



Corporate Communications Directorate

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MUMBAI

15 MARCH 2025

MUMBAI

DGCA license to airport

The Amravati Airport, developed by the Maharashtra Airport Development Company, has received an aerodrome license from the DGCA, officially making it a licensed Regional Connectivity Scheme airport. Announcing the development, CM Devendra Fadnavis called it the start of a "new era of enhanced connectivity, economic growth, and tourism".

INBRIEF



Tourism push: Rameswaram set to get a new airport

Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu on Friday said that to boost tourism in south Tamil Nadu and promote the overall development of economically backward regions, a new airport would come up in Rameswaram. The State will also expedite the work to set up a second airport at Parandur near Chennai. Presenting the Tamil Nadu Budget 2025-26, he announced the Tamil Nadu Maritime Transport Manufacturing Policy, 2025, to revive maritime heritage and position the State as a global ship-building hub. The policy would promote investment and innovation in ship and boat designing, ship hull fabrication, and engine production. This industry's growth would generate 30,000 jobs in several districts.



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PIONEER

DELHI

16 MARCH 2025

हिसार हवाई अड्डे से जल्द शुरू होंगी उड़ानें

एयरपोर्ट अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया से मिला संचालन का लाइसेंस, सात वर्षों का लम्बा इंतजार हुआ खत्म

पायनियर समाचार सेवा।
चंडीगढ़/फरीदाबाद

बहुप्रतीक्षित महाराजा अग्रसेन हिसार एयरपोर्ट को आखिरकार एयरपोर्ट अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया से संचालन का लाइसेंस प्राप्त हो गया है। यह उपलब्धि मुख्यमंत्री नायब सिंह सैनी एवं राज्य के नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री विपुल गोयल के प्रयासों का परिणाम है, जिन्होंने प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी की महत्वाकांक्षी उड़े देश का आम नागरिक (उड़ान) योजना को सफल बनाने के लिए इस परियोजना को अपनी प्राथमिकता में रखा था।

शुरुआती चरण में 5 शहरों से जुड़ेगा हिसार एयरपोर्ट: हिसार एयरपोर्ट से अयोध्या, जम्मू, जयपुर, दिल्ली और अहमदाबाद के लिए विमानों की सेवाएं प्रारंभ की जाएंगी। एयरपोर्ट इन्फ्रास्ट्रक्चर, ऑपरेशन और



मेंटेनेंस की सभी जिम्मेदारियां एएआई के अधीन होंगी।

भव्य पैसेंजर टर्मिनल का निर्माण जारी: हिसार एयरपोर्ट के विस्तार के तहत 503 करोड़ रुपये की लागत से पैसेंजर टर्मिनल का निर्माण किया जा रहा है। इस टर्मिनल में अत्याधुनिक सुविधाएं उपलब्ध कराई जाएंगी। वहीं, हरियाणा पुलिस को एयरपोर्ट की सुरक्षा की जिम्मेदारी सौंपी गई है।

रात में उड़ान की भी योजना: राज्य सरकार ने नाइट लैंडिंग की अनुमति के लिए भी प्रक्रिया शुरू कर दी है, जिससे यात्रियों को अधिक सुविधा मिल सके। एयरपोर्ट अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया यहाँ अपना प्रोजेक्ट ऑफिस स्थापित कर रही है, जिससे परिचालन संबंधी प्रक्रियाओं में तेजी आएगी। हिसार एयरपोर्ट की नींव सात साल पहले रखी गई थी, लेकिन जब से नागरिक मुख्यमंत्री

हरियाणा को मिला पहला ऑपरेशनल एयरपोर्ट

हिसार एयरपोर्ट को लाइसेंस मिलने के साथ ही यह हरियाणा का पहला एयरपोर्ट बन गया है, जहाँ से नियमित विमान सेवाएं शुरू की जाएंगी। इस ऐतिहासिक निर्णय के साथ राज्य के लोगों का लंबे समय से चला आ रहा सपना साकार होने जा रहा है। नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री विपुल गोयल ने कहा कि यह प्रदेशवासियों के लिए गर्व की बात है। अब हिसार से हवाई यात्रा की शुरुआत होने जा रही है, जिससे हरियाणा की कनेक्टिविटी को एक नई दिशा मिलेगी।

