three months; we are at or below about 400,000 daily domestic passengers, a level last seen around 2019. But this is transitory. With 1,500-plus aircraft lined up for delivery, there may be 1-2 quarters more of pain, then things will stabilise. The silver lining is that there will be massive pent-up demand.

Is this a demand problem?

There is no problem on the demand side. It is a supply-side issue. Airlines have cut capacity because of input-cost pressures, and average fares have spiked for both domestic and international travel.

Which international markets are holding up?

Southeast Asia, Europe, Japan and Sri Lanka have done very well this year. The disruption in the Middle East has definitely hurt India's out-

bound travel overall.

Have take rates come under pressure?

For the industry as a whole, take rates are largely flat. Individual OTAs have worked on margin expansion, but by and large, nothing much has changed.

Flights still account for about 80% of your revenue. How is the mix changing?

We want hotels, buses and trains to account for 30-35% of our business by the end of FY27, up from 20-22% now. Hotels are leading the diversification; the segment has grown more than 50% over the past

year, and room nights have doubled. We now offer more than 500,000 international hotels. This year we also launched bus and train, and we are scaling both. Over the



next 2-3 years, you will see a significant proportion of our top line coming from non-air.

What is the margin case for holiday packages?

Air as a single line of business is more of a commodity. India is a highly low-cost carrier-dominated market, and very competitive. Hotels are becoming competitive too, though they still have a decent margin. Holidays is a niche business where you can build pricing power, through your contracts with DMC partners, advance inventory from airlines and blocked hotels. Once you scale and get operating leverage, margins in holidays can grow much faster than in air or hotels.

How big can the business get for Cleartrip?

Over the next 12 months, we expect holidays to account for a mid-single-digit to high-single-digit share of our over-

all business.

What exactly does a Cleartrip holiday package offer?

It is an expert-curated itinerary with a traveller-controlled experience. Flights, hotels, activities and transfers come together in one itinerary, and you can change any of them — pick a different hotel, add or drop activities, or change flights. The cost changes accordingly. Visa, ground handling and insurance are also bundled. The itineraries are assembled with AI and then checked by experts.

On the supply side, it is not a marketplace where anyone can register. We have done the selection ourselves. We know the top agencies and ground-handling partners in each destination — those with a quality-first approach and a proven track record.

Read full interview on www.financialexpress.com



Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

28 SEPTEMBER 2026

Boeing flags automation problem in 737 MAX jets

PTI
NEW DELHI

Boeing has detected a software issue in some of its 737 MAX aircraft that could result in the automated flight guidance system disengaging after a missed landing approach, according to sources.

The aircraft maker is working on a permanent solution to the issue.

In India, Air India Express and Akasa Air together operate around 96 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. Air India Express has around 53 planes, while Akasa Air currently operates 43.

A Boeing spokesperson on Sunday said its engineers were working on a software update to permanently address the issue that may pose a major aviation risk.

"Last month, we informed all 737 operators about a software issue where pilots may experience a reduction in automation during a landing scenario. We shared information with operators that reinforced existing pilot procedures for safely handling such cases," the spokesperson said in a statement.

CONTINUED ON NATION

Boeing flags...

According to the sources, Boeing has identified a software issue affecting certain 737 MAX aircraft that could cause the automated flight guidance system to disengage after a missed approach if the subsequent approach path differs from the one originally planned. Boeing has issued an advisory to operators to reset the system following a missed approach as a precautionary measure to address the software issue, they added.

Akasa Air said it was coordinating with Boeing and that there was no impact on the safety of its operations.

"We are closely coordinating with Boeing and can confirm that there is no impact to the safety of Akasa Air operations.

"Our aircraft continue to operate safely in accordance with established procedures and applicable regulatory requirements," an airline spokesperson told PTI in a statement.

However, the carrier did not specifically mention whether any of its Boeing 737 MAX aircraft had been affected by the issue.



