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**NEW DELHI : All scheduled international commercial air passenger services, except for repatriation flights, will remain suspended 15 July, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a circular on Friday.**

**The restrictions shall also not apply to international all-cargo flight operations, and flights specifically approved by DGCA, the circular from the country's aviation watchdog said.**

**"However, international scheduled flights may also be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case to case basis," it added.**

**Indian airlines, which are currently operating at 33% capacity, will now be allowed to operate at up to 45% capacity, a senior DGCA official said under condition of anonymity.**

"Yes. We are working on the schedule specific to different Airports in the country and soon we should be able to provide more connectivity to our citizens," the official added.

The latest development comes after the Indian government said earlier this week that it is looking at the prospect of establishing individual bilateral bubbles, India-US, India-France, India-Germany, India-UK, where demand for travel has not diminished and final decisions are expected to be taken soon.

The US' Department Of Transport (DoT) has accused the Indian government of engaging in discriminatory and restrictive practices by leaving out US carriers from the government-backed Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) to repatriate stranded Indians from foreign countries including the US. It has also stated that it will not allow Indian national carrier Air India Ltd to operate any repatriation flights on India-US routes 22 July onwards unless specifically permitted by the US' DoT.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), home to thousands of expatriate Indians, has also asked Air India Ltd. not to carry passengers to the Gulf nation from India on its repatriation flights under the government-backed Vande Bharat Mission unless specifically approved by the UAE government.  
[Live Mint Aviation 26/06/2020](#)

**New Delhi: Airlines in India will not have to keep the middle seat vacant, after the Supreme Court upheld a Bombay High Court order on Friday.** The apex court held that airlines had followed adequate safety measures to ensure safety of passengers during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**A two-judge bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Bhushan Gavai of the SC dismissed Air India pilot Deven Kanani's challenge against the Bombay HC order that allowed middle-seat occupancy for all domestic flights.**

The pilot had filed special leave petition against a decision by aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on 31 May, which permitted airlines to sell middle seats.

DGCA on Friday had submitted that expert committee recommendations on safety and health have been incorporated for airline operations. The panel had suggested allowing discretion for airlines to

keep middle seat vacant subject to passenger load.

26/06/20 Business Standard

After the lockdown starting from March 25 due to COVID-19 impact, the domestic aviation industry resumed its operations from May 25.

**The sector, which was already struggling due to shrinking revenues and margins, is among one of the worst-hit sectors by the pandemic.**

Experts point out that the aviation sector globally operates at very thin margins due to high competition from low-cost carriers (LCC) and higher fixed cost.

While the operations have begun with restrictions, the sky for aviation players continues to look hazy.

Domestic civil air operations commenced from May 25, 2020, with the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) permitting airlines to operate at one-third of their approved summer schedule capacity. "Despite the resumption of operations, the capacity utilisation remained low at about 40 percent with weak demand and cautious view of public and corporates. **We expect the demand situation to be weak for the next couple of months given the increasing COVID-19 case across the country,**" said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services.

Nair expects that in the near-term, the travel and tourism activities will be limited due to fear of pandemic spread which will hit the companies' profitability.

"Given hit on profitability, we expect consolidation in fleet operators in the short-term. Though airlines enjoyed some respite in terms of ATF prices, given the high fixed cost it is not helping the situation," said Nair.

Nair expects the situation to gradually improve starting from August to September 2020.

**"We continue to have a positive long term growth story of the aviation sector in India but considering near-term demand headwinds and likelihood of higher losses, we have a 'neutral' view on the sector,"** said Nair.

26/06/20 Nishant Kumar/Moneycontrol.com

Ahmedabad: **Around 500 acres of land will be earmarked for developing a defence aviation hub near the proposed airport at Dholera SIR,** said Air Marshal R K Dhir, Advisor, Defence and Aerospace, Government of Gujarat, on Thursday.

Addressing the 3rd Defence Conclave here through video-conferencing, Dhir said, "This 500 acres for a defence aviation hub will be connected to the taxiway of the proposed international airport at Dholera."

The proposed airport will have two taxiways. **This aviation hub is in addition to the 300 acres that the state government is reserving for MROs (Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul) for aircraft in Dholera SIR (Special Investment Region),** he added. Union Minister of State for Defence, Shripad Yesso Naik also attended the conference through a video link.

**During a similar defence conclave in 2019, the Gujarat government claimed to have earmarked 200 square kilometres of land at Dholera SIR to set up a firing range for the Indian Army. However, little progress has been made on the ground despite the state government floating a dedicated policy for aerospace and defence sector in 2016 and promoting Dholera SIR as an investment**

**destination for almost a decade.**

On the firing range project, the retired IAF official told The Indian Express, "It takes time to implement such projects. We are ready from the state government's side. The matter is with the Chief of Defence Staff."

The official spoke about DRDO signing a memorandum of understanding with the state government to set up cyber security lab at Gujarat university in the past. "We may progress on that," said Air Marshal Dhir.

26/06/20 Indian Express

Kolkata: A passenger facility at **Kolkata airport** that was threatening to become a casualty in the China-India skirmish 2,500-km away has managed to scrape through by the skin of its teeth.

**The final consignment of automatic tray retrieval system (ATRS) from Shanghai in China reached the airport on Monday, putting to rest fears that the Rs 36-crore project could get caught in the ban cry against Chinese products following anger fuelled by the brutal killing of 20 Indian soldiers by Chinese troops in Galwan Valley, Ladakh, on June 15.**

**ATRS** is meant to automatically send trays, on which passengers place cabin baggage items for screening, back to the preparation area for others to use. The system enables CISF officers to screen twice the number of bags than they currently do in an hour.

"We were rather tensed about the fate of the ATRS consignment that began arriving in batches earlier this month. **Two consignments were still en-route when tensions with China flared up.**

**Thankfully, they have now arrived**, the last of them this Monday, barely hours before Customs clearance of Chinese goods into Kolkata port and airport got held up," said an official.

The project that was to be completed much earlier got caught in the coronavirus pandemic. The first delay was owing to travel restrictions on Chinese nationals to stop the spread of Covid-19.

26/06/20 Subhro Niyogi/Times of India

New Delhi: **The first month of domestic flight resumption has seen almost 19 lakh people flying within the country. Schedule domestic flights were suspended on March 25 and allowed to resume gradually from May 25.**

In a tweet, aviation minister H S Puri said that from May 25 to June 25 18.9 lakh passengers travelled on about 21,300 flights. This translates into an average of about 90 passengers on a domestic flight.

Domestic flights had resumed at one-third of the original summer schedule level and will be gradually ramped up as demand increases and travel restrictions -- flight handling at many airports has been capped by state governments and different quarantine requirements in different states -- ease. Calendar years 2018 and 2019 had seen over a crore domestic flyers every month.

Minister Puri had recently said India used to have 3-3.5 lakh domestic passengers daily in pre-pandemic times. "We started with 30,000 passengers on May 25 and since then have seen a maximum of 72,000 domestic passengers on a day. I expect to reach half of the pre-corona level of 1.5-1.6 lakh domestic travellers before mid July," he had recently.

Delhi airport, which remains the busiest Indian airport, says it saw about 30,000 domestic passengers daily after schedule flights were allowed which means about 9 lakh domestic flyers during the month.

"Of them, **one-third are travelling for visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and one-fourth are business travellers. Only 30-35% are those who had got stranded and were going back,**" said Videh Kumar Jaipuria, CEO of Delhi International Airport Ltd at a Boeing co-hosted webinar Thursday on

restoring confidence in air travel.

The second busiest airport, Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA), says it has seen just over 2 lakh domestic passengers in the one month post resumption of schedule flights. CSMIA currently has a cap on number of domestic flights — 50 arrivals and as many departures — it can handle due to the pandemic. "Amongst the destinations served, the airport saw the highest passenger load capacity on Mumbai – Delhi route, followed closely by Kolkata, Varanasi, and Patna, respectively," Mumbai Airport said in a statement.