नायब सिंह सैनी और नागरिक उड्डयन मंत्री विपुल गोयल ने इस परियोजना को प्राथमिकता में रखा, तब से कार्यों में तेजी आई। कई दौर की उच्चस्तरीय बैठकों और निरीक्षणों के बाद आखिरकार यह सपना साकार हो रहा है।

हरियाणा के आर्थिक विकास को मिलेगा नया आयाम: हिसार एयरपोर्ट की शुरुआत से न केवल राज्य की हवाई कनेक्टिविटी में सुधार

होगा, बल्कि औद्योगिक और आर्थिक गतिविधियों को भी नया प्रोत्साहन मिलेगा। व्यापार, पर्यटन और निवेश को बढ़ावा देने में यह एयरपोर्ट महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाएगा। अब हरियाणा का यह हवाई अड्डा प्रदेश के लोगों को देश के अन्य हिस्सों से जोड़ने के लिए तैयार है। यह विकास की एक नई उड़ान है, जो हरियाणा को प्रगति के नए क्षितिज तक पहुंचाने में अहम भूमिका निभाएगी।



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PUNJAB KESARI

DELHI

16 MARCH 2025

दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट पर कतार में आगे बढ़ने के लिए वसूले जा रहे हैं 500 रुपए!

नई दिल्ली, (पंजाब केसरी) दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट के टर्मिनल 3 पर विद्यमान की एयरलाइन वियतजेट के चेक-इन काउंटर पर अराजकता और भ्रष्टाचार के आरोप लगे हैं। यात्रियों का आरोप है कि एयरलाइन के एजेंट प्रति व्यक्ति 500 रुपये लेकर लोगों को कतार में आगे भेज रहे हैं। इस घटना का एक वीडियो बनाने की कोशिश की गई, लेकिन एयरलाइन स्टाफ ने वीडियो बनाने वाले को जबरन रोककर फुटेज डिलीट करवा दिया।

इस मामले को लेकर एक यात्री वैभव ने ट्विटर पर शिकायत की। उन्होंने दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट को टैग करते हुए लिखा, वियतजेट के चेक-इन काउंटर पर भ्रष्टाचार अव्यवस्था है। एजेंट 500 रुपये प्रति व्यक्ति लेकर कतार में आगे भेज रहे हैं। यह यात्रियों का खुला शोषण है। दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट को इस पर तुरंत कार्रवाई करनी चाहिए। इस घोटाले को उजागर करने के लिए जब एक यात्री ने घटना का वीडियो बनाना शुरू किया, तो एयरलाइन स्टाफ ने उसे जबरन रोका और वीडियो डिलीट करने के लिए दबाव डाला। यह दर्शाता है कि एजेंट नहीं चाहते थे कि यह घोटाला सामने आए और सोशल मीडिया या अधिकारियों तक पहुंचे। इस विवाद के बाद, दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट के आधिकारिक ट्विटर अकाउंट से