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

सुरक्षा-समयबद्धता एयर इंडिया की प्राथमिकता

नई दिल्ली। एयर इंडिया के नामित मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी और प्रबंध निदेशक टेबोल्डे ग्रेब्रेमरियम ने कंपनी की पहली टाउनहॉल बैठक में एयरलाइन की आगे की रणनीति स्पष्ट की। उन्होंने कहा कि एयर इंडिया की अगली विकास यात्रा में सुरक्षा, परिचालन विश्वसनीयता और मुनाफा सबसे बड़ी प्राथमिकताएं होंगी। एयर इंडिया के लिए सुरक्षा हमेशा सबसे पहली प्राथमिकता रहेगी।

Corporate Communications Directorate

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

AAIB: Garg Aviation flouted flight data-monitoring norms

Neha LM Tripathi

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NEW DELHI: The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB), in its preliminary report into the August 27 crash of a Garg Aviation training aircraft in Kanpur that claimed two lives, found that the flying training organisation (FTO) did not comply with prescribed flight data-monitoring requirements and had no standard operating procedure for such monitoring.

The AAIB has recommended that the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) direct Garg Aviation and other flying training organisations (FTOs) to strictly adhere to the requirements under Flying Training Circular (FTC).

"In view of the factual findings.. it is recommended that DGCA may issue directions to M/s Garg Aviation and other FTOs to strictly adhere to the Flight Data Monitoring requirements stipulated in FTC 01 of 2022. Further, DGCA may issue specific guidelines detailing the procedure to be followed for flight data monitoring, which



The training aircraft crashed on August 27, killing the trainee pilot and instructor.

shall be made part of the TPM (training and procedures manual)," the interim recommendation by the AAIB read.

AAIB said that based on the safety recommendations periodically issued by the AAIB, the DGCA issued Flying Training Circular 01 of 2022 on "Monitoring of Training in Flying Training Organizations" to strengthen its oversight of both flying and ground training activities conducted by FTOs.

This was done with the aim of enhancing operational safety and training quality.

"However, it has been observed that the FTO has not complied with the requirements

laid down in this circular. When queried on Flight data monitoring, the FTO stated that random monitoring of Garmin data was being carried out; however, no records of such monitoring were maintained, and there was no SOP defining how the monitoring was conducted or what exceedance limits were considered for it," the interim report released on Monday read.

The accident involving Tecnam P2006T, VT-NBV, was carrying a deputy chief flight instructor and a trainee pilot for a local training sortie. They were killed in the accident.

The AAIB said the investigation team has downloaded data from the Garmin data card recovered from the wreckage and is analysing it.

"The Italian and American investigation agencies equivalent to the AAIB i.e ANSV (Italy) and NTSB (USA) appointed an Accredited Representative each along with a Technical Adviser from Tecnam to participate and assist in this investigation in accordance with the requirements of ICAO Annex 13," the report stated.

THE HINDU

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Tewolde's flight plan: cost saving, deeper AI-AI Express synergies

Jagriti Chandra
NEW DELHI

Cost cutting and deeper integration between Air India (AI) and low-cost arm Air India Express (AI Express) will be at the centre of CEO-designate Tewolde Gebremariam's agenda, with the new AI chief calling for shared services, greater asset utilisation and organisation-wide focus on cutting duplication and improving efficiency.

In his first town hall with staff, Mr. Gebremariam said AI and AI Express should operate as 'multiple brands with a single unit of production,' with the two airlines retaining distinct customer-facing identities while sharing resources wherever



Tewolde Gebremariam

possible, sources said.

While AI will continue as a full-service carrier and AI Express as low-cost carrier, he said customer-facing functions would remain distinct while areas such as IT, HRD, finance and engineering could be streamlined and shared.

"The objective would be to reduce costs and streng-

then the airlines' competitiveness," he said.

Whether the two airlines ultimately operate with one Air Operator Certificate (AOC) or retain two was "secondary" to achieving operational synergies.

"Cost saving is top on the agenda," he said, urging staff to identify and propose cost-saving opportunities and help build a stronger culture of cost consciousness.

'No burning cash'

He also linked cost agenda with the wider financial challenge, saying, "We cannot continue to lose money. We cannot continue to burn cash."

On revenue, he called for an urgent improvement in revenue/available seat

kilometre (RASK) and greater use of cargo as a revenue stream, saying AI was losing to foreign freighters.

Safety and reliability, meanwhile, stay core priorities, with Mr. Gebremariam calling for consistent operational performance, including clean and safe aircraft, on-time departures and arrivals, baggage travelling with passengers and better disruption recovery.

