

The central government has relaxed a rule that made it mandatory for airline crew to undergo home quarantine for 14 days if they had a Covid-19 positive case in the aircraft.

The government has left it to airlines to decide the steps to be followed in such cases. The dilution was done by Ministry of Health after airlines raised concerns over shortage of crew as Covid-19 cases among air passengers increased.

“Significant number of crew was becoming non-operational due to the quarantine rules,” Ministry of Civil Aviation wrote to the Ministry of Health on June 3.

The airlines will now conduct their own risk assessments of the crew.

“It has been noted that airline crew are wearing full PPE, including N95 mask during the flight. Further, the crew is also not serving any food or snacks to passengers. The passengers also undergo mandatory screening and have to wear mask throughout the flight. Hence, possible risk of infection of crew from passenger is minimal,” said Alok Saxena, joint secretary at the health ministry. Industry sources said Air India and private airlines lobby group Federation of Indian Airlines had approached the Ministry of Civil Aviation seeking a relaxation of the rule. “On confirmation that the passenger has tested positive, the crew will be directed for consultation at government designated hospitals and continue to be under home isolation for 14 days and observed for symptoms,” the earlier direction said.

Airline executives said the rule hindered operations as Covid-19 positive cases were detected on multiple flights of the same airline. “There was a day when six positive cases were found in six different flights of IndiGo. While it’s just six passengers, 36 crew members were quarantined for 14 days. This created massive operational problems,” said an airline executive.

13/06/20 Arindam Majumder/Business Standard

Nagpur: In reply to allegations that the Nagpur airport modernization tender was cancelled arbitrarily without any notice, the Mihan India Ltd (MIL) informed the high court here that the Civil Aviation ministry wasn’t satisfied over the revenue sharing model proposed and had questioned the financial viability of the deal.

A division bench of Justices Atul Chandurkar and Amit Borkar on Friday adjourned the hearing for four weeks after petitioners’ counsel Charuhas Dharmadhikari sought time to file reply on MIL’s contentions.

The petitioners — GMR Airports Ltd and GMR Nagpur International Airport Ltd — prayed for quashing MIL’s letter issued to them on March 19, annulling the airport bidding process without awarding the contract.

In an affidavit, MIL senior airport director Abid Ruhi stated that even the comptroller and auditor general (CAG) had raised an audit inquiry on the financial viability of GMR’s bid.

“The petitioners’ offer at 14.49% of the gross revenue is extremely low and financially unviable. It would have caused tremendous loss to the exchequer. The airport upgradation must lead to increase in revenue for the government. Therefore, the tender process was annulled within its right,” the affidavit said

Adding that the MIL was contemplating floating a fresh tender, Ruhi said the financial model would be different from the one proposed in earlier process. **“The government must earn better revenue and there should be minimum loss to the public exchequer. The petitioners’ can’t question the**

cancellation but can participate in fresh tender process,” he said.

13/06/20 Vaibhav Ganjapure/Times of India

Mumbai: The dedicated bankruptcy court has allowed lenders of defunct carrier Jet Airways to sell its office assets located in BKC, a prime commercial suburb of Mumbai. On June 11, the Principal Bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) allowed the lenders to go ahead with the monetization plan for about 1.70 lakh square feet saleable area that comprises of 3rd and 4th floor of building ‘Jet Airways Godrej BKC’.

The asset also includes rights to use parking space for about 140 cars. The lenders have kept the reserved price of **Rs 490 crore for the property and the auction for the same is expected to take place on June 26.**

“The proceeds from the proposed sale of premises will be utilized for the clearing residual dues remained payable to one Export-Import Bank of the United States over the finance lease created on six aircraft of corporate debtor (Jet Airways) and to HDFC over the security interest created in favour of it,” said the six-page order. According to the order, US Exim holds a charge over six aircraft of which cumulative depreciated value is over \$200 million.

“If the amount payable to US Exim is not paid, US Exim will become entitled to repossess the six aircraft,” said the order further adding that the US Exim bank has agreed that upon the payment of **\$13 million (about Rs 90 crore), it will transfer the title of six aircraft to the corporate debtor.”** With this development, Jet Airways can add six aircraft in its fleet worth around Rs 1,400 crore, which will help its prospects for better bidders, people aware of the development said.

13/06/20 Maulik Vyas/Economic Times

India on Thursday launched the third phase of Vande Bharat Mission after over 165,000 Indians returned to the country under the first two phases of the mega evacuation exercise.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Anurag Srivastava said the third phase of the mission will last till July 2, and a total of 432 international flights will evacuate Indians from 43 countries.

He said 29 flights from private carriers including 24 from IndiGo and three from GoAir will also operate under the third phase of the Vande Bharat Mission.

Air India repatriation schedule for June 13: Ex-India to foreign stations (departure in local time)

- > IX 1686 Chennai 7:05 Singapore 14:00
- > IX 1688 Chennai 22:00 Singapore 4:55
- > IX 1115 Delhi 9:30 Abu Dhabi 11:55
- > IX 1173 Delhi 10:15 Kuwait 12:20
- > IX 1773 Kannur 13:30 Doha 15:10
- > IX 1484 Kochi 10:20 Singapore 17:30
- > IX 1337 Kozhikode 10:20 Muscat 12:15

- > IX 1889 Mangaluru 8:00 Bahrain 9:40
- > IX 1213 Mumbai 8:30 Kuwait 10:05
- > IX 1573 Thiruvananthapuram 10:00 Bahrain 12:20
- > IX 1575 Thiruvananthapuram 10:50 Doha 12:55

- > IX 1672 Tiruchirappalli 8:40 Kuala Lumpur 14:50

Air India repatriation schedule for June 13: Arrival into India ex-foreign stations (arrival in local time)

- > IX 1116 Abu Dhabi 12:55 Delhi 18:05
- > IX 1574 Bahrain 13:20 Thiruvananthapuram 20:25
- > IX 1890 Bahrain 10:40 Bengaluru 18:00
- > IX 1890 Bengaluru 18:55 Mangaluru 19:45
- > IX 1576 Doha 13:55 Thiruvananthapuram 21:05
- > IX 1774 Doha 16:10 Kannur 23:00
- > IX 1671 Kuala Lumpur 15:50 Madurai 17:30
- > IX 1671 Madurai 18:20 Tiruchirappalli 19:05
- > IX 1174 Kuwait 13:20 Delhi 20:05
- > IX 1254 Kuwait 11:05 Mumbai 17:30
- > IX 1350 Muscat 13:15 Coimbatore 18:50
- > IX 1350 Coimbatore 19:50 Kozhikode 21:00
- > IX 1483 Singapore 18:30 Madurai 20:10
- > IX 1483 Madurai 21:00 Kochi 21:45
- > IX 1685 Singapore 15:00 Tiruchirappalli 16:35

- > IX 1685 Tiruchirappalli 17:20 Chennai 18:00

Air India repatriation schedule for June 12: Ex-India to foreign stations (departure in local time)

- > AI 0187 Delhi 1:00 Toronto 6:45
- > AI 0127 Delhi 2:20 Chicago 7:25
- > AI 0173 Delhi 3:30 San Francisco 7:00
- > AI 1921 Delhi 5:30 Lagos 11:15
- > AI 0931 Mumbai 6:25 Jeddah 9:00
- > AI 1943 Bengaluru 8:00 Dammam 10:00

- > AI 1955 Hyderabad 8:00 Riyadh 10:15

Air India repatriation schedule for June 12: Arrival into India ex foreign stations (arrival in local time)

- > AI 1944 Dammam 11:00 Bengaluru 17:45
- > AI 1956 Riyadh 11:15 Hyderabad 18:15
- > AI 1936 Jeddah 11:00 Trivandrum 18:50
- > AI 1684 Trivandrum 20:20 Mumbai 22:20

>AI 1184 Helsinki 18:00 Delhi 3:45 13-Jun-20
 >AI 1922 Lagos 13:15 Delhi 4:00 13-Jun-20
 >AI 0188 Toronto 12:15 Delhi 12:15 13-Jun-20
 >AI 0126 Chicago 12:00 Delhi 13:05 13-Jun-20

>AI 0174 San Francisco 10:30 Delhi 14:55 13-Jun-20

Air India repatriation schedule for June 11: Ex-India to foreign stations (departure in local time)

> AI 0127: Delhi (2.20) to Chicago (7.25)
 > AI 0921: Mumbai (7.45) to Riyadh (9.45)
 > AI 1947: Bengaluru (8.00) to Jeddah (11.15)
 > AI 1937: Mumbai (8.45) to Dammam (10.00)
 > AI 0995: Delhi (9.00) to Dubai (11.10)
 > AI 1183: Delhi (13.30) to Helsinki (18.35)

> AI 0121: Delhi (13.35) to Frankfurt (18.40)

Air India repatriation schedule for June 11: Arrival into India ex foreign stations (arrival in local time)

> AI 1996: Dubai (12.10) to Srinagar (17.10)
 > AI 1934: Riyadh (11.00) to Kannur (18.10)
 > AI 1938: Dammam (12.00) to Kochi (18.50)
 > AI 1948: Jeddah (12.15) to Kozhikode (20.05)
 > AI 0120: Frankfurt (21.15) to Delhi (8.30)

> AI 0126: Chicago (12.00) to Delhi (13.05)

Air India Express repatriation schedule for June 11: Ex-foreign stations to India (in local time)

> IX 1250: Abu Dhabi (14:00) to Mumbai (18:35)
 > IX 1538: Abu Dhabi (17:05) to Thiruvananthapuram (22:55)
 > IX 1574: Bahrain (4:15) to Thiruvananthapuram (21:20)
 > IX 1890: Bahrain (11:15) to Chennai (18:45)
 > IX 1374: Doha (12:30) to Kozhikode (19:15)
 > IX 1676: Doha (16:35) to Tiruchirappalli (23:50)
 > IX 1671: Kuala Lumpur (15:55) to Tiruchirappalli (17:20)
 > IX 1114: Muscat (12:40) to Delhi (17:10)
 > IX 1483: Singapore (18:45) to Madurai (20:30)

> IX 1687: Singapore (14:45) to Hyderabad (16:30)

Air India Express repatriation schedule for June 11: Ex-India to foreign stations (in local time)

- > IX 1688: Chennai (7:05) to Singapore (13:45)
- > IX 1113: Delhi (10:00) to Muscat (11:40)
- > IX 1484: Kochi (10:30) to Singapore (17:45)
- > IX 1373: Kozhikode (9:55) to Doha (11:30)
- > IX 1675: Kozhikode (14:00) to Doha (15:35)
- > IX 1889: Mangaluru (8:30) to Bahrain (10:15)
- > IX 1249: Mumbai (11:30) to Abu Dhabi (13:00)
- > IX 1537: Thiruvananthapuram (13:15) to Abu Dhabi (16:05)
- > IX 1573: Thiruvananthapuram (11:00) to Bahrain (13:15)

- > IX 1672: Tiruchirappalli (8:45) to Kuala Lumpur (14:55)

Air India repatriation schedule for June 10: Arrival into India ex foreign stations (arrival in local time)

- > AI 1930: DAMMAM (11:30) to KANNUR (18:20)
- > AI 1954: RIYADH (11:20) to KOZHICODE (18:45)
- > AI 0964: JEDDAH (11:00) to KOCHI (18:50)
- > AI 1958: RIYADH (13:30) to DELHI (20:25)

- > AI 1682: KANNUR (19:50) to MUMBAI (21:50)

Air India repatriation schedule for June 10: Ex-India to foreign stations (departure in local time)

- > AI 0931: MUMBAI (06:25) to JEDDAH (09:00)
- > AI 1929: MUMBAI (07:45) to DAMMAM (09:00)
- > AI 1953: BANGALURU (08:00) to RIYADH (10:20)

- > AI 1957: DELHI (10:00) to RIYADH (12:30)

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- > IX 1682: Chennai (7:30) to Singapore (14:05)
- > IX 1688: Chennai (9:30) to Singapore (16:05)
- > IX 1171: Delhi (13:00) to Bahrain (14:45)
- > IX 1445: Kochi (11:05) to Salalah (13:25)
- > IX 1337: Kozhikode (11:05) to Muscat (13:00)
- > IX 1373: Kozhikode (13:00) to Doha (14:35)
- > IX 1815: Mangaluru (9:30) to Abu Dhabi (11:55)
- > IX 1282: Mumbai (10:00) to Kuala Lumpur (17:40)

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 > IX 1675: Kozhikode (14:00) to Doha (15:35)
 > IX 1889: Mangaluru (8:30) to Bahrain (10:15)
 > IX 1249: Mumbai (11:30) to Abu Dhabi (13:00)
 > IX 1537: Thiruvananthapuram (13:15) to Abu Dhabi (16:05)
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- > IX 1445: Kochi (11:05) to Salalah (13:25)
- > IX 1337: Kozhikode (11:05) to Muscat (13:00)
- > IX 1373: Kozhikode (13:00) to Doha (14:35)
- > IX 1815: Mangaluru (9:30) to Abu Dhabi (11:55)
- > IX 1282: Mumbai (10:00) to Kuala Lumpur (17:40)

- > IX 1573: Thiruvananthapuram (9:00) to Bahrain (11:15)

Air India Express repatriation schedule for June 10: Ex-foreign stations to India (in local time)

- > IX 1816: Abu Dhabi (12:55) to Bengaluru (18:30)
- > IX 1172: Bahrain (15:45) to Delhi (22:10)
- > IX 1574: Bahrain (12:15) to Thiruvananthapuram (19:20)
- > IX 1374 Doha (15:35) to Kozhikode (22:20)
- > IX 1281 Kuala Lumpur (18:40) to Mumbai (21:25)
- > IX 1350 Muscat (14:00) to Kozhikode (19:00)
- > IX 1446 Salalah (14:25) to Kochi (19:45)
- > IX 1681 Singapore (15:05) to Tiruchirappalli (16:40)
- > IX 1687 Singapore (17:05) to Coimbatore (18:45)
- > IX 1816: Abu Dhabi (12:55) to Bengaluru (18:30)
- > IX 1172: Bahrain (15:45) to Delhi (22:10)
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Money Control 13/06/2020

Captain Naveen Kumar, pilot of an Air India A320, returned home to Mumbai recently after a flight to Jakarta. Though he tested negative in a post-flight Covid-19 test, he said he is afraid of passing on the virus to his wife and two daughters, one of whom is an infant. He has a mandatory second Covid-19 test coming up, but the job Kumar loves has now become a cause for worry.

His fear is justified. **Despite stringent guidelines and standard operating procedures laid out by the ministry of civil aviation, incidents of pilots and crew being infected with Covid-19 has increased unabated. Around 50 pilots across the country are learned to have tested positive in the last few days. A 58-year-old Air India pilot, who retired in May, reportedly died of Covid-19.**

In the first two phases of the Vande Bharat Mission to repatriate Indians stranded abroad, Air India operated 423 inbound flights, bringing back 58,867 citizens, according to the civil aviation ministry. **In the third phase, starting June 10, the carrier will operate around 300 flights to Europe, Australia, Canada, the US, the UK and Africa. Major private airlines, too, have offered their services for the third phase.**

Pilots said that the current protocols are not enough, though they have separate entry and exit gates and hardly interact with passengers. An A320 pilot, who has been flying regularly for the last month, said: “We cannot use protective headgear because we use our headset to communicate.” He also asked how the microphone could be disinfected and added that pilots use the same toilets as passengers.

An office-bearer of the Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) said that for one Vande Bharat flight, pilots undergo three tests—pre-flight, post-flight and on the fifth day after landing. Most cases of Covid-19 are reported in the third test. However, the government is not following a similar procedure for the domestic sector, which was greenlit with effect from May 25. “Some pilots who come back after Vande Bharat [flights] are being asked to fly domestic flights without taking the (third) test,” he said. “By doing this, authorities are putting cabin crew and passengers at risk.” On May 30, a Delhi-Moscow Air India flight was forced to return midway after the ground team realised that the pilot was Covid-19 positive; there had been an error in the pre-flight test report.

Meanwhile, Captain Deven Kanani, 51, a pilot with Air India, moved Mumbai High Court alleging that the national carrier is not maintaining social distancing norms. Kanani, who flew to Shanghai twice, on April 29 and May 10, and brought back medical supplies and equipment, has submitted photographs of a flight between San Francisco and Mumbai on May 14, showing all seats occupied. **The directorate general of civil aviation’s order on March 23 had said that the middle seat should be left vacant.** During the last hearing on May 22, **the government informed the High Court that the new circular, dated May 22, issued while permitting domestic flights, does not say the middle seat needs to be empty. It stated that the May 22 order supersedes the March 23 order.** Kanani’s lawyer Abhilash Panickar said that “based on information provided by the solicitor general of India during

the hearing”, the spread of Covid-19 was 36 times more during air travel.

In response to Kanani’s petition, the government said that the Vande Bharat flights brought back Indians from countries with a higher prevalence of Covid-19, and, therefore, higher rate of prevalence was likely among the passengers of those flights. “There is nothing to indicate that the passengers contracted Covid-19 during and onboard the Vande Bharat flights,” the government’s reply stated.

Manish Mehta and his wife Payal, both cabin crew, have been flying regularly for the last one month. “Who is going to look after my (six-year old daughter) when I am in quarantine at my place and my husband is flying?” she asked. “Social distancing is not being maintained. Airlines are only looking at the commercial aspect. We risk our lives to perform our duty, but many of us face trouble from neighbours. One of my colleagues has been given notice to vacate the flat.”

13/06/20 Pradip R Sagar/The Week

New Delhi: Drone users who could not register the same with the aviation authorities in the one-time January 14-31 window earlier this year have got a second chance to do so now.

The aviation ministry has started drone registration “based on public request... Ownership of drone without registration shall invite penal action,” says the public notice titled “voluntary disclosure of non-compliant drones flying in India” issued by aviation ministry joint secretary Amber Dubey this Monday (June 8). The registration has been kept open-ended with no up to date announced so far. In the January 14-31, 2020 window, over 20,000 drones had been registered with the government, which is keen to have a database of drone users given the security implications of using this equipment. Once that is known, tracking those equipment will be key to safe operations even in green zones or areas where they will be allowed.

Drones need to be registered on a link on Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) website which says: “All unmanned aircraft need to be enlisted. For ample clarity, these include models, prototypes, toys, RC aircraft, autonomous and remotely piloted aircraft systems...”