26/06/20 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

**Kochi: The Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) will begin Rapid Antibody testing of international arrival passengers from Friday morning in accordance with the instruction given by the state government.** CIAL informed that a coordinated system has been established by the health, revenue and security officials to implement the testing and 200 passengers will be tested per hour. "CIAL established 16 counters near the international arrival area, after the Customs hall for testing the passengers. HLL Lifecare Limited, a Government of India-owned company is entrusted with the testing job. International passengers who do not have Covid-19 negative certificates will have to undergo RAB test and they will not be allowed to leave the airports till the results come. Usually an RAB test will take 20-30 minutes and passengers who undergo it should wait at the allotted area till the results come. If found positive, they will be sent to Covid-19 treatment centres for further confirmation tests like RT-PCR," said a statement from CIAL.

As per the latest guideline, all arrival passengers should wear N95 face mask, face shield, hand gloves and carry sanitisers. Apart from these, PPE kits are made mandatory for those returning from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. As UAE has already made Covid-19 tests mandatory for all departing passengers, they should produce the test certificate at the counter. Those who are coming from Qatar should have green status in Ehteraz, the COVID contact-tracing mobile app of Qatar government and they too will have to undergo RAB testing.

23 relief flights scheduled for Friday

**CIAL schedules 23 relief flights from Middle East countries and one from Tbilisi, Georgia on Friday evacuating 4320 passengers. The airport confirms the arrival of 15 flights on Thursday with 2520 passengers.**

26/06/20 Anantha Narayanan K/Times of India

**With the Kerala government tightening its rules for UAE returnees, the Ministry of External affairs has clarified state-specific protocols cannot be implemented amid lockdown. The MEA has clarified that it will only the protocols issued by the Union Home and Health ministries.** Currently, MEA has announced the commencement of the fourth phase of Vande Bharat from July 3.

On Wednesday, Kerala issued a set of new guidelines for expatriates from the Gulf countries returning to the state by Vande Bharat Mission flights and chartered aircraft. The state, which was hailed for curbing its Coronavirus cases, has seen a sudden rise in cases amid 'Unlock 1'. The new guidelines will be applicable from Thursday.

**"As per the new guidelines, all those who come from countries where testing facilities are available should take the test and carry the test certificate with them. The test must be taken within 72 hours of the flight (validity of the test report will be for 72 hours). They must also register on the Kerala Covid Jagratha website and give all details and must undergo screening at the airport. Those**

with symptoms will be shifted to the hospital for further tests."

**On May 7, the Centre launched the Vande Bharat mission to bring back Indians stranded abroad amid Coronavirus global lockdown via aircraft and naval ships in a phased manner.** This facility is available on payment-basis - almost 4 lakh people from 98 countries have registered to come back till date. **Till date, around over 1 lakh Indians have returned to India from abroad via Vande Bharat while 1.5 lakhs have returned via domestic & foreign charters, naval ships & through land borders, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said. While earlier only Air India was operating flights previously, now private airlines GoAir, Indigo and Vistara too have commenced operations, presumably ending the government air carrier's monopoly.**

25/06/20 Suchitra Karthikeyan/Republic World

New Delhi: In a first after lifting of the lockdown, a Korean-based airline was allowed to operate from Incheon, South Korea to Delhi with 165 passengers on board.

An Asiana Airlines with 165 passengers landed at national capital's Indira Gandhi International Airport last week.

**"On June 19, 135 Korean businessmen and professionals and 30 Indians were brought to India from Korea by Asiana Airlines in a charter flight. These professionals work with Korean companies in India.** They have shown their willingness to reopen their companies in India post lockdown and for this both the governments have agreed and gave the permission for the charter flight," Yoo Chang-Ho, Minister-Counsellor for political affairs, Korean embassy to India told to ANI.

The Korean-based Asiana Airlines got permission from both the Korean and Indian governments for charter flight operation.

As per the Korean embassy, 135 passengers are basically from Korea and they all are businessmen/professionals and working with Korean companies based in Delhi and NCR.

"Embassy is also planning to arrange more charter flights in the coming days. Many Korean businessmen and Indian businessmen have shown interest in both countries to restart their work," Chang Ho said.

India's aviation watchdog Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is aware of the charter flight movement. **"A flight was approved to operate on June 19 on the recommendation of Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to uplift the Korean business community from Incheon and Korean nationals/residents from Delhi,"** DGCA said.

26/06/20 Ashoke Raj/ANI/Business World

Kochi: Customs sleuths at Cochin international airport limited (Cial) foiled yet another smuggling bid and seized **280 grams of gold** from a lady passenger in the early hours of Thursday.

The contraband was in the form of gold paste and ornaments. It was seized during customs check at the airport. The passenger had travelled in a special flight from Bahrain which arrived at Cial on Thursday around 2am. The contraband is valued around **Rs 10 lakh. The smuggled gold was concealed inside the passenger's inner wear.**

Customs officials have launched an inquiry into the incident. Ever since the operations of special flights began, there have been two similar cases in which gold was recovered from returnees who arrived on special flights from gulf countries.

Sources said law enforcement agencies at the airport are constantly watching the activities of smugglers. "It seems like smuggling rackets are testing the waters by sending in small quantities of

gold. We are staying alert to thwart any such bids," said a source.

26/06/20 Times of India

Bengaluru: Twenty-two macaws, including a few endangered birds from the parrot family, which were about to be smuggled to Bengaluru via air cargo were rescued at Kolkata airport on Sunday. Two men, who investigators believe are part of a wildlife smuggling syndicate sending birds to Bengaluru for a specific client, were arrested.

Sources with the Kolkata zonal unit of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) said the duo, Kolkata residents Kamalesh Saha and Sayan Acharya, had crammed the birds into small cages and covered them with thick white cloth to avoid detection by Customs authorities.

"We received specific information about a gang attempting to smuggle exotic birds from Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose International Airport. Our team carried out a search on Sunday and discovered the **consignment containing 22 macaws packed in a few iron cages**. Following a probe, we nabbed Kamalesh and Sayan," a DRI officer from Kolkata told TOI over phone.

A thorough investigation revealed the **two men had smuggled the macaws from Bangladesh through Bongaon town at the Indo-Bangla border. They are suspected to be part of an international wildlife smuggling gang, which had possibly received an order from a Bengaluru-based buyer for a specific number of macaws**, the officer added.

25/06/20 Times of India

**NEW DELHI : More than 50% people surveyed by aviation industry body, The International Air Transport Association (IATA) during June said that they will wait for another five to six months before flying, due to the ongoing pandemic which has claimed thousands of lives worldwide, Amitabh Khosla, IATA's country director for India, said on Thursday.**

Speaking at a webinar hosted by aerospace major Boeing Corp on restoring confidence in air travel, Khosla said that 90% of the respondents surveyed by the industry body, however, will fly again in the next one year.

**"The challenge is to restore confidence in air travel and confidence to plan travel. This will take time to re-build,"** Khosla added.

Air travel has taken a huge hit worldwide due to the outspread of covid-19 with travel demand expected to remain muted in the coming months.

Indian airlines, which resumed domestic air services from 25 May, struggled to fill seats in the last seven days of the month, even though most airlines are operating at only 20%-25% of their total capacity.

"The covid-19 pandemic is an unprecedented crisis for the aviation industry. The recovery from this crisis can happen only by restoring public confidence in the health and safety of flying," said Videh

Kumar Jaipurkar, chief executive of Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), which operates New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport, at the webinar.

"The new mitigation measures introduced at airports with respect to sanitisation, cleanliness, hygiene and social distancing, as well as health screening procedures on departure and arrival have significantly reposed confidence amongst the flyers," Jaipurkar added.

According to John Hopkins university's coronavirus tracker, 9.4 million people have been affected by covid-19 infection worldwide while 482,805 people have succumbed to the virus.

India currently has 186, 514 active covid-19 cases, while 14,894 people have succumbed to the infection, according to data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).

However, aviation remains as one of the safest modes of transport amidst the ongoing pandemic and passenger confidence in air travel needs to be reinforced, said Pradeep Panicker, chief executive of GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited, which operates the city's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport.

"We are partnering with airlines, Ministry of Civil Aviation, DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) and the industry to create a multi-layered approach focused on keeping passengers and airline crews healthy," said Salil Gupte, president of Boeing India.

**"Having consistent, industry-recognized safety standards and protocols will be an important part of recovery as travel resumes,"** Gupte added.

[Live Mint Aviation 25/06/2020](#)

**NEW DELHI : IndiGo on Thursday announced a flexible payment scheme called 'Flex Pay' under which passengers will have to pay only 10% of the total fare amount at the time of booking.**

**Passengers can defer the 90% remaining payment "for a period of up to 15 days either from the date of bookings or before the date of departure" under this scheme,** IndiGo said in a press release.

If a passenger has paid 10% of the fare amount to get a ticket, and if he or she cancels the booking without paying the remaining 90%, he or she will not be refunded this 10% amount.

In general, passengers have to pay the entire ticket value upfront while booking a ticket on a flight.

"With the help of Flex Pay, the passengers can now secure their bookings by paying only 10% of the total fare amount and defer their payment on an IndiGo domestic flight for a period of up to 15 days either from the date of bookings or before the date of departure," the airline noted.

[Live Mint Aviation 25/06/2020](#)

**Indian airlines are struggling hard as most of their costs like the ones related to aircraft leasing, plane's maintenance and fuel have to be paid in US dollars, a Vistara official said on Friday, at a time when rupee has depreciated by approximately 6 per cent since January.**

"The reason why the airlines are struggling this hard is because a lot of our costs are all in US dollar. And with continually depreciating rupee, and as most of us (airlines) predominantly operate in the domestic market, there is obviously going to be a mismatch," Vistara's Chief Commercial Officer Vinod Kannan said at a webinar organised by aviation consultancy firm CAPA.

While signing contracts with aircraft leasing firms or aircraft maintenance firms, airlines generally have to agree to make payments in US dollars only.

Kannan said, "**Whether it comes to fuel, aircraft leasing, aviation maintenance organisations or aircraft overhauls, it is all in US dollar.** You can push down your costs to the lowest level possible, all you need is a Rs 10 increase (in price of a US dollar), or a depreciation of the rupee by 1-3 per cent."

"So, I think that is an important point. How do we address that? I am not sure...But I think it is very pertinent because you can be the slimmest, meanest organisation in the Indian context, but you still might not cut it purely because of factors that are outside your hands," he stated.

Calling the coronavirus pandemic a "black swan" event, Kannan noted that the airlines have a fundamental knack of ordering aircraft when the times are good, and getting the delivery when the times are bad.

"So that is an important reason why the airlines not just in India but around the world have to think twice about (aircraft) utilisation and see how we can improve aircraft utilisation than order more aircraft," he stated.

Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India.

After a gap of two months, the Indian government resumed domestic flight services on May 25 albeit in a curtailed manner and with limits placed on airfares.

#### Business Standards 27/06/2020

**The government has allowed airlines to increase flights up to 45 per cent of their total capacity, against the previous cap of one-third, aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation said on Thursday.**

Indian airlines resumed their domestic operations from 25 May after being grounded for two months due to the lockdown to contain Covid-19 pandemic.

A senior government official said data has proved that air travel is the safest mode of transport due to its controlled access and complete traceability at departure, transit, and arrival. Less than 1 per cent of people who have taken a flight since 25 May have been detected carrying the virus.

Also, only when a substantial portion of the domestic routes are functional, overseas flights can resume. International routes depend on traffic feed from domestic flights.

Airline executives said that demand was primarily unidirectional, meaning the aircraft are flying on one route with little passengers. This paper had earlier reported that data from travel firms show that over 90 per cent of bookings have been for one-way trips and on non-metro routes, indicating little demand yet for business travel.

However, market leader IndiGo is buoyant about the increase in flying capacity, as it is seeing signs of growth in seat occupancy after resuming domestic operations, Chief Executive Ronojoy Dutta recently told Business Standard. The booking trend was encouraging, with growth in load factors and unit revenue, Dutta said. "Future bookings are coming along nicely," he said.

A cash balance of Rs 20,376 crore gives IndiGo the cushion to operate one-way flights with lesser load. It makes money in the other direction where it gets a full flight.

Business Standards 27/06/2020

**"The competent authority has decided that scheduled international commercial passenger services to or from India shall remain suspended till 2359 hrs IST of July 15, 2020,"** said the DGCA circular.

**"However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case to case basis,"** said the circular by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Air India and other private domestic airlines have been operating unscheduled international repatriation flights under the Vande Bharat Mission, which was started on May 6 by the Central government.

India resumed scheduled domestic passenger flights on May 25, after a gap of two months.

Live Mint Aviation 27/06/2020

**The COVID-19 pandemic continued to weigh heavily on international air passenger and cargo markets in May with the travel and tourism sectors crippled by widespread lockdowns and travel restrictions, preliminary traffic figures released by the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) show.**

In aggregate, the region's airlines carried only 785,000 passengers in May, a 97.5 per cent decline compared to the same month last year. The slump in demand combined with a 92.5 per cent fall in available seat capacity, led to a 50.4 percentage point decline in the average international passenger load factor to just 28.4 per cent for the month.

Meanwhile, **air cargo demand as measured in freight tonne-kilometres fell by 19 per cent year-on-year.** With offered freight capacity decreasing by 20.1 per cent for the month, the average international freight load factor rose just marginally by 0.9 percentage points to 60.9 per cent, reflecting the capacity crunch experienced in preceding months as a result of the sharp declines in belly-hold space on passenger aircraft.

**"The plunge in passenger demand in May and declines in air cargo volumes underscore the immense challenges that airlines are facing,"** said AAPA Director General Subhas Menon.

"Overall, the region's carriers transported more passengers and cargo compared to the previous month. But the prognosis for the industry as well as tourism and trade remains grim."

Menon said that with recent consumer surveys indicating an increasingly cautious stance on air travel, the return to normalcy will likely proceed slowly, reflecting the uncertainty in the outlook, as

governments remain wary about lifting restrictions and continue to impose onerous conditions on travel.

**"We are hopeful that governments will act quickly to coordinate measures based on objective risk assessments that safeguard the health and well-being of the travelling public for the recovery of aviation to begin in earnest."**

The recently announced Take-off guidance issued by the **ICAO Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART)** provides a comprehensive set of measures which should be adopted consistently across States. **CART anticipates that flights will restart in phases, initially between governments where containment of the virus is apace and public health capability adequate.**

Live Mint Aviation 27/06/2020

**Mumbai: The government has, for the third time this year, deferred the deadline for submission of expressions of interest for Air India by two months to August 31.**

**Intimation to qualified bidders will now be sent on Sept 14 instead of July 14, said a notification from the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), Ministry of Finance.**

The changes are "as per the requests received from the interested bidders in view of the prevailing situation arising out of Covid19" said the notification.

The government had in 2018 tried to sell 76% stake in the airline but couldn't get bidders. This year January, it announced it would sell a 100% stake in the airline and its subsidiary Air India Express and in AI Sats, its equally owned joint venture with Singaporean in-flight services company SATS. The debt to be taken over by the new investor has been reduced.