He also described growth as 'the oxygen of business' while stressing it must be profitable and sustainable. The CEO further called for a "One Air India" approach, a leaner and flatter organisation, fewer silos and reviews of outsourcing, IT systems and internal processes.

MINT

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

New Air India CEO puts focus on growth with profitability

External factors have hurt, but Air India can't lose focus on performance, says Gebremariam

Abhishek Law
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NEW DELHI

Air India's incoming chief executive officer (CEO) Tewolde Gebremariam has put profitability and cost discipline at the centre of his strategy to turn around the airline, signalling that the Tata group-owned carrier's next phase of expansion will have to be backed by stronger financial performance.

"We must improve both revenue and cost performance," said Gebremariam, according to an employee who attended the Air India town hall on Monday. "Revenue enhancement opportunities are already under discussion, including opportunities across our international network, commercial activities and cargo business," Gebremariam said.

On the revenue side, he specifically referred to improving revenue per available seat kilometre (RASK), or the amount of money the airline makes for every seat flown over a kilometre.

The emphasis comes as Air India enters the next phase of its transformation with weak performance metrics.

Air India's latest annual report said it flew 11.7% less capacity in fiscal year 2026 (FY26), carried 18% fewer passengers, earned 8.6% less revenue and spent 4.7% more, leaving it with a ₹22,238 crore consolidated loss.

Consolidated revenue fell to ₹71,870 crore in FY26, while expenses rose to ₹93,333 crore. Consolidated loss more than doubled from ₹10,859 crore a year earlier. On a standalone basis, Air India's revenue fell 16.7% to ₹53,662 crore, and its loss widened to ₹15,073 crore from ₹4,057 crore.



Air India's incoming CEO Tewolde Gebremariam.

Physical performance was equally telling.

Available seat kilometres, a measure of capacity, declined to 100.8 billion in FY26, while revenue passenger kilometres fell to 84.8 billion. Passenger

load factor slipped to 81% from 85%, while passengers carried declined to 36 million.

Freight volumes fell 2.4% to 364,145 tonnes, as per its filings with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

That makes improving revenue productivity particularly important for Gebremariam. "Growth is the oxygen of the business. But the growth must also be profitable and sustainable," he said, according to a second employee.

line's path to break-even, including geopolitical developments, airspace restrictions, elevated fuel prices and uncertainty in international markets. But he stressed that Air India could not lose focus on financial performance.

"Cost management is not just the responsibility of the leadership or finance function," he said, adding that "every employee can contribute to savings and those savings add up across an organisation of our scale."

Air India plans to introduce programmes that reward employees for ideas that generate measurable savings and operational efficiencies.

The message marks a shift in emphasis for an airline that has spent the past four years rebuilding itself under the Tata group, including fleet renewal, product upgrades, network changes and the integration of Vistara.

Gebremariam acknowledged that employees had undertaken the "heavy lifting" required for one of the most complex transformations in aviation. His next challenge is to make that investment generate better financial returns. The airline is now expected to examine network efficiency, fleet deployment and operational readiness as it expands.

Reliability will be another priority, with Gebremariam saying customers should associate Air India with punctual flights, reliable baggage delivery and transparent communication during disruptions. Safety remains the foremost priority, with employees being encouraged to report concerns without hesitation.

For now, Gebremariam's appointment as the CEO, following the departure of Campbell Wilson, awaits clearance from the Union home ministry.

GROWTH RUNWAY

AIR India's latest annual report said it flew 11.7% less capacity in fiscal year 2026

IT also carried 18% fewer passengers, earned 8.6% less revenue and spent 4.7% more

CONSOLIDATED loss more than doubled from ₹10,859 crore a year earlier

HOW TATA'S BUDGET BET TESTS AIR INDIA'S NEW BOSS

Scaling rapidly yet bleeding cash, Air India Express could challenge Tewolde Gebremariam's turnaround plans

Air India Express
airindiaexpress.com
NEW DELHI

A board rival IndiGo flight bound for Bengaluru from Nagpur sat Tewolde Gebremariam, freshly summoned to a meeting. He had to travel to the airport, the departing chief. When their shared photograph swept the internet, the irony was unmistakable: neither Air India nor Air India Express (AIX) — the two Tata Group-owned airlines — flew that route. Yet behind this quiet embarrassment lurked a far starker fiscal drama.