सोशल मीडिया पर बढ़ता आक्रोश... इस मामले के सामने आने के बाद ट्विटर और अन्य सोशल मीडिया प्लेटफॉर्म पर यात्रियों ने वियतजेट और दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट प्रशासन की कार्यप्रणाली पर सवाल उठाए हैं। कई यात्रियों ने बताया कि यह कोई नई घटना नहीं है, बल्कि पहले भी इस एयरलाइन के काउंटर पर इस तरह की अव्यवस्था और भ्रष्टाचार देखा गया है। अब सवाल यह उठता है कि क्या वियतजेट इस भ्रष्टाचार के खिलाफ कोई कार्रवाई करेगी? क्या दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट प्रशासन इन एजेंटों के खिलाफ सख्त कदम उठाएगा? या फिर यात्रियों को ऐसे ही अपनी जेब दीली करके आगे बढ़ने के लिए मजबूर किया जाता रहेगा। यात्रियों की मांग है कि एयरलाइन और एजेंटों पर सख्त कार्रवाई हो और इस भ्रष्टाचार को हमेशा के लिए खत्म किया जाए। देखना होगा कि इस मामले में कोई ठोस कदम उठाया जाता है या यह सिर्फ एक और सोशल मीडिया पोस्ट बनकर रह जाएगा।

जवाब दिया गया। एयरपोर्ट ने कहा कि आपको हुई असुविधा के लिए हमें खेद है। हमने आपकी शिकायत से अपने ग्राउंड अधिकारियों को अवगत करा दिया है। हालांकि, हम आपको यह भी बताना चाहेंगे कि टिकट बुकिंग, चेक-इन काउंटर

प्रबंधन, बोर्डिंग आदि गतिविधियां पूरी तरह से संबंधित एयरलाइन द्वारा नियंत्रित की जाती हैं। दिल्ली एयरपोर्ट का यह जवाब यात्रियों को संतुष्ट नहीं कर सका, क्योंकि इस मामले में सीधे एयरलाइन की जिम्मेदारी तय होनी चाहिए।



Corporate Communications Directorate

TIMES OF INDIA

MUMBAI

15 MARCH 2025

2 airport staff among 4 held for smuggling

Mumbai: Customs at the airport arrested four persons, two of them airport staff, for smuggling gold worth Rs 4 crore, in two cases.

In the first case, three people — Pradeep Pawar, Mohammed Imran Nagori and airport employee Anshu Gupta — were arrested in connection with smuggling two pouches with 1.61 kg gold dust worth Rs 1.31 crore.

Another airport staffer, Sayyed Mehtab, a manager at an eatery at the airport, was found with 2.9 kg of gold dust worth Rs 2.36 crore. He has been remanded in judicial custody. TNN

DGCA aerodrome licence to Hisar airport

DEEPENDER DESWAL
THIRUVAIYUR

HISAR, MARCH 15

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Government of India, has officially granted an aerodrome licence for public use to Maharaja Agrasen Airport in Hisar. The licence, issued to the Airports Authority of India (AAI), allows the airport to be used as a regular landing and departure site for aircraft.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) issued the licence on March 13. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate the flights from the airport soon, the sources revealed. It is expected to enhance the aviation connectivity in Haryana. The conditions attached with the licence stated that the compliance with the Aircraft Act and the Aircraft Rules remains mandatory, as any violations could result in modifications, suspension or revocation of the licence, which is non-transferable and subject to conditions outlined in the aerodrome manual.

To maintain validity, the licensee must submit quarterly



Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to inaugurate flights. PHOTO: ASHOK KUNDU

progress reports addressing pending observations from DGCA inspections and self-assessed non-compliances as per the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR).

The licence came after a prolonged wait and the commercial flights from Hisar Airport are expected to commence in the first week of April. The Haryana Government has partnered with Alliance Air to operate flights connecting Hisar to Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Ayodhya, and Jammu. The licensing process faced delays after a DGCA

inspection in August 2024 raised some objections.

The Hisar airport is poised to become one of India's largest aviation hubs. Initially spanning just 200 acres in 2014, the project has expanded to 7,200 acres in two phases, making it the largest airport in India by land area. The development aims to boost regional connectivity, stimulate economic growth, and position Haryana as a key player in the country's aviation sector.

Meanwhile, Hisar activists have taken exception to the name of the airport in the

licence stating that it did not mention the name "Maharaja Agrasen Airport Hisar" but instead refers to it as "Hisar Aerodrome". Agrawal Seva Samiti, Hisar senior vice-president Sitaram Singal said the airport was initially introduced as Maharaja Agrasen Airport, Hisar, but now the licence had been issued under a different name. He has demanded that the government issue a revised licence with the "original name". He also urged the government to clarify the distinction between the terms "aerodrome" and "airport."



भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण
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AMAR UJALA

DELHI

16 MARCH 2025

मालदीव के हनीमाधू और बंगलूरु के बीच 15 मई से सीधी उड़ान

माले। मालदीव की राष्ट्रीय विमान सेवा मालडिवियन ने भारत के बंगलूरु और मालदीव के हनीमाधू द्वीप के बीच साप्ताहिक दो सीधी उड़ानें शुरू करने का फैसला किया। समाचार पोर्टल द एंडिशन ने बताया, टिकट बुकिंग 12 व उड़ान सेवा 15 मई से शुरू होगी। इस रूट को उत्तरी एट्रल में सेवाओं का विस्तार करने के लिए लॉन्च किया जा रहा है। इस्लैंड एविएशन सर्विसेज ने कहा, यह

उड़ानें विकास को गति देने में मदद करेंगी। हनीमाधू से बंगलूरु के लिए उड़ानें रविवार और बृहस्पतिवार को संचालित होंगी। एजेंसी

1800-121-1166

Corporate Communications Directorate

FINANCIAL EXPRESS

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Rules for portable batteries on planes are changing

Some airlines in Asia are tightening restrictions. You may have to repack or turn off batteries before boarding flights with certain carriers

YAN ZHUANG

THE RULES AROUND flying with portable batteries are becoming increasingly confusing as some airlines in Asia change their policies, citing the risk of fires.

Airlines in South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand have tightened restrictions since a fire destroyed an Air Busan plane on the tarmac in South Korea in January, one of several recent aviation accidents that have made travellers anxious.

There is no definitive link between portable batteries and the Air Busan fire, and an investigation is underway. But because rules vary across airlines, you may find yourself having to repack or turn off such batteries when you board a plane. Here's what you need to know.

Which airlines have changed their rules and why?

As of March 1, passengers on all South

Korean airlines must keep their portable chargers within arm's reach and out of overhead bins. The government implemented the rule to ease anxiety about the risk of battery fires, the Transportation Ministry said.

Some Taiwanese airlines implemented similar changes that also took effect on March 1. EVA Air and China Airlines announced a ban on using or charging power banks on their planes, although the batteries can still be stored in overhead compartments.

Thai Airways, Thailand's flagship airline, announced that it would implement a similar ban. The airline cited "incidents of in-flight fires on international airlines, suspected to be linked to power bank usage." Since 2016, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the United Nations agency that coordinates global aviation regulations, has banned lithium-ion batteries, the kind commonly found in power banks, from the cargo holds of passenger planes.

But there is no industry standard on how airlines regulate power banks, said Mitchell Fox, the director of the Asia Pacific Center for Aviation Safety.

They have become a part of everyday life only in recent years, and some consumers may be unaware of the risks, he said. "When you have an emerging issue, it takes a while for everyone to catch on."



What are the risks behind these batteries?

Lithium-ion batteries have been used for decades to power smartphones and laptops, and are commonly used in portable power banks.

Each lithium-ion battery has a cell that can heat up quickly in a chain reaction that causes it to catch fire or explode. The Federal Aviation Administration warns that this reaction can happen if the

batteries. Others, like power banks, e-cigarettes and vehicles such as e-bikes and scooters, are less regulated, he said, raising the risk of malfunction.

"Make sure you get your devices from reputable manufacturers," professor Sharma said.

How often do batteries catch fire on planes?

Incidents involving lithium-ion batteries on US airlines have been increasing. There were 84 last year, up from 32 in 2016.