Drone enlistment form has two parts. After uploading owner’s information, the owner will receive an ownership acknowledgement number (OAN). Using the OAN, the owner will upload the drone-related information and will receive a drone acknowledgement number (DAN).

“Each drone will require a fresh enlistment. Since a drone owner may have multiple drones, the owner shall use same OAN to enlist all drones owned by him. A separate DAN will be issued for each drone. Ownership of a drone in India without a valid OAN and DAN shall invite penal action as per applicable laws. Possession of an OAN or DAN does not confer the right to operate the drone in India. Kindly (see rules) issued by DGCA from time to time for information regarding ownership and operation of drones,” the DGCA website link for drone registration says.

Penal action can be taken against anyone found using unregistered drones, which can a jail term and/or a fine, a senior government official warned. In future people buying drones in India will have the registration process completed at the time of buying the same — akin to buying a mobile phone sim card today and getting that activated after a while in which verification of given credentials is done. The users will then be required to install trackers on their drones.

13/06/20 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Moody's Investors Service has downgraded GMR Hyderabad International Airport Ltd's (HIAL's) corporate family rating to Ba2 from Ba1 and confirmed Delhi International Airport Ltd's (DIAL's)

Ba3 corporate family rating and senior secured ratings.

The outlook on the ratings for both has been changed to negative from ratings under review. At the same time, Moody's has confirmed DIAL's baseline credit assessment at ba3.

DIAL is the concessionaire for the Indira Gandhi International Airport and operates under an operations, management and development agreement with the Airports Authority of India. It is undertaking a major airport expansion that will cost Rs 9,800 crore and another two to three years to complete.

"The rating confirmation considers the resumption of domestic passenger traffic on May 25 after a two-month suspension of commercial flights in India, management's efforts to reduce operating cost and its delayed capital spending, which will have a positive impact on the airport's liquidity position," said Moody's Vice President and Senior Analyst Spencer Ng.

The negative outlook, however, reflects material downside risk over the next 12 to 18 months, given the uncertainty over the recovery in the airport's traffic and India's weakening economic conditions, which could complicate the airport's efforts to secure additional funding to complete its expansion project and refinance its 288.75 million dollar bond maturity in February 2022.

On the other hand, HIAL has a long-term concession to operate the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport in Hyderabad under a public-private partnership model. It is undertaking a major airport expansion that will cost Rs 5,500 crore and take two to three years to complete.

"The downgrade reflects the weak operating conditions associated with the spread of coronavirus pandemic," said Ng.

13/06/20 ANI/Business Standard

Hyderabad: The Centre's Vande Bharat Mission might have brought thousands of stranded Indians back home over the last one month, but it has left the Air India crew that flew the aircraft worried. A number of the pilots and cabin crew have tested positive making many of them wonder about the quality of the protective gear they were given.

Sources told TOI that at least four from Hyderabad — two pilots and two cabin crew — tested positive for Covid-19. One cabin crew member was hospitalised while the remaining were home-quarantined. Four cases have been reported from among the Kolkata crew as well. A senior official claimed that the numbers were higher for Delhi and Mumbai.

When TOI asked AI about the four from Hyderabad testing positive for Covid-19, a spokesperson refrained from commenting on it. "To respect the privacy of our employees we will not be able to share this information," the official said in an email.

The spokesperson also did not comment on the total number of AI staff across India who have tested positive so far.

"We are entirely focussed on our evacuation flights under Vande Bharat Mission and also on our scheduled domestic operations. We are operating in sync with strict safety protocols and taking full care of our employees," was the AI spokesperson's response.

The spokesperson also said that they are taking care of the medical expenses of all its employees and assured that those testing positive for Covid-19 can "join after recovery and mandatory tests as per laid down procedure".

Although AI officials maintain that it is providing its crew "with a complete protective gear including face masks, Hazmat suits, gloves, disposable foot covers which are best available in the industry", the staff disagree. Citing a particular example, another senior pilot said: "We have to

change our gloves at least 20 times on a three-hour flight. Also, by the time we finish one trip, our PPE is in tatters.”

“Right now, they are footing the bill for those admitted to hospital. But what happens to those who have to be quarantined? That also involves a cost, especially in cases where people cannot be quarantined at home and have to opt for a paid facility. How are people going to survive?” asked another pilot from Mumbai.

13/06/20 Sudipta Sengupta/Times of India

MIHAN India Ltd on Friday informed the Bombay High Court that it had never issued a letter of award to GMR Airports Ltd for upgradation of the international airport at Nagpur and had stated that the final decision depended on the Centre's approval.

MIHAN, a joint venture of Maharashtra Airport Development Company and Airports Authority of India, filed its affidavit before the Nagpur bench in response to a petition filed by GMR Airports, challenging the cancellation of the bidding process for development and management of the Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport.

GMR Airports in its plea said it was awarded the project by way of a letter of award on March 7, 2019 and hence, annulling the tender in a letter dated March 19, 2020 was "unjust, arbitrary and illegal". However, MIHAN claimed that the communication sent to the petitioner on March 7 was only a bid acceptance letter and not a letter of award.

MIHAN said the letter clearly stated that the acceptance of the bid was conditional and required approval from the Union Ministry of Civil Aviation.

As per the affidavit, the state government in December 2017 had set up a Project Monitoring and Implementation Committee and in September 2018, it had received bids for share of gross revenue from Consortium of GVK Airport Developers Ltd with Mumbai International Airport Ltd and GMR Airports.

12/06/20 PTI/Economic Times

New Delhi: The third phase of the Vande Bharat Mission to bring back Indians stranded overseas due to the Coronavirus induced lockdown got underway on Thursday and will continue till July 2.

“I would like to announce that the Phase III of Vande Bharat Mission has been initiated from today onwards. It will last till July 2. Phase III will have 432 international flights from 43 countries reaching 17 states and UTs. In this phase, we also have 29 flights from private carriers — 24 IndiGo (GCC, Malaysia); 3 GoAir (GCC) and 2 Vistara (Singapore). Ramping up our operations in Africa, we have arranged flights from six countries in Africa.

“The number of flights from the US and Canada have also been increased given the huge demand. There are 53 flights from the US and 24 flights from Canada. **We would also have 16 flights each from Paris and Frankfurt which are to be used as hubs in Europe.** There are 170 flights from GCC countries,” said the official spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

A total of 1,65,375 Indians stranded abroad have returned to the country as part of the Vande Bharat Mission till Thursday, according to the MEA spokesperson.

These include 29,034 migrant workers, 12,774 students and 11,241 professionals. More than 61,000 Indians have returned through land border immigration checkpoints from Nepal, Bhutan and

Bangladesh. A total number of 3,99,081 persons have registered their request with the MEA's missions abroad for repatriation to India on compelling grounds.

Apart from Air India flights, repatriation has also been arranged through other streams, including Indian Naval vessels, which have brought back Indian nationals from Sri Lanka, Maldives and Iran, chartered flights and through land borders.

12/06/20 IANS/Statesman

Mumbai: Airlines' trade body, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) has introduced a free online interactive world map to provide travelers with the latest COVID-19 entry regulations by country.

"The map relies on IATA's Timatic database which contains comprehensive information on documentation required for international travel. To keep pace with the dynamic situation with respect to COVID-19, Timatic is updated more than 200 times per day to provide accurate travel restrictions specific to the current pandemic, based on one's citizenship and country of residence," said IATA in a press statement issued recently.

In March, frequently changing entry regulations in countries had turned out to be a crippling problem for international passengers, airlines and travel agents as governments began enforcing various travel restrictions to contain coronavirus.

Though international flights are still banned in India -- with the exception of repatriation, charter and private flights, that is -- in other countries flight movements have begun across borders and the problem of keeping tab of ever-changing entry restrictions is back again,

Anish Chand, IATA's assistant director, Timatic said: "As the aviation industry prepares to safely restart, travelers will need to know which countries' borders are open and what health restrictions exist. Travelers can rely on Timatic for comprehensive and accurate information on travel during the pandemic."

IATA's COVID-19 interactive world map, can also be accessed through mobile phones. "The Timatic COVID-19 Alerts service was also launched this week to offer subscribers real-time notifications for all travel updates related to the pandemic," said IATA.

12/06/20 Manju V/Times of India

Can you tell us how much of the international skies has been opened up for private airlines like Spicejet?

International skies have not been opened up in the sense that there are no scheduled flights. But what has been opened up is private sector participation in the Vande Bharat Scheme, as also charter flights that we are now allowed to do to repatriate Indians stuck in different parts of the world. The number of our citizens trying to return to India is quite large and the load could not have been done by one airline alone. Also, all of us private airlines are also national carriers. We all carry the national flag and we were looking forward to an opportunity to participate in this process of repatriating Indians back to our country.

So you are saying that this scheduling is going to be decided by the government. Will the pricing also be decided by the government because when Vande Bharat was only opened for Air India

where the government has a flat rate for the economy class ticket from the Gulf at Rs 13,000 and Rs 100,000 from any of the cities in the United States. Do you also have to follow the same pricing?

Yes, as far as Vande Bharat is concerned, the government is deciding the pricing. When Air India was flying to the Gulf, they were in a sense subsidising flights and they were making up the money by flying to Europe and the US where the fares were much higher than the average fares they would normally get. So yes, to the extent that private carriers participate in Vande Bharat, the fares will be determined by the government. In case of charter flights that we are all allowed to operate, these are typically paid for by companies and organisations in different parts of the world. Those flights have no pricing limit set by the Government of India.

What kind of traction has Vande Bharat seen? We got to know about it 24 hours ago. Is it too early to ask you the kind of reactions and traffic that you are seeing?

Well firstly, Vande Bharat has been allowed for a few days now and charter flights also since the beginning of this month. Of course, the numbers of Indians that are trying to get back to India is extremely large and the restriction really has been on the ability of state governments to accept passengers or people back into the states given quarantine rules and their ability to provide quarantine facilities.

In terms of demand, all these flights are completely full. So, it really depends on the preparedness of the states to quarantine all these people who are coming back and therefore the schedules and dates are being decided in conjunction with them and permission obtained from them for each and every flight that is coming in.

Are the procedures for the private airlines the same as what Air India is going to follow? Whether it is the downloading of the Aarogya Setu app or whether it is a seven-day quarantining, are the procedures that are going to be followed by the private carriers all the same?

There is a standard operating procedure which has been notified by the government and all of us are following the same procedure. Of course, it differs in the sense that for every state, there are some quarantine rules which may differ slightly but broadly, the process is the same. It is exactly the same SOP.

How are airlines making sure with the government that there would not be overcrowding at the airports?

As far as Vande Bharat is concerned, the government put out a list of flights that they want the private sector to operate and between ourselves, we tell the government which flights we are able to operate and the government then divides those flights between us.

In terms of charters that is for each airline is to follow their own process, but in terms of safety, very often there is no safer way to do it in terms of transportation than by air. There are just so many precautions which are being taken in terms of checks which are happening before these passengers board aircraft to the process that is followed, both at the airports and onboard in terms of the face masks, face shields, the disinfectants and when they land here again, the stringent checks which are being done and the quarantine facilities which are being provided by the states. Of course, nothing is safer than just sitting at home but if you need to travel, the safest way to do it is probably the stringent process that has been set up for air travel. Nothing is safer than that.

We have done a webinar with the honourable civil aviation minister and what he had said at that time was that the private airlines also need to say they want to be a part of Vande Bharat because the government is going to be very clear on the pricing, on the fact that we cannot cause more distress to Indians stranded overseas. You are saying the private carriers want to be a part of this mission even if it means not making as much money as they used to?

Oh absolutely, no question about it. We want to participate in this because this is our national effort to bring Indians back. There are, of course, commercial implications and in terms of charters and such things as free pricing, but as far as Vande Bharat itself is concerned, of course, we will follow whatever the government decides and the government has chosen to set higher fares on Vande Bharat for markets where they probably presume that the passengers can afford it. For example, the fares to the US or fares back from the US, are significantly higher than the average fares that Air India would normally get. But it is the function of the government to decide affordability.

How is it working? You yourself said that Air India is subsidising flights from the Gulf. But for Indians from the United States, a ticket is costing Rs 1 lakh. For business class tickets from the US, it is \$3,500 a seat. You have to have the wide bodied aircraft as well. What does this mean for the airlines which were anyway in lockdown and which are now being allowed to fly in a partial manner, what is it going to mean for the health of the airlines because you are not going to be allowed to make money, are you flying at losses?

In any case, what we are doing is when we fly at **Vande Bharat rates**, it is pretty much a **breakeven sort of a situation**. We are not losing a lot of money. In some cases, we may lose some marginal amount of money. But like I said, it is a national service and so we will happily do some of it. Today we are flying immigrants. A lot of the state governments are also approaching us for flying migrants from one place to the other.

We are doing it sometimes at discounts, sometimes without cost. Some of this is part of our process and part of our duty. We are happy to do it. All the private carriers are happy to participate because in any case, this is not a significant part of the business. The larger part of course is the schedule flying that we are doing and also the chartered flights that we are all increasingly doing now.

What India cannot afford is of course the grounding and the crash of yet another airline. We have seen governments come out with direct bailouts for airlines overseas like Germany for Lufthansa and the Trump administration for the major American airlines, Singapore airlines. India has chosen not to do that. At the same time the private carriers have also decided to give out the discounted seats. How long can this go on? Do you foresee closure of more Indian airlines?

I certainly hope not. I hope the government finds some way to support Indian carriers. There is an even larger issue and that is if you look at our region and all the airlines in the Middle East as well as the Far East. All those airlines have been strongly funded by their respective governments and as things have to open up, we will compete with these airlines.

For example, why you fly to Dubai or to Abu Dhabi or Doha, you compete with the carriers there. Those guys have got huge amounts of money from their government, millions of dollars and therefore are in a position to discount fares and put a lot of pressure on the Indian carriers. It is the same for airlines in Hong Kong and so on. So, we need to think about that and as we look forward to fulfilling our **ambition of Atmanirbhar Bharat and try to create a global passenger hub within our**

country, we need to see that we get a level playing field and that the country provides a level playing field to its carriers. We have this wonderful opportunity where we have a really strong domestic market which we can leverage to create a hub in our own country.

But if we have to constantly put pressure on our carriers, have high taxation and not support them when competing carriers are being supported by their governments, it becomes tougher to do. **We hope that the government will provide us policy support and hopefully some financial support as well so that we can compete with all these carriers and try and ensure that Indian aviation is at the centre of global aviation in the years to come.**

One of the biggest problems you have also been facing is that your staff needs to be quarantined. There have some very sad instances of crew members catching Covid-19. With all of you now also entering Vande Bharat, do you all have enough crew members? Are we finally going to see code sharing become a reality because of this problem?

Well, it could but in terms of quarantining of crew members, we have suggested some alternative approaches to the government to take a look at. In fact, it is good that we are detecting passengers who are Covid positive. It is because of the stringent checks that we are doing as passengers are boarding and de-boarding aircraft that we are able to detect some positive cases that would otherwise have gone unnoticed.

At this time, there is some pressure because of the quarantining of crew but if we come up with sensible policies, for example, the cockpit crew are completely removed from where the passengers are and supposing there is a passenger in the last few rows who has been found to be Covid positive, it should not necessarily mean that the cockpit crew is quarantined for 14 days.

So we have proposed some steps to the government and we hope the government will take a look.

We have seen that in certain cases, people trying to fly domestically at crazy high tariffs. People have been putting up those messages on social media about how one way ticket can be as high as Rs 30,000-40,000 whereas for the Ministry of Civil Aviation we were told there is an upper ceiling. Can you clarify for us how this disconnect is taking place and is that also going to apply for international flights? For example, maybe, you are seeing these price swings in premium or business class seating?

Absolutely. there is a fare band which the government of India has given and everybody is scrupulously following that fare band. The numbers that you are talking about really relates to business class seats and so that is where there is no fare band. Then the airlines are free to charge what they will. But in terms of the bulk of the flying which is on economy seats, those are controlled by the band that the government has given and these bands are extremely reasonable.

Flying from Delhi to Mumbai, the highest fare is probably Rs 11,000 which is pretty low. It starts from somewhere around Rs 3,500. It is a very reasonable band. We respect that the government needed to do that because of surge pricing possibilities and so on but one needs to remember also that most airlines have more than two-thirds of their fleet on the ground which need to be paid for.

So at some point of time, **we will have to enable airlines to make some more money to pay for**

those aircraft for all those fixed costs in the absence of government assistance.

You also have strict regulations like no food on board. How are private carriers going to grapple with that for international flights? Also, are there going to be changes in luggage norms? If people are packing up and moving their whole lives back to India because they have lost a job or a visa, are there going to be changes in rules?

The whole focus on contactless travel is probably here to stay. If you look at these web check-ins that have been attempted in India, today 99% of people are checking in through the web. There are no lines for check-in etc. In terms of baggage drop also, there is a new contactless process. All of this is extremely efficient for post Covid days as well. In terms of international travel, we have to make adjustments for that and they will be made.

The ETI 12/06/2020

New Delhi: **Almost 20 days after domestic flight operations resumed in India, airlines are now plying flights at full allowed capacity, if not overbooking, reports are suggesting.** Initially, there were apprehensions that COVID-19 fear will lead to a death in the demand for domestic tickets. But demands are high. On some routes, demands are so high that airlines are even overbooking, a report of the Mint claimed.

While there is no uniform official decision on making tickets cheaper in the wake of the high demand, airfares have decreased 20-25 percent week-on-week, making flying an attractive option for immediate trips.

12/06/20 India.com

Air India has now repatriated nearly 75,000 citizens since repatriation flights started in May. The airline, along with subsidiary Air India Express, has operated flights from over 31 countries. However, demand for flights still remains high, with many now wishing to return to other countries. Let's find out more.

The announcement that Air India has repatriated nearly 75,000 citizens shows the scale of the current operation. Originally, the government planned to bring home around 40,000 nationals in the first two phases of the mission. However, this number was later increased to nearly 100,000 after seeing huge demand. The government is now in the third phase of repatriations.

The operation, named Vande Bharat, has been led by Air India and subsidiary Air India Express. Air India operates all long-haul routes to Europe and North America along with a number of shorter routes. Whereas, Air India Express exclusively operates shorter routes to Asia and the Middle East (the airline operates a fleet of 737s).

However, in recent weeks the government has allowed private carriers to participate as well, allowing for more capacity. Under Phase 2 of the operation, private carriers were given permission to fly 180 flights from the Middle East. However, private airlines have only been given permission to operate 29 flights in Phase 3.