AIX, the group's low-cost carrier, is increasingly central to Tata's growth plans even as its finances remain stretched relative to its business size. The two airlines, along with their joint ventures and subsidiaries, generated about ₹71,870 crore of revenue in 2025-26 and recorded a combined loss of ₹22,238 crore. AIX contributed ₹10,088 crore, or about 27%, of the revenue and ₹6,767 crore, or roughly 30%, of the loss. It also accounts for about four of every 10 aircraft in the group.

Yet Gebremariam, who is tasked with reviving Air India, does not directly run AIX, a wholly owned subsidiary. He is not completely removed from it either. The two airlines are connected through their parent, overlapping boards, common senior executives and shared functions. The arrangement also predates Gebremariam. Back in April 2023, Wilson vacated the AIX chair for Nagesh Agarwal. Air India's chief commercial officer (CCO), Agarwal, turned that transition into a platform for skilling, timetables, and marketing manoeuvres. What emerged is a structure in which Tata has two separate airlines, but an increasingly integrated aviation business.

At his first employee town hall on Monday, 28 September, Gebremariam sought greater synergies among the group airlines. To an employee's question on merging the two airlines, he reiterated that they belong to a single Air India group.

"For the customer there are two brands, but we are one Air India group," he said, according to two employees who were at the town hall. "I repeat, we are one Air India, one Air India, one Air India." Gebremariam also said the group would "streamline and synergise wherever possible while retaining focus on customers". He also highlighted safety. "Everything we do must be safe. Safety is a shared responsibility and every Air Indian has a role to play."

TWIN IDENTITY

State planners had deliberately split the two airlines into separate universes, crafting distinct economics and twin identities. Air India Express was created in 2005 by the government as a low-cost, no-frills airline to serve price-sensitive passengers, particularly on India-Gulf and Southeast Asian routes. Air India, meanwhile, remained the full-service carrier. The two airlines operated with two different AOCs (air operator certificates) and Air India Express was built as a subsidiary within Air India. That structure continued post divestment.

In 2023, Air India's subsidiary, AIX Connect, got regulatory approval to operate its flights under the 'Air India Express' brand name. AIX Connect was earlier known as Air Asia India. The Tata Group wanted to consolidate its airline business and the merger allowed Air India Express to operate domestic flights and become more than just a Gulf-focused carrier.

AIX today has its own corporate structure. Abhishek Singh, AIX's first managing director (MD) and chief executive officer (CEO), stepped down on 19 March. Captain Hanish Meherwal took over as 'accountable manager'. There has been no permanent MD or CEO since Singh's departure.

An accountable manager is a regulatory role, and AIX has separate heads for finance, human



Air India chairman N. Chandrababhan (centre) poses for a photo with incoming CEO Tewolde Gebremariam (right) and outgoing CEO Campbell Wilson during an employee town hall meeting in New Delhi. (below) an Air India Express aircraft in Lucknow

resources and its operations control centre. Engineering departments are separate too. At the same time, several commercial functions operate across both airlines. Network planning, sales and distribution, marketing and revenue management have common heads. Agarwal remains chairman of AIX and Air India's CCO, Sanjay Sharma, Air India's chief financial officer (CFO), and Basil Yu Duh Kwauk, its chief operating officer (COO), are directors on the AIX board. AIX's chief financial officer (CFO), and Basil Yu Duh Kwauk, its chief operating officer (COO), are directors on the AIX board. AIX's chief financial officer (CFO), and Basil Yu Duh Kwauk, its chief operating officer (COO), are directors on the AIX board.

"Gebremariam can make a CEO appointment in network posts," said a person aware of the matter who did not want to be identified. There is also a mechanism through which the Air India CEO can participate in group-level discussions involving AIX. "Previously Wilson as Air India CEO oversaw commercial decisions at AIX, even when he wasn't the chairman. That can still happen," said a person familiar with the matter. Mint could not independently verify if that had happened.

Jannam Shah, aviation analyst at Equinox Securities, said AIX's separate status means Gebremariam would not be responsible for its day-to-day operations. "Air India Express is a separate airline with its own management. It operates on a different low-cost carrier model. Gebremariam therefore won't be responsible for its day-to-day operations," said Shah. "However, both airlines are part of the same group, allowing coordination in network planning, fleet strategy, procurement, technology, and other shared functions. Gebremariam can therefore influence the broader group strategy without directly managing Air India Express."