These included cases, in the cabins of both passenger and cargo planes, where batteries caught fire, emitted smoke or overheated. Portable chargers were the biggest culprit in these incidents, followed by e-cigarettes, according to the FAA. Airlines around the world require passengers to pack spare lithium-ion batteries in their carry-on luggage instead of in their checked bags so that any smoke or fire from the batteries can be noticed quickly. In the cargo hold, a fire may not be detected by a plane's automatic fire-extinguishing system until it has already become a critical problem.

"If there is a fire, you'd rather have it in cabin than checked baggage, and you'd

rather have it closer to a person rather than in the overhead bin, where it's more difficult to get it out and manage the fire," said Keith Tonkin, the managing director of Aviation Projects, an aviation consulting company in Brisbane, Australia.

What do flight crews do when there is a fire?

Fires in plane cabins that are caused by lithium-ion batteries are rarely deadly, and flight crews are generally well prepared to deal with them, Tonkin said.

In many cases, passengers will notice their electronics overheating and inform crew members, who will put the device into a thermal containment bag or into water, with little disruption to the flight, according to the FAA. In some cases, flight attendants or passengers will notice smoke in the cabin and discover that a device has overheated or caught fire.

In 2024, two portable batteries that were connected to each other caused a fire aboard a flight from Bangkok to Seoul operated by Eastar Jet, a budget South Korean carrier, according to *Yonhap*, a South Korean news agency. The flight crew noticed the smoke and immediately poured water on the batteries to douse the fire, the agency reported.

LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES, USED IN PORTABLE POWER BANKS, HAVE A CELL THAT CAN HEAT UP QUICKLY IN A CHAIN REACTION

—NYT

पहल

उड़ान स्कीम के तहत बाड़मेर में एयरपोर्ट की घोषणा 2019 में की थी

उत्तरलाई एयरबेस से सिविल फ्लाइट के संचालन की मंजूरी मिली

1

एयरपोर्ट अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया ने उत्तरलाई एयरपोर्ट से ए-320 एयरक्राफ्ट के उड़ान की परमिशन दी

2

जिन किसानों की एयरपोर्ट के लिए जमीन आ रही है, उनको निर्धारित मुआवजा जारी किया जाएगा

बाड़मेर, लोकसत्य

बाड़मेर के उत्तरलाई एयरबेस से सिविल फ्लाइट के संचालन की मंजूरी मिल गई है। एयरपोर्ट की नई बिल्डिंग भी उत्तरलाई एयरबेस के नजदीक बनेगी। इस प्रोजेक्ट को लेकर 24 मार्च तक सरकार को रिपोर्ट सौंपनी है। एयरपोर्ट की बिल्डिंग 127 एकड़ जमीन पर बनेगी। इसके लिए 64.43 एकड़ सरकारी भूमि निशुल्क आवंटित कर

दी गई। बाड़मेर कलेक्टर टीना डाबी की ओर से 62.93 एकड़ जमीन अवाप्ति की प्रक्रिया भी शुरू कर दी गई है। जल्द ही खातेदारों को बॉन्ड जारी किए जाएंगे। इसके बाद उनके खातों में डीएलसी दर के आधार पर पैसे दिए जाएंगे। उत्तरलाई एयरफोर्स के पीछे एयरपोर्ट का टर्मिनल बनेगा। इसके लिए उत्तरलाई रेलवे क्रॉसिंग ओवरब्रिज से 2 लेन सड़क बनेगी। इसके लिए उत्तरलाई रेलवे क्रॉसिंग



ओवरब्रिज से एयरपोर्ट टर्मिनल की करीब 5 किलोमीटर दूरी होगी। एयरफोर्स टर्मिनल के लिए सिर्फ एक गेट ही रहेगा। जहां यात्री विमान तक एयरलाइंस की बस से जाएंगे। यानि जोधपुर एयरबेस की तरह ही यहां भी एयरफोर्स का रनवे विमानों के लिए इस्तेमाल किया जाएगा। एयरपोर्ट टर्मिनल के पास कार पार्किंग, ऑफिस बनेंगे। एयरपोर्ट अथॉरिटी