As mentioned before, the demand for international flights remains extremely high. The government is currently only bringing back those with compelling reasons, such as the elderly, students, those

with expiring visas, etc.

Over 300,000 people with 'compelling reasons' have registered to return home from the Middle East alone. This means that the actual demand for repatriation could be much higher, possibly over a million, making it nearly impossible for the government to bring so many people home. The only feasible way to bring home so many people would be to allow commercial international flights once again, a call which the government is considering.

In recent weeks a new demand has cropped up. As countries around the world start returning to work, a number of Indians are asking to be allowed to return to foreign countries. **The government has allowed Air India to carry passengers on the outbound leg of repatriation flights**, although this has been plagued with difficulties.

Airlines such as Lufthansa have seized on this demand, offering to fly in empty and only carry passengers out. This would allow those eligible to leave to travel to their destinations, while not burdening the medical system with new passengers.

[12/06/20 Syd Sharma/Simple Flying](#)

Phase III of the Vande Bharat Mission has started and this will go on till July 2, during which the Ministry of External Affairs in close coordination with other ministries and state agencies has plans to organize 432 flights to bring back citizens 43 countries and will be reaching 17 States & Union Territories. In the Phase III the number of entry points has been increased and this has been possible by expanding on the number of connecting flights. **The hub and spoke model is being used at both ends.**

Responding to queries, the official spokesperson of MEA, Anurag Shrivastava said that "So far in the first two phases of the mission, more than 1, 65, 375 Indians returned home. Now, in Phase III besides the Air India, there will be 29 flights of private airlines, including 24 IndiGo (GCC, Malaysia); 3 GoAir (GCC) and 2 Vistara (Singapore)."

The number of flights which also include private airlines has been increased keeping the growing demand of the Indians who are still stuck in faraway lands. Besides ramping up the repatriation operations from Africa where six flights have been arranged, keeping in mind the huge demand from the US and Canada more flights are going to be sent.

"There will be around 53 flights from the US, and 24 flights from Canada and also 16 flights each from Paris and Frankfurt which are to be used as hubs in Europe. And there are going to be 170 flights from GCC countries."

According to the official spokesperson the numbers of Indians who have returned include: 29034 migrant workers; 12774 students and 11241 professionals. Also, around 61000 Indians have returned through land border immigration checkpoints from Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh.

So far the Indian Missions & Posts have registered 399081 for repatriation to India on compelling grounds.

Has India helped stranded foreigners?

Yes. Before the global restrictions, India had evacuated 2468 Indian nationals and 48 foreigners from the most affected areas from February to April 2020. Also, 99,000 foreign nationals from different cities of India have been evacuated to 113 countries.

[12/06/20 Huma Siddiqui/Financial Express](#)

New Delhi: Union civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri's Twitter presence has gone up since the Centre started planning the resumption of the domestic flights during the fourth phase of the lockdown. The minister posts aviation updates, he even interacts with users, takes questions on Live session etc.

On Friday, a user replied to one of the minister's tweet, saying, "Great SIR. **But international flights into Bharat shud not be allowed until August end.** Otherwise it will be a second imported wave will happen."

The minister chose to reply to this tweet. He said, "Would you like to say that to the trolls who enrich my life on a daily basis?"

Soon, comments came pouring slamming the centre's decision to not allow other international flights in what may come across as **a monopolisation bid for Air India.**

As of now, **only Air India is ferrying passengers in and out of India under the Vande Bharat mission. No other flights have been allowed to resume international operations. But if the spread of the virus is the reason to limit the international operations, then Vande Bharat Mission should also be scrapped, said several Twitter users.**

[12/06/20 India.com](#)

Vistara is negotiating with Boeing Co. and Airbus as well as leasing companies to delay deliveries of some of the planes scheduled to arrive this year, a top official at the private airline said, in an attempt to reduce costs as fewer people fly amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The full-service airline, owned by Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, also hopes to return some of the leased planes even before their lease period expires.

Vistara had planned to receive Boeing 787-9s (Dreamliners), Airbus A320neos and A321neo jets during the year, Vinod Kannan, the airline's chief strategy officer said. "We have taken delivery of our first Boeing 787-9 plane. The second one was supposed to come in March, but this hasn't happened. Our Airbus A321 planes were also supposed to come from March-April, but this hasn't happened too. A lot of this is due to logistics issues," he said.

"So, there is some delay in that front, and this would have a knock-on effect on other deliveries as many aircraft manufacturers had to close down and cut capacity. This is an ongoing discussion with aircraft manufacturers and lessors. We are also reviewing our delivery plans and fleet plans to see whether there is any scope to delay our deliveries, or early lease returns are possible," Kannan said.

Vistara currently has a 41-plane fleet, including seven Boeing 737 planes, one Boeing 787-9, and 33 Airbus A320 planes, including six older A320ceo planes and 27 A320neo planes. It planned to have 52 planes by March 2021.

"This year, **we will return our first (leased) batch of Airbus A320ceo planes, about six of them.** We took **nine Boeing 737 planes**, earlier operated by Jet Airways. Out of this, **two have already been**

returned. A third one will be going back some time this year. The remaining six are on short-term lease. We are also reviewing this to see if there is an opportunity for us to rationalize, and if early return is possible," Kannan said.

The scheduled delivery of six A320neos for Vistara in FY21 will also depend on increased aircraft production, and crew training for these planes.

"Those deliveries that are supposed to happen at the end of the year may have to be pushed back," Kannan said.

Earlier in June, Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines together infused ₹500 crore into Vistara, which will be used for aircraft-related payments and working capital requirements, Kannan said.

[Live Mint Aviation 14/06/2020](#)

Mumbai: National carrier Air India is unlikely to take action in its own version of Anamika Shukla scam, most notably the case involving the current Chief Flight Operations Inspector (CFOI) posted with the Indian civil aviation regulator who drew salary from Air India for two years, despite not being employed with the airline.

The said CFOI was an Air India joint manager till January 2017, when he joined the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on deputation. Though he was put on the DGCA payroll, he continued to collect Air India salary, every month for two years till the Times of India (TOI) exposed the double salaries fraud in a report it published on January 11, 2019.

Thereafter Air India carried out an internal inquiry and in June last year requested the director-general of civil aviation to relieve the said CFOI from his post so that he could be brought back to Air India for an investigation. However, the director general did not relent to Air India's request. Now Air India has a second chance. **"The CFOI's contract with DGCA ends on June 30. According to the government norms, the DGCA can extend his tenure only if Air India gives the CFOI a no-objection certificate,"** said an aviation source. **With AI's NOC, the CFOI can remain in the DGCA for another five years, thus putting an end to whatever possibility of an investigation.** "Certain officials in AI are keen to give that NOC," the source said.

The Times of India sent a questionnaire to Air India asking whether the airline will permit the CFOI to extend his contract with the DGCA. Air India spokesperson sought time to respond to the query, but after a week said, "we wouldn't like to make any comment on this issue".

Said a senior airline official: "It appears that Air India has decided to let him extend the tenure by another five years, by which time the case will die down. The cash-strapped airline surviving on tax payer's money apparently doesn't care about losing crores, but misappropriation of government funds is a serious offence. Action should be taken against two parties, the CFOI and also the officials in Air India who conspired to keep the salaries going though he was no longer with the airline."

[13/06/20 Manju V/Times of India](#)

Mumbai: A 42-year-old passenger on board an Air India flight from Lagos to Mumbai died under unusual circumstances, raising several questions on the checks and thermal screening being

conducted at the airports amid the coronavirus pandemic and how a passenger with a fever was allowed to board the flight.

Sources have told India Today TV that the passenger was seen shivering inside the flight. When inquired, the passenger had informed the Air India crew that he had malaria. Sources have said that the crew of the flight had also provided him oxygen as he was finding it difficult to breathe.

The passenger, however, collapsed and died on board the Air India flight. The sources have also told India Today TV that the passenger was bleeding from his mouth.

The flight landed at the Mumbai Airport at 3:40 am.

Air India has, however, said that the passenger died of "natural causes". Denying that the passenger had a fever, Air India said "Our Lagos medical screening team would have detected the same" if that was the case.

In a statement, Air India said, "A passenger aboard AI1906 of 13th June, 2020, from Lagos to Mumbai passed away due to natural causes today."

14/06/20 Pankaj Upadhyay/India Today

It is not quite the usual thing for pet dogs to be flown around in business class and private jets by their owners. However, recently an industrialist with his family flew in a private jet from Mumbai just to pick up a puppy from Bengaluru.

As per a report that has been published by Tol, the **industrialist with his wife and son came to Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) to pick up a golden retriever puppy. The family flew back in a private jet after they picked up their puppy.**

The trio had COVID-19 negative certificates with them. Currently, the Karnataka government has made COVID-19-free certificates compulsory for all the passengers traveling from Maharashtra. The industrialist and his family had test results from the Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune. After completing the procedures at KIA, the family drove to a kennel in Hannur and came back to the airport with their golden retriever puppy in 2 hours.

An airport staffer at KIA said that they believe that the family adopted the dog from Bengaluru, as it looked like a 6 months old puppy.

After completing all the due procedures for transporting the animal, the family flew back to Mumbai in the private jet with their puppy.

Domestic, chartered and private plane travel was allowed after 25th May by the government after easing some lockdown restrictions.

After Ministry of Civil Aviation gave the green signal for domestic commercial flights, **some dog owners from Mumbai brought back their pet dogs in 6 seater private jet from Mumbai.** The pets were brought back in Accretion Aviation private jet. It is an aggregator of private jets, helicopters, and yachts, for a six-seater plane. **The entire 6 seater private jet from the company costs around Rs 9.06 lakh, with each seat costing Rs 1.60 lakh.**

13/06/20 Free Press Journal

Jaipur: Since the resumption of domestic flights from Jaipur airport on May 25, the passenger load has tripled within 19 days. However, officials said that this number can't be termed as normal.

The airport witnessed around 1,000 passengers (arrivals and departures) per day during the initial period. Now, it has now gone up to 3,000.

"People who have emergency are only travelling now. But as passengers are going through standard operating procedures, precautions and other things, they are showing confidence in air travel. The number is gradually increasing. But, it will take some more time to reach a higher load of passengers," said Jaideep Singh Balhara, director, Airport authority of India (AAI), Jaipur.

Passengers said that they are satisfied with the precautions taken by their respective airlines and the airport authorities; still they have some fear in their minds. "I have got face shield and mask and keeping a sanitizer. I have ensured I should not touch anything inside the aircraft and at the airport, still there is a fear," said Aniket Solanki, a traveller from Delhi.

Though Jaipur airport has got nearly 22 scheduled flights, yet everyday it is witnessing cancelation of at least eight to 10 flights. "In every flight, the number of passengers is increasing except in Jaipur to Agra route. Some days ago, there were just two passengers on board, still it left for Agra," said an officer at the Jaipur airport.

14/06/20 Times of India

Bengaluru: Karnataka Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Monday laid the foundation stone for the construction of a Rs 220 crore airport project in his political bastion of Shivamogga, as he expressed confidence that it will give a boost to tourism, industries and economic activities in the region.

"The long cherished dream of people of Shivamogga about having an airport is finally becoming a reality.

The project that was planned when I was Deputy Chief Minister and Chief Minister in the past was shelved due to contractor issues and lack of interest by the governments that came later," Yediyurappa said.

Speaking at the foundation laying event for the airport, which he attended virtually via video conference, he said, now the government is once again taking up the project through infrastructure development and PWD departments.

The project to construct the well-equipped airport at Sogane in Shivamogga taluk at the cost of Rs 220 crore in about 662.38 acre land area has been initiated, he said, adding that the project will be taken up in two phases.

He expressed hope that it will be completed in a year's time.

The first phase consists of runway, taxiway, apron, approach road, peripheral road and compound wall construction, while the second phase consists of terminal building, ATC tower, fire station building, among others, a release said.

Noting that under the Udan scheme the project has been envisaged to provide affordable air travel to people, the Chief Minister expressed confidence about tourism, industries and economic activities in the region getting a boost, with the small airport coming up at Shivamogga

He also directed officials to complete the airport work on time without compromising on the quality. Highlighting various developmental works that is being implemented in Shivamogga, the district which is regarded as his political turf, Yediyurappa said, with the cooperation of the central

government various railway projects have also been taken up in the district including Shivamogga-Shikaripura rail route.

Shikaripura is the constituency represented by the Chief Minister, while his son B Y Raghavendra represents Shimoga constituency in Lok Sabha.

Yediyurappa, who also inaugurated the divisional office of National Highway authority in the district, said a bridge project across river Sharavati at Singndur in Sagara taluk will be taken up.

Conceding that developmental work has taken a backseat due to the COVID-19 situation, the Chief Minister said the challenge is to overcome it and achieve development.

The ETI 15/06/2020

Mumbai: IndiGo wants to operate 50% of its total daily capacity of 1,500 plus flights in July and resume international operations possibly to the middle east during that month, its CEO Rono Dutta said in an interview to ET Monday.

The airline aims to reach 70% capacity by March and 85% by April, he said. Dutta added however that profitability for the airline is at least 14 months away.

India's airlines resumed flights after their mandatory suspension since March 25 as part of a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus.

While airlines are allowed to operate 30% of their capacity, various conditions by state governments is keeping that number down. IndiGo is operating close to 350 daily flights currently.

Dutta said he wants the travel lockdown to be lifted "we have hurt jobs way too much" and has seen "encouraging trends in occupancy" although it is far from pre-Covid levels. According to figures tweeted by aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri on a daily basis, Indian carriers are on average filling slightly more than than 50% of their flights

"The trend has been encouraging," he said. Dutta said that unlike before, the airline is doing a month on month planning for the future now

The ETI

MUMBAI: The Bombay High Court on Monday permitted all flight operators to allow passengers to occupy all middle seats in flights but said they should strictly adhere with the guidelines of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

DGCA has ordered airlines to try to keep middle seats vacant in flights but if booked, the carriers should provide the passenger in the middle seats a 'wrap-around gown' apart from the other protective gears including a three-layered mask and shield to the passenger occupying the middle seat. These directions are applicable to all stakeholders and have come into force with effect from June 3.

"We are of the prima facie view that the safety and health of the passengers on board the aircraft qua Covid-19 virus is adequately taken care of even if the middle seat of the aircraft is not kept

vacant on account of passenger load and seat capacity,” said a division bench of Justice SJ Kathawala and Justice Surendra Tavade on Monday.

The court was hearing a plea filed by the Air India pilot Deven Kanani, who had sought the court’s intervention to direct the state-owned carrier as well as DGCA to formulate the guideline with regards to the middle seat in the airline.

All India Cabin Crew Association had also appeared before the court and informed that they support the DGCA order of May 31, which is based on the recommendations of the Expert Committee and they do not support the petitioner’s contention that the middle seat of the aircraft ought to be kept vacant.

Last month, the Bombay High Court had directed the Air India in its interim order to keep the middle seat vacant while operating the aircraft, in a petition filed by Kanani. However, the public carrier and the government had challenged the order in the Supreme Court.

The Apex Court had ruled on May 27, that the Air India can fill up the middle seats up to June 6 and then it will have to comply with any ruling passed by the High Court.

“It may not be possible for this court to take a view different from the views and decisions arrived at collectively by technically qualified persons after detailed deliberations and keeping in mind the health and safety of passengers, especially when the said decisions are not so manifestly arbitrary or irrational, that no prudent man would take it,” said the court in its 50-page order.

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) has also notified guidelines on May 21, for management of air passengers. The provision related to keeping the seat empty between two passengers was also not included in these guidelines as well.

[Live Mint Aviation 15/06/2020](#)

IndiGo can raise Rs 3,000-Rs 5,000 crore by leasing its owned assets including aircraft and engines, Chief Executive Officer Rono Dutta told CNBC-TV18 in an exclusive interview.

"We own some aircraft, some ATRs, a lot of engines, some A320s. We are putting them back on lease. That will give us Rs 3,000-5000 crore of funding. I am quite optimistic about prospects of IndiGo," Dutta said.

The airline believes that the biggest opportunity to save costs lies in the fleet and hence has planned to focus on the efficiency of aircraft in use, lowering maintenance costs and is renegotiating contracts with suppliers for lower costs.

"Our relationship with lessors is a key success factor. We are working with lessors. We are paying all our bills. We are trying to reach an amicable solution with lessors. We are negotiating terms of new planes with lessors," Dutta added.

It is important to note that Dutta revealed that **IndiGo will take delivery of around 120 fuel-efficient neo aircraft over the next 2 years and will simultaneously retire nearly 120 A320neos.**

"We have lots of new planes coming. The terms of new planes are for discussion...(in case of) the old planes, we have obligations and we are meeting them. We are returning 120 old planes, getting 120 or so new planes coming over 2 years. Those are under discussion," Dutta said.

This means that the capacity is expected to remain stable for the next two years at India's largest airline, IndiGo, and indicates a more cautious approach at the market amid COVID-19 pandemic.

It is also important to remember here that the airline has decided to cut employees' expenses by 25 percent. In that regard, it has already implemented salary cuts in the range of 5-25 percent in March, and leave without pay program was also announced in May.

"Right-sizing means don't grow too much but make the fleet more efficient. Our focus on employees is very sharp. The environment is hostile, we are doing 30 percent of capacity, demand is not there...**we want to keep our focus on cost because if we don't do the necessary cost-cutting, the whole company will go down.** We are taking baby steps at this time, we don't want to take big bold plunges into this," Dutta explained.

15/06/20 Anu Sharma/CNBC TV18

Mumbai: National carrier Air India has been receiving praises for operating flights and evacuating stranded passengers across the world during the coronavirus crisis.

The pilots, cabin crew and ground staff have also been applauded for rising to the occasion and rendering the service to the nation. But while flights are being operated, Air India staff have raised serious concern about the coronavirus insurance cover and sought an explanation from the airline.

At present, an Air India staff is eligible for life and health insurance when they contract the infection in the flight, but the insurance clause does not cover Covid-19 as soon as the plane lands on the ground.

An Air India employee told India Today TV that the group insurance also reduces to a "paltry" Rs 10 lakh when staff lands after a flight.

It may be noted that the Air India staffers have been putting themselves at risk during the various international evacuation missions conducted by the government. Some of them have tested positive for the virus as well.