The structure is not without precedent. Singapore Airlines operates low-cost carrier Scoot as a subsidiary through Budget Aviation Holdings, with Singapore Airlines CEO Goh Choo Phook as chairman of the holding company. In India, Jet Airways similarly operated JetLite as a wholly owned subsidiary after acquiring Air Sahara, although a later attempt to merge the two airlines did not receive approval from the civil aviation ministry. The examples show that separate airline structures can coexist.

SCALE BEFORE REPAIR
That distinction between the financials of the two carriers are compared. AIX

Dual engines

Air India's new chief is looking for synergies between the two airlines



Tied to losses: Air India Express's losses were equivalent to about 35% of its FY26 annual revenue. For Air India, losses were equivalent to about 25% of its FY26 annual revenue. For Air India Express, losses were equivalent to about 59% of its FY26 annual revenue.

expanded aggressively after Tata took over Air India and folded Air Asia India into its fold, scaling its fleet from about 26 jets to 103. The balance sheet, though, told a very different story from runway growth. During 2025-26, revenue climbed 28% to ₹19,088 crore, but operating expenses rose ahead to ₹20,855 crore. AIX closed the books with a ₹6,767 crore net loss and negative net worth, carrying liabilities that outstripped assets by ₹16,400 crore. Looking across past three years highlights how fast it grew — and how steadily the red ink pooled. Revenue slipped up from ₹12,734 crore in 2023-24 to ₹19,088 crore in 2025-26. Across the same stretch, net losses deepened from ₹1,438 crore to ₹6,767 crore, then reached ₹6,767 crore. In its most recent fiscal year, the deficit at least grew at a slower clip than revenue. The heavier blow had landed in 2024-25, when top-line growth of 20% was met with a net loss that nearly quadrupled. The surge came largely from heavy lease commitments and the sheer cost of carrying a 100-plane operation.

Still, reading the three-year trajectory requires factoring in the airline's overhaul. The official merger of Air Asia India into AIX in October 2024 fundamentally altered the size of the playing field.

The bottom line is straightforward. AIX has managed to grow much larger, but turned a profit remains out of reach. Air India's standalone loss was ₹3,976 crore last fiscal year, substantially higher in absolute terms, but AIX's loss is larger when measured against the revenue it generates. It lost about 35 paise for every

₹100 of revenue, compared with roughly 90 paise at Air India. Its lease burden is also heavier relative to its business. AIX's lease liabilities were equivalent to about 95% of annual revenue, compared to about 80% at Air India. Borrowings tell a different story. AIX had about 77 paise of borrowings for every ₹1 of revenue, while Air India had about 77 paise.

So the argument is not that AIX is more indebted than Air India. Rather, its financial position is being squeezed by a larger loss relative to revenue, a significant lease burden and liabilities outstripping assets. "The airline remained structurally loss-making at the operating level," said Anil Mittal, an aviation-sector banker and director at Aerofin India. "Negative net worth liabilities outstripping assets." AIX indicates that accumulated losses have eroded shareholder equity and can limit its ability to raise additional debt. And neither AIX nor Air India is generating enough cash to fund its needs internally," he added.

The bottom line does not tell the whole story. AIX said a non-cash mark-to-market forex loss of about ₹2,370 crore affected its bottom line. Its Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortization, and restructuring (EBITDA) turned positive at over ₹1,000 crore in 2025-26, compared with a loss in the previous year.

"EBITDA loss before tax in the second half of FY26 (fiscal year 2026) had reduced by nearly two-thirds, or about 64%, year on year, with the trend improving quarter-on-quarter," the AIX spokesperson added.

But operating cash flow was only ₹83

crore. The board report for last fiscal year says the situation was one-off and that checks have been put in place.

THE BORROWING QUESTION

The mounting financial strain is visible in how often AIX has had to raise its borrowing ceiling. Since October 2023, the approved limit has been bumped four times: from ₹11,600 crore to ₹14,000 crore, then to ₹17,500 crore, and finally to ₹20,000 crore in July 2026. The board draws up each increase, and shareholders sign off on it. In under two years, the ceiling has shot up roughly 72%, putting it almost on par with the revenue AIX posted in 2025-26.