**The government, in January, had fixed March 17 as the last date for interested bidders to submit EOIs. The deadline was extended to April 30 and then to June 30 before Saturday's announced extension.**

The ETI 27/06/2020

**The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has objected to the Mumbai Police filing a closure report in a cheating case registered earlier against now-defunct Jet Airways, its promoter Naresh Goyal, and his wife.**

**Stating that the police didn't consider crucial facts of the case, the ED has filed an intervention application before a court.**

Jet Airways, Goyal and his wife Anita were booked on charges of cheating and a criminal breach of trust in February this year by MRA Marg police on a complaint filed by city-based Akbar Travels India Private Limited, alleging that they were cheated of Rs 46 crore by the Goyals.

In its closure report filed before a court a month later, the police stated that there was no evidence to probe the case further.

In its application, the ED stated that the police had failed to consider the facts that were crucial in establishing the case against the Goyals.

Meanwhile, the **Akbar Travels has decided to challenge the closure report in court.**

"The report by the city police seemed to have been filed without any proper investigation. No investigation has been done on our allegations of personal assurances by the director (of Jet Airways) and also on foreign account details provided by the complainant," **Akbar Travel's counsel Dharmesh Joshi said on Saturday, adding that they will file a petition on July 6.**

As per the complaint filed with the police earlier, Jet Airways had done business worth Rs 900 crore with Akbar Travels between 2018-19.

It alleged that the airline and its promoter have failed to pay Rs 46,05,68,036 to the travel company.

Despite knowing the financial crisis at Jet Airways, which was in position of no return, Naresh Goyal made false promises. He willfully induced the travel company to take booking on behalf of the airline, the complaint stated.

**The ED is conducting a probe against the Goyals and the defunct airline under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act and Foreign Exchange Management Act.**

The Week 27/06/2020

**As a part of its latest steps to slash employee costs, domestic carrier IndiGo has begun laying off a section of employees, while also extending compulsory leave without pay (LWP) for others.**

Sources told Money control that the company was presently not renewing contracts of some of its cabin crew staff members, adding that it will take a look at the same going forward.

Multiple sources added that some of the ground staff have also lost jobs. These employees were asked to undergo test and anyone getting lower than a threshold, has been asked to put in papers.

**The company, which had already announced pay cuts for its employees, is looking to further cut salaries of pilots under training to around 75 percent. The trim for all line released pilots will be revised upwards to around 45 percent.**

**These changes will be instituted effective July 1.**

As per an initial email communication to employees to which Money control had access to, the **company has announced that it will add "another 5.5 days of additional LWP to a total of 10 days LWP for a full-time leave program and this would be prorated for other leave programs based on available days".**

**"There will also be a salary revision for under training transition captains and transition first**

**officers,"** said the mail from the airline's head of operations.

[30/06/20 Tanya Khandelwal/moneycontrol.com](#)

Amid the coronavirus COVID-19 crisis in the aviation sector, **Vistara Airlines on Tuesday announced that its CEO Leslie Thng will take a 20 per cent salary cut from July 2020 to December 2020.** The move comes after the airline announced that it is operating with less than it is 30 per cent capacity and currently getting back to normalcy in operations and network which may take a couple of months.

According to a Vistara spokesperson, "The ongoing pandemic continues to adversely impact our financial performance, as we are operating on a significantly reduced network since the resumption of domestic flights amid low demand. Vistara is making every effort to save jobs of more than 4,000 of its people while conserving cash and pursuing to reduce operational expenditures, which includes staff costs."

**"From 1 July 2020 to 31 December 2020, Vistara CEO will take a 20% monthly pay cut and the company shall implement graded monthly pay cuts for staff at other levels. The rest of Vistara's senior staff including members of the management will take a 15% pay cut every month, while those in mid to junior-mid levels will take 10% pay cut in this period,"** the spokesperson added.

[30/06/20 Sameer Dixit/Zee News](#)

Dubai: Two days after his arrival in Dubai, Indian expat Mudassir Ali can't still believe he is back. After being stranded in India for four months, he chose to take the expensive route - flying via private jet with 12 other strangers. And the cost? Dh135,000 for 13 passengers.

"I had joined a few Facebook groups for stranded residents from where I found a person working at Al Maktoum airport, who talked to me about the option of using private jets. I was desperate to get back and got in touch with Dubai-based Empire Aviation Group, which quoted Dh135,000 for 13 passengers," he said.

Ali was then briefed on a number of conditions, including a contract that must be signed. "The cheque should be paid in a single person's name. Valid visas, passports and Emirates IDs of all passengers were required to get the necessary approvals. Finding 12 people who could afford to take the risk was hard," he said.

"We were all strangers who met on social media and it was hard to build trust. In fact, I was asked what if I misuse the documents or runaway with money. Our Whatsapp group of 30 people, created on June 18, dropped down to 13. But, finally, I managed to convince everyone that I was just a husband and father, trying to get back to his loved ones - just like many of them."

Ali said he could have waited until flights resumed but seeing the videos of his daughter broke his heart every time. "When will Papa come home?" the little Aiza Syed Ali kept asking.

"I could've waited, but four months is too long. I knew that travel would get back to normal but I couldn't take it anymore. I had to make the chartered flight happen."

Focused on the process, Ali kept all his co-passengers in the loop via email, where all doubts about the private jet were answered.

All of them had their GDRFA approvals and they chose Mumbai as their boarding destination, as it was the city closest to Dubai and the cheapest in the lot.

Ali travelled from Bengaluru to Mumbai and all the 13 strangers finally met to board the private jet that will bring them home to their loved ones.

30/06/20 Sami Ha Zen/Khaleej Times

**Mumbai: Charter flights are helping airlines earn cash amid uncertain travel demand and rising fuel costs.**

**GoAir will be operating an additional 150 charter flights to bring home Indian citizens from West Asia, an airline spokesperson said on Tuesday. Until Monday, GoAir operated 51 charter flights carrying 8951 passengers to India.**

An AirAsia India spokesperson said it has a few more domestic charter flights planned over the next few days under its 'Umeed Ki Udaan' initiative to support migrant workers' return to their home. The airline has till now flown 26 charter flights within India and transported 4200 passengers. The highest demand for charters was to East and North East India, the airline said.

Domestic flights resumed on May 25 but seat occupancy is still between 55-60 per cent. Regular international flights are shut till July 31 and stranded Indians are returning home on government organised Vande Bharat flights or private charters.

Airlines are operating over 700 domestic flights every day and number of domestic and foreign charter flights are limited. Yet these flights are lucrative for the airline due to uncertain demand in domestic market.

**"We have not been able to estimate demand. Fuel prices are rising in past two months and it makes more sense to deploy aircraft for charters as there is guaranteed traffic and two way income,"** said an aviation industry executive.

30/06/20 Aneesh Phadnis/Business Standard

**AirAsia India has fired Gaurav Taneja, its pilot who publicly alleged violations of safety regulations at the airline.**

The move comes to light a day after aviation regulator DGCA sent a show-cause notice to the airline's senior executive, Manish Uppal, AirAsia India's Head of Operations. But sources close to the development tell Moneycontrol that the pilot was fired on June 26.

Earlier, DGCA said it had taken cognisance of concerns raised against a 'particular airline' in connection to the controversy around AirAsia India pilot Gaurav Taneja, the aviation industry regulator sent a show-cause notice to the carrier's senior executive.

In a June 15 statement on Twitter, DGCA said it had "taken note of the concerns raised by some stakeholders against a particular Airline and its approach to safety".

In a June 15 statement on Twitter, DGCA said it had "taken note of the concerns raised by some stakeholders against a particular Airline and its approach to safety".

Taneja alleged earlier that the airline was violating safety protocols, introduced to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus, which could endanger the lives of hundreds of AirAsia India passengers.

"Some of the concerns raised by Taneja are relevant. Some may not be," a senior pilot had said.

[29/06/20 Prince Mathews Thomas/moneycontrol.com](https://www.moneycontrol.com/news/international/29/06/20-Prince-Mathews-Thomas-moneycontrol.com)

**NEW DELHI : India needs to start using its grounded aircraft and minor airports for cargo handling to bring down logistics costs and make exports of fish, vegetables and fruits more viable, transport minister Nitin Gadkari said on Tuesday.**

In an online interaction with members of the Domestic Air Cargo Agents Association of India, Gadkari said he will speak with defence minister Rajnath Singh to use assets such as **decommissioned Air Force planes for cargo.**

This, he said, will make exports of certain commodities more viable, enhance incomes of people and benefit the nation. "The government will support your efforts. The point is we need to get maximum work done by our assets and elicit maximum utility to keep costs low." He said India needs to bring down its logistic cost from the existing 13%.

I have many suggestions for air cargo movement. There is a lot to do, especially in the case of fruits, vegetables and fish. Our marine economy is worth ₹1 trillion. We want to scale it up to ₹6 trillion, but our biggest problem is transportation." An efficient air cargo ecosystem will help in exporting items like prawns from cities like Nagpur to Dubai and Singapore, he added. Gadkari said higher logistics costs have been one of the challenges for industry, with costs in India much higher than in China and the US.

He said the 12-lane Delhi-Mumbai expressway that is in the works is expected to drastically cut travel time between the two cities. "The number of trips taken by a truck will also increase and cost will go down."

[Live Mint Aviation 01/07/2020](https://www.live-mint.com/aviation/01/07/2020)

**The international passenger flight services in the country will resume in a phased manner during 'Unlock 2.0', the ministry of home affairs said in a statement on Monday.** In the wake

of coronavirus outbreak, India suspended all the domestic and international flight services in the last week of March. While the domestic flights have started operations in limited routes after a gap of two months, the **international flight services will remain suspended till July 15.**

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) earlier mentioned "international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes on a case-to-case basis." The DGCA order had come after several countries such as the United Kingdom, France urged the Indian government for allowing Air India to carry outbound passengers from India on its flights meant to repatriate Indian citizens from those countries.

To bring back the stranded Indians across the world, the central government started Vande Bharat Mission on May 6. In the first three phases of the Vande Bharat Mission, around 875 international flights were scheduled for operation from over 50 countries across 5 continents. Nearly 1,25,000 Indians have returned from different countries, the civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said earlier.

"International air travel of passengers has been permitted in a limited manner under the Vande Bharat mission. Further opening up will take place in a calibrated manner," the central government said in a statement.

Earlier, the civil aviation minister said that re-commencement of international flight services will depend on factors like 'border acceptance' norms in the arriving country and the traffic demand. He also hinted at the prospects of bilateral bubble arrangements, which will allow some international operations between countries.

In a relief to the airlines, the civil aviation ministry allowed the companies to fly up to 45% of the pre-COVID-19 capacity on domestic routes. The domestic airlines have ferried close to two million passengers in a resuming service on May 25, a senior government official said.

Last week, the Supreme Court clarified that there is no need to keep middle seat vacant in the flights. The apex court upheld the Bombay High Court order that had permitted all flight operators to allow passengers to occupy middle seats in flights. However, the airlines should strictly comply with guidelines of aviation regulator on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the top court said.

[Live Mint Aviation 30/06/2020](#)

**ISLAMABAD : The European Union Air Safety Agency (EASA) has suspended Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) authorisation to fly to the bloc for six months,** the airline said on Tuesday, a blow to the carrier's operations.

**Separately, the safety agency said it took the action because of concerns about Pakistan's ability to ensure compliance with international aviation standards at all times.**

The suspension follows Pakistan's grounding of 262 of the country's 860 pilots, including 141 of PIA's 434, whose licences the aviation minister termed "dubious".

"EASA has temporarily suspended PIA's authorization to operate to the EU member states for a period of six months effective July 1, 2020 with the right to appeal," PIA said in a statement.

PIA said it would temporarily discontinue all its flights to Europe but later said it received a two-day relief with landing permission in Europe and Britain granted from July 1 to July 3. PIA is also allowed over flying until further order, the national flag carrier's spokesman said.

Confirming the move in an emailed statement, the EASA referred to a recent investigation by Pakistan which it said showed a "large share" of pilot licences to be invalid.

Pakistan's grounding of the pilots followed a preliminary report on a PIA crash in Karachi that killed 97 people last month.

PIA said it is in contact with the EASA to take corrective measures and appeal against the decision with the expectation of the "earliest possible" lifting of the suspension after action by the government and the airline.

The EASA also suspended the authorisation of another Pakistani airline, Vision Air International.

Vision Air International did not immediately respond to an emailed request for comment.

Following the EASA's decision, the UK Civil Aviation Authority said it, too, was withdrawing PIA's permit to operate from three of its airports, as required under law.

"PIA flights from Birmingham, London Heathrow and Manchester airports are suspended with immediate effect," a spokesman for the UK authority told Reuters.

The three were major flying destinations for the airline.

Meanwhile, Pakistani pilots and their union, the Pakistan Airlines Pilots Association (PALPA), say there are discrepancies in the government's list of pilots with licences deemed dubious and are demanding a judicial investigation.

PIA and private airline Air Blue have also queried the list with PIA saying 36 of its pilots mentioned had either retired or left the airline, while Air Blue said it no longer employed seven of nine pilots on the list.

"It contains names of highly educated and qualified pilots who have passed all the tests,"

"We want a fair and impartial resolution to this matter," said PALPA's president Chaudhry Salman. Pakistan aviation ministry official Abdul Sattar Khokhar said it did not have full details of the discrepancies and "the issue is being sorted out in consultation with airlines and civil aviation authorities."

**With two-cent airfares, high fuel costs and taxes, India's aviation market already was one of the toughest around. The coronavirus pandemic could be the final straw for some of the country's airlines.**

**Indian carriers need as much as \$2.5 billion to keep flying, CAPA Centre for Aviation in Sydney says, and that may only last to the end of this year if they're lucky.** Airlines suffered a total collapse in demand from March 25 to late May as India banned commercial passenger flights as part of its virus lockdown.

Governments in Europe, the U.S. and elsewhere have provided \$123 billion to support airlines through the Covid-19 crisis. But **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, facing a widening fiscal deficit, hasn't doled out funds to individual industries or airlines backed by private businesses and, in some cases, billionaires.**

The country's airlines need significant investment or one or more will fail, said Satyendra Pandey, an independent consultant and former head of strategy at Go Airlines India Ltd. That puts them on track to follow the likes of Flybe Group Plc in the U.K., Virgin Australia Holdings Ltd. and Latam Airlines Group SA in Chile into administration or collapse.

"Airlines with weak balance sheets and inadequate collateral have survived by withholding payments to suppliers for two months and counting," Pandey said.

The Indian aviation market was challenging enough before the pandemic as crushing fare wars and high costs took their toll. **There were two major collapses in the last decade: Jet Airways India Ltd., the country's oldest private-sector carrier, and Kingfisher Airlines Ltd., which was owned by Vijay Mallya. Air India Ltd. has been limping along under a mountain of debt for years searching for a buyer.**

**In addition to Indian states imposing levies of as much as 30% on jet fuel, a weakening rupee adds to the pain.** The currency has fallen nearly 10% against the dollar over the past year, the weakest in Asia, which hurts Indian airlines as their costs are mostly dollar-denominated.

"**We haven't given a financial bailout package,** but that doesn't mean the government has not been helping the aviation sector," said Pradeep Singh Kharola, the top bureaucrat in India's aviation ministry. "The help can be in various ways."

**Kharola cited an announcement to open up the nation's airspace -- part of a \$277 billion government stimulus package for the economy first proposed in 2013. Another decision to reform plane-repair facilities was announced in 2016, and a plan is in the works to privatize more airports.**

**Without immediate government support, any cash infusion would need to come from tycoon owners, CAPA's South Asia Chief Executive Officer Kapil Kaul said** on Bloomberg Television. Tata Group, India's biggest conglomerate, owns majority stakes in Vistara and AirAsia India Pvt Ltd., while Wadia Group -- a family business empire -- owns GoAir. Billionaires Rahul Bhatia and Rakesh Gangwal own IndiGo.

But wealthy backers don't guarantee salvation, as Jet and Kingfisher show.

**Two senior bankers who approve loans to large companies, including airlines, said there's little desire to lend to them without a government backstop, adding that there is now a big gap between carriers' revenues and expenses.** Cash flows have almost dried up, but the airlines still need to pay salaries, maintain airlines and cover outgoings, the bankers said, asking not to be identified as they weren't authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

**SpiceJet, Air India and Vistara had cash ratios of less than 1, the latest annual figures show, indicating there's a risk of not fulfilling current liabilities with cash and cash equivalents,** according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

**Close to 3 million jobs in aviation and related industries could be lost in India this year because of the pandemic, as well as more than \$11 billion in revenue,** according to the International Air Transport Association. India is one of the worst-affected countries, with more than half a million confirmed virus cases and 16,475 deaths.

**Even after some domestic routes reopened in late May, planes were flying only about half full in the first week back,** according to data shared by the country's aviation regulator. **The fixed costs of maintaining grounded planes and meeting financial obligations to banks, oil companies, lessors and staff make it even harder for weaker carriers to stay afloat.**

**There is an added legal risk, too, that could run the airlines dry, with India's top court hearing a plea to mandate carriers refund passengers whose flights were canceled due to the lockdown. That figure that could top \$500 million,** according to CAPA.

Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Group and Singapore Airlines Ltd., said it is working to lower or defer operating expenditure and avoiding discretionary expenses. It also reduced staff costs to save jobs. SpiceJet said it is confident of emerging stronger after the crisis and has adequate cash flow. The listed carrier, whose market value has more than halved this year, hasn't cut jobs.

Representatives at IndiGo, GoAir and AirAsia India didn't respond to requests for comment.

**Also at stake are orders with Boeing Co. and Airbus SE. IndiGo, operated by InterGlobe Aviation Ltd., is the world's biggest customer for Airbus's best-selling A320neo-family of jets, while GoAir also has ordered 144 of them. SpiceJet is one of the biggest buyers of Boeing's now-grounded 737 Max jets, with as many as 205 on order.**

"The growth of airline capacity in India far outstripped demand at economic prices, placing the viability of fleet plans and entire carriers in doubt," said Robert Mann, New York-based head of aviation consultancy R.W. Mann & Co. **"Covid will accelerate the reduction of capacity, in a number of cases by extinguishing airlines."**

The ETI 01/07/2020

Delhi airport launches E-gate pass facility at Cargo terminal

**The E-gate pass facility**, created in collaboration with Delhi Cargo Brokers Association (DCBA) and operators of both the cargo terminals (Celebi and DCSC), for Import cargo delivery **will not only help in ensuring social distancing by reducing human contact at the terminals, but will also expedite the process and save time**, the company said.

The ETI 01/07/2020

**NEW DELHI: Passenger loads continue to be low in domestic flights, the operations of which resumed on May 25 after a gap of two months.** Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Twitter on Thursday that **71,471 passengers travelled on 785 flights on July 1.** This means, **on an average, there were 91 passengers in a plane on Wednesday.**

IndiGo said on Thursday it will give a 25 percent discount on the airfare to doctors and nurses till the end of 2020 as they are at the forefront of the battle against the coronavirus pandemic.

"The nurses and doctors will be required to provide valid hospital IDs at the time of check-in as a proof of their identity," the airline said in a press release.

"The discount will be offered while booking through IndiGo's website, valid for sale and travel from July 01, 2020 till December 31, 2020," it added.

Passenger loads continue to be low in domestic flights, the operations of which resumed on May 25 after a gap of two months.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Twitter on Thursday that 71,471 passengers travelled on 785 flights on July 1. **This means, on an average, there were 91 passengers in a plane on Wednesday. Since the commonly used A320 aircraft has around 180 seats in it, this means that the passenger load was just around 50 per cent on July 1.**

IndiGo has termed the aforementioned scheme as a "Tough Cookie" campaign.

As part of the initiative, IndiGo will track the Tough Cookie journey to make it special every step of the way, starting from a complementary cookie tin at check-in, welcome announcement at the boarding gate, special Tough Cookie sticker on the PPE and in-flight announcement giving them a warm welcome on-board," it said.

Scheduled international passenger flights continue to remain suspended in India.

The ETI 02/07/2020

**NEW DELHI: India is in talks with the US and Canada and the countries in European and Gulf regions on establishing individual bilateral bubbles which will allow airlines of each country in the pact to**

**operate international flights**, said Arvind Singh, Chairman, Airports Authority of India (AAI), on Thursday.

**The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA) had on June 23 said India is considering establishing "individual bilateral bubbles" with the US, the UK, Germany and France.**

Singh said, "This morning, I took a brief from the key point person (from the MOCA) who is negotiating with the countries, and he said that we are in constant touch. We are working on a consensus to restart the international flights. This is going to be through air bubbles."

"Talks are mainly going on between India and the US, India and Canada, India and Europe and India and the Gulf countries to start flights in these bubbles," he said at a webinar called "Reposing the faith in flying" organised by the GMR group.

Scheduled international passenger flights remain suspended in India since March 23 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Singh said the MOCA official has informed him that the discussion with the countries is at a "very advanced" level and the effort is to restart international flights at the earliest.

"I am sure there would be a positive outcome of the talks with the US, Canada and with the Gulf countries and the negotiations are going on," he noted.

The EU has presently banned the flights from India as the number of coronavirus cases are rising in the country, Singh said.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had on June 20 said the government will start thinking on the resumption of scheduled international passenger flights in mid-July, when it expects the domestic air traffic to reach 50-55 per cent of the levels before the coronavirus.

After nearly two months of suspension to combat the coronavirus outbreak, the government resumed scheduled domestic passenger flights on May 25.

However, it had then allowed the airlines to operate the maximum 33 per cent of their pre-COVID flights. **The MOCA increased the limits on June 26 from 33 per cent to 45 per cent.**

The MOCA on June 23 had said, "As we contemplate further opening up in response to demands, we are looking at the prospect of establishing individual bilateral bubbles, India-US, India-France, India-Germany, India-UK. These are all destinations where demand for travel has not diminished. Final decisions pursuant to negotiations are expected to be taken soon."

"We have received requests from authorities in several countries including the US, France, Germany among others requesting that their air carriers be allowed to participate in the transportation of passengers along the line being conducted by Air India under Vande Bharat Mission. These requests

are being examined," it added.

Air India started international chartered flights under the Vande Bharat Mission from May 6 to help people stranded due to the pandemic reach their destinations.

The MOCA's June 23 statement had come after the US Department of Transport (DOT) said on June 22 that it appears that Air India may be using its passenger repatriation charter flights as a way of circumventing the government of India-imposed prohibition of all scheduled international services.

"We are taking this action (of allowing only those Air India flights from July 22 that have DOT's approval) because the Government of India has impaired the operating rights of the US carriers and has engaged in discriminatory and restrictive practices with respect to the US carrier services to and from India," the DOT had said. DSP AQS AQS

The ETI 02/07/2020

#### **Chinese entities own 20% of Indian carriers' fleet of leased aircraft**

Indian carriers have a combined passenger **aircraft fleet of 650, of which about 600 are on outright lease or under sale and leaseback**. In terms of number of companies doing business with Indian carriers, **China closely follows Ireland and the US**.

The ETI 02/07/2020

#### **Mumbai: Domestic airlines, excluding IndiGo, may require funding requirements to the tune of USD 3-3.5 billion, with travel demand likely to remain subdued until the September quarter and no certainty of revival in the second half, aviation consultancy CAPA said in a report on Friday.**

The Centre for Asia Pacific Aviation (CAPA) had in late April said that Indian airlines, excluding IndiGo, will need to raise a minimum of USD 2.5 billion to survive the temporary grounding of the operations due to the lockdown imposed to contain COVID-19 spread.

Stating that the demand-related risks are much higher than its earlier estimates, CAPA said the outlook remains "soft" as the recent traffic (after the resumption of domestic services from May 25) mostly comprised those passengers that were stuck in the "wrong" place at the time of imposition of lockdown on March 25, and started returning to their home base.

"Our earlier funding estimate proved to be conservative. Revised requirements are now likely to be in the range of USD 3-3.5 billion," CAPA said in the report.

On the fund requirements for IndiGo, which it had earlier not quantified, CAPA said, "**IndiGo is likely to raise USD 400-650 millions by monetising its aircraft and engine assets.**"

Estimating the April-June losses of the Indian airlines at around USD 1.50-1.75 billion, it said that although some moderation in losses is likely due to waiver and deferrals of lease rentals and supplementary leases, salary cuts and staff being sent on leave without pay.

According to the report, domestic traffic is estimated to have reached only around 2.5 million passengers compared with 34 million for the same period last year, while the scheduled international operations remained grounded for the entire April-June quarter of the fiscal.

The domestic passenger flight services restarted from May 25 after a two months hiatus due to the

lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The international operations, however, remained suspended since March 22 for similar reasons. **The government on Friday extended the suspension of scheduled international flights till July 30. It, however, said that some international scheduled routes may be permitted on a case-to-case basis.**

04/07/20 PTI/Indian Express

**Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government seems to be blocking fresh requests to operate charter flights from Malaysia and Dubai to bring home stranded passengers, though Centre has given its nod for foreign and private carriers to fly services in addition to Vande Bharat flights by Air India.**

A Kuala Lumpur-Chennai chartered flight that was supposed to have landed on Saturday was cancelled a few days ago. The trip was finalised by people stranded in Kuala Lumpur with a foreign airline and they had obtained permissions from the Centre and the DGCA, but could not get clearance from the state government. This is the second such cancellation as a charter which was supposed to bring in people from Colombo had to be cancelled.

Similar attempts by people to charter planes from Dubai and other cities in the Middle East were also not materialised as getting permissions from the state government is proving to be difficult.

Basheer Ahemed of Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI) said, "Many companies are gathering 100 to 200 people and are ready to apply for charter flights but they are finding it difficult because the state government is worried about bring in more people here and the need to quarantine them."

05/07/20 Times of India

The world is at the cusp of widespread adoption of the fourth industrial revolution. Drones, as a subset of cyber-physical systems, have the potential to lead the charge of India Industrial Revolution 4.0 platforms, as per "FICCI Recommendations on The Draft Unmanned Aircraft System Rules, 2020."

Recognizing the potential of drones, the Government of India has recently published a draft of Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules 2020. **FICCI welcomes the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) initiative to launch the Draft UAS Rules 2020 for public consultation and also thanks the government for the string of approvals, exemptions, and other steps taken on a fast-track basis within the past few months for widespread adoption of drones despite challenging times.**

"Our country needs innovators who can solve societal problems by applying technology and creating next-generation platforms. R&D and Innovation undertaken in collaboration with industry, academic institutions, and government agencies by drone start-ups in India shall make the vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' a reality within a short time. These innovators have the potential to flourish and succeed with the notification of the Draft UAS Rules 2020," Mr. Rajan Luthra, Chair, FICCI Drones Committee, said.

04/07/20 Linda Hohnholz/eTurbo News

**AirAsia India is expected to let go of several of its employees** as its part-owner, AirAsiaBerhad struggles to maintain its group operations across regions following the outbreak of coronavirus.

AirAsia Berhad is set to reduce up to 30 percent of its workforce across regions including its Indian operations which it part-owns with Tata Sons as the group struggles to maintain its operations following the Covid-19 outbreak.

Sources in the airline said that apart from salary reduction up to 75 percent, the group is seriously considering plans to let go between 25 percent and 30 percent of its entire workforce of about 20,000 across regions.

An AirAsia India spokesperson, however, declined to comment on the possible measures being taken

to retrench employees. As of December 2019, AirAsia India had a market share of 7 percent. It has a total fleet size of 30 aircraft and flies to 21 destinations across India.

The airline sector is one of the most-affected industries since the outbreak of coronavirus across the countries. According to airline consultancy firm CAPA, most airlines in the world could file for bankruptcy soon. "As the impact of the coronavirus and multiple government travel reactions sweep through our world, many airlines have probably already been driven into technical bankruptcy, or are at least substantially in breach of debt covenants."

As far as the airlines operating in India are concerned, CAPA said they are expected to incur a total loss of \$3.6 billion during the first quarter of the current financial year. Cash reserves are running down quickly as fleets are grounded and what flights there are operate much less than half full, it said.

05/07/20 Carly Stevenson/Pineville Voice

**Panaji: With the state opening for tourism, those who are willing to spend over Rs 10 lakh for a trip are flying down to Goa in private jets. With nine private jets landing in Goa over the past 10 days, the state is fast emerging as the top destination for people who own second homes or have leased luxury villas in the state.**

Most of the flights come from Mumbai and Delhi, India's two worst-affected Covid cities.

Over the past few days, Goa International Airport has hosted all sorts of business jets—from Gulfstream-200s to Bombardier Global 6000s—bringing to the state a variety of persons like the family of L K Advani's son and the Shah family that owns the diagnostics chain Metropolis Healthcare.

"Goa is currently one of the top destinations for private charters, and there is a constant demand on this route. People want to go to their vacation homes," said co-founder of bookmycharters.com Sachit Wadhwa.

Private jet operators have witnessed a 60% increase in enquiries, while Goa Airport officials said it is getting more requests for these flights, mostly from Delhi, Mumbai and Pune.

"On a daily basis, we are receiving requests for non-scheduled operator charters, and we clear the requests if they meet all requirements," said Goa Airport director Gagan Malik.

06/07/20 Times of India

**New Delhi: The race to reach the top positions of Air India has picked up steam as 10 senior executives are scheduled to retire in the next six months.**

**Accordingly, Air India CMD Rajiv Bansal has sounded out these 10 officials to chart out their respective succession plans, thereby ruling out any possibility of an extension.**

In effect, the move is viewed in line with the flag carrier's efforts to streamline the company's top-heavy management structure.

Consequently, sources in the airline told IANS that a squabble for these positions has already started as internal bickering among senior officials has risen.

Till recently, post-retirement job extensions were given to the airline's executives as even some retirees were also re-hired.

However, this practice has been stopped, a senior AI official told IANS on condition of anonymity.

Besides, the official cited a letter dated June 24, in which Bansal named all 10 executives who are to retire in the coming months and asked them to put in place their respective succession plans.

These executives include Arvind Kathpalia, ED (Special Projects), Arun Kumar Bansal, ED (Engineering), Rajeev Bajpai, ED (Training), and Ajay Thakur, GM (Administration), Headquarters.

"All concerned are requested to put in place a succession plan, identify the successor and put him or her in position to take over the charge from the current incumbents on the day of their superannuation so that there is no disruption of work," Bansal said in the letter.

Furthermore, he scuttled their chances of any future company engagement, by writing: "No request for engagement on post retirement basis should be initiated in this regard."

Unfortunately, this has triggered internal bickering and even routine intra-department transfers are now viewed with suspicion, the official said.

05/07/20 IANS/Outlook

**New Delhi: Different government agencies and departments owe more than Rs 526 crore to ailing national carrier Air India as on 31 March this year**, according to an RTI reply received by The Sunday Guardian from Air India.

The RTI reply from Air India has given a detailed breakup of the money owed to the airline by numerous different government departments, bodies and institutions.

According to the RTI response, the Commissioner of Customs, Ministry of Finance, owes a whopping Rs 64.37 crore to the national carrier, while the office of the Director General of Post and Telegraph, Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications, owes more than Rs 31 crore, 37 lakh to the airlines as on 31 March this year.

Several offices of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), that come under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), also owe at least Rs 70 crore to Air India as on 31 March. For example, the office of the Deputy I.G., CRPF-Guwahati, owes Rs 3 crore and 46 lakh to Air India; likewise the office of the I.G., CRPF Kolkata, owes more than Rs 1 crore 9 lakh to Air India.

The office of the Secretary to the Governor of Tripura also owes more than Rs 17 lakh to Air India, while the West Bengal State Electricity Board owes around Rs 40,000 to the airline.

The Airport Authority of India also owes around Rs 3 crore to Air India as on 31 March this year, while the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) owes more than Rs 50 lakh to the airlines.

Not only this, even the President of India's secretariat owes more than Rs 60 lakh to Air India as of 31 March this year. The Lok Sabha, along with the Lok Sabha Secretariat, owes more than Rs 4 crore 50 lakh to Air India, while the Rajya Sabha, along with the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, owes more than Rs three crore to the debt-ridden national carrier.

04/07/20 Dibyendu Mondal/Sunday Guardian Live

**For the second time in two years this January, the Narendra Modi government rolled out the process to sell Air India - the state carrier, long considered the Crown Jewels of Indian aviation, which is now languishing.**

**The Modi government wants to make a 100 per cent divestment in AI and AI express, which have a combined debt of ₹ 60, 074 crore.**

**Expect all those who have visited the iconic Air India building in Mumbai have seen it first hand: AI has priceless art collection of 8,000 pieces.**

These include paintings by M.F. Hussain, V.S. Gaitonde, K.H. Ara and Kishen Khanna. AI was considered a significant patron of the Progressive Artists Group in the 1950's which comprised world famous artists.

Artefacts include object d art, approximately 2,500, modern and traditional sculptures by artists such as B. Vithal, Pillo Pochkhanwala and P. Janakitan.

AI in its tax payer-funded treasure chest has a collection of exquisite and antique textiles in different fabrics - this includes the famous "Shringar" collection of costumes, which has been displayed both in India and abroad to high acclaim.

So as the Indian national carrier funded by the tax payers is out on the block you would reckon that such a magnificent collection of around 8,000 pieces of priceless art would be part of the asset evaluation of AI for its bidders?

Well you would be wrong.

The art collection has disappeared from the evaluation as I conclusively investigated over months for this Gulf News Investigation.

I filed a Right to Information (RTI) application in February this year. RTI is an Act of Parliament, which sets out the rules and procedures regarding citizens' right to information. The Act was made into a landmark law by the Manmohan Singh-led United Progressive Alliance Government.

In my RTI petition I asked the Modi government and the Ministry of Aviation the following:

Air India is reputed to have 8,000 art works including paintings.

1. When was the last valuation carried out?
2. What is the valuation?
3. Has this valuation been included in the sales prospectus of AI?
4. Has the art catalogue of the AI collection been included in the assets for sale or is it going to be sold separately?

After a wait of four-and-a-half months, I had my official answer, which confirms the shocking truth that my sources had been telling me.

The RTI reply said categorically that the major art collection possessed by AI has never been valued. This itself is shocking as this art collection was paid for by tax payers money. Shouldn't the collection have been appraised by experts and transparently valued every year?

[05/07/20 Swati Chaturvedi/Gulf News](#)

**The Customs on Sunday seized around 30 kg of gold from an air cargo meant for the UAE consulate in Thiruvananthapuram.**

This is the first time in the country that the Customs has seized gold from diplomatic baggage meant

for the staff in the United Arab Emirates Consulate General in Kerala. The gold was smuggled into the state through a chartered flight.

According to sources, the consignment had reached the Trivandrum airport two days back and the Customs officials confirmed the seizure on Sunday. The Customs is yet to make a statement on record in this matter as **smugglers used diplomatic channels to smuggle in the gold into the state**. It is yet to be known whether the staff in the office of the Consulate general, Thiruvananthapuram, were involved in the smuggling.

**Trivandrum airport sources said the diplomatic baggage and consignments including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) kits were used to be delivered here through diplomatic channels.**  
05/07/20 New Indian Express

**Mumbai: India is not allowing UAE airlines to operate additional repatriation flights. The move comes following the UAE government's curbs on carrying passengers to Dubai on Air India and private airlines.**

A formal order has not been issued but UAE airlines, including Air Arabia, Emirates, Etihad and Flydubai, were verbally informed of the decision on Thursday. The move led to a couple of flight cancellations from Dubai on Friday, it is learnt.

India banned scheduled international flights on March 22 and these remain suspended till July 31. Air India began repatriation flights under Vande Bharat Mission from May 6 and domestic and West Asian airlines had been allowed to operate charter flights from May 25.

It is these repatriation flights, which have become a bone of contention between India and foreign governments. The aviation dispute with the UAE is the latest example.

A civil aviation ministry spokesperson did not immediately comment on the issue. A government source said there was an issue of parity and Indian carriers were facing challenges in operating to the UAE. Efforts are also under way to resolve the issue through diplomatic channels, a source said.

Last week, Air India said passengers intending to travel to Dubai on a Vande Bharat flight would require specific approval from the UAE embassy. Since then, only a few passengers have managed to travel to Dubai on Air India Express flight in view of the restrictions. The Dubai government has opened doors to permanent residents and will welcome tourists from July 7.

Requests have also been made by UAE airlines to allow transport of passengers from India and that is pending. Currently, airlines are operating ferry flights to the UAE.

04/07/20 Aneesh Phadnis/Business Standard

Kolkata: Civil aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola has written to Bengal chief secretary Rajiva Sinha, asking the state government to reconsider its request for curtailment of domestic flights to Kolkata airport.

Sinha had on Tuesday written to Kharola, urging him to stop flights from eight cities worst affected

by Covid and had also called for restricting other flight operations by suggesting that an airline operate to Kolkata only once a week.

**Kharola urged the state to reconsider the request. The development comes at a time the DGCA is increasing flight operations from 30% to 45% of pre-lockdown schedule.** In Kolkata, 65 flights are currently operating daily, down from 210-odd flights in late February and early March.

Bengal has sought a ban on flights to Kolkata from Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Nagpur, Chennai, Indore, Ahmedabad and Surat till July 16. The Bengal government had delayed resumption of domestic flight by three days from May 25 to 28 citing devastation caused by Amphan. Thereafter, only 10 flights were allowed to operate daily till June beginning.

04/07/20 Times of India

New Delhi: **Industry body Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci) has recommended to the Centre to set up a single window mechanism to obtain clearances and approvals for drone operations in the country.**

Accordingly, Ficci said that such a mechanism will make it easier for applicants to obtain flying licenses and give a boost to the nascent sector.

In its recommendations on the draft Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Rules, 2020, Ficci has requested the Centre to give special consideration to certain applications owing to their non-urban or low altitude applications.

It exhorted the Centre to consider the extreme social value of drones in agricultural spraying and medical delivery.

**"Due to the unprecedented scenario created by the COVID-19 pandemic, industry cannot afford the time and cost overruns due to delay in approvals,"** Ficci said.

"Ficci recommends setting up a single window mechanism to enable applicants to obtain clearances or approvals from ministries such as the Ministry of Home Affairs, WPC Department of Telecommunication etc. Without such a mechanism the application process could prove to be a cumbersome process.

**As per the recommendations, the MoCA (Ministry of Civil Aviation) and DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) may consider setting up an appeals system for applicants through the single window mechanism.**

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