A senior cabin crew member from Mumbai recently wrote to Air India DMD and expressed concern over the current situation. He sought an explanation of the insurance clause for staff.

The cabin crew member highlighted that many AI staffers tested coronavirus positive despite the best precautions and felt that the risk of the virus was being "undermined by the airline". Many other crew members have expressed the same concern to India Today TV.

15/06/20 Pankaj Upadhyay/India Today

Air India is likely to grant a no-objection certificate (NoC) and drop the investigation against the employee, who drew salary from both the national carrier and the DGCA for two years after being deputed at the aviation regulator.

The official's term with the DGCA ends on June 30 and for him to carry on with the regulator, he requires an NoC from the national carrier. If this is provided, Air India will not be able to probe him, as per reports citing sources.

According to people in the know, Air India is expected to provide the NoC, since a resolution to the matter has already been initiated.

However, reports citing sources said that such a move might be contemplated to stall an investigation by the airline.

As per reports, **the employee concerned was a joint manager in the national carrier till January 2017 and was then deputed in the Directorate General of Civil Aviation.** The alleged scam came to light in January last year.

Following the claims, Air India conducted an internal enquiry before urging the DGCA in June last year to relieve the Chief Flight Operations Inspector (CFOI) so that the airline could bring him back and investigate the allegations. However, the DGCA did not agree to the request.

Now is the opportunity, sources in the report said, citing the expiry of the DGCA contract, when Air India can actually bring back the person and investigate the allegations of fraud.

There are, however, contradictory opinions within the establishment. A person in the know of the matter said: "This is a matter that has been resolved internally in the airline. When the pilot is returning the extra payments he had received, then there is no point of an investigation left."

[15/06/20 IANS/India TV](#)

Jewar: The construction of much-awaited Jewar airport will continue despite lockdowns. The concessionaire - Zurich Airport (which has been awarded the tender for construction)-had sought a 120-day breather from the Uttar Pradesh government citing the consecutive lockdowns due to coronavirus pandemic.

However, the government refused and asked the Zurich Airport to start the process 45 days after the international flights are resumed.

"This airport project is a shot in the arm for the economy of Uttar Pradesh and India. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath wants the project to take off as soon as possible as it will generate lakhs of jobs. Hence the contractor has been given only 45 days to start the process after the first international flight is permitted," said Thakur Dharendra Singh, MLA, Jewar (Greater Noida).

The land acquisition and relocation of residents of various villages in Jewar to start soon. "Out of eight runways, two are likely to be operational for international flights before the end of 2022," Singh

said.

15/06/20 Abhishek Anand/India Today

As Delhi continues to grow as a hub for multiple airlines, it might be helpful to know how much time you should leave for connections. While Delhi is home to a major international terminal, it also has two separate domestic terminals and can be confusing at times. So join us for a quick guide on how to transit through Indira Gandhi International on your next trip!

All international flights depart from Terminal 3 (T3) of the airport, so you don't have to worry about leaving the airport area. Transiting through Delhi airport is relatively simple if you're booked on a single ticket, with your bags checked through to your destination. Promotional videos for the airport tout a 45-minute layover is more than enough to transit and even stop by duty-free.

However, it's probably safe to put aside at least 1.5 hours for most flights. This is to account for any long queues for security or delays on your incoming flight. Better early than a missed connection!

The procedure for transiting is fairly straightforward. Once off your inbound flight, follow the signs towards the transit area. If you have the boarding pass for your connecting flight, you can continue to security. There are also airline transfer desks in case you need a print of your boarding pass. Once through security, you'll be redeposited into the terminal area. The experience is quite similar to other hub airports.

Things tend to get a bit more complicated if you're booked on separate tickets or your bags aren't checked through. In this case, you will need to clear immigration and pick up your bags before going to landside departures. Once you've got your bags, go to the arrivals halls where you'll find signs towards departures.

15/06/20 Syd Sharma/Simple Flying

NEW DELHI : **IndiGo aims to operate 70% of its pre-COVID-19 flights by the end of this year**, its CEO Ronojoy Dutta on Monday said, adding that resuming international passenger services in July would be a "good idea".

The Centre should allow the airlines to operate 50% of their pre-COVID domestic flights now, Dutta told PTI in an interview, while expressing hope that the **limits imposed on airfares would be removed in August as promised by the government**.

India's largest airline IndiGo operated around 1,500 daily flights in the pre-COVID era. Around 20-25% of these flights were on international routes while the remaining operated domestically.

The Centre resumed domestic passenger flights from May 25 after a gap of two months amid the coronavirus pandemic. However, it allowed airlines to operate only 33% of their pre-COVID flights and imposed lower limits and upper limits on airfares as per the flight durations.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had on May 21 said that the limit on air fares will be in place till August 24.

Dutta said, "We are at 30% (of pre-COVID traffic) now. We would like the government to take it to 50%. We will pause and see what happens. Because the traffic has to be profitable otherwise it is not worth it. And at that point, we would like to take it to 70% by the end of the calendar year."

"I think Mr. Puri is talking about opening international traffic in July, and I think that is a good idea, and he should follow that...I think that the lockdown needs to be eased," he added.

Puri had said on June 7 that India will take a decision on resumption of international passenger flights as soon as countries ease restrictions on entry of foreign nationals.

On fare limits imposed by the government for domestic flights, Dutta told PTI, "It is good for the government to try different things under this crisis because no one knows what the real answer is. So it is good to do a lockdown, it is good to set up a 30% capacity, it is good to put a fare cap of some kind just to see all this works out until more data becomes available."

"Now that we have seen all this, we need to move to the next step. We need to ease the lockdown, take the 30% up to 50%. The government was afraid that there might be some huge spike in fares and that has not happened. They have promised to take it off (fare limit) in August and I hope they will do that," Dutta noted.

The CEO mentioned that IndiGo started with around 240 flights on May 25 and is now operating about 350 daily flights.

"So, the capacity is up. Our passenger loads are up. Our unit revenue has gone up. And just as importantly, future bookings are up. Everything is pointing in the right direction," he added.

The strongest demand we are seeing is on flights connecting metro cities to non-metro cities, the CEO said.

"A lot of traffic goes to the east. But it is not as if Delhi-Patna flight is full and Patna-Delhi flight is empty. It is good in both directions, but is clearly stronger in one direction," he explained.

He mentioned that there is less corporate demand as people are preferring to meet via video conferencing on Microsoft Teams, Zoom application.

"But the demand at the bottom end (the one that comes from leisure travellers) is good. And the pricing is also very good. So we are very encouraged by it," he added.

The CEO mentioned, "I think that is a long term trend. Traffic at the top end (corporate traffic) will have less demand. If people were flying on Delhi-Mumbai three times a month, they would now do it two times a month or one time a month. On the other hand, they will rely on technology like Zoom."

The aviation sector globally has been hit extremely hard because of the travel restrictions imposed by the countries in view of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dutta said that **IndiGo, in order to reduce its expenses, will return all 120 A320ceo aircraft within the next two years as they have high maintenance costs and higher fuel burn.**

He added that the airline would be taking delivery of "a lot of" newer generation A320neo aircraft during the same time period, but they would not replace all outgoing A320ceo planes in one-to-one ratio.

"We have decided for the next two quarters to take around 30 of them (A320neos). Beyond that we will pause and see," Dutta noted.

As on March 31 this year, IndiGo had a total of 262 planes in its fleet.

Live Mint Aviation 15/06/2020

New Delhi: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has launched a probe into AirAsia India after a pilot levelled allegations of safety breaches by the airline on social media.

The pilot, who airline officials say has been suspended pending inquiry into disciplinary charges, had levelled charges in a video that went viral on Monday.

Taking cognizance of that, the DGCA tweeted: "DGCA has taken note of the concerns raised by some stakeholders against a particular airline and its approach to safety. DGCA has already started an investigation into the issues flagged and shall take appropriate action based on the outcome of the said investigation."

In a statement, AirAsia India said that it "stands firmly on its value of 'safety always'. The safety of our guests is of paramount importance in every aspect of our operations. AirAsia India is cognizant of the matter in regard to a social media post put up by one of its employees. We are cooperating with the DGCA on this matter. As a policy, AirAsia India does not comment on matters pertaining to its business or employees."

15/06/20 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

New Delhi: The first week of schedule domestic flight resumption saw 2.8 lakh people fly within India. Domestic flights were suspended on March 25 as part of the lockdown and allowed to resume at a one-third summer schedule level on May 25. According to Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data released Tuesday, May 25-31 period saw 2.8 lakh domestic flyers. May 2019 (full month) had seen 1.2 crore domestic flyers.

The two month suspension has led to a **43.4% fall in domestic flyers** this January-May. The first five months of this year saw 3.3 crore domestic flyers, as opposed to 5.8 crore in same period last year.

Aviation minister H S Puri tweeted on June 13 that "more than 10 lakh people have now flown on more than 11,500 flights since domestic operations recommenced on May 25, 2020."

In the seven days of May (25-31) when domestic flights operated, IndiGo had the highest market share of 50.6% (1.4 lakh passengers) followed by Air India (49,000 passengers) and SpiceJet (48,000 passengers) at over 17% share each; the two Tata JVs Vistara and AirAsia India at 14.3% (40,000 passengers) and then two small airlines accounting for the remaining 0.7%.

SpiceJet had the highest aircraft occupancy in May 25-31 period at 57.2% followed by Air India at 54%; IndiGo at 52.6%; AirAsia India at 46% and Vistara at 44.1%.

GoAir resumed domestic flights from June 1.

16/06/20 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

It has been over two weeks since domestic flying re-started in India after a surprise announcement on Twitter from the minister of civil aviation. It has been challenging for the airlines to get up and running within days after grounding over 650 commercial aircraft on March 25. This was coupled with state governments wary of accepting passengers from other states leading to delay in opening up of certain airports like Kolkata. Even today, there aren't any flights between Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu. No sooner had this confusion settled, a new one started – this time with the data which was published which mixed up departures with air traffic movements.

As airlines increase presence, this article goes behind the numbers for one single day – looking at the planes, utilisation, presence and more.

Mondays and Fridays have traditionally been the busiest days in the skies. For this calculation, I looked at Friday, June 12, to see what airlines are doing in an environment which is not only highly challenging but also regulated – artificially!

Since the day of grounding to the day of re-start and beyond, airlines have been involved in repatriation flights, cargo as well as carrying passengers to isolation facilities across the country.

While these continue, it is prudent that such are exempted from the calculation.

Airlines in India have a little over 650 aircraft for commercial operations. While a small portion of those is the Air India wide-body aircraft which primarily operate on international routes, 13 B737 MAX of Spicejet have been grounded since last year in line with the global grounding of the aircraft.

The government allowed a maximum of 33 percent of capacity by airlines, in proportion. A few states and airports have further capped this capacity but airlines have been operating anywhere between 220 and 230 planes on a given day. This does not include the planes committed by Air India for the Vande Bharat Mission or the charters operated by private airlines, outside the purview of Vande Bharat Mission.

The interesting stats come from the smallest airlines – **Star Air and Trujet – that are operating most of their flights under UDAN**, if not all. The RCS-UDAN routes have their own fare cap, unlike the one

proposed by the government post-COVID-19 and the airlines also are entitled to subsidy. While Spicejet, IndiGo and Air India regional are also operating RCS-UDAN flights, this constitutes a smaller percentage of their total flights.

What is the capacity share and utilisation?

Most airlines except Go Air are operating in line with the market share and capacity share they had pre-COVID. IndiGo operated 47 percent of total domestic flights on June 12. While Vistara and AirAsia India operated 6 percent each. Spicejet operated 15 percent of total flights with Go Air contributing just 3 percent of the total flights, lesser than Air India regional.

However, this translated to over 50 percent capacity by seats deployed for IndiGo as the airline also deployed its A321neos which seat 222. While Air India regional with its all ATR operations had 9 percent of the flights, by capacity the number dropped to 4.1 percent.

For years, airlines have put the focus on utilisation and having a lot of red-eye flights. Increased utilisation helps distribute costs over more flights and block hours helping the bottom lines for an airline. However, utilisation has touched new lows with an average of three flights per aircraft. For the low-cost carriers, this is less than half of what is usually planned. This also indicates that **more aircraft are being utilised than needed to operate – which is probably done to cater to crew requirements and engineering requirements and averaging the utilisation across multiple aircraft to push engineering expenditure to a later date.**

IndiGo – the country's largest airline by fleet and domestic market share had stated that it would continue to induct the A320neo family aircraft and would phase out the older A320ceo aircraft in fleets. A look at the utilisation details clearly shows the intention with some aircraft movements indicating preparations for re-delivery.

Go Air operated all its flights with the A320neo, while keeping all its A320ceo grounded. As for IndiGo, of its total A320 family operations, 65 percent were with the A320neo family.

Which routes are experiencing traffic?

The interesting bit since the start of operations has been the routes. There have been routes which have seen one-way traffic and there have been routes which have seen single-digit passengers in the flight. **The busiest route by frequency has been Delhi–Kolkata–Delhi with 11 frequencies each way, followed by Delhi–Patna–Delhi with 10 frequencies. This is followed by routes like Delhi–Pune and Hyderabad–Delhi. Interestingly, Delhi–Mumbai–Delhi, the busiest route in normal times saw only 4 frequencies across airlines and there were 213 sectors which saw just one flight.**

The route mix is a dynamic thing with airlines operating certain routes with a gap of a few days, mostly due to a lack of consistent demand. Like aircraft which are being utilised in rotation, routes are also being operated by rotation.

However, with a near **60 percent average occupancy** – on most flights social distancing norms and a possibility of middle seat remaining empty would take care of the customer apprehensions.

What are the challenges?

With just 34 percent of the fleet operating, Indian airlines are definitely looking at an excess of capacity in the skies. Without any clarity on when more flights will be allowed and with ever-increasing cases of COVID-19 in the country, recovery isn't going to be quick.

The situation is anything but normal and while the government has also pushed for RCS-UDAN flights to be operational, the current spate of fliers still seem to be those who were stranded or have a long pending trip due to family reasons. Until business and leisure travel returns, airlines will find it hard to continue.

While IndiGo's CEO Rono Dutta was optimistic about the loads and future, **I remain cautious because we don't know just yet how the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading across the country and when the business and leisure demand would retain – which remains the backbone of the aviation industry in the country.**

Money Control 16/06/2020

With aircraft being highly mobile assets that retain value, the concept of “aircraft as an asset class” has gained traction. Indeed, the last decade saw many new aircraft lessors emerge and as of today, multiple aircraft lessors have exposure to the Indian market.

Leasing remains the dominant method for Indian airlines to acquire aircraft. Of the current Indian commercial aviation fleet, **more than 80 percent is leased** compared to the global average of around 41 percent. This is because given the structural challenges in Indian aviation, options that minimise cash-burn are usually more attractive. Leasing is one such option. **In addition to cash-flow considerations, leasing traditionally has also been driven by liquid credit markets, low-interest rates, high competition and high demand.**

However, with the pandemic that has revealed the extremely fragile nature of some of India’s airlines, aircraft lessors are being forced to re-evaluate their India exposure.

The drying up of cash-flows has affected lease payments

Overall the leasing model is one wherein in exchange for monthly payments airlines are granted use of the aircraft which in turn is deployed towards earning revenue for the airline. As such the cash-flow is secured via monthly payments not only for the use of the aircraft but also via monthly payments for provisions of maintenance of these aircraft. Add to this the deposits and final dues that are triggered at the end of the lease period.

With the pandemic, the Indian skies were shut for a period of 60 days. During this time, airlines had limited cash inflows (there was some inflow due to sporadic bookings and cargo flying). This against a backdrop of a banking crisis that was brewing even before the pandemic hit and also a recent airline failure that left several lenders taking significant writedowns. As the pandemic progressed and the lockdown was effected, **the weaker airlines— without adequate balance sheet strength or a strong company backing—were unable to secure access to credit. Lease payments were suspended and several requests were made not only for deferrals but also lease holidays.**

Aircraft value changes likely to impact lease terms and conditions

Aircraft values are critical to the leasing business and these are driven by a host of factors. This includes supply and demand dynamics as well. Just two years ago, airlines were clamoring for new aircraft but the OEMs (mostly Airbus and Boeing which constitute around 81 percent of the global commercial fleet) were booked solid. Thus airlines that required aircraft and did not have orders in place had no option but to approach the leasing market. Even airlines that had placed orders often saw their aircraft end up with lessors due to the sale-and-leaseback financing mechanism.

Because supply could not keep up with demand, the aircraft values held steady for the most part. But the pandemic has not only hit the current operations but also future demand. As such, there is a supply-demand mismatch and this is leading to pressure on aircraft values.

For India’s airlines, especially ones that are reliant on sale-and-leasebacks, this means a lower value realised on these transactions coupled with higher lease payments. Further lease conditions

are likely to get more stringent as lessors reassess credit risk both for airlines and for the Indian market.

It doesn't help that some of India's airlines find themselves in a very precarious position and are pushing for lease terms that are highly relaxed. This demand will face squarely into the lessors' promise of a higher return to their shareholders. **An impasse in many cases seems inevitable.**

There is an ongoing debate between new technology versus fuel prices and capital costs

Aircraft technology usually changes once in 30 years. And the technology thus far has focused on fuel efficiency and capacity. That is, airplanes are flying longer, packing in more seats and burning less fuel. **But there is always a tradeoff between the capital cost and efficiency of a new aircraft compared to that of an older aircraft. Only new engine technology has come up and not a clean-sheet design for aircraft. It is widely assumed that a clean sheet design is imminent and this too impacts aircraft values.**

Interestingly, the latest round of changes has brought this to the forefront. Mostly because of the challenges with the 737Max8 and also the problems with the A320 NEOs traced back to the Geared TurboFan (GTF) engines. And perhaps for the first time, lessors started to cancel orders with OEMs. At the same time, with depressed demand, fuel prices have declined significantly. Thus in many cases, the capital cost of a new aircraft simply did not deliver the benefit as compared to flying an older aircraft (albeit with a higher fuel burn).