That ₹20,000 crore represents sanctioned headroom rather than drawn debt, and the need for it is, said Disha Parwar, CA and partner at Noida-based firm, SD&A & Co. The timing is critical as Tata shows no sign of tapping the brakes on AIX. Over the next two years, the group plans to take delivery of more than 100 aircraft, with a sizeable chunk headed straight to AIX. The group is also pouring money into pilot training infrastructure to handle the influx, gradually turning AIX into a central pipeline for cockpit crew, according to a second person familiar with the matter.

At the same time, Air India has begun handing off smaller city routes to its budget sibling, stepping aside on six connections between August and September alone. AIX now connects 52 Indian cities compared to Air India's 39, running 474 domestic and international flights a day against Air India's roughly 625.

Shore it by scanning the QR code.

GERBEMARIAM'S BASICS
The immediate task for Gebremariam is to shore up the airline's basic operating performance, sharpen crew utilization, tighten on time performance and elevate passenger experience, all while trimming

KEY FIGURES

₹20,000 CRORE

AIX's approved borrowing ceiling. The sanctioned debt headroom jumped 72% in less than two years across four hikes.

35 PAISE

AIX's loss for every ₹1 of revenue generated in FY26, underscoring a scale before repair problem at the airline.

₹45,347 CRORE

Tata's capital commitment into Air India since taking ownership in January 2022. It is seeking \$15 billion in fresh equity.

Tata's budget bet tests new Air India boss

FROM PAGE 12

meanwhile, showed signs of operational improvement but was financially stretched.

THE CAPITAL

Tata's commitment to aviation is already substantial. Tata Sons has sunk ₹45,347 crore into Air India since taking ownership in January 2022, per corporate filings. Singapore Airlines, holding a 25.1% slice of Air India, remains equally bound to this resurrection. *Routy* reported Air India is seeking \$15 billion in fresh equity from Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, with discussions ongoing.

The numbers explain why AIX can't be treated as a separate issue outside the Air India CEO's office. Air India presents the heavier fiscal drain, the core carrier Gebremariam was summoned to revive.

Gebremariam steers clear of daily AIX management. Yet reviving the flagship may



File photo of an Air India aircraft.

prove impossible without establishing the exact runway its budget arm occupies — and questioning if today's dual-carrier architecture can truly yield the financial rewards and operational synergies the promoters anticipate.

Insiders reveal Gebremariam has cautiously floated queries around "integrating operations" between both houses. He has avoided pitching a single-airline, twin-brand doctrine, or nested-carrier blueprint. Rather, he emphasized "better integration of operations" while closely reviewing dual-AOC

history and rationale.

His leadership across Ethiopian Airlines championed massive capacity, rigorous execution, and nurturing ancillary revenue engines — spanning freight, maintenance hubs, and flight academies. Through pandemic disruptions, Ethiopian's freight arm furnished a cash hedge. That playbook signals he will gaze past simple passenger metrics toward group-wide operational muscle and durable resilience.

At Air India and Air India Express, he has asked as to how the two airlines can shore

up cargo volumes further.

His challenge is now to turn that rebuilt airline into a financially sustainable group, which could mean greater focus on costs, utilization, reliability, capital allocation and whether the current two-airline structure remains optimal.

Campbell Wilson spent his tenure stitching fleets, Vistara assets, networks, and guest cabins into an operating framework. Gebremariam takes that mantle forward.

That viral photo of Gebremariam and Wilson flying IndiGo wasn't just a quirky coincidence; it was a snapshot of the reality awaiting them. The outgoing chief and his successor sat inside the cabin of the very rival dominating the domestic skies, travelling a route their own airlines didn't even serve. For Gebremariam, the real test is whether he can stop burning cash while expanding at the same time, finally mounting a credible challenge to the competitor they flew that day.



TURN TO PAGE 13



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE MORNING STANDARD

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Profitability key objective for Air India: Gebremariam

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

ADDRESSING Air India's employees for the first time at a company-wide town hall, CEO and MD (proposed) Tewolde Gebremariam said that achieving sustainable profitability remains a key objective for the airline as it progresses through its transformation journey.

He stated that a combination of external factors has affected the airline's path to breakeven, but stressed that Air India cannot afford to lose focus on financial performance.