ऑफ इंडिया ने उत्तरलाई एयरपोर्ट से ए-320 एयरक्राफ्ट के उड़ान की परमिशन दी है। भारत सरकार की उड़ान स्कीम के तहत बाड़मेर में एयरपोर्ट की घोषणा 2019 में की थी। अब 6 साल बाद इस प्रोजेक्ट के पूरा होने की संभावना बढ़ गई है। इससे पहले एयरपोर्ट के लिए 3-3 ऑप्शन तैयार किए गए थे। अब अंतिम ऑप्शन को एयरपोर्ट

अथॉरिटी ऑफ इंडिया से मंजूरी मिलने के बाद इसे आगे बढ़ाया गया। एयरपोर्ट के लिए भूमि अवाप्ति की प्रक्रिया चल रही है। इसके लिए सुनवाई की प्रक्रिया पूरी होने के बाद 7 सदस्य कमेटी रिपोर्ट तैयार कर रही है। एसडीएम वीरमाराम के नेतृत्व में रिपोर्ट बनाने के बाद कलेक्टर को भेजी जाएगी। इसके बाद 24 मार्च तक रिपोर्ट सरकार को भेजी जानी है। जिन किसानों की एयरपोर्ट के लिए जमीन आ रही है, उनको निर्धारित मुआवजा जारी किया जाएगा। अप्रैल से किसानों के खातों में मुआवजा राशि ट्रांसफर करने का काम शुरू हो जाएगा। इनमें 5 किमी एप्रोच रोड और टर्मिनल, पार्किंग और अन्य सुविधा शामिल है। सरकार ने वित्तीय साल 2023-24 में 5.70 करोड़ रुपये भूमि बजट का प्रावधान किया था।

Corporate Communications Directorate

MORNING STANDARD

DELHI

16 MARCH 2025

AILING AIR INDIA NEEDS INVASIVE SURGERY



POWER & POLITICS

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In the new firmament of Indian independence, a new maharaja conquered the sky. Designed by Bobby Kuka, Air India's immortal mascot with a twirling moustache and decorated turban was the country's symbol for a welcome in the sky. Over the years, this glorious image became tarnished thanks to public-sector nepotism and indifference, accumulating total losses of ₹70,000 crore, more than a king's ransom. Then, Prime Minister Narendra Modi did what others before him had promised: unshackle the overweight maharaja from incompetence and loss.

The USP of royals is cachet. Air India, with over 17,000 employees, was taken over by one of Indian industry's oldest maharajas—the Tatas. Everyone expected the king of the skies to get a shining new look and feel. Unfortunately the reverse has happened. AI's monarch became even more shabby and as efficient and friendly as the purveyor of a roadside eatery. There is hardly a day when AI doesn't face passengers' wrath for mismanagement. From inadequate and horrendous in-flight services to technical faults, flight delays and arrogant staff, India's premier airline is plagued with multiple malaises.

In his message to shareholders a year after taking charge company Chairman N Chandrasekaran wrote: "The team at Air India has been working hard to transform this 'national institution' into a 'national inspiration'. So on behalf of the board, I would like to acknowledge their effort and that of fellow directors. Much has been achieved, but there is much more yet to be done.

Expectations for the new AI are high, but the resolve, enthusiasm and focus on delivering burns bright." But three years after the takeover, AI isn't an inspiration but a source of melancholy.

As the new owners with a phalanx of crackerjack officials track the fault-lines, many more surface with menacing celerity. Early this month, Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was horrified to find that he had been allocated a broken seat. Chouhan isn't known for angry outbursts; but he was so incensed that he even questioned the idea of handing over AI to the Tatas. He posted: "I had the impression that AI's service would have improved once Tata took over its management, but it turned out to be my mis-

conception. I don't care about my discomfort while sitting, but it is unethical to charge the full amount from passengers and then make them sit on bad and uncomfortable seats. Isn't this cheating the passengers?"