Together the above factors are also factored on risk appetites and impact airlines. I.e. Mostly due to locked-in prices with OEMs, limited exit clauses, and a double whammy with low, **the airlines with their own order book are the ones that are most vulnerable asset value and lack of financing options.**

Lack of localised access means limited market insight

For aircraft lessors, travel is a large expense. This is because assets are placed all over the world and representatives continuously fly in and out to engage with airlines. With the lockdown and all international travel suspended, localised access has become a challenge. This comes at a time where bank lines have dried up and the overall outlook for the sector is extremely negative. Market information is at best incomplete and alarmingly media outlets report information that at times is downright inaccurate. **For lessors, the lack of localised access in the current market conditions is akin to flying blind in a storm.**

Outlook: More turbulence forecast before lessors find a comfortable cruising altitude

As Indian aviation struggles through what may be its greatest challenge to date, aircraft lessors will face challenges. Repossessions are not out of the question and in several cases these have begun. When it comes to airlines, it is only the ones that are able to shore up credit, cash and conviction that will be able to make it through. With this outlook, it will be extremely tough for weaker airlines to convince aircraft lessors to continue with India exposure.

For lessors, this will involve tough calls and a reassessment of risk. Overall, things are likely to get worse before they become better.

Cnbctv18.com 15/06/2020

BORDER TENSIONS TO HIT INDUSTRY

News that an Indian Army officer and two soldiers were killed on Monday in a “violent face-off” with Chinese troops—the first in 45 years when both sides reported casualties—in Ladakh’s Galwan Valley is likely to have an impact on business though markets haven’t slid yet. An escalation in border tensions and trade restrictions could push up domestic manufacturing, experts say. China is India’s largest trading partner—16% of India’s imports are from China—and a conflict would impact Indian manufacturers, who rely heavily on China for raw materials and semi-finished products. Supply chains are already under strain due to the covid-19 outbreak. Indian companies will have to shift to other markets to de-risk or manufacture at home. The Sensex and Nifty didn’t seem too badly affected by India-China tensions on Tuesday, but markets are witnessing wild swings due to covid-19 and border tensions, and could be negatively impacted in future.

AIRLINES FLY HALF EMPTY IN MAY

Domestic flights resumed on 25 May, but fears of infections, quarantines and the sudden cancellations by airlines kept passengers from flying. **Most airlines flew at 50% capacity during the first seven days after services resumed.** Data from aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation shows that Indigo, the market leader, filled just 52% of seats on all its flights in the last seven days of May. In industry parlance, this is load factor, or the how much of an airline’s passenger carrying capacity is used. SpiceJet registered 57% load factor in May, and national carrier Air India 54%. Revival could be a challenge as worldwide, too, passenger traffic has shrunk and industry bodies expect air travel to remain depressed this year, only touching 60% of 2018 levels by the end of this year. **Domestic air passenger traffic declined 43% in January to May 2020, as compared to the same period last year.**

Live Mint Aviation 17/06/2020

NEW DELHI : India on Tuesday summoned Pakistan’s top diplomat in India, Charge d’ Affaires (CDA) Syed Haider Shah to lodge a strong protest on the abduction and torture of two officials of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad by Pakistani security agencies.

The two Indians “were forcibly abducted by Pakistani agencies” on Monday, the Indian foreign ministry said in a statement, adding that the two were detained “illegally” for more than 10 hours.

“The two Indian officials were subjected to interrogation, torture and physical assault resulting in grievous injuries to them. They were video-graphed and coerced to accept a litany of fictitious allegations and concocted charges. The vehicle of the High Commission, in which they were travelling, was extensively damaged,” the statement said.

“The Government of India strongly condemns and deplores the action of the Pakistani authorities in this regard. This premeditated, grave and provocative action on the part of the Pakistani authorities, preceded by intensified surveillance, harassment and intimidation of High Commission personnel over the past several days, was designed to obstruct and disrupt the normal functioning of the Indian High Commission in Islamabad. The attempt by Pakistani authorities to levy false accusations and concocted charges on the officials of the High Commission is rejected in entirety,” the Indian statement said.

Such actions violate the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations that governs the treatment of diplomats as well as the bilateral Code of Conduct for treatment of Diplomatic / Consular personnel in India and Pakistan signed in 1992, the statement said. The actions are also “against all established norms and practices of diplomatic conduct,” it said.

“Such continued unilateral actions by Pakistan, aimed at escalating tensions, will not succeed in diverting attention from the core issue of Pakistan’s continued hostile activities and sponsorship of cross-border terrorism against India,” the Indian statement added.

Live Mint 17/06/2020

New Delhi: **The first week of schedule domestic flight resumption saw 2.8 lakh people fly on aircrafts that were barely half full.** Contrary to the belief that there will be a rush of stranded people, **big airlines reported aircraft occupancy in the range of 44% to 57%.**

Domestic flights were suspended on March 25 as part of the lockdown and allowed to resume at a one-third summer schedule level on May 25.

According to Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data released on Tuesday, **May 25-31 period saw 2.8 lakh domestic flyers. May 2019 (full month) had seen 1.2 crore domestic flyers.** The two month suspension has led to a **43.4% fall in domestic flyers** this January-May. The first five months of this year saw 3.3 crore domestic flyers, as opposed to 5.8 crore in the same period last year.

On June 13, aviation minister H S Puri had tweeted that “more than 10 lakh people have now flown on more than 11,500 flights since domestic operations recommenced on May 25, 2020”.

17/06/20 Times of India

The Bombay High Court on Monday allowed airlines to allot middle seats, if required. However, it directed the airlines to follow all the standard operating procedures (SOPs) laid down by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). The petition had alleged that Air India had violated the norms for COVID-19 air travel and sought direction to the airlines that the middle seats be kept vacant to ensure that social distancing is followed inside the aircraft.

In its order, the High Court noted that the DGCA's updated guidelines issued on May 31 after the Supreme Court's order have taken into consideration adequate security measures based on the recommendations of an expert committee. Stating that the court was satisfied with the updated guidelines, it disposed of the petition.

Updated guidelines issued by DGCA and accepted by Bombay HC

The DGCA's updated guidelines, in accordance with the expert committee's suggestions, were issued on May 31. **These guidelines are applicable to scheduled and non-scheduled flights alike, as ordered by the Supreme Court.**

Airlines must provide all the passengers with safety kits, including face shields, three-layered surgical masks, and sachet or bottle of adequate hand sanitizer.

The DGCA suggested that the seat allotment should allow for middle seats or seats between passengers to remain vacant if allowed by passenger load and seat capacity. However, family members can be seated together.

The guidelines ordered that in case middle seats cannot be kept vacant, then the passengers sitting on such seats should be given wrap gowns, as per the standard approved by the Union Ministry of Textiles, in addition to face masks and shields.

Meals and drinking water cannot be served aboard the aircraft, except for extreme circumstances due to health conditions.

The boarding and deboarding should be carried out in an orderly and sequential manner and the airlines should advise passengers to not rush to the entry and exit gates.

Aircrafts should ensure that the air conditioning is set to replace the air within the flight in the shortest interval possible.

After every sector, the aircraft would be sanitised once all passengers have deboarded, and during transit flights, all the seats vacated by passengers at a stop would be sanitised. The guidelines further ordered that at the end of each day, the aircrafts must be deep cleaned. Apart from this, the lavatories must be sanitised at regular intervals during the flight.

If there is a COVID-19 emergency on board, the **disinfection of the aircraft must be carried out**, and special attention must be paid to the affected seat and adjoining ones.

The guidelines also ordered that airlines or airports must look at the possibility of installing a **disinfection tunnel to ensure the safety of passengers**. However, this should only be done after evaluating the implications of such a tunnel on human health.

16/06/20 Bulbul Dhawan/Financial Express

The country's repatriation exercise Vande Bharat Mission has brought back 95,000 Indians so far, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

At present, the Mission is on its third phase, which began on June 10. In the first phase, the world's largest repatriation exercise had got back about 16,000 Indians.

The third phase, which is also the biggest of the Mission till now, will have Air India operating over 200 flights. Apart from these, there will be 356 flights, which include the return services and domestic connections.

"In comparison, foreign airlines have repatriated about 2 lakh passengers in 850 flights, from India," the minister said on June 16, while addressing an industry event held online.

"We will ramp up Vande Bharat Mission further," Puri added.

Defending the Mission from criticism that Air India has got a monopoly over it, the minister said the four private airlines have been invited to take part in the exercise. These are GoAir, IndiGo, SpiceJet and Vistara.

He also defended the fares being charged for these flights, saying that the cost structures are different from a commercial flight. "Air India has flown to 52 countries as part of the Mission, and these include many where the carrier has never flown," the minister said.

[16/06/20 moneycontrol.com](https://www.moneycontrol.com)

New Delhi: International flights are unlikely to resume anytime soon and a decision may not be taken until domestic flight operations are close to normal again, Union aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday.

Speaking at a webinar organised by GMR titled "Reposing the faith in flying", Puri said he was receiving several queries on resumption of international flights. He said while the Vande Bharat Mission had been immensely successful, no country in the world had opened international flight operations yet without applying restrictions.

Restarting of international flights would depend on a lot of factors, including how the virus behaves and the rules for travel by various countries. "We couldn't find a single country allowing access without any conditions. Even the US said since universities are closed, students holding a particular type of visa shouldn't come. We are currently handling close to 70,000 passengers daily in domestic operations. Once we reach close to 70% of the utilisation capacity, maybe then we can think about opening our borders for international travel," said Puri.

"Bilateral discussions need to be held before international travel can be decided. It is also not fair to set a timeline to it. We need to move towards international travel systematically without inviting a backlash," said Puri, adding that flying was still one of the safest forms of transport, simply due to the number of precautions being taken.

[17/06/20 Pankhuri Yadav/Times of India](https://www.timesofindia.com)

SpiceJet chairman and managing director Ajay Singh said on Tuesday that Indian aviation needs both intent and policy to tide over the crisis at hand, and to also grow the aviation sector.

In a candid conversation over a webinar hosted by GMR, **Singh said that countries across the world have used aviation as a strategic resource to increase the size and value of their hubs, and improve tourism and business in their countries. However, India has gone the other way**, he said.

“We pretty much promoted foreign airlines in our country to the extent that it is hard to believe that Emirates is not our national carrier. So, this is our moment and **we need to ensure that we make India-centric policies and at least those policies are reciprocal**,” Singh said.

He added that it was time airports like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Hyderabad became global aviation hubs. “It absolutely needs to happen. It needs both intent and needs policy”.

In terms of passengers, Singh said India had a minuscule share of traffic into the US and Europe in terms of cargo, which was under 5%. More than 95% is carried by foreign carriers, “it is just completely wrong,” he said.

17/06/20 Financial Express

Mumbai: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday filed an intervention plea before a local court here, requesting the judge to continue an ongoing probe against Jet Airways and Naresh Goyal after the city police closed a complaint that had claimed forgery and cheating by the grounded carrier and its founder.

The application comes after the Mumbai Police filed a closure report in the cheating and forgery case registered against the mothballed airline, saying that there was no evident case against Jet Airways or its founder.

Sources said that the ED move was prompted as its money laundering case against Goyal and others is based on the predicate offence of cheating and forgery lodged by the Mumbai Police.

“A probe under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) is based on a predicate offence registered by another law enforcement agency. In this case, the ED's Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) was based on Mumbai Police's case. Since the police closed the case, it will have an adverse effect on the money laundering probe and hence an intervention application has been filed,” said a source privy to the details.

Other than the ED, the complainant, Akbar Travels India Pvt Ltd also plans to file a protest petition on July 6 when the matter will be heard next.

17/06/20 Rashmi Rajput/Economic Times

New Delhi: Nothing is unthinkable in the pandemic-stricken world. Aerospace major Boeing is flying in a business jet to India this Friday to take a team of Vistara crew to its home US for taking delivery of the airline's Dreamliner B787. This is the first time an aircraft manufacturer is doing so to enable an Indian carrier to take delivery of an aircraft.

“The Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) 737 will first go to Canada to pick up a team of experts of CAE, a leading company for aviation training, which will install and make operational a B737 Max simulator in Delhi. The BBJ will fly one-stop from Canada to Delhi and is scheduled to reach here on Friday,” said sources.

The aircraft will then leave Delhi with a team of Vistara, four pilots and two engineers, for Seattle. This team is scheduled to fly back the airline's brand new B787-9 Dreamliner to Delhi mid next week. "This is the first time an aircraft is being sent to India to enable an airline to take delivery of its wide body aircraft. The travel restrictions on international flights made this necessary," said sources.

A Vistara spokesperson said, "We are working on taking delivery of our second B 787-9 Dreamliner."

The Tata Group-Singapore Airlines full service (JV) had taken the delivery of its first Dreamliner this February. Due to the subsequent lockdown and restrictions on international schedule flights, it has been flying on domestic routes so far. **Once India lifts the suspension on schedule international passenger flights, which for now is till the month-end, Vistara would have completed the mandatory requirement of flying a new type of aircraft in its fleet for a month on domestic routes before deploying it on foreign routes.**

17/06/20 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Mumbai: National carrier Air India plans to acquire six lakh passenger safety kits comprising face shield, masks and hand sanitisers as the use of such protection gears has now become a requirement for a traveller prior to boarding a flight in times of COVID-19.

The kits are to be procured over a period of six months with the first batch of 50,000 kits will have to be delivered to the carrier within 15 days of the award of the contract, according to the tender document on Air India website.

"Air India invites price bids for supply of passenger safety kits, which should consist of three items -- face shield, face mask and hand sanitiser (in sachet of 5 ml) for use by our esteemed passengers," the airline stated in the document.

The tenders can be submitted by June 18, it said.

The supply contract will be 6,00,000 kits, Air India said, adding, "however the requirement may vary depending on actual consumption and accordingly call offs will be given by the Mumbai-based stores."

According to the document, the airline can also increase the quantity by 25 per cent in the contract/purchase order at the same rate and terms and conditions.

16/06/20 PTI/Deccan Herald

The Indian government is considering allowing international flights to resume, but Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri refused to provide a timeline, saying it will depend on the course of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Domestic flights resumed on May 25 in a phased manner – only one-third of the scheduled summer flights are operating. During a webinar organized by airport promoter GMR, Puri said, "When we start international civil aviation, we need to have domestic aviation reach a certain point of maturity."

Puri also said his ministry is in constant touch with states and a decision on re-starting international

operations will be both bilateral and federal, with all stakeholders being taken into confidence. He said that once domestic flight operations reach 50-55% utilization and receiving states can absorb more incoming passengers, restarting international operations can be looked at.

Puri said the government will further ramp up Vande Bharat flights to ferry back Indians stuck in foreign countries due to flight bans. He said the government will fly planes to Gulf countries, Malaysia, Singapore and other parts of the world.

Meanwhile, airlines in the domestic circuit are flying at near capacity after a two-month ban. Leading airline IndiGo is operating at capacity with overbooking in many sectors, according to its latest passenger load data. GoAir, which resumed operations on June 1, has reported a 70-80% average passenger load factor across sectors. There has been a rise in travel from non-metros to metros as offices resume operations.

This surge has allayed airline companies' fears that coronavirus infections will prompt people to skip flights. This surge in demand has also come as a respite to banks that have offered loans to airlines. Aviation experts believe travelers are becoming less fearful of flying as they learn to live with the virus.

IndiGo CEO Ronojoy Dutta has said the airline aims to operate 70% of its pre-Covid-19 flights by the end of this year and felt that resuming international passenger services in July would be a "good idea." He felt the government should now allow the airlines to operate 50% of their pre-Covid domestic flights.

17/06/20 KS Kumar/Asia Times

New Delhi: The first week of schedule domestic flight resumption saw 2.8 lakh people fly on aircrafts that were barely half full. Contrary to the belief that there will be a rush of stranded people, big airlines reported aircraft occupancy in the range of 44% to 57%.

Domestic flights were suspended on March 25 as part of the lockdown and allowed to resume at a one-third summer schedule level on May 25.

According to Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) data released on Tuesday, May 25-31 period saw 2.8 lakh domestic flyers. May 2019 (full month) had seen 1.2 crore domestic flyers. The two month suspension has led to a 43.4% fall in domestic flyers this January-May. The first five months of this year saw 3.3 crore domestic flyers, as opposed to 5.8 crore in the same period last year.

On June 13, aviation minister H S Puri had tweeted that "more than 10 lakh people have now flown on more than 11,500 flights since domestic operations recommenced on May 25, 2020".

17/06/20 Times of India

NEW DELHI: Pilots of commercial airlines are faced with an uncertain future as airlines have resorted to salary cuts and reduced allowances to lower costs at a time when a large portion of their fleet remains idle.

Indian airlines, especially **private carriers, have also sent a large number of their pilots on leave without pay, as they operate at just 20-30% of their total capacity given flight operations are capped at 33% and as few are willing to travel because of the threat of covid-19 pandemic.**

Wadia Group-controlled GoAir has sent a large number of its pilots on leave without pay during the last couple of months, said a pilot with the airline, adding that the company has also restructured the fixed salaries of its pilots.

For instance, a senior first officer (FO) or co-pilot with the airline, before the onset of covid-19 pandemic, was paid about ₹4.30 lakh-4.50 lakh per month as gross salary, which has now been revised to about ₹67,000, according to an internal communication in May, which has been reviewed by Mint.

A senior pilot at the airline is now paid a gross salary of about ₹1.25 lakh per month down from ₹6.3 lakh-6.5 lakh earlier.

The Mumbai-headquartered airline has also done away with variable allowance for flying more than 70 hours a month, and several other incentives given during a layover.

Apart from the gross salaries, GoAir's senior first officers, who are flying, will now be paid ₹1,900 per hour for the first 10 hours to ₹9,200 per hour while flying 60-70 hours during a month. Similarly, senior captains will be paid for flying hours which range from ₹2,400 per hour for the first 10 hours to ₹14,400 per hour while flying 60-70 hours.

"Annual increments have also been deferred due to the onset of the pandemic," said the pilot mentioned above, who requested anonymity.

Meanwhile, pilots with national carrier Air India Ltd are yet to get flying allowance for March, said a pilot with the airline.

"Flying allowances make up for 70% of the total salary of senior pilots and about 50% of total salary for junior pilots," the pilot said, adding that there are three components to salaries for pilots of the national carrier, which include basic salary, flying allowance, and international layover allowance.

"We are yet to get international layover allowance for February and March," the pilot added.

The Indian government grounded all commercial flights when it announced a nationwide lockdown, effective 25 March, to contain the covid-19 pandemic. Domestic flight operations were allowed to resume in a limited capacity from 25 May.

Globally, airlines will lose over \$84 billion, the biggest in aviation history, during financial year 2020 because of the covid-19 pandemic and the resultant muted travel appetite, according to Alexandre de Juniac, director general and chief executive of industry body International Air Transport Association.

India's largest domestic airline IndiGo has implemented salary cuts for senior staff, including pilots, from May besides handing out a graded leave-without-pay programme for employees till July to help the carrier conserve cash and reduce expenses. Apart from a salary cut of 20-25%, IndiGo senior staff including some pilots have also been asked to go on a leave without pay that ranges from 1.5 days to five days per month.

"Base flying allowance (BFA) for pilots have been reduced from 70 hours to 20 hours and reduction in the BFA impact results in around 15% impact on CTC," said a Vistara official.

AirAsia India has cut flying hours of its pilots, which has resulted in salary cuts. Similarly, SpiceJet has cut domestic and international layover allowances for its pilots to save costs.

"These are unprecedented times and airlines have no option but to cut salaries to save costs. As things stand, demand outlook is weak and airlines are operating at a very limited capacity," said an official with a no-frills carrier.

However, many feel that the deduction of salaries is unfair as pilots often take huge loans to complete their training courses and earn their licenses.

"We have had to spend ₹17 lakh to ₹23 lakh to get a rating on Boeing 787 and ₹15.5 lakh for bank guarantee (for Boeing 787). And now under current circumstances, a large chunk of my salary is pending," said a pilot with the national carrier Air India Ltd.

When contacted, an Air India spokesperson said the airline doesn't comment on internal matters. A GoAir spokesperson didn't offer comments.

IndiGo's chief executive Ronojoy Dutta had earlier told his employees that the airline is left with no option but to implement the originally announced pay cuts during the coming months as the airline worked towards reducing costs.

A Vistara spokesperson had earlier told Mint that the airline's decision on salary cuts does not impact 70% of its staff including cabin crew, other frontline staff and junior corporate office employees.

Spokespersons of AirAsia India and SpiceJet didn't offer comments.

[Live Mint Aviation 18/06/2020](#)

NEW DELHI : Commercial pilots are staring at an uncertain future with idling airlines cutting their salaries and allowances to lower costs.

Private carriers have also sent a large number of pilots on leave without pay, as most airlines are currently operating at just about 20-30% of their capacity. Airlines can only operate 33% of flights on domestic routes following a government cap.

GoAir has sent a large number of its pilots on leave without pay during the past couple of months, said a pilot with the airline, adding that the company has also restructured the fixed salaries of its pilots.

A senior first officer or co-pilot with the airline, who was paid about ₹4.3 lakh to ₹4.5 lakh per month as gross salary, now earns ₹67,000, according to an internal communication seen by Mint.

A senior pilot is now paid a gross salary of about ₹1.25 lakh per month, compared to a pre-covid salary of ₹6.3 lakh to ₹6.5 lakh per month.

The Mumbai-headquartered airline has also done away with variable allowance for flying more than 70 hours a month, and incentives given during a layover.

GoAir's senior first officers will now be paid for 'flying hours', which range from ₹1,900 per hour for the first 10 hours to ₹9,200 per hour for 60-70 hours in a month.

Flying hour wages for senior captains will range from ₹2,400 per hour for the first 10 hours to ₹14,400 per hour while flying 60-70 hours.

"Annual increments have also been deferred due to the onset of the pandemic," said the pilot mentioned above, requesting anonymity.

Meanwhile, pilots with national carrier Air India Ltd are yet to get their flying allowances for March, said a pilot with the airline.

"Flying allowances make up for 70% of the total salary of senior pilots and about 50% of total salary for junior pilots," the pilot said.

Pilots' salaries at Air India are made up of basic salary, flying allowance and international layover allowance. "We are yet to get international layover allowance for February and March," the pilot added.

The government grounded flights when it initiated a lockdown on 25 March to contain the covid-19 pandemic. Domestic flight operations were allowed to resume in limited capacity from 25 May.

India's largest domestic airline IndiGo has enforced 20-25% pay cuts for senior staff, including pilots, from May besides handing out a graded leave-without-pay programme for employees till July. Senior staff, including some pilots, have also been asked to go on leave without pay for up to five days a month.

"Base flying allowance (BFA) for pilots has been reduced from 70 hours to 20 hours and the reduction in the BFA impact results in around 15% impact on CTC," said a Vistara official.

AirAsia India has cut flying hours of its pilots, resulting in salary cuts.

SpiceJet has cut domestic and international layover allowances for its pilots.

“These are unprecedented times and airlines have no option but to cut salaries to save costs. As things stand, demand outlook is weak and airlines are operating at a very limited capacity,” said an official with a no-frills carrier.

The problem is that pilots often have to take out huge loans to complete their training courses and earn their licenses. “We have had to spend ₹17 lakh to ₹23 lakh to get a rating on Boeing 787 and ₹15.5 lakh for bank guarantee (for Boeing 787). Now, under current circumstances, a large chunk of my salary is pending,” said a pilot with Air India.

An Air India spokesperson said that the airline doesn’t comment on internal matters. Spokespersons for GoAir, AirAsia India and SpiceJet didn’t offer comments.

IndiGo chief executive Ronojoy Dutta had earlier told employees that the airline has been left with no option but to implement pay cuts during the coming months, as it worked towards reducing costs.

A Vistara spokesperson had earlier told Mint that its cuts left 70% of staff untouched.

[Live Mint Aviation 19/06/2020](#)

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday said that in addition to facilitating the Vande Bharat Mission, it granted permission to around 870 chartered flights, transporting around 200,000 passengers, both inbound and outbound.

These chartered flights were foreign airlines transporting stranded people to their destinations amid coronavirus lockdown.

"In addition to facilitating the Vande Bharat Mission, DGCA granted permission to around 870 chartered flights, transporting around 200,000 passengers, both inbound and outbound. Several Airlines helped in the humanitarian mission of taking stranded people to their destinations," tweeted the DGCA.

In another tweet informing about the airline taking part in the operations, the DGCA said, "**Major airlines including Qatar Airways-81, KLM Dutch-68, Kuwait Air-41, British Airways-39, FlyDubai-38, Air France-32, Jazeera-30, Air Arabia-20, Gulf Air-19, Sri Lankan-19, Biman Bangladesh-15, Korean Air-14, Delta-13, Saudia-13 and Air Nippon-12 took part in the operations.**"

"Additionally, Airlines like Air New Zealand-12, Thai Air Asia-11, United Airlines-11, Iraqi Airways-11, Oman Air-10, Ural Airlines-9, Lufthansa-8, Somon Air-8, Condour-8, Emirates-5, Etihad-5, Aeroflot-4 & Virgin Atlantic-4 also took part in the chartered operations," the DGCA said in another tweet.

[Business Standards 16/06/2020](#)

New Delhi: AirAsia India launched on Wednesday a door-to-door baggage service for its passengers, under which luggage would be picked up from a traveller's address in the city of departure and delivered to the place of stay in the destination city. Termed 'AirAsia FlyPorter', the

airline in a release said, "This convenient service starts at an introductory price of Rs 500 for one-way delivery to or from the airport and is available in Bengaluru, New Delhi and Hyderabad as part of the first phase of launch with Mumbai coming shortly as well."

This means, if the passenger wants end-to-end service, where baggage is taken from home and then delivered to the address in the destination city, he or she will have to shell out Rs 1,000.

While touchless and contactless check-in and boarding has ensured that passengers feel safe while opting for air travel, the FlyPorter service now introduces a more "safe, stringent and hassle-free way to transport your baggage as well", the airline said.

An industry first, the door to door baggage delivery service entails FlyPorter picking the baggage from the guests' home and delivering at their doorstep," the low-cost carrier said.

India resumed its scheduled domestic passenger flights on May 25 after a gap of two months amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The ETI 17/06/2020

City-based budget airline GoAir on Friday operated its maiden flight from Kuwait to Jaipur under the central government's Vande Bharat Mission with 180 passengers. GoAir flight G8 7098, which took off at 1040 hours (local time) from Kuwait and landed at Jaipur with 180 passengers aboard, operated with all the precautionary measures and guidelines laid down by the governments of the countries and other stakeholders, the airline said in a release.

"Today (Friday) was a day that had special feelings across our cockpit crew, cabin crew, airport staff and the various teams involved in making the Vande Bharat flight happen and as we flew back our stranded citizens and reunited them with their families," a GoAir spokesperson said.

GoAir is thankful to the governments of India and Kuwait besides to the governments of Rajasthan and Gujarat for allowing the airline to operate this special flight at this crucial time, with safe return of Indian citizens, he added.

The ETI 19/06/2020

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said in the wake of pandemic domestic private carriers have been offered to operate 750 repatriation flights in third and fourth phases of Vande Bharat Mission: Aviation Minister.

Air India has planned 300 flights under phase-3, phase-4 of Vande Bharat Mission, he said at a press briefing.

"Close to 2,75,000 Indians, who were stranded in foreign countries, have been brought back to the country in flights and ships during the lockdown," the minister said.

About domestic flight operations, Puri said India is not able to carry out 33% capacity of its operations yet and that maximum daily traffic seen so far was 72,000 passengers.

Puri said 33% capacity will be reached when daily passenger traffic reaches 100,000.

"Will mull over international flights once domestic air traffic reaches 50-55% capacity," Puri said. He further said border acceptance, entry restrictions, quarantine conditions are factors to be considered in international flights.

Entry into US, UK, Brazil, UAE, Singapore is conditional and some countries are allowing entry to only their citizens, said Puri.

"Any suggestion that international traffic has opened up and we are the only one not to open up needs a reality check. The exact time when we will resume international flight depends on when the other countries will be open to receive flights," said Puri.

"In absence of a decision on resumption of international civil aviation, which will depend on other countries opening up, we are left with no option but to continue what I call evacuation and repatriation flights under managed and controlled conditions," Puri further said.

The minister said he expects Indian aviation to resume pre-virus levels anywhere between Diwali and end of the year. He also said that he is confident, and optimistic about Air India divestment more than ever.

"If international operations have to start, both ends have to be ready and there has to be traffic.

There is a significant amount of traffic between India and North American continent. We may think of opening flights on a case-to-case basis," said Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola.

Upper and lower limits on airfares may be extended beyond 24 August depending on how Covid-19 situation pans out, said Kharola.

Almost all passengers are getting their boarding passes at home. Entire boarding process has been made contact-free and process of baggage drop has been contactless," Kharola further said.
[Live Mint Aviation 20/06/2020](#)

NEW DELHI : The government has offered private carriers as many as 750 flights to operate under the Vande Bharat Mission (VBM) to repatriate stranded Indians from foreign countries, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Saturday.

"About 40 of the 750 flights offered to private airlines under Vande Bharat Mission has already been scheduled. Air India Group will operate 300 additional flights under the Vande Bharat Mission, However, I am not sure if all 1000 (additional) flights will be availed (by the airlines)," Puri said at a press conference.

During the first two phases of VBM, national carrier Air India Ltd., and its subsidiary Air India Express, were the only airlines that were allowed to repatriate stranded Indians from foreign countries.

The Air India Group is set to operate about 650 flights under the VBM during July, the company's chairman and managing director Rajiv Bansal said.

Air India and its subsidiary Air India Express brought back 109,203 passengers to India under VBM, till 18 June.

Meanwhile, Puri said that the government would consider opening up international flights on a case to case basis in future, without elaborating on a time frame for resumption of international flights.

"For international air travel, (the first condition is that) you need the airspace to be open. That means you must allow people to fly in. You must have the border acceptance to be free. What happens as a result of covid-19 is that many countries decided not to allow nationals other than their own to come in," Puri said.

"We are now constrained by the conditionality's about the entry of passengers (imposed by nations). The second condition is quarantine conditions, which you can deal with. Third is the extent of domestic and international traffic allowed in these countries," Puri added.

The government will consider resumption of international flights once domestic traffic reaches 50%-55% capacity. At present, domestic airlines can operate upto 33% of its capacity.

However, airlines are currently operating at below 33% capacity, as they struggled to fill seats in the last seven days of the month, monthly data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) showed.

"Airlines will increase domestic frequencies on certain routes where there is (heavy) demand in the coming days. New destinations, like Aurangabad, and others, will be added by airlines," **Puri said adding that the maximum daily traffic recorded by airlines post resumption of domestic flights stood at 72,000 passengers, up from 30,000 passengers when domestic flights resumed late-May.**

The minister added that he expects Indian aviation to return to pre-covid level, in terms of passengers, airport footfall and aircraft movement, by end of the year.

Meanwhile, civil aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola said that capping of domestic airfares, which remain till 24 August, may be extended depending on the situation.

On the issue of refunds of air tickets, Kharola added that the civil aviation ministry will soon meet airlines and find a solution to the issue.

The Supreme Court had earlier in June asked the central government to respond to a plea seeking directions to airlines for full refund of tickets of flights cancelled due to covid-19 and the ensuing lockdown.

Kharola added that the government favour ramping up of domestic capacity, which is currently set at 33%, once the demand goes up.

"If there is demand, we will take it up. (As of now) we will add more routes within the 33%. Our target is to reach 50-55% (capacity). Then we will start looking at that next stage," Kharola added.

[Live Mint Aviation 20/06/2020](#)

A steep increase in jet fuel prices by state-run refiners will swell the operating costs of Indian carriers at a time when they are struggling to reboot operations after a two-month halt due to the pandemic. Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) accounts for 35-50% of the cost of running an airline in India. The flurry of price increases will further stress the balance sheets of airlines who are making desperate efforts to stay afloat.

"The price of ATF rose substantially during June, which is not a good sign, as airlines resumed domestic operations after two months of grounding on 25 May," said a senior airline official, who didn't want to be named. **"The steep hike will make it difficult to add more flights and routes as it will be harder for airlines to cover their variable costs."**

The price of ATF was raised by 16.3% to ₹39,069.87 per kilolitre in New Delhi last week, according to Indian Oil Corp. Ltd (IOCL). This is the second straight increase in jet fuel prices this month, after rates were hiked by a record 56.5% in the national capital on 1 June.

The sharp increase in jet fuel prices is despite a more than 35% drop in global crude prices in the past year, according to Bloomberg data. Crude oil prices closed at \$42.19 a barrel on Friday.

"Indian airlines spend at least 40-50% more on ATF prices as compared to several of their contemporaries across the world. As international operations are closed, airlines don't even have an option to buy ATF at a cheaper rate from abroad," said a senior official of a budget carrier, who added that with passenger demand staying tepid amid the pandemic, it is difficult for airlines to pass on the entire cost increase to passengers. Airlines operated at below 33% capacity after resuming operations, as they struggled to fill seats, monthly data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) showed.

"The government wants airlines to expand capacity to 45% and eventually to 50-55% in the coming months. However, we don't expect load factor to improve to pre-covid levels anytime soon," said the official cited above.

The official said rising costs, including that of fuel, and the uncertain demand scenario will make airlines conservative on expanding capacity, especially on routes which have low demand.

"The increase in ATF prices significantly impacts the cost of operations for any airline, as fuel remains the biggest cost contributor. In the current, difficult circumstances, this obviously hurts. We continue to review our network and make every effort to make our cost structure leaner by trimming non customer-facing expenses," said a Vistara spokesperson.

Spokespersons for IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, AirAsia India, and Air India declined to comment.

A senior official at a state-run oil marketing company said oil companies follow import-parity pricing, and crude oil price has recovered from its historical low of \$14 a barrel in April, while demand for ATF has picked up, resulting in higher ATF prices.

"The ATF offtake has picked up with domestic flights beginning operations. We expect airlines to do better business when the international routes are opened," the official said, requesting anonymity.

Eventually, passengers will have to bear the brunt of rising ATF prices as airlines will have no option but to pass it on, said aviation analyst Mark Martin, chief executive of Martin Consulting LLC.

"Clearly, the government doesn't want to pass the benefit of low oil prices to travellers. **The government has been talking about including ATF under GST (goods and services tax) for the past few years but this is yet to happen,**" he said.

[Live Mint Aviation 21/06/2020](#)

New Delhi: In the nation's battle against the Covid-19 pandemic, **AirAsia India stood true to their purpose of supporting migrant communities by airlifting 180 more stranded countrymen from Mumbai to Kolkata and Imphal today, in continuation of its 'Umeed Ki Udaan' initiative which has flown over 2700 migrants home on specially chartered flights.** Working closely with the support of National Law School Alumni, actor Sonu Sood, State Governments and private bodies and individuals, #UmeedKiUdaan took wings as flight operations resumed in India, helping stranded migrant workers from across the country reach home. As per standard protocol, all guests are screened before boarding and provided customized AirAsia safety kits comprising Masks, Sanitiser and Face Shields for their personal safety.

[21/06/20 Orissadiary.com](#)

Mumbai: **The state-run Airports Authority of India (AAI) has decided to give the Adani Group time till November 12, 2020 to take over the commercial operations of the three privatised airports Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Mangaluru,** said multiple people in the know. **This is less than half the seven-month extension the group had asked for, citing the Force Majeure clause because of Covid19.** ET had reported it on June 4.

AAI will also reject the company's requests of a six month moratorium on payment of concession fees and a three month extension on reimbursements to AAI. The decisions were made by the AAI board on Friday, said a senior executive.

An Adani Group spokesman didn't immediately respond to queries.

Adani had signed concession agreements for the three airports on February 14, 2020 and was

supposed to take over commercial operations by August 12. But in March, it asked for an extension, citing the acute impact of the Coronavirus crisis and subsequent lockdown on aviation business. Adani had in Feb 2019 won bids to privatise six airports also including Jaipur, Guwahati and Thiruvananthapuram. It hasn't signed concession agreements for the latter three yet.

In the board meeting, AAI has said the decision to curtail the extension to three months was made considering the partial resumption of flights from May 25 and resumption of several economic activities from June 1, one of the people told ET. The government allowed flights to resume after keeping them suspended since March 25 to prevent the spread of the virus.

20/06/20 Anirban Chowdhury/Economic Times

Dubai: For the first time, two free community chartered flights repatriated 395 stranded Indians in the UAE to their hometowns in Kerala today.

While one flight was organised by Malayalam TV channel Kairali TV, under the leadership of its chairman superstar Mammooty, the other one was sponsored by the community group Overseas Malayali Association (Orma).

Kairali TV flew 215 stranded Malayalis home on an Air Arabia flight from Sharjah to Thiruvananthapuram at 6pm today, said E.M. Ashraf, the channel's Middle East director for news and programmes. "Under the COVID-19 relief programme Kaikorthu Kairali, we had announced 1,000 free flight tickets to Keralites stranded in the Gulf countries. While we had given away some tickets to deserving candidates, we decided to also charter some flights from the UAE," he told Gulf News on Sunday morning.

At least four free chartered flights are being planned for repatriation from the UAE with the contribution of several community members, businessmen and actors apart from Mammooty.

"We have also received the support from community groups in the UAE such as the Indian Social Centre in Ajman and MAS in Sharjah for organising today's flight," said Ashraf.

21/06/20 Sajila Saseendran/Gulf News

Low-cost carrier SpiceJet has revised the salary structure of its pilots, who will now get paid depending on the fleet utilisation of the airline. This is the first time that an airline in the country has laid such a condition for remuneration.

In a recent communication sent to its pilots, the airline said that - effective from April 1 and until July 2020 - they would be paid only for the hours flown on the basis of hourly rate, Rs 6,020 per hour.

But, this is subject to, the carrier said, to the company achieving flying capacity of 26,000 hours per month or until either written notification in their regard..."

Moneycontrol has seen a copy of this communication.

"Lifeline Udan has seen 588 flights so far and has carried over 940 tonnes of cargo. The cargo essentially covered COVID-19 related reagents, enzymes, medical equipment, testing kits, PPEs, masks, gloves, medicines and other accessories and cargo requisitioned by state and UT governments," Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said.

"Lifeline Udan has received excellent support from state government and other stakeholders," he added.

The minister said that the government is planning to add more flights in Vande Bharat Mission in 3rd and 4th phase.

"The government of India is planning for additional flights under Vande Bharat Mission to evacuate Indians. **Under third and fourth phase, 300 flights extra will be run by Air India,**" Mr Puri said.

"Around 750 odd flights have been offered to Domestic Private Carriers. Around 40-odd flights already scheduled by private operators. Flights which may be operated by foreign carriers for Indians stranded in Latin America and some parts of Africa in collaboration with Air India," he added.

20/06/20 ANI/NDTV

Union Civil Aviation Minister, Hardeep Singh Puri called Air India, a 'first-class asset'. During a media brief in the national capital on June 20, Puri said, "I have never been as hopeful and confident on Air India, divestment or disinvestment whatever you choose, as I am now. Air India is a first-class asset. Whether it be for evacuation of people from Wuhan, Air India has been at the heart of it."

The ETI 20/06/2020

Covid-19 has brought India's aviation sector to its knees. The high double-digit growth is now a thing of the past, as travel demand is likely to recover only in the second half of FY21, as per rating agency Icra. Mint looks at the pandemic impact on the sector and the way out.

How has covid-19 hit the aviation sector?

Both domestic and international airline operations were halted by the Indian authorities after the covid-19 breakout. Thus, airlines incurred huge losses. Even after the operations resumed, passenger demand remained muted as people were wary of traveling. As a result, many airlines are sending back their leased aircraft to lessors and are planning operations with a limited number of aircraft. New fuel-efficient planes are being preferred over older aircraft. "The situation remains grim for airliners across the world and Indian carriers are no exception," said a senior official of a global aircraft leasing firm.

How did services fare after easing of cubs?

Airlines resumed operations on 25 May with limited capacity, two months after being grounded.

However, **due to muted demand, airlines recorded load factors of 44-57%** in the last week of May, a

far cry from a high load factor before the pandemic. At present, airlines are allowed to operate only 33% of their total capacity, which would slowly be increased, as per government rules. International air travel, meanwhile remains grounded. **Domestic air passenger traffic fell by 43.39% year-on-year in January to May, due to the lockdown**, shows data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

When is a recovery in passenger traffic expected?

Passenger traffic at Indian airports will remain under pressure in the first half of FY21 and a recovery is likely in the second half depending upon covid containment, said Icra. Passenger traffic across India is estimated to decline by 45-50% in FY21. International travel will be dependent on lifting of travel restrictions by countries, which is likely to happen in phases.

How are airlines likely to fare financially?

India's aviation industry is likely to post losses of \$3 billion-3.6 billion in the June quarter, according to aviation consultancy Capa India. Domestic carriers may incur losses of \$1.75 billion in Q1FY21, followed by airports and concessionaires with losses between \$1.50 billion-\$1.75 billion. Ground handling firms may report a loss of \$80 million-90 million. Airlines globally will lose over \$84 billion in FY20, the most in history, while losses for FY21 are estimated at \$16 billion, industry body International Air Transport Association (IATA) said.

How are airlines addressing the crisis?

In the absence of a tangible government bailout package, airlines have been focusing on reducing costs, while gradually scaling operations. Besides seeking a reduction in rental costs, domestic carriers have approached lessors seeking a deferment on the rentals and have managed to avail concessions, according to industry watchers. Domestic airlines are also seeking volume discounts from vendors, renegotiating payment terms and seeking a waiver on annual cost escalations for high-cost components.

[Live Mint Aviation 22/06/2020](#)

The United States has described as "**discriminatory and restrictive**" the Indian government not allowing American carriers operate chartered flights on Indo-US routes even though Air India was doing so under the Vande Bharat Mission.

Therefore, Air India will not be allowed to operate any chartered flight on Indo-US routes from July 22 onward unless specifically permitted by the US' Department of Transportation (DOT), said an official order of the DOT on Monday.

"We are taking this action because the **Government of India (GoI) has impaired the operating rights of US carriers and has engaged in discriminatory and restrictive practices with respect to US carrier services to and from India,**" said the DOT order.

Scheduled international passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 25 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Air India started international chartered flights under Vande Bharat Mission from May 6 to help people stranded abroad return home amid the pandemic. It has been operating chartered flights on Indo-US routes since May 18 where tickets on both the legs are sold.

While tickets on the India-US leg are sold through Air India's website to the public, the seats on the US-India leg have to be purchased after contacting the Indian Embassy in the US.

The US Department of Transport said it appears that Air India may be using its passenger repatriation charters as a way of circumventing the Government of India-imposed prohibition of all scheduled international services.

"On May 26, 2020, Delta Air Lines, Inc. ("Delta"), via letter, requested permission from the Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to perform repatriation charter services similar to those provided by Air India. To date, Delta has not received approval to perform the requested repatriation charters," the DOT said.

Explaining further, the DOT said Air India released a schedule for additional flights on June 3 that includes 49 US-India round-trip charter flights that are scheduled to operate between June 10-July 1.

"On June 13, Air India released a schedule for 10 additional repatriation flights between June 20-July 3," it said.

Prior to the March 25th suspension of scheduled passenger services, Air India operated 34 round-trip flights per week to the United States.

"With 59 flights advertised for the period from June 10 to July 3, 2020, Air India would be performing charter operation at a rate of 53 per cent of the operations it previously performed as scheduled services," the DOT stated.

This situation, in which Indian airlines are permitted to perform services pursuant to their rights under the "US India Air Transport Agreement" while US carriers are not, creates a competitive disadvantage for US carriers vis-à-vis Indian carriers, it noted.

While Air India is permitted by the Indian government to sell tickets directly to individual passengers or through other distribution systems, the US-based carriers are not allowed to do so even if they are permitted to operate a chartered flight connecting India, the DOT mentioned in its order date June 22.

"Effective 30 days from the service date of this order, it shall not perform any Third-and/or Fourth-Freedom charter flights unless the Department has granted it specific authority in the form of a statement of authorization to conduct such charters," the DOT said.

Moreover, it said: "Air India shall file applications for statements of authorization required... at least 30 calendar days before the proposed charter flights."

The Third Freedom rights under Chicago Convention rules allow an airline to operate flights from one's own country to another country. The Fourth Freedom rights allow an airline to fly from another country to one's own country.

The ETI 23/05/2020

The US Transportation Department on Monday accused the Indian government of engaging in "unfair and discriminatory practices" on charter air transportation services to and from India and issued an order requiring Indian air carriers to apply for authorisation prior to conducting charter flights.

The order will allow US officials "to scrutinize charter flights by Indian carriers on a case-by-case basis."

The department said it "seeks to restore a level playing field for US airlines" under the **US-India Air Transport Agreement**. The Indian government, citing the coronavirus, has banned all scheduled services and failed to approve US carriers for charter operations, the department said.

The Indian embassy in Washington did not immediately comment. The order is effective July 22.

The department previously accused China of unfairly denying US air carriers the ability to conduct flights and also demanded China seek preapproval for some charter flights.

The US government said Air India has been operating what it calls "**repatriation" charter flights** between India and the United States **in both directions** since May 7.

Air India is advertising flights "that would constitute a rate of 53 per cent of the scheduled services it operated before the onset of the current public health emergency," the department said.

"Considering this rate of flying, and that Air India is selling tickets on the market, **the charters go beyond true repatriations, and it appears that Air India may be using repatriation charters as a way of circumventing the Gol-imposed prohibition of scheduled services.**"

The US government first raised objections with the Indian government through engagement by the US Embassy New Delhi on May 28.

Business Standards 23/06/2020

India will soon make further forays into space-based technologies through an application for surveillance and safety by providing automatic and constant updates of aircraft location while flying over oceanic regions. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has successfully completed backup

trials with the space-based Automatic Dependent Surveillance-Broadcast (**ADS-B**), used in all aircraft, technology that allows an aircraft to automatically send its location updates via satellites to air traffic controllers.

Currently, unless a pilot himself updates his location (send timely signals) **while flying in oceanic regions**, the location of an aircraft remains unknown to controllers. Experts said that with this technology, chances of incidents like the disappearance of Malaysian airline aircraft can be avoided.

After successful trials, AAI plans to start using the technology to keep surveillance over complete oceanic traffic within the Indian airspace.

Space-based ADS-B is a technology made by a company named **Aireon** which has been certified as an air navigation service provider (ANSP) for ADS-B by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA), an agency of the European Union with responsibility for civil aviation safety. Aireon has been providing their service to NAV Canada (the country's civil air navigation), Seychelles and the United Kingdom. **AAI will be the first ANSP in South Asia to start operating space-based ADS-B.**

When ADS-B is in use, an aircraft broadcasts its position with the help of its on-board computer system while the ground-based sensors receive these ADS-B signals which are then picked up by the local air traffic control (ATC) for keeping surveillance over an aircraft.

Since these reports are accurate, it not only enhances passenger safety but also lets ATCs to efficiently use the reports to apply optimum separations between two aircraft flying in the same region, which also results in increasing the capacity of a given airspace.

Officials privy to the development said some security concerns with the ADS-B signals were initially raised, but these doubts have been cleared gradually and ADS-B is gaining confidence from ATCs and pilots to be used as a surveillance tool across the world. Many countries have mandated this technology as an essential equipment for aircraft.

Similarly India's regulatory body, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (**DGCA**), **from January 1, 2020 mandated all Indian aircraft to be equipped with the technology.** Following this, AAI entered an agreement with the company and has been testing the technology in their back-up system.

Currently **Chennai and Mumbai airports are running the trails.**

"We have already started receiving the signals and we are running trials in the back-up system. We keep cross-checking data received via satellites, and till date we have found all the information to be timely and accurate for the aircraft. **The system gets refreshed every eight seconds, which means that we get an updated location along with various other details of all the aircraft flying in the oceanic region every eight seconds. This technology is also able to give the latest location details with a maximum delay of just two seconds,**" said a senior Delhi-based AAI official.

The official added, "We have a system in place called as ADS-C (used by 60% aircraft) which sends automatic messages through satellites every 27 minutes, and hence raises concern on aviation safety due to excessive time difference in receiving updates."

To ensure maximum air safety to passengers, **the Indian continental air space is now covered by ADS-B receivers that are placed all over the country for keeping continuous surveillance over any aircraft flying within the Indian airspace.**

"This technology does not need a line of sight; no hindrances can affect the accuracy and speed of the signals received by an ATC. **A link between their US-based station and Mumbai has been established and that's how ADS-B signals are being received by the ATCs,**" said a Mumbai-based AAI official. "**The date of running this technology in full-fledge is being negotiated,**" the official added.

The Hindustan 22/06/2020

India and the United States (US) are working on a plan to create a travel corridor which will significantly ease travel restrictions between the two countries. This will be the first green corridor India will establish with any country. Besides the US, similar initiatives are being tried with select European countries as well.

Senior officials from New Delhi and Washington confirmed that the two countries were in final stages of forming a “travel bubble”, which will completely remove or substantially relax the quarantine measures for flyers.

“As we contemplate further opening up in response to demands, we are looking at the prospects of establishing bilateral bubbles with the US, France, Germany and UK. Final decisions after negotiations are expected soon,” said a spokesperson of the aviation ministry. Travel bubbles, also called travel bridges or green corridors, do away with the waiting period for travellers from certain countries. They are reciprocal in nature, meaning flyers from both countries will enjoy similar benefits.

Since the largest chunk of non-stop traffic on international routes is between India and the US, the plan is being worked out on this route urgently, according to a person aware of the development.

However, officials said only limited number of flights would be allowed to operate under the corridor. India is likely to allow US airlines to operate to Delhi and Mumbai.

Meanwhile, US may allow Air India to operate normal flights to New York, San Francisco and Chicago.

According to travel data firm OAG, the US-India non-stop traffic has grown by 8 per cent every year since 2016.

While such corridors are being created by countries that have successfully curbed the growth of cases, officials indicated that India and the US would not wait for cases to fall to zero before creating the corridor. “A travel bubble can also be between two countries which have similar number of cases and respond in the same way to the pandemic,” one of the officials said. In such a scenario, neither country needs to close the border to protect citizens.

Such a plan has been in the works after the US accused India of “discriminatory practices” and violating fair trade practices during the Vande Bharat mission- the repatriation exercise being carried out by Air India. The US Department of Transport on Monday said that from July 23, Air India would have to seek prior approval before operating flights to the US.

Air India is operating a schedule which is more than 50 per cent of the pre-Covid level, the department said. **“The charters go beyond true repatriations, and it appears that Air India may be using repatriation charters as a way of circumventing the flight restrictions imposed by India,”** it said. It sought to restore a level-playing field for American airlines under the US-India Air Transport Agreement.

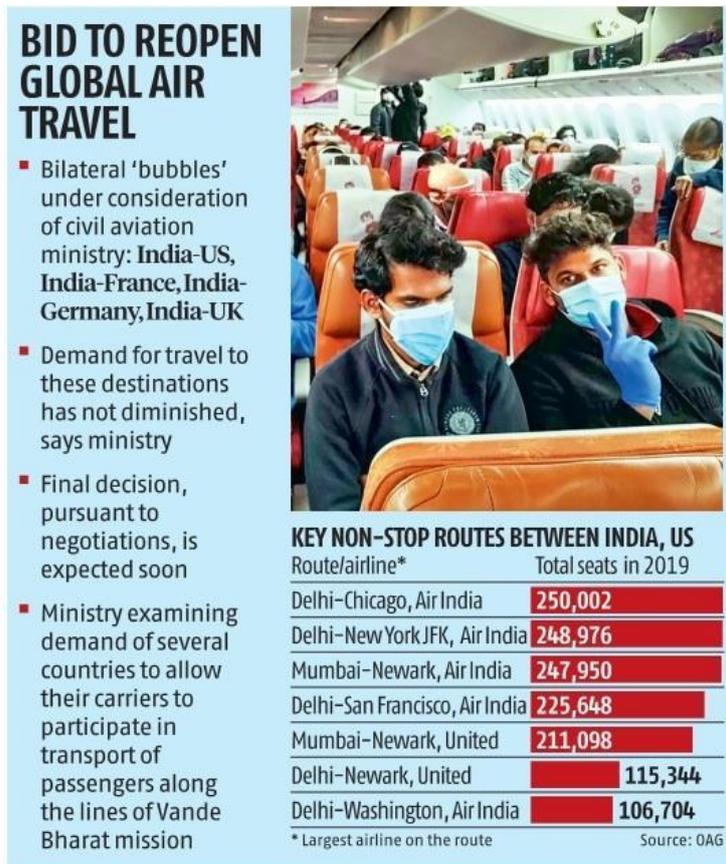
Due to restrictions imposed by the Indian government, foreign airlines were forced to operate empty one way.

US carriers like Delta and United had also sought permission to operate repatriation flights like Air India, but were not allowed by the Indian government resulting in “competitive imbalance,” the US Department of Transport said.

Experts said the green corridor would be a sign of gradual opening up of international travel.

“Travel bubbles are a step forward and will help towards restarting international travel. The

important thing is to ensure that the measures are aligned with international guidance so that the bubbles can be expanded to include other countries and restore global connectivity by air," said Amitabh Khosla, IATA Country Director (India).



BS 24/06/2020

New Delhi: With US government on Monday calling Air India Vande Bharat flights as 'discriminatory', the Ministry of Civil Aviation said on Tuesday it got requests from US, France, Germany to allow their airlines to operate repatriation flights.

"We have received requests from concerned authorities in several countries including US, France, Germany among others requesting that their air carriers be allowed to participate in transportation of passengers along the line being conducted by Air India under Vande Bharat Mission. These requests are being examined. We have also had one round of negotiations with the US on 15 June with representatives of the US Department of Transportation and US Embassy on this issue," the ministry said.

"They were invited to submit precise proposals in this respect. Communication has now been received on 19 June, 2020 detailing these requests. These evacuation flights which were primarily meant for the evacuation of our citizens from all over the world are now increasingly carrying Indians

and citizens of other countries outbound to countries where they are normally resident. As we move from controlled and managed aviation evacuation of our citizens in different parts of the world and foreign nationals from India, we are now looking at the possibility of establishing bilateral arrangements.

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," the ministry further said.

Accusing it of indulging in "discriminatory and restrictive practices" by violating a treaty governing aviation between the two countries, the US government on Monday restricted charter flights from India.

The US Transportation Department has accused the Indian Government of "discriminatory and restrictive practices" with respect to U.S. carrier services to and from India through the Vande Bharat repatriation mission to bring back stranded citizens.

"..we note that Air India has been conducting self-described "evacuation" charters (i.e., repatriation charters), between India and the United States in both directions since May 18, 2020. On May 19, 2020, an official from the Department advised Air India of the Department's concerns that some, if not all, of Air India's so-called evacuation charters have gone beyond true evacuations (at least on the India to the United States segments) and involved sales to any member of the general public able to enter the United States," the department wrote.

It also said, " On May 26, 2020, Delta Air Lines, Inc. ("Delta"), via letter, requested permission from the Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to perform repatriation charter services similar to those provided by Air India. To date, Delta has not received approval to perform the requested repatriation charters."

[Live Mint Aviation 23/06/2020](#)

Airlines squeezed by continuing air travel curbs are seeking reduction, waiver and deferral of premium payments, and renewing cover for shorter durations, five top industry officials said.

On 25 May, India permitted limited resumption of air travel; however, a large number of aircraft remains grounded since the coronavirus lockdown began in March, depriving cash flows to pay salaries and buy insurance. Aviation insurance covers specific aircraft operations and possible risks in aviation.

According to a top official at a general insurer, **airlines have demanded policy renewals and new policy purchases deferred by three months to a year; waiver on renewal of insurance policies and 30-40% lower premiums. The airlines claim that since flights are not fully operational, aircraft mostly grounded and most staff on furloughs, the risks are much lower,** the official said on condition of anonymity.

As part of a nationwide lockdown, air travel was suspended by the government from 25 March to prevent transmission of covid-19. However, regardless of its flight operations, an airline needs to keep mandatory insurance cover.

The size of the Indian aviation insurance market is estimated to be around ₹5,000-6,000 crore.

Depending on the size of the cover, the premium ranges from 0.002% to 0.004% of the sum assured. Premiums are revised annually, depending on the claims in the previous period.

“Among various proposals, all major airlines have sought deferment of premium renewals and waivers and discounts on premium amounts from insurance companies since airlines are staring at losses with passenger demand expected to remain muted for some time,” an airline executive said, requesting anonymity.

Operating just a fraction of their fleet as many people avoid air travel, airlines are revisiting contracts with vendors, including insurance contracts for aircraft, personnel, medical and equipment.

“Just like any other cost element, we are looking to better our terms with our insurers as well,” an IndiGo spokesperson said. “This means both a reduction in rate and betterment of credit terms. We are leveraging our long standing relationships with our insurers and highlighting what makes IndiGo unique. We have an excellent track record across all our insurance products with a very low claim ratio which translates into lower premiums for us,” the spokesperson said, adding the company is not looking at a short-term cover.

Spokespersons for SpiceJet, GoAir, AirAsia India and Vistara didn’t respond to emails and calls seeking comments.

According to IndiGo’s latest annual report, the airline spent ₹65.66 crore on aircraft and other insurances during FY19, up from ₹55.41 crore during FY18.

According to SpiceJet’s latest annual report, the airline spent ₹36.17 crore on aviation insurance during FY19, up from ₹22.74 crore during FY18. During FY19, the airline spent about ₹15.29 crore on other insurances, up from ₹4.81 crore during the previous year.

There are **five types** of aviation insurance—in-flight insurance, ground risk hull (non-motion) insurance, ground risk hull (motion) insurance, public liability insurance and passenger liability insurance.

The insurance provides coverage for hull losses as well as liability for passenger injuries, environmental and third-party damage caused by accidents. The insurance policies cover the risks the aircraft, the staff and the passengers are exposed to both during the flight and while it is on ground.

Accidental losses of parts of the aircraft, legal liability of passengers, losses due to war, deliberate risks due to workers are covered by insurance.

Live Mint Aviation 24/06/2020

Air India has announced additional flights on its domestic network to provide customers with convenient connections. The new services will be effective, starting this week.

Flights are operated on Delhi-Ranchi, Mumbai-Hyderabad, Delhi-Coimbatore, Mumbai-Bhopal, Delhi-Indore and Mumbai-Kolkata among others.

Recently, Air India has also updated its waiver policy for domestic flights.

In India, domestic flight services resumed on May 25, and currently, airlines are operating less than **33 per cent of their total capacity.**

However, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri expects the domestic traffic to **reach 50 per cent soon.**

23/06/20 Nisha Shroff/Business Traveller

The United States has described as "discriminatory and restrictive" the Indian government not allowing American carriers operate chartered flights on Indo-US routes even though Air India was doing so under the Vande Bharat Mission.

Therefore, Air India will not be allowed to operate any chartered flight on Indo-US routes from July 22 onward unless specifically permitted by the US' Department of Transportation (DOT), said an official order of the DOT on Monday.

"We are taking this action because the Government of India (GoI) has impaired the operating rights

of US carriers and has engaged in discriminatory and restrictive practices with respect to US carrier services to and from India," said the DOT order.

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The US Department of Transport said it appears that Air India may be using its passenger repatriation charters as a way of circumventing the Government of India-imposed prohibition of all scheduled international services.

"On May 26, 2020, Delta Air Lines, Inc. ("Delta"), via letter, requested permission from the Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) to perform repatriation charter services similar to those provided by Air India. To date, Delta has not received approval to perform the requested repatriation charters," the DOT said.

Explaining further, the DOT said Air India released a schedule for additional flights on June 3 that includes **49 US-India round-trip charter flights** that are scheduled to operate between June 10-July 1.

"On June 13, Air India released a schedule for **10 additional** repatriation flights between June 20-July 3," it said.

Prior to the March 25th suspension of scheduled passenger services, **Air India operated 34 round-trip flights per week to the United States.**

"With 59 flights advertised for the period from June 10 to July 3, 2020, Air India would be performing charter operation at a rate of 53 per cent of the operations it previously performed as scheduled services," the DOT stated.

This situation, in which Indian airlines are permitted to perform services pursuant to their rights under the "US India Air Transport Agreement" while US carriers are not, creates a competitive disadvantage for US carriers vis-à-vis Indian carriers, it noted.

While Air India is permitted by the Indian government to sell tickets directly to individual passengers or through other distribution systems, the US-based carriers are not allowed to do so even if they are permitted to operate a chartered flight connecting India, the **DOT** mentioned in its order date **June 22**.

"Effective 30 days from the service date of this order, it shall not perform any Third-and/or Fourth-Freedom charter flights unless the Department has granted it specific authority in the form of a statement of authorization to conduct such charters," the DOT said.

23/06/20 PTI/Indian Today

New Delhi: **In the latest development, Air India has informed its employees that its earlier guidelines about quarantining the entire crew if there's a positive passenger on board the aircraft, stands annulled.**

The airline management told its staff that **because the crew is wearing proper PPE [hazmat suit] while operating a flight, "the risk of contracting Covid-19 infection from a positive passenger is negligible.** Moreover, there are no in-flight catering services".

The airline has, however, clarified on the following:

1. If there's a breach of PPE of a crew while undertaking an activity in close contact to a Covid positive passenger on board, then the crew shall go into preventive home quarantine for 14 days.

There is no need for the rest of the crew to be quarantined.

2. If a cabin crew tests positive immediately after a flight, then the other crew of flight having exposure due to close contact with that crew, with breach of PPE, as decided by CCIC shall go into preventive 14 days home quarantine. There is no need for the rest of the crew to be quarantined.

In both the above cases, as cockpit crew is not at risk of exposure they will not be advised any quarantine.

3. If one of the cockpit crew tests positive for the coronavirus immediately after operating the flight, then the other cockpit crew shall go into preventive 14 days home quarantine. The cabin crew in this situation shall not be observing quarantine.

4. Any staff travelling on duty as a passenger in any of the above situations need not observe quarantine as he will be wearing PPE and maintaining physical distancing.

This development comes after the new amended Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) circular on airline crew management owing to the Covid-19 crisis.

23/06/20 Pankaj Upadhyay/India Today

New Delhi: Aviation regulator Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Monday (June 22) issued order that the Airline cabin crew must download the Arogya Setu App to safeguard against COVID-19 pandemic. Further, the concerned airline's doctor should check the cabin crew, it said.

This is mandatory for any crew member having symptoms of coronavirus, or came in contact with any COVID positive patient to undergo 14 days home quarantine, according to the DGCA statement.

The aviation regulator's order came in view of the COVID-19 outbreak and to contain the outbreak of the deadly virus. This was issued after having due consideration of the Union Health Ministry.

The DGCA said, **"The "Risk assessment" for the crew shall be done by the concerned Airlines doctor and the crew shall be advised for testing as per ICMR guidelines. Whether the crew should be subjected to 14 days home quarantine or not, shall be based on the said "Risk assessment".**

In the case of such crew, who have the history of contact with a COVID-19 case during the flight operations, the home quarantine shall be mandatory. Such information should be shared by the airlines with concerned APHO for coordinating with the state government, the Aviation regulator added.

With 9,440 COVID-19 patients cured in the last 24 hours, the COVID-19 recovery rate of India has reportedly increased to 55.77 per cent. There are 1,74,387 active COVID-19 cases and all are under active medical supervision with the total number of recovered patients crossing the number of active patients by 62,808, according to the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare statement on Monday.

22/06/20 Zee News

Chennai: The international terminal of the city airport has been bustling with activity almost every day this month as the number of evacuation flights bringing home stranded Indians has increased.

Thirty-two flights, a majority of them from the Middle East, brought in around 4,800 people stranded

abroad since June 2. There were 19 flights last month.

Institutional quarantine is compulsory and samples are taken for RT-PCR tests on arrival and also before exiting from quarantine. The authorities were able to identify 52 people with Covid-19 among those who arrived on the flights this month. Test results are awaited for three flights which landed in the past three days.

Almost all the patients are from the Middle East. Of the infected passengers, 33 are from Qatar. Passengers from the US and UK have also started to arrive via transit flights being operated from Delhi this week. They are treated as international passengers and quarantined here.

Sources said rescue flights have increased in June as the ministry of civil aviation has allowed Air India and Air India Express to operate more flights under phase 2 and phase 3 of Vande Bharat mission. Flights were also sent to Moscow, Hong Kong, Laos, Sydney to bring back stranded people. There was a demand for flights from south east Asian countries and the Middle East apart from the US and UK.

23/06/20 Times of India

Some of us have already experienced how flying has changed ever since limited domestic flights were allowed on May 25. Equally significant have been the changes for the cockpit crew. And like fliers, cockpit crew members too are getting used to the new normal.

As with passengers, for pilots too, the new normal kicks in even before they reach the airport and carries on at the destination airport as well.

While fliers have to do check-in and get printouts of their boarding cards and baggage tags before they leave for the airport, pilots at IndiGo spend time at home reading the documents that they will need for the flight three hours before the flight time.

This is being done to ensure that the pilots do not spend unnecessary time in the flight dispatch section at the airport.

According to Captain Ashim Mitra, Senior Vice-President, Flight Operations, IndiGo, this helps save a “good 20 to 25 minutes” at the airport. The dress code for pilots has changed too. To the earlier tie

and cap have been added **face masks and shields and gloves.**

The way the pilots are driven to the airport has changed as well. Says Captain Mitra, “In the normal course, the driver would come, may be you would chat with him, put on your seat belt and go. Now, we have a screen that is like a divider or a sort of a cabin for the driver. It is a **plastic screen** and half the air-conditioning goes to the driver and half to the pilot.”

Once pilots reach the airport, their flight bags are sanitised using ultra violet rays and their Aarogya Setu apps checked for body temperature. Here, the pilots take off their face masks for a fraction of a second and display the airport entry pass.

“The CISF has to identify that the person walking in uniform is the one who is the holder of the airport pass,” explains Captain Rajesh Malik, Chief Pilot A-320 fleet, Vistara.

He adds that **the only other time that the pilots briefly remove the mask is at the security or departure gate so that security can identify them.**

Captain Malik also says that the airline has increased the reporting time for cockpit crew members for domestic flights to 90 minutes, from 60 minutes earlier. This is in compliance with the Standard Operation Procedures that the crew should be able to complete the pre-flight requirements and be in the cockpit before boarding is announced, so that social distancing norms are maintained.

Gone are the days when the cockpit crew would have a one-on-one meeting with the cabin attendants. **Now they use the interphone for this conversation.** On IndiGo flights, the flight deck doors remain closed from the time passengers board till they disembark. Only one crew member is permitted to interact with the pilots at any given time, keeping the area non-congested.

The flight deck is also disinfected whenever pilots change or as required between flights. This is done in the presence of one of the airline’s pilots or engineers and records are maintained.

23/06/20 Ashwini Phadnis/Business Line

Mumbai: **A DGCA official has accused an Air India pilot of abusing and misbehaving with him during his visit to the airline's airport office at Santacruz for a simulator check. He has filed a complaint with the airport police and also emailed it to the Mumbai police commissioner and the additional commissioner.**

Captain Charanvir Singh Randhawa, the deputy chief flying inspector at Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), filed a complaint against Captain Rajneesh Sharma on June 3 when the incident happened. But his statement was recorded only on Thursday, June 18. He told mid-day, "I filed a written complaint to the airport police on June 3 and they recorded my statement 15 days later. Now, let's see how much time will they take for further proceedings."

In his complaint, Capt Randhawa stated, "**After carrying out the checks of Capt Pankaj Agrawail and Capt Datta on B-77 simulator at Air India, Old Airport, Santacruz East, I was filing up forms in a briefing room along with Capt Datta when Capt Sharma entered in an aggressive mood...**"

He alleged that **Capt Sharma was angry that the DGCA made him prepare the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for anti-COVID-19 measures for the use of simulators.** "He was explained that these measures were based on the Centre's guidelines to stem the spread of COVID-19. He started abusing and said that he is being overworked as the airline is forcing him to fly and attend office during the lockdown."

"Forgetting the physical distancing rules, he came too close to my face to hit me. As he was not even wearing a mask, particles of his spit landed on my face as he yelled. Such outbursts are totally detrimental to air safety and could lead to accidents on flights," Capt Randhawa said. He added that the pilot has a record of such outbursts.

18/06/20 Vishal Singh, Faizan Khan/Mid Day

NEW DELHI: As many as 16 seaplane routes have been identified for regional connectivity under the UDAN scheme, the government said on Tuesday. Seaplanes will offer faster and hassle-free travel option in difficult terrains of the country, it said.

Sabarmati and Sardar Sarovar - Statue of Unity route is included in the project and is likely to be operationalised by October 2020.

Shipping Minister Mansukh Mandaviya reviewed the seaplane projects in the 'Chai pe Charcha' meeting, a unique and innovative meeting platform of the ministry officials to bring about the changes in the Indian maritime sector.

"Till now, 16 seaplane routes have been identified under Regional Connectivity Routes under UDAN

scheme," the Ministry of Shipping said in a statement.

"Seaplane projects will provide faster and hassle free travel option for the long, treacherous and hilly regions of the country," it said.

Mandaviya said Sabarmati and Narmada River-Statue of Unity seaplane route will save time and boost tourism, as it provides a bird eye view of Narmda Valley and Statue of Unity.

The minister instructed the officials to come up with Indian model of waterdrome (terminal), after thorough study of the waterdrome infrastructure of the countries like the USA, Canada, Maldives and Australia.

He also directed Sagarmala Development Company Limited (SDCL) and Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) to join hands to commence the seaplane operation of the Sabarmati and Statue of Unity route by October, 2020.

IWAI will manage the project of seaplane in inland waterways and SDCL will manage the projects of seaplane in coastal areas.

IWAI and SDCL will coordinate with the Ministry of Shipping, flight operators, Ministry of Tourism as well as DGCA, the statement said.

The ETI 23/06/2020

Virgin Atlantic plans to restart flights on the London-Delhi and the London-Mumbai routes from September 2, the airline said on Monday.

Scheduled international passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 23 due to the coronavirus outbreak. Domestic air services resumed on May 25, after a gap of two months.

BS 22/06/2020

Air India operated a ferry flight to Paris on Monday as the French government restricted the airline from carrying passengers to France on its evacuation flights.

Around 50 passengers who reported at airport were denied boarding due to these restrictions.

Air India began the Vande Bharat mission last month to bring home stranded Indians. Over 100,000 citizens have returned home on these flights since May and around 34,000 have flown overseas on outbound legs.

Foreign governments have raised concerns on Air India being transporting passengers in both directions while restrictions were imposed on their repatriation flights.

While the US department of transport has accused India of discrimination, the French authorities have taken a view the repatriation flights should be carried out on a principle of reciprocity under air service agreements.

An aviation official said when Air India received approval from France for its evacuation flight it was informed it will have to operate a ferry flight to Paris. This means it can not carry any passengers to France. A similar condition was imposed on French repatriation flights to India.

Apparently Air India sold tickets for Monday's flight to Paris before receiving approval from the French authorities.

Two more Vande Bharat mission flights are planned from Delhi to Paris on June 26 and 29.

"The flight AI 1117 from Mumbai to Paris today was operated as ferry due to operational reasons. Most of the 78 passengers booked in it were informed of the cancellation," Air India said in an email

However passengers complained that they were not informed about the cancellation and learnt about it only after reaching the airport.

A reply from French civil aviation authorities is awaited.

BS 23/06/2020

MUMBAI: AirAsia's reported move to sell its 49% stake in its Indian venture will face legal hurdles as agencies probing corruption and money laundering charges against its founder Tony Fernandes and former brass of AirAsia India are set to oppose it.

Fernandes hinted at possible exit from its Indian joint venture with the Tata Group when he said in a Credit Suisse webinar that "we would never say that we would never exit India."

A probe agency official, however, said the agency would oppose any such move. "Since this (the ongoing probe) is directly related to the airline, at this point **we have to probe the shares before he is allowed to sell them. Fernandes will have to seek permission and even move court for the same,**" the person said.

Also, Tata Group is not immediately keen to buy out AirAsia Berhad's stake in the no-frill domestic airline as it focuses on prioritising capital investments in other businesses, including its other airline venture Vistara, top officials close to the development said. Global travel restrictions in the wake of Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns have hit aviation companies that have been forced to ground their fleet. Fernandes was unavailable for comment. AirAsia India did not comment.

The ETI 25/06/2020

After the United States and France objected to Air India's Vande Bharat Mission in which it is the only carrier allowed in India for international services, the UAE too extended similar objections. According to a report, the UAE has told Air India that it won't allow Air India flights even if they are

carrying UAE nationals from India. If anyone wishes to fly on a VBM flight from India to Dubai, then that individual will have to seek approval from the Embassy of the UAE in New Delhi, reports said. After this, Air India has sought Dubai's permission to carry on with the ongoing mission as there is a huge demand for India- UAE route.

All passengers including the Indian Nationals who are holding valid Residency Permit / Work Permit of United Arab Emirates and have procured approval of the UAEs Federal Authority for Identity and Citizenship- UAE (ICA) of the United Arab Emirates or an approval from the General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs (GDRFA) applicable to Dubai would need to have specific approval from the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in New Delhi and their UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFAIC) to travel from India to United Arab Emirates (UAE) on these repatriation flights.

25/06/20 India.com