Gebremariam's focus on profitability comes as the Tata Group-run carrier continues to face financial challenges and is seeking additional capital to service its growth plans, which include an order book of over 500 aircraft. Singapore Airlines' (SIA) annual financial statement showed Air India's losses stood at \$2.8 billion in FY26, its biggest annual loss since the airline was taken over by Tata Group in 2022. SIA owns a 25.1% stake in Air India.

"We must improve both revenue and cost performance. Revenue enhancement initiatives are already under discussion, including opportunities across our international network, commercial activities and cargo business," said Gebremariam who will assume the role of CEO & MD of Air India after all necessary regulatory approvals are received.

At the same time, he said cost discipline must become part of the airline's culture. He added that scale is key in a business characterised by high capital investment, major fixed costs and intense competition. "Growth is the oxygen of business. But growth must be profitable and sustainable. We will pursue expansion in a disciplined manner and ensure our people, fleet and network are ready to support it," he said.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE PIONEER

DELHI

29 SEPTEMBER 2026

Surging jet fuel demand to boost SAF market: Report

PIONEER NEW SERVICE

■ New Delhi

Jet fuel demand in India would rise from about 192,000 barrels per day in 2024 to 277,000 barrels per day by 2031, providing a strong market for the Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), as per a report released on Monday.

The government has announced SAF blending roadmap starting with 1 per cent blending in 2027 and increasing to 2 per cent in 2028 and 5 per cent in 2030 to decarbonise the aviation industry.

The report jointly developed by S&P Global Energy and the SAF Association estimates that the SAF demand will be 46,000 tonne in 2027, which would rise to 250,000 tonne in 2030.

India's aviation sector is



expected to remain one of the fastest-growing sources of refined product demand through 2060, providing a strong foundation for developing a domestic SAF market, the report said.

"This expansion is driven by rising middle-class mobility, continued growth in domestic and international air travel, airport infrastructure development, and ongoing airline fleet addi-

tions," it said.

The report, released at 2nd India SAF Conclave, noted that while some short-term weakness emerged in 2026, particularly in the international segment, the underlying demand trajectory remains firmly positive.

India's aviation fuel consumption softened in mid-2026, with July demand falling to about 180,000

barrel per day reflecting weaker flight activity, higher operating costs, and supply-side disruptions, it said.

However, first-half 2026 jet fuel consumption still increased by nearly 2 per cent year-over-year, suggesting the recent slowdown is temporary rather than structural and does not alter the longer-term growth outlook, the report said. "The demand outlook is further supported by rising passenger traffic, the continued expansion of low-cost aviation, and increasing international connectivity," it said. New infrastructure, including Navi Mumbai International Airport and Jewar Airport in Noida, is expected to ease capacity constraints and support additional growth in flight activity. International aviation is likely to remain an

important demand driver, with international seat capacity expanding faster than domestic capacity in 2026 despite higher ticket costs. "Policy support is also expected to play an important role in sustaining aviation growth. A key structural driver is the government's continued focus on expanding air connectivity through UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik) Regional Connectivity Scheme," the report said.

It highlighted that the government has introduced an aviation turbine fuel (ATF) pricing stabilization mechanism, including a fixed ATF price in Delhi and a dedicated stabilization fund.

While not a direct subsidy, the mechanism reduces fuel price volatility and improves cost visibility for airlines, it added.

बैंकॉक में बारिश का कहर

एयरपोर्ट पर भारतीय यात्रियों की दयनीय हालत- सरकार से हस्तक्षेप की मांग

थाई एयरवेज की बदइंतजामी से यात्री मुश्किल में

सतेन्द्र त्रिपाठी

नई दिल्ली/थाईलैंड, (पंजाब केसरी): थाईलैंड की राजधानी बैंकॉक में भारी बारिश और बाढ़ के बीच स्वर्णभूमि एयरपोर्ट पर भारतीय यात्रियों की मुश्किलें बढ़ गई हैं। थाई एयरवेज की उड़ानों में देरी और रद्दीकरण के बीच सैकड़ों यात्री घंटों से एयरपोर्ट पर फंसे हैं। यात्रियों का आरोप है कि उन्हें उड़ान रद्द होने की स्पष्ट जानकारी तक नहीं दी जा रही। बताया जा रहा है कि बाढ़ के कारण थाई एयरवेज के कई ग्राउंड स्टाफ कर्मी ड्यूटी पर नहीं पहुंच सके, जिससे एयरपोर्ट पर थाई एयरवेज का परिचालन प्रभावित हुआ है।