Chouhan was reflecting the exasperation of a large section of AI's over-45-million fliers. The nation's flag carrier has long been considered a symbol of pride with a maharaja as its mascot. However, its reputation has been marred by persistent operational and service-related goof-ups since the Tata takeover. The numerous challenges include recurring flight delays and cancellations due to fleet deficiencies that undermine its ambitious plan for growth and global competitiveness.

The airline's inexplicable deficiency in in-flight service has drawn consistent passenger ire. Frequent reports of outdated cabin interiors, malfunctioning amenities and poor service paint a picture of an airline owned by the Tatas struggling to modernise. For in-

stance, on March 5, AI flight 126 from Chicago to Delhi was forced to return to O'Hare International Airport due to malfunctioning lavatories. The stinking incident pointed towards inadequate oversight by crew and underscored a broader problem: ageing aircraft with substandard maintenance and insufficient upgrades to passenger-facing systems.

Another pestilential experience occurred in late 2024 when passengers on long-haul flights to the US complained of broken in-flight entertainment systems and worn-out seats on legacy Boeing 777s. It exposed AI's promise of a "heavy refreshment" plan to install new seat covers, cushions and carpets by mid-2025. The slow pace of retrofitting



SOHANI/IST

has left many travellers having to tolerate the inferior flying experience. It is perhaps to do with Tata's inability to correct the decades of underinvestment in passenger facilities during the airline's state-owned era.

AI suffers from technical flaws as well, raising concerns about safety and operational reliability. On January 5, flight 2820 from Bengaluru to Delhi made an emergency landing back in Bengaluru after one of its engines shut down mid-air. The incident added to a growing list of mechanical failures. In 2024, an AI Boeing 777 flying from Delhi to San Francisco was diverted due to a hydraulic failure, and multiple flights faced delays from minor glitches, forcing the Directorate General of Civil Aviation to fine the airline.

AI admirers claim that these are isolated incidents that are being addressed. These issues just can't be attributed to the pains of an airline which is in transitional transformation. AI's fleet shortage is one of the primary reasons for its woes. The airline operates

a mixed fleet of approximately 140 aircraft, a number dwarfed by competitors like IndiGo with over 425 aircraft and global players like Emirates. In addition, a significant portion of its fleet—especially the legacy Boeing 777s and older A320s—is outdated.

Even configurations of its fleet suffer from operational infirmities. Its fleet renewal programme, touted as a game-changer, includes a historic order for 470 new planes in 2023, followed up by another order for a 100 more aircraft the next year. Deliveries began with the A350-900 entering service on the Delhi-New York route in November 2024, followed by Delhi-Newark in January 2025. Yet, progress is slow.

To be fair, AI has shown some positive results as well. Tata's stewardship has led to operational improvements: a 25 percent revenue increase, 50 percent loss reduction and the massive aircraft order signalling ambition and financial recovery. Its domestic market share rose from 8.7 percent in 2022 to 9.7 percent in 2023, and on-time performance improved from 70 percent in 2021 to 90 percent in 2022, partially bolstered by Tata's reputation for discipline and scale.

But the Tata group is yet to erase the public-sector mindset that still dictates 40 percent of AI's staff. Internal sabotage by the old employees isn't ruled out as well. The Tatas may have brought in a reputed foreigner to turn around a sick and maimed monster. But going by the response mechanism, it is evident that the company lacks an architecture that can provide the management with genuine feedback from the ground.

AI has an advantage over other international airlines. Since it has not yet used all of its share of international slots, a refurbished AI can be the darling of the largest number of compulsive Indian travellers. If it's to become a global leader in aviation, it should inject a massive dose of Tata-ism in the 79-year-old baby crawling on its knees. Or else, India's most vaunted palace in the sky could become a moribund relic with its head in the clouds. Instead of saying 'ta', it could be saying ta-ta to an aviation heritage established by JRD himself.