एयरपोर्ट पर फंसे एक भारतीय यात्री ने बताया कि सोमवार शाम 6:50 बजे (थाईलैंड के समय अनुसार) की उनकी थाई एयरवेज की उड़ान अचानक रद्द कर दी गई। अभी रात के 1:30 बज चुके हैं, लेकिन उनकी



फ्लाइट का कुछ अता-पता नहीं है। यात्री के मुताबिक, भारी बारिश और रास्तों में जलभराव की आशंका के कारण एजेंट ने उन्हें कई घंटे

पहले एयरपोर्ट पहुंचने की सलाह दी थी। वह बोर्डिंग पास लेकर कई घंटे पहले एयरपोर्ट पहुंच गए, लेकिन बाद में उड़ान रद्द होने के

● फ्लाइटें लेट हो रही हैं और इसके बाद कैंसिल हो रही हैं, हालात बद से बदतर

साथ ही उसका बोर्डिंग पास भी रद्द कर दिया गया। यात्री का दावा है कि वह करीब दस घंटे से एयरपोर्ट पर ही फंसे हुए हैं। यहां उन्हें कोई स्पष्ट जानकारी देने वाला नहीं है।

एयरलाइंस की ओर से अगली उड़ान, उठरने या आगे की यात्रा को लेकर स्थिति स्पष्ट नहीं की गई। यात्रियों के मुताबिक दिल्ली, मुंबई, चेन्नई, हैदराबाद के अलावा पंजाब, हरियाणा और उत्तर प्रदेश समेत देश के विभिन्न हिस्सों के लोग यहां फंसे हुए हैं। थाईलैंड में फंसे भारतीय यात्रियों ने भारत सरकार से हस्तक्षेप कर थाई अधिकारियों और एयरलाइंस से समन्वय करने तथा यात्रियों को जल्द राहत दिलाने की मांग की है।

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Bride dies days before wedding; airline told to refund full fare

Consumer Forum Orders Refund Of Deducted Fare With Interest

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Vadodara: A family's trip to Varanasi to attend their daughter's wedding reception turned into a painful cancellation after she died just four days before the wedding. Nearly four years later, a consumer forum has ordered SpiceJet to refund the full airfare, holding that the airline failed to give any plausible reason for the deduction.

Narhar Halbe of Subhanpura in Vadodara had booked four return tickets on SpiceJet from Ahmedabad to Varanasi for Jan 2022, when his daughter Samruddhi's wedding reception was scheduled. He paid Rs 30,358 through a travel agent.

However, Samruddhi died four days before her wedding,



The commission ordered the airline to refund the deducted Rs 21,014 with 8% interest. It also directed it to pay Rs 2,000 towards mental agony and Rs 1,000 towards litigation costs

following which the family cancelled the Varanasi trip. Halbe approached the airline seeking a full refund, citing the tragic circumstances. Instead, the airline offered travel vouchers to family members who were in the complainant's first blood relation. It

refused even a voucher for Halbe's son-in-law-to-be, saying he did not fall within that category.

Halbe emailed the airline about 10 days before the scheduled journey and later submitted the death certificate and other documents sought by it. However, the airline did not agree to a full refund. The travel agent eventually refunded only Rs 9,344 from the Rs 30,358 paid, said advocate Rinkal Shah, who represented Halbe.

Halbe subsequently filed a complaint against SpiceJet and the travel agent before Vadodara District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (Additional) in Aug 2022 through NGO Jagrut Nagrik.

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'Refund as per ticket cancellation rules'

► Continued from P1

The airline argued that the refund was governed by ticket cancellation rules and that it had offered full-value travel vouchers as a humanitarian gesture. It also claimed that the refunded amount was paid after deducting appli-

cable cancellation charges.

The commission, however, noted that Rs 21,014 had been deducted from the ticket amount without the airline specifying the clause under which the deduction was made or giving a reasonable explanation for it. The forum held that such an unexplained deduction amo-

unted to unfair trade practice.

The commission ordered SpiceJet to refund the deducted Rs 21,014 with 8% interest to Narhar Halbe. It also directed the airline to pay Rs 2,000 towards mental agony and Rs 1,000 towards litigation costs. The complaint against the travel agent was dismissed.