Holi weekend air travel surges but fares static in lean March

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: For the weary office-goer, there is probably nothing quite as fetching as a festival holiday that falls close to a weekend. This year, Holi fell on a Friday, making it possible to extend the weekend as revelers flew out on Thursday to places such as Vrindavan, Varanasi, Dubai or Goa, Mumbaikars' perennial favourite destination, said travel companies.

As March is a lean month for air travel, there was not much of an impact on airfares to these destinations for travel during the Holi weekend. Even the 24-hour advance purchase fares for travel during the Holi weekend were not high.

Skyscanner said its data showed a 353% surge in searches for flights to Agra for March 12 compared to the same day in Feb. Agra is the nearest airport to popular Holi destinations of Vrindavan and Mathura. Searches for March 11 alone spiked 417% compared to the previous day, it said. The data showed March 13 and March 15 as the popular travel dates. "Holi in Vrindavan and Mathura is celebrated as a multi-day spectacle, steeped in history, devotion, and an explosion of colour. From Barsana's 'Lathmar Holi' where women playfully chase men

FLIGHT SEARCH SPIKE FOR AGRA NEAR VRINDAVAN, MATHURA

► On March 12, the cheapest 24-hour advance purchase ticket price for a return trip from Delhi to Agra started at ₹23,000 while from Mumbai and Bengaluru it was ₹18,000 and ₹19,000 respectively

► Cheapest does not necessarily mean for non-stop flights

► By comparison, for travel next week, Thursday to Sunday, the cheapest fare to Agra from Delhi started at ₹31,000 while for Mumbai and Bengaluru



it was ₹20,000 and ₹19,000 respectively, showing fares didn't rise much due to Holi travel demand

► Fares on return flights from Delhi to Varanasi for travel during the Holi

weekend were priced around ₹12,000

► For travel next week, these are priced at ₹7,500 for return

► For travel from Mumbai or Bengaluru to Varanasi, the Holi weekend fares were

₹11,600 and ₹11,800 respectively

► For travel next week from the two metros, the one-week advance purchase fare available on Friday was ₹11,600 and ₹10,000 respectively

► The cheapest return fares for Goa were ₹8,500 for travel from Delhi and Bengaluru respectively and ₹12,000 from Mumbai

► For travel next week from Mumbai to Goa, the cheapest return fare was priced at ₹8,000 while from Delhi and Bengaluru it was ₹11,200 and ₹5,000

Source: Skyscanner for Holi weekend fares. Skyscanner and other travel portals, for next week's fares

Note: The Holi weekend fares provided by Skyscanner are 24-hour advance purchase fares while next week's fare is a seven-day advance purchase fare

with sticks to 'Phoolon wali Holi' at the Banke Bihari Temple where petals replace coloured powder," said a Skyscanner spokesperson.

There were also international trips. "The long weekend spurred a 27.2% increase in family travel compared to last year," said Atlys, a visa-processing platform. The data also highlights a broader trend: 55% of Holi travel applications span four to seven days, showcasing the rise of festival-linked tourism.

Digital travel platform

Agoda said it observed a 25% rise in domestic accommodation searches and a 16% increase in outbound this Holi month compared to the same period last year. For international travel, Dubai leads the list of most-searched destinations, followed by Phuket, Bangkok, Singapore and Bali. Domestically, Goa claimed the top spot with Udaipur, New Delhi, Mumbai and Vrindavan rounding out the top five, it said. Krishna Rathi of Agoda said: "Holi is one of India's most important festivals. And with the long

weekend, travellers are eager to celebrate it in new and exciting ways."

Rajesh Magow of MakeMyTrip said, "Bookings for accommodations in cultural hubs like Jaipur and Udaipur, temple towns such as Amritsar, Varanasi, Ujjain and Madurai, and beach destinations like Pondicherry, Alibaug and Mandarmani show steady growth. Internationally, we are observing the highest growth in short-haul destinations like Vietnam, Malaysia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia."