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Vistara has received infusion of Rs 600 crore from its promoters — Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines — at a time when the carrier is planning rapid international expansion and domestic yields are under pressure due to a fare war.

The airline's board approved the allotment of 600 million shares of `10 each to the two promoters on November 28, according to a filing with the ministry of corporate affairs.

A Vistara spokesperson did not reply on the fund-raising till the time of going to the press. While Tata Sons owns 51% in Vistara, Singapore Airlines has the balance 49% in the full-service carrier.

According to the aviation regulator, Vistara held 5.4% domestic market share in October 2019.

Tata group has been on an investment mode in its aviation business since its launch in 2014. So far the promoters of Vistara have infused over Rs 1,500 crore in FY20.

The loss-making carrier had raised Rs 2,200 crore in FY19. Vistara's net losses almost doubled to Rs 831 crore in FY19 due to a tough operating environment. Its operating revenues increased 41% year-on-year to Rs 2,994 crore in the year ended March 31, 2019.

AirAsia India, Tata's other joint venture carrier with Malaysia-based AirAsia Berhad, also witnessed an investment of Rs 500 crore from the promoters in April 2019.

04/12/19 Arun Nayal/Financial Express

The second runway of the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) which will be inaugurated on December 5 has been declared an airside area, restricting the accessibility of the public.

Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel have been deployed around the runway for security purposes. "A security detail has been laid along the runway perimeter, including the watchtowers," said a source.

An airside area is accessible only to passengers and staff of the airport and those entering this area will be screened by the security personnel in compliance with the regulations laid down by the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security.

The second runway or the New South Parallel Runway, measuring 4000 metres in length and 45 metres in width will only be limited to departures initially. Though the runway is Code F and Cat IIIB compliant, it will be operating on CAT I standard certification when it begins operations and will progressively evolve to CAT IIIB as operations stabilise.

04/12/19 Bangalore Mirror

IndiGo has said that it is working with engine supplier Pratt & Whitney and aircraft manufacturer Airbus to acquire sufficient spare engines and 'mitigate the risk', after industry regulator DGCA asked it to replace engines of its A320Neo aircraft.

The DGCA, in multiple communications, asked the country's largest airline to replace all unmodified engines in the Neo aircraft. The regulator had also asked the airline to ground one aircraft with the unmodified engine, for every addition of a plane with the modified engine.

The directive came after multiple incidents of engine snags of the Neo aircraft, raising a security scare. IndiGo has 98 A320 Neo aircraft in its fleet.

Consequently, the engine modification and resultant grounding of aircraft is "likely to have an impact on future capacity," the airline said in a presentation to investors earlier this month.

"Expect a year-on-year (YoY) capacity increase of 15-20 percent in Q4 FY20 and 22-23 percent in FY20," IndiGo added. This capacity growth guidance is against the earlier outlook, in which the airline

targetted a 30 percent increase in capacity.

04/12/19 Moneycontrol

The new T2 integrated terminal building at the Chennai airport is expected to be ready by September 2020 to handle international passenger traffic movement, according to CV Deepak, Officiating Airport Director, Airports Authority of India (AAI), Chennai International Airport.

The biggest challenge during the construction was that it was carried out in between two terminals when the operations at the airport was going on. Despite this, the project went on, he said at the 4th edition of Chennaiinfra, a conference organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry on planning for a sustainable Chennai, utility and services, industry infrastructure and future outlook of the city.

“On commissioning of the T2 building, the demolition of the existing old terminal will commence. By February 2022, there will be a fully integrated terminal with a capacity to handle nearly 40 million passengers, and envisaged for 2031, 2032-2035,” he said.

Deepak said when the first phase of the airport's infrastructure expansion was taken up in 2013, the airport had a capacity to handle only 15 million passengers. However, last year, the traffic touched 22 million, and there were severe constraints on the existing infrastructure.

With growth in domestic traffic of 11.8 per cent and international traffic at 7.6 per cent, AAI had decided on modernising the airport under phase II.

In 2018, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs had approved the infrastructure project at a cost of ₹2,467 crore, he said. When the traffic reaches 35-40 million, there is an eminent need for second airport. For the second airport it is important to look at the additional infrastructure such as highway and metro rail connectivity, he added.

04/12/19 Business Line

New Delhi: The New Delhi bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) revived another case of insolvency against Air India, filed by a retired pilot of the airline. The pilot has claimed dues close to Rs 70 lakh from the debt-laden airline. The case will be next heard on January 14.

The dues of the retired pilot are for the period between July 2012 and January 2016. Apart from the retired pilot, a serving pilot of the company has also recently moved an insolvency application against the airline, claiming dues of nearly Rs 1 crore.

Under Section 9 of The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), salaried employees can, acting as operational creditors, initiate insolvency proceedings against a corporate debtor.

A two-member bench led by Justice Deepti Mukesh also suggested that counsel for Air India could mention the case before NCLT President Justice M M Kumar and get both the cases listed there to avoid duplicity in orders passed by different benches of the same adjudicating authority.

The NCLT had agreed to hear the case filed by the serving pilot, following an October order by a two-judge Supreme Court Bench of Justice Rohinton Nariman and Justice V Ramasubramanian, which set aside the tribunal's decision to adjourn the case sine die.

04/12/19 Asish Aryan/Indian Express

Nagpur: The union ministry of civil aviation has asked Mihan India Ltd (MIL) whether it is justified to lease out Nagpur airport to a private player as it would only reduce government's income from current level. MIL is a joint venture between the state government's Maharashtra Airport Development Company (MADC) and Airports Authority of India, a Central government body.

MIL is yet to send its reply to the query but it is learnt the agency will be contending that a private player will be needed to pump in required investment for developing the airport infrastructure as

envisaged.

GMR Airports Ltd emerged as highest bidder for taking over Nagpur airport over a year ago. The private companies were supposed to bid on the basis of revenue share to be offered to MIL. Initially GMR had offered to pay 5.73% of the revenue generated from airport operations and was the highest bidder too. In March this year, the offer was hiked to 14.49% after which the MIL board approved the bid.

The final takeover will be subject to scrutiny by the project management implementation committee (PMIC) and Union cabinet. PMIC includes representatives of the union civil aviation ministry also. **In a meeting held on August 30, the secretary civil aviation sought an explanation on financial justification behind privatization of Nagpur airport.**

The secretary contended airport was being operated by the government undertaking and has earned a profit of Rs49 crore in 2019. It will continue to earn more profits as traffic is estimated to grow at 20% annually. At current level, revenue share offered by the private party will amount to Rs15 crore.

“As the airport is already earning Rs49 crore, how is it justified to lease it out to a private party that will pay only Rs15 crore,” he has asked.

04/12/19 Shishir Arya/Times of India

Jaipur: Passengers who arrived here on Indigo flight 6E 415 from Bangalore were welcomed with chocolates and roses by the airport authorities in the newly constructed arrival lobby in Terminal-2 on Wednesday.

“We have extra wash rooms, three extra conveyer belts and passengers helpdesk at the new hall which has extra space and facilities. Since we are growing as an airport in terms of passengers, this was needed,” said Jaideep Singh Balhara, director of Jaipur airport during inauguration.

On the idea of welcoming passengers, he said, “It has been made to cater to them only. Thus we planned the inauguration in a way which will make passengers happy.” He added that in next couple of months, extra departure halls would also be ready. “In this arrival hall, we have extra seating facility for those who visit the airport to receive their relatives and friends,” he added.

Balhara added that with increasing load, the authorities are planning and working to introduce new extension in facilities.

04/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Wednesday permitted building of an additional terminal at airport in Agra near Taj Mahal but made it clear that it would not allow increase in air traffic on the airfield as that will be hazardous to environment and asked the Centre to consider luxurious trains like the "Palace on wheels" to the city.

The apex court also directed the Centre to consider an alternative airport site to meet the increase in the air traffic due to rise in tourist influx to visit the Taj Mahal and other destinations in and around Agra in Uttar Pradesh.

Further, the top court said it has been informed that the Railways can provide more excellent trains like the "Palace on wheels" and such trains could have employed to transport passengers from the new air field to the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ), Agra.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde made it clear that it was willing to allow the construction of additional terminal at the existing airport but was against increasing the air traffic which could "damage" the environment in an "eco-sensitive area" having some world heritage sites including Taj Mahal.

The bench, also comprising Justices B R Gavai and Surya Kant, took on record the submission of senior advocates Ajit Kumar Sinha, appearing for the Airport Authority of India and environmentalist

lawyer M C Mehta who opposed the project.

04/12/19 PTI/Pioneer

Ahmedabad: For the second day in a row, flight operations, particularly those by GoAir, were adversely affected due to multiple factors; as a result of which, passengers taking flights to various destinations remained stranded at various airports. Departure and arrival of 32 flights were affected from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International (SVPI) airport in Ahmedabad. These include 29 flights operated by GoAir in addition to two more flights operated by other airlines. That apart, a SpiceJet flight to Jabalpur was also diverted to Bhopal.

GoAir flights from Ahmedabad to Jaipur, Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru were affected by some two hours. The worst affected operation was the flight from Ahmedabad to Chandigarh which was delayed by 7 hours. That apart, flights to destinations such as Hyderabad, Goa, Pune, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Nagpur, were delayed in the range of 1 hour to more than five hours.

Ten other incoming flights to Ahmedabad from Mumbai, Hyderabad, Chennai, Lucknow, Nagpur, Jaipur, Delhi and Bengaluru were also delayed by 1 to 7 hours.

04/12/19 Times of India

Dubai: A Spicejet flight from Dubai to the Indian city of Kochi, Kerala had to make an emergency landing at Muscat airport in the early hours of Wednesday. According to a Spicejet spokesperson, flight SG 18, which was on a non-stop route to Kochi experienced some technical issues, so the pilot took the decision to abort the onward journey and made an emergency landing in the Omani capital. According to passengers smoke was detected onboard. The flight was full and all passengers were managed by a Spice Jet team who provided rest and meals. At the time of the report, the spokesperson said another flight from Muscat to Kochi was being arranged and it would take off on Wednesday afternoon. **No details about the origin of the technical issue were available but a technical team was investigating the incident, a spokesperson said.**

04/12/19 Suchitra Bajpai Chaudhary/Gulf News

New Delhi: Airports Authority of India on Wednesday said it has signed an agreement with the International Air Transport Association for training its 500 employees using the latter's online course on "overview of the air transport system".

"The **online training course** will help in providing fundamental knowledge of air transportation system and shall cover overview of the world aviation organizations, airports, air navigation services and civil aviation authorities," said AAI in an official statement.

The agreement was signed between AAI Member (HR) Anuj Aggarwal and IATA-Training Director Stephanie Siouffi during the "6th ICAO Global Aviation Training & Trainair Plus Symposium" that is being held in Delhi from December 4 to December 6.

04/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

Kannur: Customs sleuths on Wednesday seized gold biscuits weighing around 2.34 kg worth Rs 91 lakh from a GoAir flight that arrived at Kannur International Airport from Abu Dhabi.

Customs sources said 20 gold biscuits was found concealed in two packets and kept under one of the

vacant passenger seats during an inspection by the security personnel.

The security personnel informed the Customs officials and Assistant Commissioner E Vikas led team seized the gold biscuits.

04/12/19 UNI

Chennai: Customs officials at Chennai airport on Tuesday seized gold worth nearly 15 lakh from two passengers, who arrived from Sharjah and Sri Lanka.

Twenty-two-year-old Parthiban of Cuddalore arrived from Sharjah by Air India flight AI 968, a statement said. On suspicion, officials intercepted him at the exit. When checked, officials found a gold chain weighing 190gm and valued at 7.5 lakh hidden in his trouser pocket.

Jabarullah, 35, of Pudukkottai reached Chennai on Sri Lankan Airline flight UL 121.

Officials found him acting in a strange manner and picked him up for questioning, the release said. He was intercepted at the exit. Jabarullah gave evasive replies when questioned and on further inquiries, he admitted to having concealed the gold.

04/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: CISF personnel have apprehended four Indians returning from Saudi Arabia with about Rs 39 lakh cash at the Delhi airport, officials said on Wednesday.

They said the four passengers landed at the Indira Gandhi International Airport from Jeddah on Tuesday and were scheduled to take an Air India flight to Jammu. They were intercepted after the security personnel noticed images of currency wads in their bags.

A total of Rs 38,99,322 cash was found in envelopes belonging to the said passengers, a senior official said.

04/12/19 PTI/NDTV

With an aim to further increase connectivity to remote areas, the government on Tuesday invited bids from airlines under the **fourth round of bidding of its regional connectivity scheme UDAN. The latest round launched by the civil aviation ministry will focus on priority areas such as NER, Hilly States, J&K, Ladakh and islands**, the government said in a statement. Under the scheme, financial incentives in terms of concessions from the centre, state governments, and airport operators are extended to selected airlines to encourage operations in the regional areas and keep airfares affordable. The inclusion of helicopter and sea plane operation under NSOP license has also been allowed in the fourth round of bidding.

“The provision of VGF for Category 2 / 3 aircraft (more than 20 seater) has been enhanced for operation of RCS flights in Priority Area(s) (Union Territories [UT] of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir; the States of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, North Eastern State; UT of Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar),” the government added. **The government has also revised the viability gap funding (VGF) limit applicable for various stage lengths for operation through category 1 / 1 A aircraft (below 20 seater).**

In the last three years, MoCA has successfully completed three rounds of bidding under the Scheme and awarded about 700 routes. UDAN is a regional airport development and Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) of the government with the objective of letting the common citizen of the country fly, aimed at making air travel affordable and widespread, to boost inclusive national economic development, job growth and air transport infrastructure development of all regions and states.

03/12/19 Financial Express

New Delhi: **Seeking to ensure aviation biggies participate in the bidding for Air India sale, the government may dilute substantial ownership and effective control (SOEC) clause in the FDI guidelines for the airline sector.** Official sources said the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has been discussing the proposal with the Civil Aviation Ministry.

The present FDI rules allow up to 100 per cent FDI in domestic carriers but the investment by a foreign airline is capped at 49 per cent. Further, substantial ownership and effective control has to be in the hands of Indians.

In most of the aviation-related activities such as ground-handling, greenfield airports and Maintenance, Repair, Overhaul (MRO), FDI is allowed up to 100 per cent through the automatic route.

Relaxation in FDI rules for airlines may help generate interest among foreign players keen to get a foothold in the Indian market.

As the government's bid to sell majority 76 per cent stake in Air India failed last year with not a single private firm showing interest, the dilution in FDI norms could encourage foreign airlines and other investors to participate in the bidding this time.

"We would make sure that disinvestment of Air India happens this time. All necessary steps would be taken. The issue of relaxing FDI guidelines has been there. We are examining it," said a government official wishing not to be named.

The government is making all-out attempt to completely exit Air India. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has set March 31, 2020 as the deadline for Air India disinvestment.

03/12/19 IANS/NDTV

Mumbai: **India is considering setting an experience threshold for pilots who fly Boeing's 737 MAX planes, as it moves to ensure safety once the aircraft returns to service, a senior official of the air safety regulator told Reuters.**

The 737 MAX, the fastest-selling plane in the history of Boeing, has been grounded worldwide since March, after 346 people were killed in two crashes in five months.

Boeing is making software changes, readying a new pilot training plan and must run a key certification test flight to get approval from the U.S. regulator, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), before the planes can resume flying.

India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) may consider mandating a minimum number of flying hours for pilots of the 737 MAX, the source said, adding a decision would be made once it is clear when the planes are fit to return to the air.

"Pilot training is a serious matter for the DGCA and the airlines will also need to work on building pilot confidence," said the source, who sought anonymity, as the discussions were private.

The regulator will also make it mandatory for Boeing to set up simulators in India and for airlines to carry out comprehensive pilot training before it allows the planes to start flying, the source added.

In a statement, Boeing said it was working closely with global regulators on a training program to help enhance pilots' understanding of the updated 737 MAX flight control systems.

03/12/19 Reuters/Business Standard

On November 24, India's aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), directed Gurugram-headquartered IndiGo to ground an old aircraft every time it inducts a new aircraft into its fleet.

IndiGo's A320neo aircraft, which are powered by engines from Pratt & Whitney, have been facing glitches both mid-air and on-ground since they were inducted in 2016. Over the past year, the airline has seen 13 such incidents including four incidents in a single week in October.

DGCA had earlier directed the airline to comply with a January 31 deadline to replace all unmodified P&W engines on its A320neo aircraft or face grounding of the planes. The move essentially puts IndiGo's route expansions in jeopardy.

"Every aircraft that is added to the existing fleet should lead to one of those with unmodified engines to be grounded and the new aircraft may be operated on the same schedule as was being operated by the grounded aircraft," a DGCA statement said.

03/12/19 Manu Balachandran/Forbes

Thousands of flyers have had a close shave in the Indian skies where 141 air misses happened in the past three years, going by data shared by civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri in the Lok Sabha.

A majority of these incidents happened within the three major flight information regions of Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai. The incidents were the highest in 2018 when 47 air misses were reported. In 2016, 32 air misses were registered and in 2017, 28. **This year, till November 1, there were 35 such incidents.**

Mumbai flight information region topped the list with 38 incidents, followed by Delhi with 37 and Chennai 32. Kolkata saw 17 incidents when planes came too close for safety. To ensure safety, flights are separated horizontally and vertically. When the prescribed separation is breached, it is considered an air miss.

An AAI official said many of these incidents were not "very serious", but could have been avoided.

"Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai flight information regions handle more than 2,000 flights with a considerable number of domestic movements and overflying flights. This puts pressure on air traffic controllers. The number of incidents can be considered as far less for the kind of flight traffic handled over the airspace," he said.

Most incidents took place because of poor coordination between air traffic controllers and pilots, inadequate surveillance by controllers and pilots deviating from their flight path without permission. There were also instances when commands of the air traffic controllers were either not understood or not read back by pilots. Similar call signs too created confusion, which has made DGCA to direct airlines not to use similar call signs.

03/12/19 V Ayyappan/Times of India

New Delhi: **The Centre will invite bids for the fourth round of Udan, the regional connectivity scheme, from Tuesday.** According to an official statement on Monday, the Airports Authority of India, which is the implementing agency on behalf of Ministry of Civil Aviation will invite 'e-Proposals' from interested bidders. "... Airports Authority India on behalf of Ministry of Civil Aviation, Government of India invites 'e-Proposals' (bids) from interested bidders for 'Selection of Airline Operators under the Regional Connectivity Scheme-UDAN in 4th round of bidding'," the note read. **That time, the ministry had issued "Letter of Awards" for 73 proposals involving 235 regional connectivity and water aerodrome routes which were received under the third round of RCS-Udan.**

03/12/19 IANS/Sify

Rajkot: Aircraft manufacturing is all set to take wings in Gujarat. Dhanji Patel (Makson), promoter of Makson Group and known as India's 'candy man', has finalized plans to venture into making microlight aircraft near his home town Surendranagar.

The businessman-turned politician, who makes confectioneries for several top global chocolate brands, has recently tied up with companies in Serbia for technical support to make two-seater and four-seater aircraft along with air ambulances. Patel was elected as BJP MLA from Wadhwan constituency in 2017 election.

Confirming his plan, Patel told TOI, **"Component manufacturers in Serbia have agreed to lend us technical support. We are confident of getting statutory permissions to set up the unit soon."** While he declined to reveal the quantum of investment, Patel said that the engines and blades for the aircraft will be imported while all other parts will be sourced locally. **"We are sending a team to Serbia to get trained in manufacturing. The aircraft will be assembled in the Surendranagar unit," he added.**

Asked why he is venturing into aviation sector, Patel said that it was his dream for the past 25 years to make aircraft in his home state.

"This aircraft don't need runway to take-off or landing but only a simple airstrip which can be made in farms also. But it requires a policy decision. If 3-4 airstrips are made near Ahmedabad, reaching here can be made very fast. Such aircraft are very common in foreign countries," he added.

Initially, Patel plans to manufacture 25 such aircraft in the first year. The cost of one such aircraft is around Rs 70 lakh, according to him.

03/12/19 Nimesh Khakhariya/Times of India

New Delhi: The IndiGo has informed that an airbus A320 P&W fitted Neo aircraft, which was heading from Chennai to Hyderabad, suffered engine problem on Monday and was withdrawn from service for necessary maintenance.

According to the airlines, the pilot reported vibration on the engine during flight.

"IndiGo flight 6E-6215 was operating from Chennai-Hyderabad on Dec 2, 2019. Post arrival at Hyderabad, the pilot reported a momentary engine vibration caution during flight," it said.

After the aircraft landed safely in Hyderabad, it was withdrawn from operations and necessary maintenance checks are in progress, it said.

In October, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued instructions to IndiGo to ensure that it does not operate any Neo plane which has two Pratt and Whitney 1100 series engines that have been used for over 3000 hours each.

03/12/19 ANI/India Today

New Delhi: It was an unusual situation for a passenger when he was asked to fly a Delhi-bound IndiGo flight on Saturday after the pilot who was supposed to fly the aircraft threw up his hands during take-off in Pune due to a thick blanket of fog and low visibility.

The passenger agreed to take the pilot's seat as the plane was operating as per the schedule and the airline had completed the boarding process of all the passengers. It is pertinent to mention here that the passenger was not a usual passenger but an off-duty pilot.

The IndiGo flight 6E-6571 from Pune to Delhi was finally flown by the passenger who was trained to land in low visibility (CAT IIIB). After landing at Delhi airport, he headed to the national capital as a passenger.

"After receiving information that visibility has drastically dropped in the capital and to fly the aircraft a CAT-IIIB compliance pilot is required, a passenger, who was also an IndiGo captain and was trained

to fly in low visibility was requested to take the charge of the flight operation to avoid any delay and inconvenience to passengers" news agency ANI quoted a source as saying.

After landing at Delhi airport, the captain had to go through all the mandatory examinations including Breath Analyser (BA) test. As per the source, he flew the plane without the uniform.

The airline also confirmed the incident, and said, **"Yesterday (November 30) morning Delhi Airport had implemented low visibility procedure. All incoming aircraft were expected to have Cat III crew. On flight 6E- 6571(PNQ-DEL), the assigned captain was not Cat IIIB cleared. Rather than delay the flight so weather in Delhi could improve."**

The Director-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said that it would look into the matter and take action as per regulations if needed.

03/12/19 TimesNow

New Delhi: **Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri has clarified that he did not give any assurance regarding employment of Jet Airways' employees during Parliament proceedings in July.** The minister was replying to an allegation by AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh who on November 27 said in the House that Puri had "assured" Parliament "no employee of Jet Airways would lose job and would be adjusted in other companies".

According to Singh, the minister had also said that a website having details of the employees was being launched for that purpose.

Jet Airways had shut down its operations on April 17 as it had run out of funds.

On December 2, Puri wrote a letter to Singh, stating, "I am writing with reference to the issue of employment of Jet Airways staff raised by you in Rajya Sabha on November 27, 2019."

Citing his statement given on the floor of the House in July, Puri in the letter said, "At no point during the proceedings of the House in July 2019 did I give an assurance. In fact, I stated categorically that the government couldn't assume responsibility for business failure of a private enterprise."

"Therefore, your statement in the House on November 27, 2019, is not only devoid of fact, but is deliberately misleading," he added.

According to airline's employee consortium, Jet Airways still has more than 5,000 employees on its rolls.

Puri, in his letter to Singh on Monday, said, **"I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you that the NCLT process (for the airline) is ongoing."**

03/12/19 PTI/Times of India

New Delhi : **Representatives from the Asia Pacific, Middle Eastern and African countries are participating in a three-day workshop organised by Airports Authority of India (AAI) to promote awareness of the integration of Airport Collaborative Decision Making (A-CDM) and Air Traffic Flow Management (ATFM).**

The inauguration of the workshop was attended by J.P Alex, ED (ATM), Shane Sumner, Punya Raj Shakya and Hiroyuki Takata, representatives from International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), Keziah Achieng Ogotu, Eastern and Southern African (ESAF) Office and other senior AAI officials at Indian Aviation Academy, New Delhi.

This workshop, which started on Monday, will provide a platform to share the experiences of all ICAO APAC states in the implementation of ACDM and ATFM and discuss implementation-related issues.

The C-ATFM network consists of a Central Command Centre (CCC) at Delhi and Flow Management Positions (FMPs) established at civil and defence airports, to optimise the utilization of air traffic system capacity.

ACDM system, on the other hand, enables collaborative decision making by involving all stakeholders operating at an airport to achieve optimum utilization of Airports, Airspace, and Aircraft at Indian Airports.

02/12/19 ANI/New kerala

New Delhi/Mumbai: For those who haven't booked well in advance, international travel this winter will hit your pocket hard. Fares on key routes to the US and Europe are up almost threefold in some instances with the grounding of Jet Airways, which was the second-largest international carrier from India until it stopped flying in April. The lack of bargains has prompted some to give up holiday travel plans.

Average fare data for December show a big jump from last year for tickets booked close to the date of travel. A Delhi-Paris ticket is priced at Rs 1,14,642 against Rs 40,020 in December last year, according to travel aggregator ixigo.

A Mumbai-London ticket will cost Rs 1,23,021 against Rs 53,041. Fares will stay high until carriers fill the gap created by Jet's exit, analysts said.

"Demand for winter travel is fairly high and are pushing the fares north. While the domestic capacity has bounced back, it will still take some time to replace Jet's nonstop capacity to Europe and US," said ixigo CEO Alok Bajpai. "While international airlines have recently announced an increase in flight frequencies to Europe for the winter, till the capacity gap is fully restored, airfares will continue to remain high for some time."

The India-London sector could see new flights, with Vistara and IndiGo possibly starting them next year, but other routes will have to wait. Vistara is also looking at adding flights to New York or San Francisco next year and US-based carriers have also announced plans to increase connectivity to India.

03/12/19 Mihir Mishra/Economic Times

New Delhi: Two men were arrested by customs officials at Amritsar airport for allegedly trying to smuggle in 3.352 kg gold worth Rs 1.30 crore by concealing them as wires in a suitcase, bluetooth speakers and toy cars, according to a statement here on Monday.

Gurpreet Singh and Gurjant Singh arriving from Dubai were intercepted at the airport on Sunday and taken into custody.

Gold weighing 1664.18 gram valued at Rs 64.57 lakh was recovered from Gurpreet and 1688.22 gram valued at Rs 65,50,293 of 24 carat from Gurjant.

02/12/19 IANS/CanIndia

Hyderabad: Hyderabad police's Commissioner's Task Force, Central Zone Team on Monday busted a job fraudster, who indulged in cheating the innocent unemployed youth with false promises of providing jobs from "Airport Authority of India" at Shamshabad.

He would lure the unsuspecting youth with a promise of providing them jobs as Drivers, HDS and UDS employees and Mechanical employees and would collect thousands of rupees from them on the pretext of this fraud.

The accused has been identified as Mohd. Jameel Ahmed, aged 34 years and is an ex-employee of Shamshabad Airport.

03/12/19 India Today

New Delhi: **A Port Blair-bound passenger has been apprehended by CISF personnel at the Delhi airport for allegedly carrying seven live cartridges in his baggage**, a security official said on Tuesday. The bullets were detected during the baggage search of Ashu Varshney at the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) around 4 am, the official said.

"Seven live bullets of 8 mm calibre were recovered from the bag of the passenger. He was scheduled to take an Air India flight to Port Blair," he said.

The traveller was not allowed to board the flight and handed over to the Delhi Police as he could not produce any document for possessing the ammunition.

03/12/19 PTI/Outlook

New Delhi: **IndiGo has told its pilots to stop pushing engines on its new Airbus jets to the limit when the planes are climbing, after India's aviation regulator said the practice may have contributed to turbines failing in the air.**

All the budget airline's A320neo aircraft now use a lower thrust setting following take off, according to a spokesperson from IndiGo, which has suffered 13 engine shutdowns during ascents in 2019. The decision was taken "in order to make every possible effort to minimise exposure of engines," she wrote in an e-mail, adding that manufacturer Pratt & Whitney stated there was no evidence of a connection between climbing procedure and engine incidents.

Ascending at maximum power can help burn less fuel as it takes less time to reach cruising altitude. IndiGo made the switch only after India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation found in a probe — first reported by Bloomberg on Friday — that full-thrust climbs could wear down the engines and probably contributed to the shutdowns, people familiar with the matter said earlier.

In November, IndiGo instructed pilots of the A320neo-family of jets to use no more than 93% thrust on the Pratt engines until they reach 25,000 feet (7,622m), the people said. They asked not to be identified because the change hadn't been made public.

The airline spokesperson said the change made "hardly any difference" in day-to-day operations, beyond taking two to three minutes longer for aircraft to reach optimum flight level due to lower thrust settings. "Difference in fuel consumption is marginal," she said.

02/12/19 Anurag Kotoky/Business Day

Budget carrier IndiGo has put a cap on its take-off thrust after aviation watchdog scrutiny found issues with only IndiGo's Pratt and Whitney engines. While both IndiGo and GoAir deploy same type of P&W engines, IndiGo flights are susceptible to mid-flight stallings because the airline was found to be using maximum thrust of the engine during take-off in order to save fuel, Bloomberg had earlier reported. However, the airline has now put a limit on take-off thrust, ET Now reported. Revving up the engine to full thrust wears the engine down but saves fuel. On the other hand, Go Air uses an alt-climb approach that applies less thrust, Bloomberg cited sources as saying.

Sor far, IndiGo has reported 13 engine shutdowns following which, DGCA had asked both GoAir and IndiGo to replace their faulty engines. The airlines have been served with a notice demanding that the carriers fix faulty engines before January next year. Aviation regulator had also asked IndiGo to replace A320neo engines and also threatened grounding of an entire fleet if the airline fails to meet the deadline. IndiGo operates about 100 planes which are fitted with Pratt and Whitney engines. Addressing the same, Ronojoy Dutta, CEO, IndiGo had said that the deadline for changing entire fleet is challenging, adding that the airline is still confident that it will be able to meet the earlier deadline

of November 19 to change 23 engines on immediate basis, he had told CNBC TV-18 in an interview. **However, the company later requested for a year long extension on the deadline. DGCA denied the same and added that the previous deadline of 31 January 2020 remains, Bloomberg reported. IndiGo, which is the market leader in domestic aviation, is prevented from adding new flights until the issue is resolved.**

02/12/19 Financial Express

The government is proceeding with utmost caution before putting Air India on the block, after potential buyers baulked at its first attempt to divest a majority stake in the national carrier last year. **“We will release the draft share purchase agreement (SPA) along with Expression of Interest (EoI).** Last time, it was released after the EoI stage. A lot of potential investors raised questions at the pre-bid stage after the EoI was released. We had told them that those issues will be cleared in the draft SPA. So, nobody submitted EoI. Investors should have more transparent information at the very beginning. Through the draft SPA, they could know the details of liabilities including employee costs, their benefits and the dos and don’ts,” a senior finance ministry official said under condition of anonymity. Potential investors will also have access to a virtual data room at the stage of EoI under a confidentiality agreement, where they can raise queries about unclear liabilities. Preparation is taking some time, said the official quoted above. “Ground work is very important. The more preparation we do now, the more time we save later. What matters is closing the deal,” he said. The department of investment and public asset management (DIPAM) needs to first take clearance from the core group of secretaries on disinvestment headed by the cabinet secretary and then from the Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism headed by home minister Amit Shah, before publishing the EoI and draft SPA documents. **To reduce the debt burden on Air India, the government has transferred around Rs. 29,464 crore to Air India Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a special purpose vehicle (SPV) meant to park some of the airline’s debt not backed by any asset, non-core assets and other non-operational assets. “Some more debt will have to be taken out. At present, the negative net worth of Air India is upward of Rs. 30,000 crore. We cannot even start the bidding process which is not meeting minimum investor concerns. In the EoI, the debt amount will be mentioned,” the official said.**

02/12/19 Asit Ranjan Mishra/DealStreetAsia

Mumbai: As many as 11 GoAir flights were delayed on Monday due to operational issues.

A GoAir spokesperson, the delays and cancellations are due to a combination of factors such as **inclement weather, low visibility conditions and runway maintenance in certain parts of the country which further aggravated with flight duty time limitation (FDTL) of the crew.**

The pilots have a limited number of hours to fly in a day according to the DGCA rules. The pilots and crews could end up taking two-three flights depending on the duration of the flight.

According to a source in GoAir, the issues have prevailed over two days in a cascading effect. GoAir has 5000 employees and is operating to 33 destinations as of now, 25 domestic and 8 international and a fleet size of 54 aircraft.

“Even if there is a delay in flight and then the company has to find an alternative pilot and crew which hasn’t crossed the limit, leaving us with no option but to cancel or delay the flights,” the person explained.

“If there is fatigue, the pilot will not be able to fly a safe flight. Even if there is a delay in a flight, the roster is on and thus, if a pilot crosses the set limit, the pilot’s license can be revoked,” the person

added requesting anonymity.

02/12/19 Business Line

In recent years, IndiGo has launched a series of significant steps, making a marked departure from a pure low-cost strategy, long its mainstay and which helped it become India's largest airline. As the airline spreads its wings, the extent of its ambitions is becoming clear.

IndiGo is no longer content being the dominant domestic airline in India. It is steadily positioning itself to become a major player in the international segment as well. The change has not been sudden. Far from it.

The shift — by way of an evolving strategy — has been deliberate. And looking back, one can clearly see a pattern emerge.

IndiGo started as a pure low-cost carrier (LCC). Elements of the LCC model were made popular by Southwest Airlines in the US and then copied the world over.

A raft of LCCs sprung up all over the globe. The disciplined airlines that were devoted to the core principles of the LCC business model thrived. The salient principles of the LCC model are a focus on short-haul sectors, no-frills, point-to-point flights, and low fares delivered via a single fleet and engine type.

Complexity for this model was (and is) akin to a cancer and kept at bay. Genuine LCC airlines utilize their assets to the hilt, with fast turnarounds, minimal ground times and stubborn about stifling costs. Rather than building a network spread across several points, they focus on maximising frequencies, allowing for amortization of fixed costs over a greater spread. They also consistently offer low fares, which are a key determinant of demand, especially in price-sensitive markets such as India.

02/12/19 Satyendra Pandey/CNBC TV18

The government owes crisis-stricken Air India a whopping Rs 797.95 crore as of September 30, 2019 for flights operated for VVIPs, including the president, the prime minister, the vice president and foreign dignitaries, and more than half of it—Rs 458.959 crore—is the amount outstanding for the prime minister's travel.

As per the information provided by Air India in response to a query made under the Right to Information Act, six months earlier, on March 31, 2019, the government owed the national carrier Rs 598.55 crore. Hence there was a whopping increase of close to Rs 200 crore in the amount that the government owes the airline.

In response to an application made by RTI activist Commodore Lokesh Batra (Retd), the Air India informed that total invoice raised for the prime minister's travels was Rs 1,321.41 crore. Of this, bills amounting to Rs 862.45 crore were cleared by the government, leaving Rs 458.959 crore as the outstanding amount.

The president's flights cost a total of Rs 539.35 crore. Of this, the defence ministry, which handles the travel bills of the president, paid Rs 295.40 crore, leaving an outstanding amount of Rs 243.950 crore. The Air India raised a bill of Rs 779.40 crore for flying the vice president, of which Rs 706.69 crore has been paid, and the amount yet to be paid stands at Rs 72.7 crore.

The national carrier is awaiting a payment of Rs 9.674 crore for evacuation flights undertaken by it. Other flights operated by the national carrier generated a billing of Rs 21.57 crore, of which Rs 8.91 crore was paid and Rs 12.656 crore is pending.

02/12/19 Soni Mishra/The Week

As the Centre gears up to invite fresh expressions of interest (EoIs) soon for the sale of its entire stake in debt-ridden Air India, the DIPAM (Department of Investment and Public Asset Management) secretary Tuhin Kanta Pandey told FE that there is sufficient interest among potential buyers.

“There is sufficient interest from investors and the (strategic disinvestment) process of AI is moving in the right direction,” Pandey said.

Sources said AI won't be a distress sale as it is a robust going concern and potential buyers could capitalise on its premium bilateral rights and parking slots across the world to revive its fortunes. Also, the government would take over some more debt of AI and pass on a 'fair' amount of debt and liabilities to the buyer.

On delays in coming out with a fresh EoI for AI, sources said preparations took a lot of time as all the information are being frontloaded this time — along with EoI, DIAPM would share the actual share purchase agreement (SPA) and other information on a real-time basis with bidders — learning from the last year's experience.

In June last year, the government called off the proposed sale of 76% stake in AI after no buyer had shown interest. Probable reasons as analysed by transaction adviser EY for non-receipt of bids last year included the government's decision to retain 24% stake and corresponding rights, high amount of allocated debt and profitability track record.

Sharing of the actual SPA would help investors take long-term view of various liabilities and accordingly plan their funding for the deal. Over the last few months, the DIPAM, aviation ministry and AI management, have been holding a series of meetings to place a well prepared document before buyers.

Even though employees of the national carrier — over 11,000 at last count — are likely to be offered job protection for one year, sources said new owners could find most of the existing staff useful to expand operations to meet higher demand for flights in certain international routes such as India-UK after grounding of Jet Airways.

02/12/19 Prasanta Sahu/Financial Express

New Delhi: A Pratt and Whitney (PW) engine on IndiGo's A320neo aircraft, which was heading from Chennai to Hyderabad on Monday, suffered a snag, according to a source privy to the development. "The A320neo aircraft, which had the call sign 6E-6215, landed safely in Hyderabad. High vibration was observed in the second PW engine post-landing," the source said.

In a statement, IndiGo said, "Flight 6E-6215 was operating from Chennai - Hyderabad on Dec 2. Post arrival at Hyderabad, the pilot reported a momentary engine vibration caution during flight. The aircraft was withdrawn from operations. Necessary maintenance checks are in progress."

The source said the affected PW engine would be replaced.

Aviation regulator DGCA on November 25 had instructed IndiGo to ground an old A320neo family aircraft with an unmodified PW engine for every new A320neo plane added to its fleet to prevent large-scale cancellation of flights from January 31 onwards.

02/12/19 PTI/IndiaTV

Singapore: Vistara, a full-service airline owned by TATA Sons and Singapore Airlines, has signed an extended distribution and IT partnership with Amadeus.

Vistara renews its contract for the full Amadeus Altéa suite that includes inventory, reservation, ticketing and departure control systems.

The airline has also renewed its distribution agreement with Amadeus ensuring worldwide distribution of a full range of the airline's content and fares to Amadeus-connected travel sellers. Vistara chief strategy officer Vinod Kannan commented: "Amadeus (is) a key partner as we recognise the need to grow beyond our home market. At the same time, investment in the best technology will simplify our customers' interactions with us."

Embarking on an expansion project through to 2023, Vistara has placed firm orders worth USD3.1 billion at list prices with Airbus for 13 aircraft from the A320neo family and with Boeing for six 787-9 Dreamliners. Also, the airline is leasing another 37 new A320neo-family aircraft between 2020 and 2023.

Amadeus' global network of travel sellers will have access to a broader range of Vistara's content, including the full range of international, as well as preferred and negotiated fares.

02/12/19 TTR Weekly

It is a case of you win some, you lose some, as seven new airlines have started flying into India this northern winter. However, the net gain is only two airlines, as five international carriers have also exited the Indian market this winter. Despite the collapse of Jet Airways potentially opening opportunities in India, the market is problematic for both local and international airlines.

Exiting the Indian market throughout 2020 are Asiana, Air Manas, Brussels Airlines, Garuda, and Thomas Cook Airlines. Asiana ended its A330 services between Seoul and Delhi in July 2019. Air Manas wrapped up its 737-800 services between Bishkek and Delhi. Brussels Airlines axed its services to Mumbai. Garuda once flew to three Indian destinations but ended its flights to its last destination, Mumbai, in March 2019. And Thomas Cook ... well, we all know what happened with Thomas Cook.

According to a report in CNBC, seven new airlines are up for the challenges of flying into India this winter. The new entrants are Air Tanzania, Arkia Israeli Airlines, Azerbaijan Airlines, LOT Polish Airlines, Nok Air, Scoot Air, and Vietjet Airlines. It is, you may agree, an eclectic mix.

02/12/19 Andrew Curran/Simple Flying

Thiruvananthapuram: Norka Roots, the government agency under the Norka department, has tied up with Air India for free transport of mortal remains of non-resident Keralites (NRKs), who die abroad, in case of lack of financial assistance for the body repatriation from the employer, sponsor or the respective embassy.

An agreement was signed between the CEO of the Norka Roots and Air India executive director (Cargo). The bodies reaching the airports back home will be transported to the house of the deceased via the free emergency ambulance service for NRKs, which was launched by Norka a year ago.

The relatives or friends of NRKs who die abroad can apply for the free service under the scheme, Application forms and more details are available on website www.norkaroots.org, said an official release. More details can be received over toll-free number 18004253939 (from within India) or 00918802012345 (missed call service from abroad).

02/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: The engines on board the first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) being constructed at Kochi have been fired up and the Navy is starting on the next step of basin trials, with expectations that the warship would be ready for operations by 2022.

The long-delayed project, which was to be completed by 2018, is now back on track, with senior

officers saying that the 37,500-tonne aircraft carrier will initially operate MiG 29K fighters and could also feature indigenous combat aircraft.

The carrier, the largest ever warship to be constructed in an Indian yard, is now in its final phase of construction and the Navy could consider operating a limited number of the maritime version of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) once it gets fit for service, said people aware of the matter.

However, an indigenous fighter jet that would meet technical requirements of the Navy is unlikely to be ready for operational duty before 2026, which could put a strain on the fleet of MiG 29K fighter jets that are currently used for the INS Vikramaditya, India's only aircraft carrier.

A key requirement of the Navy is a double engine jet to ensure safety of the crew at sea.

"We have started the engine and hope to get the ship by 2021. It will take a year after that to get it operational.

We plan to start with the MiG 29K fighter jets," a senior official told ET on condition of anonymity.

02/12/19 Manu Pubby/Economic Times

Amritsar: Gold weighing over 3 kg and worth Rs 1.30 crore was seized from two passengers upon their arrival from Dubai at the Shri Guru Ramdas International Airport here on Monday, custom officials said.

Customs Commissioner Dipak Kumar Gupta said the custom staff at the airport intercepted two passengers, residents of Tarn Taran and Patiala districts of Punjab.

During checking, it was found that the gold which they were trying to smuggle, was concealed in the form of wires and other items.

"The baggage examination revealed that gold in the form of silver colour wires were found concealed behind the metallic strip of the suitcase. Further, gold was found concealed in the small transformer kept in a toy car having 20 pieces of small "E" shape silver colour plates.

Gold was also found concealed inside the small speaker. The customs officers also found six more bracelets in the baggage and on suspicion, cut open them only to find 48 small pieces of metallic objects resembling gold which was recovered beneath red and blue stone fitted in the bracelets," Gupta said.

02/12/19 PTI/Outlook

A Boeing 787 Dreamliner (in pic) belonging to Saudi Arabian Airlines (Saudia) made an emergency landing at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) on Sunday. Flight SV 3835D, which had taken off from the Kuala Lumpur Airport and was en route Medina, had developed a **snag mid-air**, following which the flight was diverted to KIA. One of the engines of the aircraft is said to have failed mid-air. "Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing 737 Dreamliner travelling from Kuala Lumpur to Medina (SV 3835 D) was diverted to Bengaluru Airport due to a technical issue.

It landed without incident at 0908 hours and all passengers and crew are reported safe," said a BIAL spokesperson. Following the emergency landing, 'Aircraft on Ground' was declared at the airport. ARFF (Air Force Fire Fighting) teams were deployed and the passengers and crew on board the Dreamliner were safely made to alight and were taken to the terminal. Operations at KIA were affected for a few minutes and there was a backlog of flights. This is second time in a month that a flight underwent an engine failure near KIA. In November, a GoAir aircraft, with 180 passengers on board, veered off the runway into a grass pitch while attempting to land at KIA.

Due to poor visibility, the aircraft was asked to go-around. One of the engines of the A320 aircraft stalled when the flight initiated the go-around process.

01/12/19 Bangalore Mirror

Chandigarh: As the aviation sector grapples with progressive increase in air traffic and deteriorating weather conditions in the subcontinent, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) in collaboration with the India Meteorological Department (IMD) is installing Integrated Automated Weather Observing System (IAWOS) at 18 airports across the country to meet operational exigencies and mitigate economic losses.

The IAWOS provides continuous, real-time information and reports on weather conditions prevailing over an airport and disseminates weather data through a computer-generated voice message which is broadcast via radio to pilots in the vicinity of an airport. These messages are also available over a telephone dial-up service or ground data link. It consists of various meteorological sensors, data acquisition systems, processing and transmitting units.

According to AAI sources, the proposal of setting up the IAWOS has been approved and the tendering process would be initiated shortly for executing the project, with preference being given to made-in-India products.

Weather plays an important role in aviation operations and factors like visibility, wind speed, fog, rain, thunder and cloud cover being critical during landing and take-off. Visibility is a serious issue during winter months, particularly in north India and north-east India due to fog.

01/12/19 Vijay Mohan/Tribune

An Afghan man arrested by the Indian custom police at the Indira Ghandi International Airport in New Delhi while he was smuggling 1kg gold by hiding it in his shoes, Indian media reported on Sunday.

The passenger was intercepted after his arrival from Mazar-e-Sharif, on Friday, The Times of India reported.

A detailed body and baggage search of passenger resulted in the recovery of 997 grams gold worthing around 50,000.00 US Dollars which was concealed inside his shoes, the custom department has said in a statement.

The accused passenger has admitted after an investigation that he had smuggled 400 grams gold in his last visit to India.

The passenger has been arrested and the gold is seized by the police, but the identity of him has not be revealed.

01/12/19 Khaama Press

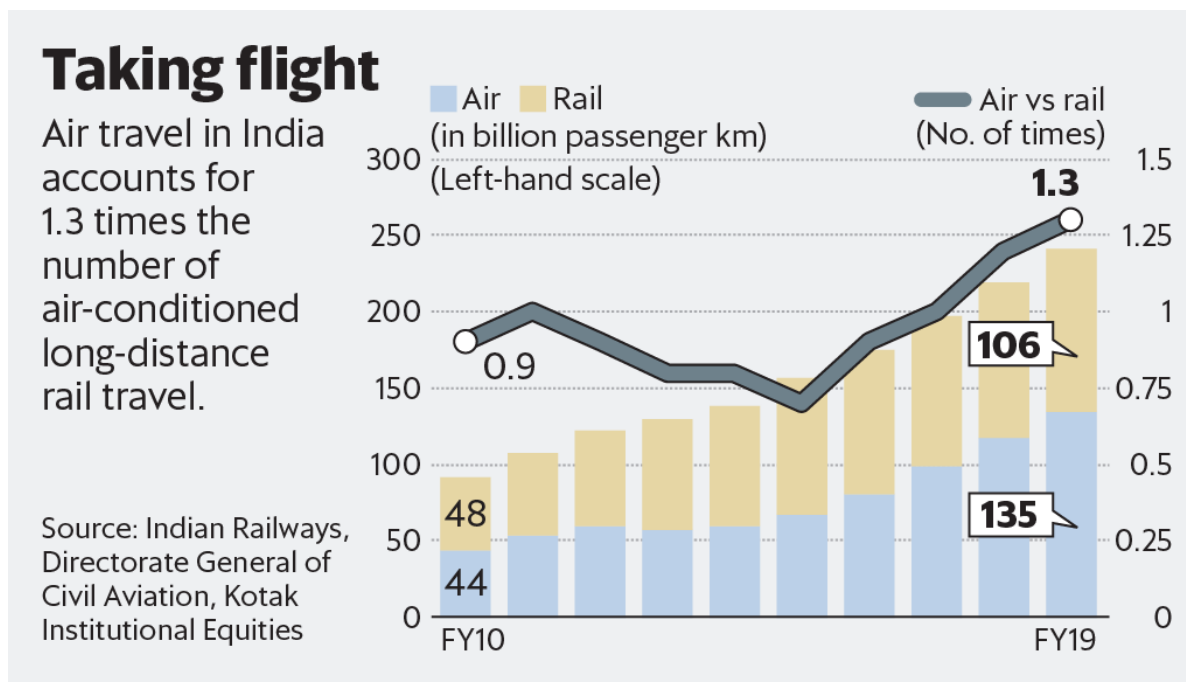
New Delhi: A pilot trained to land aircraft in low visibility (CAT III B), travelling as a passenger on IndiGo's Pune-Delhi flight on Saturday morning, was asked to operate the flight as IGI Airport was reporting a declining visibility trend due to smog. The captain had operated a flight to Pune on Friday and was headed back home to Delhi as a passenger on 6E-6571.

"After boarding was complete, we realised Delhi is experiencing a declining visibility trend. From mid-December on Delhi-bound early morning and evening flights, we roster both CAT III B-trained pilots. However, the low declining trend was witnessed suddenly on Saturday morning catching everyone completely unaware," said IndiGo sources.

The captain, originally rostered for 6E-6571, was not CAT III B-trained, while the co-pilot was. The airline realised that a CAT III B-trained captain was travelling as passenger on the flight. "We took internal clearances as per procedures to be adopted to avoid passenger inconvenience or may be a cancellation in such situations. **The captain, who was travelling as passenger (and was not in**

uniform), was rostered to operate this flight after taking all required clearances," said sources.
 30/11/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Recently, Zurich Airports International AG won the bid to develop and operate the Jewar airport near Delhi for 40 years. The Swiss firm's bid to share revenue of ₹400.97 per passenger with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) beat competition by a wide margin. But keen participation by leading business firms such as Adani Enterprises Ltd, Delhi International Airports (GMR Group) and international firm Anchorage Infrastructure Investments Ltd shows the rising private sector interest in airports.



Naveen Kumar Saini/Mint

This follows the recent deal by Tata group with Singapore's sovereign wealth fund GIC Pte Ltd and Hong Kong-based SSG Capital Management Ltd to buy 44.44% in GMR Airports Ltd.

Indeed, when the government kicked off airport privatization in early 2000s, the two main developers—GVK Power and Infrastructure Ltd and GMR Infrastructure Ltd—suffered losses along the learning curve. Now, the 4 top airports of Delhi, Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru are churning operating profits.

The time is ripe now to ramp up private investment in airports. India is expected to emerge as the third-largest aviation market by 2025 with annual passenger departures of about 300 million, over threefold jump since 2017.

"The falling cost of air travel and realization of benefits of time saved is being seen in the marked preference for air travel in the long-distance air-conditioned travel market," says Kotak Institutional Equities Ltd in a report. Analysts also reckon that private firms and AAI airports are seeing a meaningful drop in debt levels. In comparison, the National Highways Authority of India's rising leverage and liquidity crunch in the economy, along with land acquisition problems, has led to hiccups in the road sector. Highway developers have been burdened with rising debt due to land acquisition issues, project delays and cost overruns.

That's not all. **Airport revenue is a confluence of air traffic, and aeronautical and non-aeronautical revenue. "The growing number of air travellers and their spending at the airports are helping improve cost structure of air travel,"** explains the Kotak report. Such frills include revenue from retail (duty-free and otherwise), advertising, food and beverage, and parking, not seen in other infra sectors.

AAI must take advantage of these tailwinds to lure investors. "It must address external connectivity such as linkages to the city and providing unencumbered site for development to the concessionaire (developer) at the earliest," says Jagannarayan Padmanabhan, practice leader and director (transport and logistics) at Crisil Infrastructure Advisory.

In fact, given the cash flow and sustained earnings traction possible in airports, companies such as GMR are planning to hive off the airports segment to unlock value for shareholders. If successful, this will reinforce confidence in private sector participation in airports.

Live Mint Aviation 06/12/2019

Mi-171A2 helicopter was certified in India and Colombia. It allows Russian Helicopters, part of Rostec State Corporation, to start exporting the latest modification of the multirole civilian **helicopter**.

The Civil Aviation Department of India confirmed that the standard design of Mi-171A2 complied with Indian civilian aviation requirements (CAR). The Indian Directorate General of Civil Aviation had previously approved a type certificate for VK-2500PS-03 helicopter turboshaft engine installed in Mi-171A2 helicopters for JSC "UEC-Klimov."

The validated Mi-171A2 type certificate was also issued by the Special Administrative Unit of Civil Aeronautics of Colombia (UAEAC). The decision of the Colombian authorities gives Russian Helicopters an opportunity to supply machines of this type to Colombia.

"Mi-171A2 is the latest modification of Mi-8/17, the most common twin-engine helicopter in the world. Companies from Rostec's Aviation Cluster made a great effort to receive an opportunity to operate the machines in India and Colombia: the type certificates were confirmed for the helicopter itself and for UEC's VK-2500PS-03 engines that the helicopters were equipped with. Mi-171A2 has the A type certificate of the Federal Air Transport Agency of Russia. It means that the highest flight safety requirements for civilian helicopters are met," said Director General of Russian Helicopters holding company Andrey Boginsky.

The first Mi-171A2 for an Indian customer has already been produced by Ulan-Ude Aviation Plant. It was demonstrated to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Eastern Economic Forum. It is planned to validate the Mi-171A2 type certificate in China, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Peru and other countries.

01/12/19 AviationPros

New Delhi: Flughafen Zurich winning the bid for the proposed Jewar airport in Uttar Pradesh is likely to bring a paradigm change to India's airport sector, threatening monopolies for the first time, said sector experts.

If the project is completed on time, Jewar airport — projected as the second such facility for the National Capital Region — will compete with GMR-owned Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) from 2023 to attract air traffic. This could be a threat to IGIA's monopoly on air traffic in north India, which has made it the crown jewel in GMR Infrastructure's airport portfolio.

Zurich Airport offered a revenue share of Rs 400.97 per passenger. GMR, which had the right of

first refusal (RoFR), offered Rs 351 per passenger. It would have had the chance to match the highest bid only if its offer was within 10 per cent of it.

“GMR’s bid was aggressive and rightly so, as they were desperate to win it because of a lot of synergy it offers with IGIA. That Zurich was able to outbid GMR, which had a RoFR, is something extraordinary. It doesn’t happen every day,” said an executive of a financial institution which invests in infrastructure projects.

Jewar is about 80 km from IGIA.

A six-year-long moratorium over concession fees to be paid to the government may give a buffer to Zurich. But, in the long term, completion of the project on time will determine its ability to compete with Delhi, said experts.

“The winning bid marks the re-entry of Zurich Airport in India. What is defining is the entry of an experienced player in a market that has GMR, GVK, Fairfax, and Adani. Their bidding number underscores their understanding of the Indian market and how important they think it is,” said Sidharath Kapur, former executive director at GMR Airports.

Capacity crunch in Delhi and Zurich’s ability to offer better services may make Jewar airport popular among India’s airlines that are frantically expanding their fleets but facing infrastructure crunch at major airports.

Delhi Airport is currently undergoing a Rs 9,000-crore upgrade to increase its capacity from 70 million fliers per annum to 100 million by 2022.

“After 2022, when Delhi finishes its fourth runway and terminal expansion, it has limited capability to expand capacity. Naturally, airlines and customers will have no other option,” said an airline executive.

30/11/19 Arindam Majumder/Business Standard

New Delhi: Soon to complete 5 years of operations, Tata Group-Singapore Airlines backed passenger carrier - Vistara - plans to operate beyond the subcontinent and southeast Asia. The airline which commenced commercial operations on January 9, 2015 has indicated plans to commence services to Europe and Japan by 2020-21.

In an interview to IANS, Vistara's Chief Executive Leslie Thng said India's only full-service private carrier will be able to add destinations with up to 11 hours of flying time as it inducts the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft by early next year.

"The 787-9 aircraft that we induct early next year will be able to fly to destinations with up to 11 hours of flying time. The choice of our existing codeshare partners may be indicative of the long-haul destinations that we are looking to add to our network," he said.

The full-service carrier has established interline agreements with 26 airlines around the world and entered codeshare agreements with Singapore Airlines, SilkAir, British Airways, Japan Airlines and United Airlines. At present, the airline operates to Singapore, Dubai, Bangkok and Colombo. It is said to soon commence operations to Kathmandu.

Late last month, Vistara, a joint venture of Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, commenced services to Colombo from Mumbai. It had inaugurated international operations in August 2019 with Singapore as its first destination, followed by Dubai and Bangkok.

Lately, the airline has expanded its fleet and network by close to 50 per cent. Besides, the number of aircraft deployed by the airline is set to almost double by the end of the current financial year in comparison to the fleet size it had at the start of FY19-20.

30/11/19 IANS/New Indian Express

Bareilly: Union Minister State (Independent Charge) for Labour and Employment **Santosh Gangwar here on Saturday claimed that helicopter service from Bareilly to Uttarakhand religious places would start soon.**

Mr Gangwar said that he will meet Union Aviation minister in Delhi and will write to UP CM Yogi Adityanath and Uttarakhand CM TS Rawat for the same. He said that some technical glitches were there to resolve to start air service from Bareilly airport.

07/12/19 UNI

The upcoming International Airport at the Jewar township of Greater Noida is expected to be a growth catalyst for the region, say industry analysts, as the project is expected to create urban infrastructure and generate jobs.

Accordingly, experts have predicted the project to not only boost the aviation industry but also a host of other sectors such as real estate, hospitality, tourism, transportation and construction.

"Jewar Airport will provide an impetus to the real estate sector in Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna Expressway," JLL India's Chief Economist Research and REIS Samantak Das told IANS. "Real estate developers and corporates will be encouraged to invest in commercial real estate in the region. It would lead to a jump in investment and infrastructural development leading to rising in demand for both residential and commercial properties."

Additionally, Das pointed out that apart from residential, commercial and residential segment, the demand for logistics and warehousing sector is expected to get a boost by development of Jewar Airport. "It will also lead to growth in manufacturing and exports sector. Since the region is also near to tourist attractions such as Taj Mahal, Mathura, the tourism sector will also be positively impacted by the development of the airport," Das said.

ANAROCK Property Consultants' Vice Chairman Santhosh Kumar, said: « As far as job creation and value addition is concerned, the project will definitely give a major boost in the future. »

08/12/19 IANS/Economic Times

New Delhi: Airlines need to refund the full value of passenger's ticket and compensation equal to 400% of booked one-way basic fare plus fuel charge in case the airlines denies boarding to him or her despite having confirmed ticket and if the passenger does not opt for an alternative flight provided by the airlines. The total amount of compensation can be claimed for this is maximum Rs 20,000, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri told Lok Sabha in reply to a question.

Members of Parliament Devji M. Patel and Ram Shankar Katheria sought to know what protection passengers have when despite having confirmed ticket airlines deny them seat in the flight due to overbooking. There is a common grievance against the airlines that they book tickets more than the number of seats available to make profit.

In October this year, a total of 1,102 passengers were denied boarding by various airlines. Out of these, the highest was by Air India (822), followed by Spicejet (226), IndiGo (35), Air Asia (14) and least was by Vistara (5). The total amount compensated by the airlines to all these passengers was over Rs 47 lakhs.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) receives details of passengers affected due to denied boarding from the scheduled domestic airlines as part of monthly submission of traffic date. In order to ensure appropriate protection of the air travellers in case of denied boarding, the DGCA had in February this year issued specific guidelines under Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) for refunds. However, DGCA, primarily being a safety the regulatory body does not regulate the

commercial activities of the airlines, the minister added.

08/12/19 Asian Age

New Delhi: Despite having a thriving aviation industry that has 625 aircraft flying passengers daily, India has only four domestic Aircraft Maintenance Organisations (AMO) with the capacity and requisite certifications for base maintenance, repair and overhaul needs (MRO) of the planes, out of the 48 approved by director general of civil aviation (DGCA).

The government says that an estimated 85%-90% of the base MRO is supplied by overseas AMOs.

“Given the technical and skill base and in recognition of the potential for attaining self sufficiency in MRO sector, attracting business from foreign airlines, and developing India as a hub for MRO services, various interventions have been made from time to time under National Civil Aviation Policy 2016. **There has been renewed focus on development of engine shops, component and airframe MRO in India by aviation original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and logistics services providers,**” minister of state for civil aviation, Hardeep Singh Puri told Lok Sabha recently in response to a question.

He added that **several steps have been taken for creation of a congenial atmosphere for broad-based development of MRO in the country.** These include, exemption of customs duty on tools and tool kits; reduced GST on various spare parts, accessories and consumables; relaxed restriction on utilization of duty-free parts from one year to three years.

In addition, 100% foreign direct investment is permitted via automatic route for MRO along with liberalised policy for borrowing and lending in foreign currency and Rupees. There are also prescribed modalities for concessional temporary imports of spare parts by foreign airlines for repair of their aircraft in transit, the minister added.

08/12/19 Asian Age

India has the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world and is now considering making it easier for foreign airlines to invest in Indian airlines.

According to an unnamed source in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government, tourism website Skift which is Nordic for “shift” or “transformation” is reporting that India is considering amending a foreign ownership rule when it comes to domestic airlines.

When you look at airline ownership rules in India it is a little misleading as the country allows 100% ownership in India-based airlines providing they have government approval.

The truth, however, is that foreign investment in Indian airlines is limited to a 49% stake like Singapore Airlines stake in Tata-owned Vistara.

The reason why the Indian government wants to relax its rule on foreign airline ownership is that it cannot find a private buyer for state-owned Air India.

Debt-laden and overstaffed with around 12,000 employees who enjoy incredible benefits like medical insurance for their entire families for life, if Air India was a horse it would have been shot already.

On a domestic level as a full-service airline, it cannot compete with the private sector and the airfares offered by the likes of Spicejet and IndiGo.

Internationally it has to compete with Gulf carriers Emirates, Qatar, and Etihad who quite honestly provide a better service with more connections to the India subcontinent than Air India could ever manage.

The only thing Air India has that could be enticing to a foreign buyer is coveted landing slots at some of the world’s major airports.

Seriously though, if the Indian government wants to get the loss-making airline of its books it would have to allow the buyer to fire tenured staff and start over with a new business model. This, of course, is something that airline workers' unions would never allow, as working for Air India is considered as being a job for life.

08/12/19 Mark Finlay/Simple Flying

Dubai: An Air India Express flight (IX814) departed from Dubai Airport Terminal 2 to Mangalore, India at 2:10pm today after it was been delayed by nearly 12 hours.

The flight to Mangalore was scheduled to depart at 11.40 pm on Saturday, however, passengers were stranded at the airport till 4am Sunday morning. Most passengers were families, and some were traveling on emergencies.

Meanwhile, Air India Express has cited technical difficulties for the unexpected delays. The passengers were requested to check-in again at 11 am Sunday.

Ayaz Syed, a Dubai resident told Khaleej Times, "We completed check-in by 9.30pm. After waiting till 1am, we were provided food and snacks from a fastfood restaurant in the airport. We were stranded at the airport till 4am. The airline did offer hotel stay to those interested, but we chose to go back home." Passengers said they were also offered taxi fares to and from the airport.

Another Dubai resident Syed Hassan was on his way to Mangalore to attend his daughter's wedding. "I booked the ticket three months ago. The wedding itself is on 21st, but I have a lot of work to complete and have a planned trip to Mumbai on the 11th," lamented Hassan.

He added, "We began our long wait at 9 pm, and at 2 am we were told about the technical difficulties. We had to exit the airport through immigration all over again."

08/12/19 Dhanusha Gokulan/Khaleej Times

The Centre has agreed to include three airports in Odisha under the regional connectivity scheme, officials said on Saturday. The decision in this regard was taken at a meeting between Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola and Odishas Chief Secretary A K Tripathy on Friday.

"Discussion held yesterday with the visiting civil aviation secretary. **Jeypore, Rourkela and Utkela** will go again to the next round of Udan scheme. There is inbuilt subsidy support to the state government along with Centre in this initiative," Tripathy said, adding that this will help enhance the connectivity in the remote and regional areas of the state.

The three airports would be developed under the UDAN -4 (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) scheme, officials said. Kharola said, "We had a meeting regarding steps to be taken for improvement of air connectivity in Odisha. We are in touch with the state government and whatever issues are there, will be resolved."

07/12/19 PTI/Economic Times

Srinagar: Flight operations at Srinagar airport remained suspended for the second consecutive day as all flights were cancelled on Sunday due to dense fog causing poor visibility in the Kashmir valley, officials said.

"All flights at Srinagar airport were cancelled on Sunday and no flight operations took place," an airport authority of India (AAI) official said.

The official said 28 flights, including those for the armed forces, were scheduled at the airport for Sunday.

"The airlines took the decision to cancel all flights because of very poor visibility caused by heavy fog

in the valley," the official said.

Flight operations have been severely affected at the airport for the past three days.

08/12/19 PTI/Times of India

In a major step to boost connectivity in the northeastern states, the Centre has invited bids from companies to provide air services to 6 underserved and 24 unserved airports under the fourth round of the regional air connectivity (RCS) Udan scheme.

"The ministry has also recognised one water aerodrome location that is up for bidding in the region," the Ministry of Civil Aviation said in a statement. "The move will not only boost tourism but will also transform economic situation of the region," the statement added.

Besides, the ministry under Udan 4 scheme is providing additional Viability Gap Funding (VGF) of around 25 per cent extra to airlines.

As per the statement, the Centre will bear 90 per cent of VGF and remaining 10 per cent will be borne by state governments.

"MoCA aims to operationalise 1,000 routes and more than 100 airports in the next five years. This would be achieved by focusing on operationalising routes in priority areas," the ministry said.

"AAI would focus on developing the no-frills airports in the future and routes connecting such airports would be prioritised for the award of VGF. The market would be incentivised to develop short-haul routes only, providing connectivity to nearby airports."

07/12/19 Prashant Singh/ZeeBiz

Daniel Bircher, chief executive of Zurich Airport Asia, spoke to ET from Kuala Lumpur on the Zurich Airport AG's successful bid for the Noida International Airport. Edited excerpts:

How do you see the prospects of business and traffic at the Noida International Airport?

We see a potential growth of air travel beyond 200 million passengers for the metropolitan Area of Delhi by the end of the concession period in 2060. For Noida International Airport, we see a development range between 50 and 80 million passengers until the end of the concession. The airport is located strategically between Delhi and Agra, close to the fastdeveloping Noida and Greater Noida area.

For success of Noida airport, road connectivity has to be executed as planned and the Metro must be extended to the airport. Apart from the land connectivity, the treatment of Noida International airport as equivalent to IGI Delhi International Airport is extremely important — thus traffic rights and airspace management are two important aspects that need to be applied for the whole NCR area.

If we look at large metropolitan areas worldwide, we see that second airports become viable once the primary airport reaches a level of about 35 million passengers. We see Noida International Airport as complementary to IGI Delhi International Airport.

Which aspects of your experience from Zurich Airport do you plan to incorporate in the Noida Airport?

Zurich Airport has been ranked top by the World Travel Award, the Skytrax Award, ACI ASQ Award and the Air Cargo Excellence Award over the past 10 years. We see this as a result of our well-functioning processes and passenger flows, our focus on passenger services, our dedication to have a clean, lean and efficient airport with Swissness. Our investment in Kempegowda international Airport (Bengaluru), Belo Horizonte International Airport and Floripa Airport (Brazil) and Bogota Eldorado

Airport (Colombia) has resulted in excellent customer feedback and satisfaction. **Our aim is to develop and manage an efficient, user-friendly and sustainable Indian airport.** Passengers will see, feel and experience Uttar Pradesh as well as India, be it in its architecture, its service culture and its products and services (food, beverage, retail, entertainment) and by its local operating team.

How realistic are the targets (2023) for construction and start operations at Noida International Airport?

We consider timelines as very ambitious, but they are achievable. The Bengaluru Airport did not take even three years. **We need a couple of approvals to come through from the authorities. Another factor is the land acquisition which we believe isn't complete yet.** We will sit with the Noida International Airport Authority and discuss our project plan to ensure that all the planning and construction steps are thoroughly coordinated with the land acquisition process as well as with the construction of the airport access roads and other enabling works. Zurich Airport has delivered recently two terminals in Brazil in record time; we are used to working with tight timelines.

07/12/19 Aman Sharma/Economic Times

Between May and October this year, over 1,000 passengers were denied boarding by various airlines each month, peaking at 3,834 passengers in June.

During the same period, flight cancellations affected between 15,000 and 48,000 passengers each month, while flight delays of two hours or more affected between 1.2 lakh and 2.5 lakh fliers each month. These data were presented by the Ministry of Civil Aviation in response to two separate questions in Parliament.

According to the Civil Aviation Requirements detailed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, when a passenger denied boarding against their will is not given the option of an alternative flight within one hour, the airline is liable to pay between Rs 10,000 and Rs 20,000 to the passenger depending on the circumstance.

In September and October, when over 2,100 passengers were denied boarding across flights, Air India accounted for 1,400 of them.

The maximum number of passengers affected by flight cancellations during these six months was 48,272 in July, which also accounted for the highest number of passengers affected by delays of two hours or more, at 2.5 lakh.

07/12/19 Indian Express

The West Bengal government will be renovating unused airfields in the state to make them fit for operating light aircraft, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said on Saturday. She said 27 helipads have been constructed at all district headquarters and other important locations.

"Today is International Civil Aviation Day. Our Govt in #Bangla has taken the initiative for renovation of small unused airfields like Balurghat, Malda, Cooch Behar etc. for operationalisation of small aircraft services," Banerjee said in a tweet.

"Helicopter services between Kolkata and Gangasagar, Digha, Malda and Balurghat have been introduced. 27 helipads have been constructed at all district headquarters and other important locations," she added.

07/12/19 PTI/Financial Express

New Delhi: **The ministry of civil aviation (MoCA) recently announced that it is kicking off the fourth phase of the UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) scheme. It aims to improve connectivity to remote and regional areas (like North East regions, hilly states, Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh) besides giving flexibility to airlines in designing their network, promoting short-haul routes, and revising the parameters of VGF (viability gap funding).**

The government subsidises UDAN flight tickets under VGF (for three years) that has been reworked on the basis of flight hours, distance flown, and airport type (priority or non-priority). An airline (that has applied for UDAN) has to sell 50 per cent of seats on a flight from say Gwalior to Kanpur at Rs 2,048 per person.

But what prompted MoCA to launch the fourth edition of UDAN when it is already facing issues with previous three rounds? **In the first three rounds, the ministry awarded 688 routes covering 106 airports and 31 heliports. As on October 31, just about one-third or 232 routes are operational. The remaining 456 routes are yet to be operationalised highlighting the challenges for the scheme.** The ministry has said efforts are being made to operationalise many pending routes in the winter schedule which is between October 2018 and March 2019.

The reason for the poor show of UDAN can be attributed to shutting down of airlines and infrastructure-side issues. **At least two airlines - Jet Airways and Air Odisha - that won routes under UDAN have folded up. Others such as Air Deccan and Zoom Air which had bid for several routes are unable to scale up. SpiceJet, which had bid for two seaplanes proposals under UDAN-3, still has to start those operations.**

Then, there are a few routes where the airports are not ready. For instance, airlines had bid for flights from Solapur (in Maharashtra) but the airport is not yet certified by regulator DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation). **"I think the fourth phase is about rebidding for the routes which have not been operationalised yet,"** says an aviation expert.

The rules under UDAN mandate airlines to commence flights within 180 days of the winning the route (through a bidding process) or within two month from the readiness of airport - whichever is later. A part of the funding for UDAN scheme comes from fund (RGF) which levies Rs 5,000 on each flight departure in the country.

06/12/19 Manu Kaushik/Business Today

Low-cost carrier SpiceJet has grounded four of its pilots over the past week after they failed breath alcohol tests.

Sources said three of them are pilots in command and the other is a first officer.

As per the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's rules, for the first such offence, pilots are grounded for three months. For a second offence, they can be grounded for three years, and for the third, their commercial pilot licence to fly could be suspended.

In an email to all pilots of the carrier, Capt Gurcharan Arora, SpiceJet's chief of flight operations, warned that if pilots continue to test positive in breath analyser tests, the airline could take a "more severe" punitive action. "The fact that there are four events in a span of a week is clearly indicative that some pilots do not understand the gravity or implication of being tested positive for alcohol," read his email.

06/12/19 Satish Nandgaonkar/Mumbai Mirror

Agartala: **In an attempt to boost connectivity of Northeast India, UDAN 4.0 scheme, operated under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, has invited bids for six underserved and 24 unserved airports and airstrips of the northeastern states.**

These include Tripura's Kailashahar, Kamalpur and Khowai Airports, which are lying defunct for decades, and used to be satellite airports of Agartala Airport.

"With focus on connectivity of North eastern region, UDAN 4.0 scheme under the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has invited bids for 6 underserved and 24 unserved airports/airstrips in the North-East states of India. The ministry has also recognized 1 water aerodrome location that is up for bidding in the region," a statement from the ministry read.

"The move will not only boost tourism but will also transform economic situation of the region. Under the UDAN 4.0 scheme, MoCA is also providing additional Viability Gap Funding (VGF) of around 25% to the airlines," it added.

Among unserved airports and airstrips in the region, Arunachal Pradesh has got nine potential spots — Alinya, Along, Daparizo, Mechuka, Tuting, Vijaynagar, Walong, Yinghiong and Ziro, Assam has nine available unserved air transport sites — Chabua, Darrang, Dinjan, Ledo, Misa Mari, Nazira, Sadiya, Sorbhog, Sukerating (Dum Duma), Meghalaya has three sites — Dwara, Shella and Tura, and Tripura has three defunct airports.

Apart from these, there are few underserved airports which are up for bidding. These include Passighat and Tezu airports of Arunachal Pradesh, Jorhat, Rupsi and Tezpur of Assam, and Shillong airport or Umroi in Meghalaya.

06/12/19 Debraj Deb/Indian Express

The national carrier has posted a record net loss of Rs 8,556.35 crore in 2018-19 (April-March) as per provisional figures, government data showed. This is the largest net loss posted by the carrier since the merger of Indian Airlines and Air India.

The information was provided by the minister of state (Independent Charge) in the civil aviation ministry Hardeep Singh Puri in a written reply to Lok Sabha on Thursday.

The airline had posted a net loss after tax of Rs 5,348.18 crore in FY18, Rs 6452.89 crore in FY17, Rs 3836.78 crore in FY16, Rs 5859.91 crore in FY15, Rs 6279.60 crore in FY14, Rs 5490.16 crore in FY13, Rs 7559.74 crore in FY12, Rs 6865.17 crore in FY11, Rs 5552.44 crore in FY10, Rs 5548.26 crore in FY09 and Rs 2226.16 crore in FY08.

In view of the strained balance sheet of the carrier, the government had approved a Rs 30,000-crore turnaround plan in 2012 for the revival of the carrier. Today, the minister told the Lower House that the airline has received an equity infusion of Rs 30,520.21 crore till date from 2011-12 which includes financial support and cash support.

"A total debt amounting to Rs 29,464 crore to be transferred from Air India Ltd to the SPV viz Air India Assets Holding Co Ltd. A cash support of Rs 3,975 crore to Air India, inclusive of Rs 1,630 crore already infused in AI in FY 2018- 19. Provide a government guarantee of Rs 7,600 crore, inclusive of Rs 3,000 crore already provided to Air India in FY 2018-19, to raise new debt for payment of stretched liabilities," Puri said.

06/12/19 CNBC TV18

The Supreme Court has asked the Centre to plan a bigger airport away from the main city of Agra in order to protect the Taj Mahal from the pollution that would be caused by air traffic.

Reportedly, the Centre has put forth a proposal to expand the existing Agra airport.

A bench of Justice B R Gavai, Surya Kant and Chief Justice SA Bobde were united with environmental lawyer MC Mehta in his objection to the expansion of Agra airport, which, he said, would increase the number of aircraft leading to more pollution. On the other hand, senior advocate Ajit Sinha, on behalf of the Airports Authority of India (AAI), said that AAI aims to construct an additional terminal

to serve the air passengers in a better way.

The bench did not see any reason to permit the construction of another terminal, and voiced its opinion by saying that it is better that the Central looks for another site to build a new airport in the city to deal with increased air traffic.

06/12/19 Times Travel

Kolkata: **Work on removing a major obstacle in unhindered aircraft movement is finally set to take off at Kolkata airport with the awarding of contract to extend taxi track F, a taxiway closest to the terminal.** Not only will it provide departing planes a shorter and faster conduit to the runway, it will also enhance safety on the ground by doing away with several hotspots or conflict points that planes have to be cautious about when they taxi for takeoff.

At present, departing planes take taxi track A, the taxiway farthest from the terminal. Since several other taxi tracks used by arriving aircraft intersect with taxi track A, there are potential conflict points that pilots of both departing and arriving planes have to be cautious about.

Also, since taxi track A is close to the secondary runway, movement of aircraft on it is not allowed when the latter is in use. This delays the taxi time for departing planes by nearly twice the usual time, thereby reducing the operational efficiency of the airport by half. While 35 flights can operate every hour when the primary runway is in use, only 15 flights can operate when the secondary runway is operational.

“Work on extension of taxiway F that was planned years ago but has been pending will start soon. The project will take about a year to complete. Once it’s ready, it will save time and aviation fuel, enhance safety and also significantly enhance the operational capability of Kolkata airport when the secondary runway is in use,” Airports Authority of India regional executive director SP Yadav said.

07/12/19 Times of India

Acquisition of GVK Airport Holdings Limited (GVKAHL) by Green Rock B 2014 Limited (Green Rock), National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) and Indo-Infra Inc. (Indo-Infra) [filed on 19th December, 2019]

The notification relates to acquisition of shares of, and control over, GVKAHL (and / or of its affiliates) and through GVKAHL (and / or through its affiliates), control over GVKAHL’s subsidiaries, Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL) and Navi Mumbai International Airport Private Limited (NMIA) by Green Rock, NIIF, and Indo-Infra. Green Rock, a trustee of Green Stone Trust has made certain investments in India and does not carry out any business activities directly in India. NIIF is an alternative investment fund with a focus to provide long-term capital to the country’s infrastructure sector. Indo-Infra is a holding company and part of the PSP group. PSP is a Canadian Crown corporation established by the Canadian Parliament under the Public Sector Pension Investment Board Act. GVKAHL is an affiliate of the GVK group. GVKAHL is a holding company for MIAL and its subsidiaries and joint ventures, and is also intended to engage in the business of developing infrastructure facilities and investing in companies directly or indirectly developing, operating and managing airports.

Summary of the Proposed Combination is available at :

https://www.cci.gov.in/sites/default/files/notice_order_summary_doc/C-2019-12-713.pdf

NEW DELHI: Roadshows in Singapore and London, held to ascertain investor interest for the debt-laden national carrier Air India, received a lukewarm response from potential bidders, three top government officials aware of the development told ET. However, that's not likely to disrupt the government's privatisation plan schedule.

"The response to the roadshow in Singapore was tepid and it was similar in London, where only a couple of interested parties attended. Definitely, there are concerns about the interest the airline will receive from potential buyers," said one of the three.

Regardless of this, India is likely to finalise initial bidding documents for the carrier by next month. According to the current timeline, New Delhi is likely to issue the Expression of Interest (Eoi) documents after the holiday season to ensure greater participation by foreign buyers, another official told ET.

"We plan to release the Eoi documents **in January**," the official said. Another official maintained that investor interest in the Mumbai roadshow had been more encouraging while the exercise didn't get many inquiries overseas.

"Given the response at these roadshows, there is not much hope of bids coming in for the national carrier. Even on the domestic front, there are not many takers for Air India," said the third government official, who did not want to be named. Air India CMD Ashwani Lohani and aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola didn't respond to queries.

Economic Times 23/12/19

NEW DELHI: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has cracked down on GoAir for pushing pilots and cabin crew to work in excess of stipulated hours, said officials with knowledge of the matter.

"The inquiry is on and innumerable violations have been found of a serious nature. The airline has been asked to fix them," said one of them.

The airline breached Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms by, for instance, making the crew fly for four consecutive nights, said the people cited above, adding that about 40 violations had been pointed out. GoAir didn't respond to queries on the DGCA findings sent on Sunday.

This comes as the carrier has been cancelling flights over the past week. About 18 domestic flights were cancelled on Monday from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata and Patna.

Airlines Face Shortage of Pilots

This was on account of bad weather and protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA).

"A combination of factors such as inclement weather, low visibility and anti-CAA protests in certain parts of the country have disrupted multiple flights across GoAir's network," it said in a statement on the Monday cancellations. **"This led to crew pairing disruptions resulting in cancellation due to flight duty time limitations (FDTL)...** Free cancellation and re-booking options have been offered to

all those affected.”

FDTL guidelines on the working hours of pilots and cabin crew are aimed at maintaining safe operations by ensuring that they aren't fatigued. The airline is said to have flouted time limits prescribed under FDTL by the DGCA, according to the people cited above.

Aviation analysts said the airline and the crew members involved should be penalised.

“FDTL violations are serious because they compromise the safety of airline operations,” said Shakti Lumba, former pilot and head of operations at two Indian carriers. “These rules are made to ensure that the fatigue of the crew does not compromise safety because a fatigued pilot would not be able to fly as efficiently as a non-fatigued pilot, thus compromising safety. The DGCA should take stringent action against both the airline and pilots or cabin crew members involved.”

Turbulence

GoAir breached Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms

For instance, it made the crew fly for four consecutive nights

FDTL violation a safety risk; AI Express 2010 crash was blamed on pilot fatigue

Airline cancelling flights since last week; **cancels 18 flights on Monday**

The infographic features a blue background with white and red text. It includes an icon of a pilot in a red uniform and a red prohibition sign over an airplane icon.

Pilot fatigue has played a role in incidents previously. The Air India Express crash at Mangalore airport in May 2010 that killed 158 people was found to have been caused by an error in judgement on touchdown with pilot fatigue playing a key role.

FDTL stipulates maximum flying hours as well as the number of landings and takeoffs allowed in a day, week or month.

Indian carriers face a shortage of pilots, primarily commanders, which could become severe as they expand to meet growing demand.

According to industry estimates, the country has about 8,000 pilots and will require an additional 17,000 in the next 10 years. Pilots are also in global demand, especially from carriers in China and the Middle East. The pilot shortage has disrupted the operations of various airlines in the country. Economic Times 24/12/19

NEW DELHI: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is likely to extend the deadline for replacement of all old Pratt & Whitney engines on about 100 Indigo Airbus 320 (neos) from

January-end to a later date reducing inconvenience to passengers and delivering a big respite to the airline.

“What we know by now is that it will take more time than envisaged in view of the involvement of various stakeholders and the mobilization time,” DG Arun Kumar told ET on Wednesday.

“We will take a call on the extension of time after assessing the status in the middle of January. We are confident that we will accomplish it in a record time,” he added.

“We are doing our best to ensure the change of unmodified engines with a modified one for the complete fleet,” he added.

The DGCA had asked the airline early November to replace older PW engines in all aircraft by the end of January after a spate of incidents on IndiGo’s Airbus 320 (neos), operated on PW engines.

A deadline extension would mean that IndiGo would be able to complete the engine replacement without having to cancel flights, which would have caused huge inconvenience to the travelling public.

Emails sent to IndiGo seeking details on engine replacement did not elicit any response till the time of going to print.

GoAir also operates Airbus 320 (neos) fitted with PW engines but the aviation regulator did not ask for any change as the fleet size was low.

According to the earlier plan, IndiGo had to change 120 engines scheduled over a period of one year ending December 2020. However, the aviation regulator insisted on an early deadline due to the rising number of incidents.

The regulator had also asked IndiGo and GoAir to replace at least one engine on 29 aircraft operating with both old engines which has been done now.

European safety agency EASA and US safety agency FAA have also issued similar engine replacement orders for Airbus 320 (neos) operating in the country.

“Other agencies also doing and it is a vindication of our stand,” said a DGCA official, who did not want to be identified.

The official added that three airlines in Asia, including in India, are the ones reporting the most number of incidents with Airbus 320 (neos), hence, the onus is on these aviation safety agencies to act and ensure safe operations. “We acted to ensure that travelling public does not suffer any inconvenience,” the official added.

Airbus 320 (neos), fitted with PW engines, are facing a lot of problems leading to IndiGo ordering the next batch of engines from CFM.

Economic Times 20/12/19

New Delhi, Dec 24 (PTI) **Aviation regulator DGCA on Tuesday decided to inspect all Pratt and Whitney (PW) engines which have been used for more than 3000 hours of GoAir's A320neo planes, an official said.**

The decision came after an incident on Monday morning in which an A320neo aircraft of GoAir carrying 132 passengers had to return 10 minutes after take-off from Guwahati airport as its PW engine faced a mid-air snag.

A senior DGCA official said on Tuesday, **"We will be inspecting GoAir planes that have PW engines which have been used for more than 3,000 hours. Post inspection, we will decide on what action has to be taken in this matter."**

As PW engines of IndiGo's A320neo family aircraft's have also been facing similar incidents, **the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on October 28 ordered it to replace 16 PW engines, which have been used for more than 3000 hours, within 15 days.**

Worried about the safety aspect, the DGCA issued further orders to IndiGo on November 1, telling it that all 97 A320neo family aircraft in its fleet must have modified PW engines by January 31 next year "at all costs".

Later, unsatisfied with IndiGo's speed in replacing the unmodified PW engines, the regulator on November 25 instructed it to ground an old A320neo family aircraft with an unmodified PW engine for every new A320neo plane added to its fleet to prevent large-scale cancellation of flights from January 31 onwards.

On December 4, in its presentation to investors and analysts, the airline said that PW engine issues is "likely to have an impact on future capacity".

The A320neo family aircraft, which are powered by PW engines, have been facing frequent on-ground and mid-air glitches since their induction into the IndiGo and GoAir fleets in 2016

Mumbai: Hyderabad-based Turbo Aviation Private Limited is the latest to express interest for acquiring the defunct Jet Airways in the ongoing corporate insolvency resolution process, said three persons in the know.

Ashish Chhawchharia, the appointed resolution professional of Jet Airways, had recently informed the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on December 17 that two entities had shown early interest to invest in the grounded airline.

Turbo Aviation Private Ltd has emerged as one of those entities. Earlier this week, Turbo Aviation Pvt. Ltd had firmed up an investment of about 100 million pounds from a UK based Group. Turbo Aviation had announced its plans to launch a new low-cost airline 'TruStar' by mid 2020.

One of the persons close to the development said "The Indian company reached out to the RP about six days ago. The RP is yet to receive any formal request from it."

Turbo is founded by V. Umesh, who was associated with no frills airliner TruJet initially. When BusinessLine reached out to Umesh, he refused to comment on the same. Another person associated with Turbo said that the company is "Evaluating the possibilities for the same. However, nothing is formulated yet."

The third person said that it was important to verify all the KYC documents, and other proof. "Yes, there has been an early interest, however, we have burnt our fingers with several entities who were unable to present proof of business and deposit money. Hence, it's better not to take this early

interest at face value."

22/12/19 Forum Gandhi/Business Line

The Hinduja group is still open to acquiring defunct Jet Airways, reported Live Mint. The London-based group, the report said, will go forward with the acquisition plan if given protection from legal liabilities.

"The reason we took interest was because government authorities approached us to help in the survival of Jet. Even the banks approached us... With our good relations and contacts in the Middle East and Gulf, we took the initiative to support and help," Gopichand P. Hinduja, co-chairman of the London-based group, was quoted as saying in the report.

The development comes after the group had earlier abandoned its plans to resurrect Jet Airways despite the initial interest. This decision, Ashok Hinduja, chairman of the group's India operations told media was because National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) wasn't giving Hinduja's protection from past problems of the carrier.

23/12/19 CNBC TV18

Mumbai: Jet Airways' resolution professional Ashish Chhawchharia on Sunday invited a second round of expressions of interest (EoI) from new parties after the Committee of Creditors (CoC) voted in favour of calling fresh binding bids.

Mr. Chhawchharia had informed the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Mumbai, of the possibility of a fresh EoI during a hearing on December 19. The tribunal had then directed the CoC to take all aspects into consideration and decide on the fresh EoI process. The December 19 hearing was mainly to provide the Synergy Group of Brazil the opportunity to clarify its stance to submit a binding bid for Jet Airways.

On Sunday, Mr. Chhawchharia invited the second round of EoI under Regulation 36A (1) of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016. **While the last date of the EoI will be January 6, a provisional list of prospective resolution applicants will be declared on January 9.**

After objections to this provisional list are received till January 14, a final list will be issued on January 17. The last date for the submission of the resolution plans is February 8 and the estimated date of submission of the plans to the adjudicating authority for approval is February 28.

23/12/19 Aditya Anand/The Hindu

Kolkata: In the first major fog-related disruption at Kolkata airport, several early morning flights that were to depart or arrive in Kolkata were delayed due to poor visibility. Altogether, 17 flights were affected during the hour-long period when visibility plunged.

Fog is a visible aerosol consisting of tiny water droplets or ice crystals suspended in the air near the earth's surface. It is a low-lying cloud and is heavily influenced by nearby bodies of water, topography and wind conditions.

Fog forms when the difference between air temperature and dew point is less than 2.5. Fog begins to form when water vapour condenses into tiny liquid water droplets that are suspended in the air.

"The factors at the airport on Sunday perfectly suited the conditions for fog formation," said a meteorological department official.

The dew point is the temperature to which air must be cooled to become saturated with water

vapour.

IndiGo Airlines that operates over 110 flights a day from the city was the worst hit with seven flights delayed by 30-60 minutes. Three flights each of Air India and SpiceJet and two GoAir flights were also delayed by the fog.

Two incoming flights had to be diverted. A GoAir flight from Singapore was diverted to Nagpur while a Biman Bangladesh flight returned to Dhaka due to the poor weather condition in Kolkata.

After the commissioning of the advanced version of instrument landing system (ILS) last year, pilots trained in CAT III-B operations and flights equipped with requisite technology can land in visibility as low as 50m. However, lack of experience among a section of pilots to fly in low visibility situations means that most prefer to operate only when visibility is over 250m.

23/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: No-frills carrier SpiceJet said it has re-started operations of three Boeing 737 freighter aircraft that were grounded earlier this month.

The three planes were grounded due to a “potential defect” after an advice from Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI) that had converted these aircraft into freighters.

In a regulatory filing on Monday, the airline said the three grounded B-737 freighter aircraft shall return to operations effective **December 23, 2019** basis the resolution provided by IAI.

SpiceJet has four freighter planes that operate on domestic as well as international routes. Out of them, three were converted by IAI. The budget carrier has a fleet of 118 planes, including the freighters.

In a regulatory filing on Monday, the airline said the three grounded B-737 freighter aircraft shall return to operations effective December 23, 2019 basis the resolution provided by IAI.

23/12/19 PTI/Business Line

Gaya: Private operator IndiGo will be soon introducing flights on Gaya-Delhi and Gaya-Kolkata-Chennai routes. The airlines has made a formal request to the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for permission to operate the Delhi flight in the evening.

The Gaya-Kolkata- Chennai proposal is said to be in the planning stage. As of now, Gaya airport has facilities for a single shift eight-hour operation. The evening slot demanded by the airlines will mean that if approved, the airport will have to operate in two shifts. Earlier, the IndiGo wanted a slot between 1 to 2 in the afternoon. The request was denied as the airport is overworked during that period.

According to AAI sources, the private airliner wants the flight to be scheduled for departure from Delhi between 6.30 -7.00 pm and the return flight between 8.30 -9.00 the same evening. If everything goes as per schedule, the operation will begin on February 5, 2020. Pre-operation formalities and paperwork is being done.

Airport director Dilip Kumar said that the CISF has already sanctioned additional forces for two shifts. The director hoped that deputation of additional forces by the CISF will be soon made.

Altogether 160 CISF personnel of different ranks are deployed at the airport. An additional of about 100 personnel are required for two shift operation. Sources also say that the AAI needs another 25 officials including those skilled in Air Traffic Control (ATC), communication navigation and fire-fighting etc for a two shift operation. Regular personnel to man these important positions are required and

this cannot be outsourced, said an AAI official.

23/12/19 Abdul Qadir/Times of India

Bhubaneswar: The Veer Surendra Sai (VSS) Airport at Jharsuguda will require around 178 more acres of land for expansion. The additional patch of land will be used for the installation of approach light and navigational equipment.

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) had raised the issue during a meeting called by civil aviation secretary P S Kharola here recently. **The AAI had said that a survey will be conducted soon and the actual requirement of the land will be intimated to the state government. After the survey, necessary permission will be accorded for the installation of the approach light and navigational equipment.** Now the airport is spread over 1027 acres of land, an official communication said. **The VSS airport became operational in September last year after Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the facility in Jharsuguda, the industrial western Odisha town, which is now connected by air with the state and national capital.** It was built at a cost of Rs 210 crore, of which Rs 75 crore was contributed by the state government.

The AAI has said that of the total land allotted to it by the state government, about 119 acres of land is yet to be transferred in its name. **In August, the VSS airport had upgraded its air navigation services by installing a doppler very high-frequency omni range (DVOR) technology. The new aids now help the air traffic control (ATC) share information with the aircraft to define air traffic control routes.**

23/12/19 Times of India

Visakhapatnam: Indigo airlines is going to operate a new flight 6E 7281/7282 and 6E 7283/7284 in Chennai - Visakhapatnam - Hyderabad - Visakhapatnam – Chennai route from December 23.

Members of Andhra Pradesh Air Travellers' Association (APATA) said that there is a huge demand for flights in this sector. Initially, when the time slots were submitted for the operation of the Indigo flight, naval authorities had not approved it even though DGCA had given the approval. APATA members then urged the state government to intervene and resolve the issue of denial of peak-hour slots. They were then asked to look into other time slots. Since the slots were not approved by the Navy, a new schedule with new timings was submitted by Indigo, which was later approved.

O Naresh Kumar, vice-president of APATA said, "With the introduction of the new flight, the number of flights will go up to 78."

23/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: Flyers, who have booked GoAir flight tickets, must take note that the no-frills airline has cancelled 18 domestic flights on Monday i.e December 23 citing non-availability of adequate cockpit crew and aircraft. Cancelled flights were originally scheduled from Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Goa, Jammu, Srinagar, Patna and Indore. The airline was facing dual issues pertaining to crew and aircraft problem, as per a PTI report.

GoAir, however, has released a statement saying the disruption in flight operations was due to protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and issues related to the duty norms of the operating crew. However, the airline has not specified the number of cancelled flights on Monday.

The airline has witnessed issues pertaining to engine glitches, particularly in its A320 Neo aircraft. This has bearing on the availability of some of such planes for flight operations, the PTI report said. Several factors like low visibility, inclement weather, anti-CAA protests in certain parts of India have resulted in disruptions of flight operations. Flight duty time limitations (FDTL) of the crew aggravated the situation, a GoAir spokesperson was quoted as saying by PTI.

While flyers complained that sudden cancellations of their flights have caused inconvenience, the

airline stated that all possible steps have been taken to minimise the inconvenience caused to the passengers, PTI reported. Go Air has stated that it is offering free cancellation and re-booking options all the affected flyers to minimise the inconvenience, the GoAir spokesperson told PTI.

23/12/19 Debjit Sinha/Financial Express

Kolkata: West Bengal Minister and state president of Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind Siddiqullah Chowdhury on Sunday said Home Minister Amit Shah will not be allowed out of the airport whenever he visits the city, if the Citizenship Amendment Act is not immediately withdrawn.

Mr Chowdhury said the contentious law is against humanity.

"We may not allow him (Shah) to step out of the city airport if necessary. We may gather one lakh people there to stop him," he said at a Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind rally against the CAA.

Reacting to his remarks, BJP's West Bengal unit chief Dilip Ghosh told PTI that Mr Chowdhury has made such "provocative comments" in the past, too, with the "tacit support of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee."

"How can a state minister issue such a threat? If they (Shah, PM Narendra Modi) are stopped from moving around in the city, then imagine the situation of others who don't share its (Trinamool Congress) views? Stop playing with fire," Mr Ghosh said.

The state's library service minister claimed that Jamiat-Ulema-e-Hind's movement would be democratic and peaceful.

22/12/19 PTI/NDTV

New Delhi: The number of snag-prone Pratt & Whitney (PW) engines that IndiGo needs to change in just over a month has risen from 120 to over 130 now, adding to the woes of the airline. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will now next month decide on giving the airline to more time given the volume of engine replacement.

"Originally, the number of PW engines that required to be replaced on IndiGo Airbus A320 Neos was 120. After intense boroscopic and piston seal examination, the number now will be more than 130," DGCA chief Arun Kumar said. **Any IndiGo A320/321 Neo with an unmodified PW will not be allowed to fly from February 1, 2020, although the regulator may extend the date.**

IndiGo recently said the regulatory requirement to have only modified - and hopefully less snag-prone - PW engines on all its Airbus A320/21 Neos by January 31, 2020, is "likely to have an impact on future capacity".

Regarding the DGCA directive to have only modified PW engines on all its Neos by January-end, the presentation says, the airline had said it is "in talks with manufacturer (PW) for additional modified engines". And on the "ground a Neo with unmodified PW engine for each new or leased Neo with modified engines" order, it says: **"We are working with manufacturers PW and Airbus to get sufficient spare engines to mitigate the risk," while admitting the issue is "likely to have an impact on future capacity.** Expect a year-on-year capacity increase of 15%-20% in Q4 FY20 and 22-23% in FY20".

22/12/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

New Delhi: Following the early onset of fog on Friday (Dec 20) and significant flight disruption caused by that, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has asked airlines to increase the window of low visibility operations to and from fog-ridden Delhi Airport. Airlines need to mandatorily roster pilots trained for CAT IIIB landing and low visibility take off (LVTO) at IGI Airport

for 13 hours daily between 9 pm and 10 am from December 10 to February 10. “We have directed airlines to constantly monitor weather and increase this window of rostering pilots trained to operate in fog to and fro Delhi when there is a declining visibility trend by planning early,” DGCA chief Arun Kumar said.

Following Friday’s experience, airlines have accordingly been further advised to “increase fog period requirement from as far as possible to before 9 pm and constantly monitor weather and coordinate with other agencies when a reducing visibility trend is shown.”

22/12/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

The future of Air India, the state owned carrier, is uncertain, to say the least. The government has indicated that it will have to be closed down if it cannot be privatized through strategic disinvestment by end-March when the current financial year ends.

An initial attempt to sell 49 per cent drew a blank as did a subsequent attempt to sell 76 per cent. But with Jet Airways having failed to find a buyer so far and the escalating economic slowdown affecting business prospects for all, this may be perhaps the worst possible time to get rid of a large non-profitable government owned airline one of whose chief weaknesses is too many staff.

Despite the fact that privatization may save a good number of jobs and government promise of an acceptable package to serve the interests of all the employees along with privatization, Air India unions are making a last ditch attempt to stop privatization. And they have not hesitated to call the organization a “jewel”. So it is necessary to repeat some of the by-now ancient arguments in favour of privatization.

The foremost is that the business of government is not to be in business which is best left in private hands. For the private commercial space, the government’s foremost duty is to ensure competition by removing market imperfections and promote the free flow of information so that all stakeholders can take informed decisions.

The government has enough on its hands. Some of its foremost tasks is to ensure the delivery of public goods like health and education. A role for the government may indeed be needed in areas which tend to be natural monopolies like utilities. In such situations where there is a single service provider, the absence of the disciplining effect of competition can be substituted by government regulation.

23/12/19 Subir Roy/Moneycontrol.com

Zirakpur: Air India trip from Delhi to Chandigarh ended up being canceled on Saturday because of poor weather. Air India trip number 463 flies from Delhi to Chandigarh at around 11 am and hits Chandigarh at 12.10 pm. In addition, IndiGo's flight quantity 495 arrived two . 5 hours and Vistara's flight quantity 667 arrived couple of hours later. The airport's professional stated that due to poor weather at various other programs, the time of flights to and from Chandigarh will be impacted.

Chandigarh-Kullu canceled from January 3

Air India has actually chose to terminate the Chandigarh-Kullu trip from January 3 onwards due to poor weather. This trip would be canceled from January 3 to January 26. Confirming this, Chandigarh Air India place supervisor MR Jindal stated that guests can terminate their particular tickets on the internet and from the City Booking Office, Chandigarh.

22/12/19 OBN

Kolkata: In the first major fog-related disruption at Kolkata airport, several early morning flights that were to depart or arrive in Kolkata were delayed due to poor visibility. Altogether 15 flights were affected during the hour-long period when visibility plunged.

Fog is a visible aerosol consisting of tiny water droplets or ice crystals suspended in the air near the earth's surface. It is a low-lying cloud and is heavily influenced by nearby bodies of water, topography, and wind conditions.

Fog forms when the difference between air temperature and dew point is less than 2.5. Fog begins to form when water vapor condenses into tiny liquid water droplets that are suspended in the air. "The factors at the airport on Saturday perfectly suited the conditions for fog formation," said a meteorological department official.

IndiGo Airlines that operates over 110 flights a day from the city was the worst hit with seven flights delayed by 30-60 minutes. Three flights each of Air India and SpiceJet and two GoAir flights were also delayed by the fog

Two incoming flights had to be diverted. A GoAir flight from Singapore was diverted to Nagpur while a Biman Bangladesh flight returned to Dhaka due to the poor weather condition in Kolkata.

After the commissioning of the advanced version of instrument landing system (ILS) last year, pilots trained in CAT III-B operations and flights equipped with requisite technology can land in visibility as low as 50m. However, lack of experience among a section of pilots to fly in low visibility situations means that most prefer to operate only when visibility is over 250m.

22/12/19 Tamaghna Banerjee/Times of India

Coimbatore: Gold bars weighing about 7 kgs and valued at Rs 2.74 crore was seized from two people who arrived here from a Gulf nation on Sunday, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) said.

Based on specific intelligence on gold smuggling, DRI officials intercepted two people belonging to Sivagangai district, who arrived at the airport here from Sharjah.

During examination, they found gold bars coated with mercury concealed inside portable air coolers in their luggage, Deputy Director of DRI, G Satish said. The duo was arrested, he said.

22/12/19 Free Press Journal

Chennai: What tumbled out of Mohamed Mohideen's bags at Chennai airport on Sunday could well have made Customs officers mistake the passenger from Bangkok for a Santa Claus out to deliver goodies to a zoologist. Tucked away in his stroller bag were a dozen tailed kangaroo rats, three prairie dogs, five blue iguana lizards and a red squirrel.

Based on a tip that some endangered species were being smuggled from Bangkok, officials waited for the "suspicious passenger on board a Thai Airways flight", and Mohideen, 28, happened to catch their attention for his nervousness and unusual body language as soon as he landed. At the exit, just when Mohideen was carting away his animal kingdom, customs officers flagged him down.

"He was evasive when we asked him about the purpose of his visit abroad," said an officer. "We searched his stroller bag and found eight plastic containers and a small cardboard box. The containers were marked as chocolates, gift items and personal clothing." Inside the containers were species of rodents and reptiles. **Mohideen told the officers that a stranger had given him the bag outside Bangkok airport with instructions to hand it over outside Chennai airport to an unknown person who would identify him by his photograph.**

Mohideen was made to wait outside the airport, the officers observing him from strategic points.

When nobody came for more than 20 minutes, **he was detained. He was later let off because these**

species are not listed under the Wildlife Protection Act or CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). "It is not a cognizable offence, but the man will be asked pay a penalty," said a customs officer.

23/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: Air carrier SpiceJet on Sunday issued a clarification after BJP MP Pragya Thakur filed a complaint against private airline SpiceJet for allegedly denying the seat she had booked during a Delhi-Bhopal flight.

SpiceJet, in its clarification, said Pragya Thakur was not allowed to sit on the pre-allotted seat as rules do not allow a "passenger on wheelchair" to be seated in the emergency row due to safety reasons.

"SpiceJet had the privilege to have Pragya Thakur on board SpiceJet flight SG 2498 (Delhi-Bhopal) on December 21. She had pre-booked seat 1A and had come to the airport in her own wheelchair. The Delhi-Bhopal flight is operated by Bombardier Q400 aircraft (78 seats). On this aircraft, the first row is the emergency row seat and is not allocated to passengers on the wheelchairs," the statement by SpiceJet read.

It went on to add, "As Pragya Thakur had come with her own wheelchair and had not booked through the airline, the staff wasn't aware of the fact that she was a wheelchair passenger. She was requested by the crew to shift to 2 A/B (non-emergency row) due to safety reasons, but she refused. The duty manager and other staff also requested her to move to another seat. She asked for the safety instruction document wherein the exit door policy is mentioned and the same was shown to her to provide clarity."

According to the statement, this had led to a delay in the operation of the flight and after persuasion from the crew and co-passengers the Bhopal MP had "agreed to change her seat from 1A to 2B" after which the flight took off as planned.

The statement ended with the expression of regret over the inconvenience caused to the BJP leader but also added that passenger safety is a major concern for SpiceJet.

Pragya Thakur had on Saturday filed a complaint with the Bhopal Airport Director alleging that she was not allotted the seat that she had booked in the Spicejet flight and the conduct of the airline crew with her was not right.

22/12/19 ANI/NDTV

Chennai: Passengers may have to brave delays while flying to Delhi and a few cities in the north as protests against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) continue to hit flight schedules.

Airlines have begun advising their crew stationed in Delhi on traffic restrictions due to the protests planned on Sunday. Poor weather condition in Delhi and Kolkata on Saturday morning also added to the delays. IndiGo has tweeted on the traffic diversion by the Delhi traffic police on Sunday.

On Friday and Saturday, flights from Delhi suffered delays as crew could not reach the airport on time. As planes are used on multiple routes, the disruption in Delhi is affecting schedules in other airports as well. On Friday, passengers of an IndiGo airlines Delhi-Chennai flight were stranded at the Delhi airport after the 8.45pm flight was rescheduled a few times and finally left at 5.30am the next day.

22/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: **Faced with a daunting task of sustaining the cash-strapped national carrier Air India, Ashwani Lohani, its Chairman cum Managing Director, believes that the company still has the potential to be turned around into a profit-making body with some transformational reforms.**

Speaking at the second edition of the Build India Conclave organised by ITV Network, Lohani said the state-owned airline faced stiff challenge from the private sector, yet it has to be sustained till it is sold out.

"It has to survive till it is sold out...currently the Air India is under Rs 20,000 crore debt but still it can be made into a profit-making body. At present we have some constraints but there is a tremendous potential for improvement," Lohani said.

He said the drop in air fares was the biggest challenge that the aviation sector faced at the moment. Noting that while the demand and supply in the aviation sector was a constant rise, the drop in ticket prices pose a grave challenge for the airline companies. **"The aviation sector faces the highest competition in ticketing but at the same time the business is low on margin.** The prices of tickets on several routes have only reduced in the last two decades and hence making it difficult for airlines to sustain," he said.

Lohani said with the growth of middle class, there has been a tremendous rise in demand in the aviation sector as people tend to shift from road and rail transport to the air travel. "With the UDAN scheme, new airports are coming up in tier-2 and tier-3 cities. The number of active airports is going up," he said.

21/12/19 Rakesh Ranjan/Sunday Guardian Live

Amritsar: **Custom officials here have foiled a bid by two Gujrati passengers including a lady to smuggle gold into India in rubber form** (gold mixed with melted synthetic rubber).

Stating that this was first incident of its kind wherein gold was detected in rubber form, commissioner customs, **Amritsar Dipak Kumar Gupta informed that custom officials recovered around 660 grams of gold from two passengers who had arrived at Amritsar International Airport from Dubai via SpiceJet flight number SG56 on Saturday.**

Dipak informed that custom officials apprehended two passengers including Hari Jethani, 66, who was found hiding gold in rubber form in her innerware which was wrapped in blue adhesive tape while the male accompanying her, Mayur Rohia was found hiding gold in his rectum which was also covered with an adhesive tape adding that further investigations were under progress.

21/12/19 Yudhvira Rana/Times of India

Passengers flying with GoAir airlines on Saturday had a disappointing day after a morning flight had to return following a bird hit, while another three flights had to be cancelled due to operational issues. A morning flight bound to Delhi took off at 10.55 am, but had to return mid-air after a bird hit.

The flight landed safely and all the passengers on board had to vacate. Pankaj Doval, one of the passengers tweeted around 11.30 am, highlighting the incident. GoAir spokesperson said, "The flight returned to Pune following a bird-hit. After it turned back, the aircraft landed safely at Pune airport. It is now being inspected and rectified by GoAir engineering team."

The spokesperson added that alternate flight arrangements were being made to accommodate the passengers to their destination. "GoAir regrets the inconvenience caused to its passengers," the person added. Meanwhile, Airport Authority of India (AAI), Pune informed the passengers that three other flights, two bound for Delhi and one to Kolkata were cancelled due to operational reasons. Pune-Delhi flights that were scheduled to take off at 9.05 pm and 1.20 am, respectively and Pune-

Kolkata flight that was scheduled to take off at 10.25 pm were cancelled.

21/12/19 Himanshu Nitnaware/Pune Mirror

Mumbai: The government has given a Rs 500-crore guarantee to cash-starved Air India which will help it secure fresh funds for operational requirements, a senior airline official said.

Striving to keep afloat due to liquidity issues, the loss-making carrier had last week sought Rs 2,400 crore guarantee from the government for raising funds to mainly meet its operational requirements.

"The government has extended Rs 500 crore guarantee to Air India. It was provided the airline on Wednesday," the official told PTI.

The sovereign guarantee will help the airline secure some funds, a part of which has already been drawn, he said adding, "Air India is already in discussions with the banks."

The amount of Rs 2,400 crore is part of the Rs 7,600-crore guarantee that was to be provided to the airline in the current fiscal.

Air India's net loss in 2018-19 is provisionally estimated to be Rs 8,556.35 crore.

Last month, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri informed Parliament that Air India will have to shut business if it is not privatised.

21/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

New Delhi: Amid bone-chilling cold conditions in north India, forty-six flights were diverted due to dense fog at Delhi airport till December 20 midnight. Earlier yesterday, twelve flights had to be diverted due to minimum visibility at the runway at Delhi airport till 8:30 pm.

The flight operations at the airport were also affected due to bad weather, while some flights were impacted due to crew operational limitations.

On Friday, over 750 flights were delayed, 19 cancelled and five were diverted due to the dense fog.

"Approximately 320 departures and around 440 arrivals were delayed due to fog enveloping the airport on Friday morning," a senior airport official said.

The official further said that while landings and takeoffs continue at Delhi airports, flights that are not CAT III A compliant may get affected. He further urged the passengers to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information.

21/12/19 Times Now News

Though the year-on-year passenger growth of 11.2 per cent for airlines in November was the highest since December 2018, it is unlikely to boost their yields calculated as the average fare per passenger per kilometre. The traffic growth was boosted by low fares and higher induction of capacity in the past few months by SpiceJet and IndiGo Airlines. According to analysts, the 14-day prior to booking date window for the industry shows that airfares on heavy-traffic destinations such as Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru and Chennai fell by 8-21 per cent in November year on year. Hence, airlines are not expected to show any meaningful growth in their yields for the December 2019 quarter.

November is historically a quarter of strong demand for airlines due to tourist season in various parts of the country. Airlines usually raise prices during the period. But, the current season is an exception since airlines have maintained affordable fares. This shows **the airlines are focusing on securing more passengers to utilise the fresh seat capacity.** According to the domestic brokerage Axis Capital,

in the first two weeks of December, fares on the said key routes fell by 4-14 per cent year on year.
20/12/19 Rajesh Naidu/Economic Times

In November, Zurich Airport International (ZAI) won the bid for constructing the airport at Jewar, Uttar Pradesh, in the National Capital Region (NCR). In India, Mumbai is the first city that will have two airports. Regarding Delhi's second airport, some questions linger.

Will Delhi have enough passengers for both airports so as to not 'cannibalise' each other's? The existing Delhi GMR airport has handled 48.2 million, 57.7 million, 65.69 million and about 70 million passengers (domestic and international together) in 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19 respectively, resulting in a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 16.74%.

Given this trend, Delhi GMR airport would reach its maximum capacity latest by 2021-22. The additional Terminals 4, 5 and 6, which would be exclusively allotted for international traffic, are expected to be completed by 2030. This would take the passenger handling capacity of Delhi GMR to 100 million.

With the contract already awarded for constructing Jewar airport, the first phase, with a capacity of 12 million passengers, is expected to be commissioned by 2023-24 and the second, third and final phases, with a capacity of 30 million, 50million and 70 million passengers, in 2031-32, 2036-37 and 2040-41 respectively. The 170 million passengers capacity of these two airports in Delhi-NCR together should be fully utilised in the ensuing decades.

But is it right on Gol's part to decide the winning bid based only on the revenue share per passenger offered? ZAI won the bid by offering a revenue share of Rs 400.97, the highest — followed by GMR's Rs 351— for the second airport. However, as per contractual terms, Delhi GMR airport has been sharing 45.9% of the gross revenue with Gol, which works out to Rs 342 per passenger (46% revenue share on revenue of Rs 52 billion and traffic of 70 million passengers) in 2018-19. When GMR reaches its maximum passenger capacity of 100 million passengers, it would be probably sharing 30% more than Rs 342, that is Rs 488.

Given this, ZAI quoted well within the limits. **Moreover, this modification of revenue-sharing in terms of passengers handled, removes the challenges of assessing revenue underreporting and manoeuvres to minimise payout to Gol.**

In the case of Mumbai's two airports, both were won by GVK by bidding. In Delhi's case, the existing airport is operated by GMR, and the new Jewar airport will be operated by ZAI. Given this, how much of a level playing field will be provided to GMR, an Indian player, against ZAI, an international one? Competition between airports can also be on the services provided within airports. The strength of competition between airports also depends on how good a substitute the new airport is. Delhi GMR airport handled 78 air traffic movements an hour against 80 of Zurich Airport (both have three runways) in 2018-19. Delhi handled 70 million passengers against Zurich's 31million.

Both organisations have a rich experience in airport construction and operation, and the question of one having an upper hand over the other is not true. However, the new airport can give Delhi airport serious competition. How Gol and the Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (Aera) react to, or influence, the emerging market dynamics is of great interest.

How will Gol ensure that traffic will be apportioned between the two airports depending on their capacity? There is more than enough traffic for both players to get their share, depending on how they augment their capacity to handle passengers to their maximum capacity. Gol should ensure a level playing field by providing multi-lane roads, metro, speed rail and last-mile connectivity projects to both airports, and leave it to the airport operators how they make use of these facilities.

When the civil aviation ministry decided to develop Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Kochi airports in the mid-2010s on a public-private partnership (PPP) model, it broke the Airports Authority of India's (AAI) monopoly. Coupled with an open sky policy, the PPP airports brought a breath of fresh air to airport services, and facilitated the CAGR of 12.72% of air passenger traffic between 2005-06 and 2018-19.

This first set of reforms in airport infrastructure development in India created opportunities for investment not just in airports but also in ancillary sectors related to fuel, cargo, ground handling, commercial businesses, parking, etc. However, most of the airports operated by AAI offer services that have remained subpar.

India may not be able to sustain its double-digit air passenger growth rate if the second wave of reforms in airport infrastructure is not taken up in earnest. **By awarding the brownfield development of airports in Ahmedabad, Thiruvananthapuram, Lucknow, Mangaluru, Jaipur and Guwahati on PPP by bidding in 2018-19, GoI initiated the second wave of reforms.**

The entry of an international player in the construction of airport in the national capital not only brings competitive spirit to excel in the aviation business, but it also brings in foreign investment, improved revenue for the government, decongestion at existing airports and choice to passengers and airlines.

Economic Times of India 26/12/2019

Siliguri: Mystery shrouds the death of a flight attendant whose body was found hanging at a PG facility in Gurgaon on Wednesday.

The deceased has been identified as Sarmistha Sarkar (23), a resident of Bharat Nagar in ward 24 of Siliguri Municipal Corporation. She had recently shifted to a guesthouse in DLF Phase 3.

The PG facility's owner was booked for abetment to suicide after Sarmistha's father lodged a police complaint against Amrendra Singh, who he alleged was harassing his daughter.

A friend of Sarmistha's (name withheld on request), who is also her neighbour, said: "She had told her mom a week back that she was not liking the place and had complained about the house owner. She wanted to return home. But her mother said she had just joined the job and should not think of leaving the place. She probably had some love affair problem, too."

Sarmistha had started her career as a flight attendant with Air Asia in Bengaluru in 2016. "She did her schooling from St John's School in Siliguri and her graduation from North Bengal St Xavier's College. Then, she did an aviation course from a private institute in Siliguri," the friend said.

Sarmistha's latest job was with SpiceJet in Delhi.

20/12/19 Roshan Gupta/Times of India

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has decided to hold a meeting with CEOs of major airlines here to discuss about Odisha's aviation potential.

The direction in this regard was issued by Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri after getting a letter from Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who sought operation of more international flights from the state.

"Taking note of the letter of Hon'ble CM, @Naveen_Odisha ji, HMCA @HardeepSPuri has directed Ministry officials to convene a meeting of CEOs of major airlines at Bhubaneswar at the earliest to discuss and harness opportunities offered by the potentiality of the state," the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) tweeted on Thursday.

"In line with ministry's approach of ensuring optimum connectivity in each and every state, steps are being taken for Odisha as well," the MoCA said in another tweet.

On Wednesday, Patnaik wrote a letter to the Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and invited him as well as the CEOs of major airlines for an exposure trip to Odisha.

"I would like to invite you personally to visit the state of Odisha along with officers of Civil Aviation Ministry and the CEOs of major airlines," Patnaik wrote to Puri.

"Looking forward to hosting you and your team in Bhubaneswar soon," he added.

Noting that the state will get an opportunity to present, in detail, the potential of the state and explain the viability of Bhubaneswar as a favoured international destination, Patnaik, in his letter, had said that the state government will provide necessary support for developing the infrastructure for aviation.

20/12/19 Republic

New Delhi: In a move unheard of, in a while, in the aviation sector, private carrier IndiGo on Thursday cancelled its evening flight to Bhubaneswar and 18 other destinations as the airline crew failed to report for duty on time.

Flight no 6E 5035, which was scheduled to leave Delhi at 4.15 pm for Bhubaneswar, was cancelled as a fallout of the late arrival of the crew at the IGI airport.

According to a source in Delhi International Airport Limited, 19 IndiGo flights have been cancelled in all. Other airlines have also rescheduling their services.

The crew got stuck in traffic snarls while heading for the airport from Gurugram. Unlike other airlines, most IndiGo crew stay put in Gurugram, the source added.

Delhi police had imposed traffic restrictions since Thursday morning in the NCR in view of anti CAA protests. The worst hit has been the Delhi-Jaipur section of NH, which passes through Gurugram.

19/12/19 Odisha Bytes

New Delhi: Alleging that airlines jack up ticket prices by 3-5 times during weekends and festive season, air travelers group Air Passengers Association of India (APAI) has written to Prime Minister's Office (PMO) for reining in the carriers.

"A passenger has to spend an exorbitant amount (3-5 times of the normal fare) for booking tickets during weekend and festivities," the APAI has said in its letter to the PMO. It added that in case of any unforeseen emergency in which there is a sudden travel required, apart from mental agony, a person has to suffer the consequences of booking ticket at over-priced (7-8 times of normal) fares. The passengers' association has noted "glaring disparities" in various charges bundled with the ticket price and demanded standardisation of such levies.

It said that airlines are charging various levies such as convenience fee, processing fee, RCS fee, Spice Assurance, surcharges etc without giving any clarity for charging the same to the passenger.

"This is creating considerable doubts on the genuineness of the charges which are borne by the passengers," APAI founder and national President D. Sudhakara Reddy said. The association cited the example of Air Asia levying Rs 100 as surcharge on Delhi-Mumbai sector and SpiceJet imposing Spice Assurance Fee and RCS fee and sought clarity over its authorisation by aviation authorities.

20/12/19 Sentinel

Air India and Emirates account for 36 per cent of market share of India-US air traffic and their dominance has come under challenge with US airlines launching new services to India.

United launched a daily San Francisco-Delhi flight earlier in the month and Delta will begin its New York - Mumbai service next week offering customers more non stop travel options "This is a good time for Delta to be in Indian market," said airline's sales director (Africa, Middle East and India) Jimmy Eichelgruen. He pointed out to the growth in trade and travel between the two countries and said the new flight beginning December 24 will give Indian passengers easy onward connections to 50 cities in the US.

Harvinder Singh, United's country manager in India said launch of new flight will give customers more choice and connections from San Francisco to 40 other destinations across US and Canada.

Over 5.4 million passengers flew between two countries in twelve months ending September.

Emirates is the largest carrier on India-US market with a 20 per cent share of passenger traffic. Air India which operates 33 flights per week has a share of 16 per cent and Qatar Airways takes third place with 11 per cent. Air India's share increased from 11 per cent four years ago to 16 per cent now as it introduced new flights to San Francisco and Washington.

19/12/19 Aneesh Phadnis/Business Standard

Several employee unions of Air India on Friday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi demanding waiver of the airline's loans and run it by a professional management.

Against the backdrop of the government working out the modalities for Air India disinvestment, seven employee groupings have also said the carrier can be turned around.

"Air India has been reporting operational profit for as long as three years. Servicing the loans is a major challenge as the annual outgo is an upwards of Rs 4,000 crore," they said in a letter.

The letter has been signed by representatives of seven unions -- Indian Commercial Pilots' Association, Indian Pilots' Guild, Air Corporations Employees' Union, All India Cabin Crew Association, Air India Employees' Union, Indian Aircraft Technicians' Association and All India Aircraft Engineers' Association.

The unions have urged the government to consider waiving the credits and have the airline run by a professional management.

"We have immense faith, that taking these actions will indeed find Air India in the league of profit making carriers, once again.

"... Air India can be turned around and run successfully in the hands of professionals if the government intends for it to," the letter said.

20/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

New Delhi: In a double whammy for air passengers, over 300 flights were delayed at IGI Airport on Thursday. After dense fog initially wreaked havoc on schedules, the closure of Delhi-Gurgaon border, which saw hundreds of passengers getting stuck in traffic jams while on their way to the airport, made matters worse.

Not just passengers, several airline crew were stuck in the traffic logjam. At least 19 flights were cancelled by IndiGo alone, with a cascading effect of the disruptions being felt till late into the evening, airport sources said. In fact, a source told TOI that none of the flight cancellations were caused by the fog. "At least 16 flights were delayed due to the traffic jam, which meant passengers and crew reached the airport late," he added.

At 8.30 am, Delhi airport tweeted: "There might be some flight disruptions. Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information. Any inconvenience caused is regretted (sic)." As the protests started taking a toll on the traffic on road, it followed up with another tweet two hours later, stating that some flights might get impacted due to "crew operational limitations".

For most trying to reach the airport, it was a slow crawl. One such passenger who missed his flight said he had to wait at IGI for seven hours after having to book another flight. "I missed IndiGo flight at 2:45 pm due to traffic jam. Now I'm sitting at airport. Rebooked flight @11.35 pm. Have to sit at airport for 7 hours. Wastage of time, money and it's too frustrating (sic)," the passenger tweeted.

20/12/19 Times of India

Mumbai: The Customs on Wednesday arrested a 35-yearold man who brought four kg gold ornaments worth Rs1.4 crore from Dubai.

The Air Intelligence Unit of Customs on Wednesday intercepted a passenger identified as Gaurav Dilip More, a resident of JB Nagar, Andheri, who had arrived from Dubai. Officials said More arrived by an Air India flight and walked through the green channel and had crossed the Customs exit gate when officials stopped him on suspicion and asked him to show his luggage. On opening his baggage, officials discovered 29 gold chains, 30 gold bracelets and three hooks totally weighing over 4kg and worth 1.4 crore.

The accused told Customs officials he was just a carrier and had brought the gold jewellery at the behest of a certain Zaffarbhay from south Mumbai. More was booked under the Customs Act and was produced before the court which remanded him to custody till December 22.

20/12/19 Ahmed Ali/Times of India

New Delhi: Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) reported zero visibility at 8 pm on Friday due to very dense fog, which resulted in delaying a number of flights to and from the national capital. At least five flights were diverted and 12 were running late as of 8 pm due to low visibility at one of the country's busiest airports.

"Five flights have been diverted since morning at Delhi Airport due to low visibility and around 12 flights are running late," said an official. According to agency reports citing airport officials, operations at IGIA were affected due to bad weather and while take-offs and landings continued even during the low visibility hours, operational limitations on the crew impacted flight schedules. "Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport reported zero visibility at 2000 hrs today due to very dense fog. It is likely to continue during the next 4-5 hours," India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Friday evening.

20/12/19 Times Now News

Foggy weather delayed several flights in Bengaluru on Friday as poor visibility at the Kempegowda International Airport triggered disruptions.

Flights were delayed due to the poor visibility for an hour this morning. Speaking to indianexpress.com, a Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL) official, said, "on Friday morning due to the poor visibility, flights were delayed from 5.09 am to 6.41 am."

An Air India flight from Ahmedabad scheduled to land at the Bengaluru airport was diverted to Chennai due to the bad weather. The weather delayed the departure of 22 flights to various destinations and arrival of one flight were also affected.

Meanwhile, several passengers who were left clueless took to social media to express their frustration.

20/11/19 Indian Express

The Mumbai Bench of National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Friday approved the extension of the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) for Jet Airways by 90 days.

The extension comes after the CIRP did not make any headway during the mandated 180-day period. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code permits one-time extension up to 90 days by the NCLT in deserving cases.

Ashish Chhawchharia, the Resolution Professional (RP) for the defunct Jet Airways, had filed a miscellaneous application before the two-member Bench on December 13 where he also attached

the minutes of the Committee of Creditors (CoC) meeting.

The CoC passed a resolution with vote share of 90.08 per cent for extension of the CIRP by 90 days. Following the resolution passed by the CoC, the NCLT ordered 90-days extension for completion of CIRP.

During one of the recent hearings, the RP had informed the court that he had received two early interests — one from an Indian entity backed by a UK-based firm, and another from a West Asian Fund — for picking up stake in the company.

As per FDI rules, an overseas airline can hold only up to 49 per cent stake in an Indian airline, with the balance being held by an Indian partner.

South American conglomerate Synergy Group was the only company to place a formal EoI for Jet before the deadline ended in October. Thereafter, Synergy asked for more time to submit a formal bid.

20/12/19 Business Line

Bengaluru: The fate of the ‘struggling’ AirAsia India hangs in the balance with one of its strongest critics, Cyrus Mistry, back at Tata Sons, one of the joint venture partners of the airline.

One of the key issues raised by Mistry in his petition against his ouster as Tata Sons’ chairman in October 2016 was what he claimed were “corporate governance” lapses while floating the airline venture. In case the Supreme Court upholds the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal’s ruling that reinstated him as chairman of Tata Sons, **there is a strong possibility that Mistry may want the board to either stop funding AirAsia India further — which could eventually result in the company having a reduced stake in the airline, something that the scion of the Shapoorji Pallonji group always wanted — or completely exit the airline by selling off Tata Sons’ stake to another corporate house.**

It may be recalled that Mistry, after reluctantly agreeing to the decision made during a board meeting in 2012 to float the airline with AirAsia Berhad, wanted Tata Sons to limit the stake in the venture to 30 per cent. But Tata Sons later raised its stake to 51 per cent after buying one of the partners’ stakes in the carrier.

The airline itself has been facing lot of turbulence ever since it began operations in 2014. It has been hit by regular exits at the CXO-level, while losses have been mounting over a period of time. The latest to leave the company was Sanjay Kumar, COO of the company. A year ago, Amar Ambrol, the CEO of the airline, left the organisation. In 2017, five functional heads resigned after the exit of the high-profile CEO Mittu Chandilya in 2016.

20/12/19 K Giriprakash/Business Line

Yesterday, in the wake of nation-wide protest against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, as many as 24 flights were delayed at Delhi airport, with some airlines waiving cancellation/rescheduling fee for Dec 19 flights to and from Delhi.

While IndiGo had to cancel 19 flights as its crew members could not reach the airport due to traffic jam, Air India had to delay eight flights yesterday.

Referring to this development, IndiGo issued a statement stating, “Due to traffic restrictions and to accommodate passengers reaching late to the airport, we have rescheduled and curtailed our schedule in and out of Delhi by approximately 20 departures.” The statement also mentioned that this accounts for around 10 per cent of its total flights out of the capital.

Several airlines also issued travel advisories for their customers, requesting them to check the traffic

advisory with the airlines before leaving their house.

20/12/19 Times Travel

Mumbai: The NCLT on Thursday directed the Committee of Creditors (CoC) of Jet Airways to expedite their decision on seeking fresh Eols in view of new interest being shown for the grounded airline.

"We direct the committee of creditors to take a decision to float expression of interest (Eols). We direct them to expedite the process," the Mumbai bench of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) said.

The resolution professional (RP) Ashish Chawcharia requested three weeks time to float the Eol. The RP on December 17 had told the tribunal that until now two investors have shown interest in the airline. The tribunal, comprising Bhaskara Pantula Mohan and Rajesh Sharma, also urged the South American Synergy Group, which has submitted an Eol, to expedite its decision on Jet Airways.

The bench told the representative of the Synergy Group, who was present at the hearing, to expedite their due diligence as the 180 days' time period for submission of resolution plan already ended on December 16. "We expect the Synergy Group to do their due diligence at a faster pace. Once you have any positive decision put some earnest money deposit to show, which will show positive intention in reviving the defunct airline," the tribunal said.

19/12/19 PTI/Economic Times

Calcutta: Fliers who had booked tickets of Jet Airways, which was grounded on April 17, and are still waiting for refunds are set to get back a part of their money, sources said.

There is no word yet when the remaining amount will be refunded.

Only those who had booked tickets through travel agents approved by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) will be eligible for refunds.

There is no guarantee yet that those who had bought tickets directly from the airline or agents not approved by IATA would get any refund.

IATA, a trade association of airlines across the globe, said in a recent letter to travel agents that a refund process initiated by the body had been completed by the court-appointed administrator of Jet Airways.

"IATA will now proceed to issue settlements on the approved refund claims in proportion to the remaining funds on hand with IATA," the letter states.

That means, said an IATA source, travel agents who have applied for refunds would get a part of the amount they have claimed.

"If a travel agent has filed a refund claim of Rs 1 lakh, he or she would get a percentage of that amount," the source said.

Around Rs 30 crore is with IATA for disbursement and the refund claims total Rs 150 crore, IATA sources said.

19/12/19 Sanjay Mandal/Telegraph

Low-cost Indian airline IndiGo is now operating 1,500 domestic flights per day. Just twelve months ago, the airline was chuffed to have 1,000 domestic flights per day. But the airline says this new benchmark is just business as usual and the growth is in line with its projected expansion capacity. According to a report in cnbctv18.com, the airline hit the 1,500 domestic flights per day figure earlier this month. It now has a departure approximately every one minute. In a statement, IndiGo's chief

executive officer, Ronojoy Dutta said;

“We are pleased to be the first Indian airline to touch 1,500 daily departures, with one flight taking off every minute.

“2019 has been an eventful year with many new partnerships, orders and milestones. We are optimistic about 2020, and our endeavor will be to build focus cities and traffic corridors that connect India to the world.”

IndiGo has only been operating for 13 years. With the demise of Jet Airways, it is now the biggest airline in India in terms of fleet size and passenger numbers. It now has 249 planes (the majority being from the A320 family) and carried over 64 million passengers in the last financial year.

For much of the last decade, IndiGo has been expanding at a decent clip. And like many Indian airlines, it is now picking up Jet Airways passengers and mopping up growth opportunities from its collapse.

19/12/19 Andrew Curran/Simple Flying

Thiruvananthapuram: **With the Kerala High Court dismissing a batch of petitions filed against the privatisation of Trivandrum airport, including that of the state government, the decks are now cleared for the takeover of the airport by the winning concessionaire Adani Enterprises Limited (AEL). Though Adani had won the bid for the six airports in the country, the Letter of Awards (LoAs) for the Trivandrum, Guwahati and Jaipur airports were not issued as state governments concerned and Airport Authority of India (AAI) employee unions challenged the decision.**

The petition challenging privatisation of Guwahati airport has been postponed to January 22 for further hearing, while there is no petition filed regarding Jaipur airport but the state government has been maintaining that it will not cooperate with the move. Once the Guwahati airport case is settled, there would not be any major hurdle for the Adani group for the takeover of remaining airports.

In addition, though Calicut airport has not figured in the next set of six airports -- Amritsar, Bhubaneswar, Varanasi, Indore, Raipur and Tiruchi airports -- to be privatised, sources close to AAI said it would also be privatised along with Madurai and Coimbatore airports. It is also learnt that though the Centre has awarded LoAs of Mangalore, Ahmedabad and Lucknow airports, the winning concessionaire has been delaying the takeover as part of buying time for preparing itself for the running of the airports. After the LoAs are awarded, the concessionaire has to seek security clearance. Once the clearance is granted, the concessionaire has to take over the control of the airports in 45 days.

Earlier, there were reports that the Kerala government and concessionaire have reached an agreement for sharing the stakes in the Trivandrum airport. In the new circumstances, it remains to be seen whether Adani would honour the understanding, if there was any. Still, the government has one final straw to clutch.

If it announces that it would not sign the state support agreement with the private entity, it would be difficult for the winning concessionaire to take over the airport as the agreement ensures the logistics required for the airport operations like water and electricity supply, and road connectivity.

Meanwhile, S Ajith Kumar, secretary of Airport Authority Employees Union, Trivandrum, said the union would challenge the High Court order in the Supreme Court and it would not go back on its fight against privatising the airport.

19/12/19 Dhinesh Kallungal/New Indian Express

The Indira Gandhi International Airport in the national capital is preparing for winter spell, which brings along challenges like fog and low visibility. Delhi is likely to witness immense coldwave from

December 20 onwards, while the second wave is predicted around December 26. According to the Delhi International Airport Ltd, new techniques are being introduced to manage flight operations safely during reduced visibility conditions.

New state-of-the-art ATC tower, thermal imaging cameras and first-of-its-kind 24X7 social media command centre have enhanced its capabilities to manage operations at times when there is dense fog, Delhi International Airport Ltd, the firm which operates the IGI airport said.

Other plans to deal with foggy weather conditions at Delhi Airport include 139 parking stands equipped with aeronautical ground lightning (AGL) system and a dedicated senior team to deal with situations arising due to low visibility.

"This year, Delhi Airport has launched 24X7 social media command centre, to assist the passengers with real time and requisite information during the fog situation," DIAL said in a statement.

"The new ATC Tower, which became operational in September, would also help airlines and air traffic controllers significantly in operating flights during poor visibility conditions."

Apart from these, DIAL said that all stakeholders work in close coordination during the fog to ensure minimal inconvenience to the passengers.

19/12/19 India TV

Kochi: The high court on Wednesday dismissed petitions filed by the state government and others challenging central government's move to lease out operation of Trivandrum International Airport to Adani Group.

A division bench of Chief Justice S Manikumar and Justice AM Shaffique considered a total of seven petitions, including one filed by the state government. The other petitions considered by the court were filed by Mahesh G, KP Suresh, Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation Ltd (KSIDC), Airport Authority Employees Union, Trivandrum Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and CPM leader M Vijayakumar. The airport was established in 1932 and converted to an international aerodrome in the 70s.

While dismissing the petitions, the court said the challenge in the petitions is towards a policy decision of the central government and that only the Supreme Court can consider such a dispute.

Representing the central government, assistant solicitor general P Vijayakumar had argued that only the apex court can consider a petition against the central government when there is a dispute with the state government.

It was contended by the state government that the state stands to lose significantly by the Centre's decision which is against public interest as it will not result in better management of the airport.

19/12/19 Times of India

While air cargo and logistics companies across the world have been acknowledging the utility of drones for its speed and automation after it made its first public drone delivery six months ago, India is yet to begin its experimental drone flights.

In October, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had selected seven firms, including Zomato, Swiggy, Zipline and Redwing, for long-range or beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) drone experiments.

These firms were asked to submit technical details by the civil aviation authority.

In the latest development, the applications of **Google-backed hyperlocal delivery startup Dunzo** and **Bengaluru-based drone maker Throttle Aerospace Systems** have been finally approved by the DGCA based on their experimental programme called beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) drone

operations.

Throttle Aerospace Systems has tied up with SpiceJet's dedicated air cargo service SpiceXpress that will provide the company with drones and assist in the initial testing phase.

19/12/19 Aarzoo Mittal/EnTracker

New Delhi: Domestic air passenger traffic growth is expected to reduce to a six-year low of 4.5 per cent in fiscal 2020 after five years of double-digit growth, according to ICRA.

The temporary suspension of operations by Jet Airways, the grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft and technical issues with the Airbus A-320 New Engine Option (NEO) have impacted the industry's capacity and passenger growth, ICRA said in a study.

The study also pointed out that many domestic airlines are focussing on expanding their international routes and fiscal 2020 will witness a muted domestic capacity growth, as measured by available seat kilometre (ASKM) of about 3 per cent during the fiscal.

While aviation turbine fuel (ATF) price has been benign in the current fiscal, the yields continue to be under pressure. Coupled with rupee depreciation, this has squeezed the Revenue per Available Seat Kilometre — Cost per Available Seat Kilometre spread — exerting significant pressure on airlines' operating profitability.

"The domestic aviation industry had benefitted significantly during the second half of fiscal 2019 when yields witnessed an improvement due to the decline in industry capacity owing to the grounding of aircraft of Jet Airways. Further, it was supported by the transfer of debt of ₹29,500 crore from Air India Ltd to a special purpose vehicle from October this year," the rating agency's report said.

19/12/19 Business Line

New Delhi: Aircraft engine-maker Pratt and Whitney (PW) on Thursday appointed Ashmita Sethi as the managing director of its India division, according to a statement.

Sethi had resigned from her position of director for communications and corporate affairs at Boeing India a few weeks ago.

The A320neo family aircraft, which are powered by PW engines, have been facing frequent on-ground and mid-air glitches since their induction into the IndiGo and GoAir fleets in 2016.

Palash Roy Chowdhury, who served as the managing director of PW's Indian division for around eight years, put in down his papers in July.

PW, which is a division of United Technologies Corp, said on Thursday, "Ms. Sethi brings more than 20 years of experience from the defense and aerospace industry to this role and joins PW following a distinguished career in corporate and public affairs, and communications with Boeing and Rolls-Royce."

19/12/19 PTI/Outlook

New Delhi: Nineteen IndiGo flights were cancelled and 16 others were delayed as crew members were stuck in traffic jam on NH-8 due to anti-CAA protests on Thursday, a Delhi airport official said. Four airlines -- Vistara, GoAir, Air India and IndiGo -- announced that their passengers, who are stuck in traffic due to anti-CAA protests in various parts of Delhi, will be adjusted in subsequent flights for no extra fees.

"Till now, 16 flights have been delayed due to traffic jam at NH-8. IndiGo has cancelled 19 flights as the crew members were stuck in traffic jam and because of other issues," the official said.

In a press statement on Thursday, IndiGo said that it has "proactively blocked hotel rooms near the airport to keep our crew ready to be deployed at short notice...Customers who are affected can be rebooked at no additional cost."

"Due to traffic restrictions and to accommodate passengers reaching late to the airport, we have rescheduled and curtailed our schedule in and out of Delhi by approx. 20 departures (approximately 10 per cent of our Delhi departures)," the low-cost carrier said.

IndiGo is India's largest airline, carrying around 47 per cent of total domestic passenger traffic.

GoAir stated on Thursday that it is offering waiver of fees for rescheduling and cancellation to passengers travelling to or from Delhi on Thursday and Friday.

However, the airline clarified that if there is any fare difference, it will have to be paid by the passenger.

19/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

Kochi: Directorate of revenue intelligence and customs air intelligence unit seized a total of 7.5kg of gold, foiling smuggling bids at the Cochin International Airport Ltd (Cial) on Wednesday.

DRI officers seized 2kg of gold in the form of biscuits from a Mumbai woman. Officers said that the gold was hidden in the lavatory of an aircraft by another passenger for the woman to collect. The woman, a domestic passenger who was coming from Chennai to Kochi, collected the contraband hidden in the toilet. She hid it on her body and tried to exit the airport, when sleuths intercepted her. "Further investigations into the seizure are progressing," said a DRI officer. Sources said that as many as 17 gold biscuits were found concealed around the waist of the passenger.

Customs air intelligence officers seized 5.5kg of gold from two passengers. The metal was concealed in the handle portion of dumbbells in the check-in baggages of the passengers.

Customs officers intercepted the passengers who landed at Cial from Kuwait. Both of them were natives of Kadappa in Andhra Pradesh, said an officer.

19/12/19 Times of India

Mumbai: The Committee of Creditors (CoC) of the defunct Jet Airways has agreed 'in-principle' to invite fresh Expression of Interest (Eoi) as two new entities have shown an early interest in bidding for the airline.

Resolution Professional for the airline, Ashish Chhawchharia, informed the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) about the development on Tuesday.

According to sources, one Indian entity backed by a UK-based investor, and a West Asian fund have shown an early interest in the company.

What this means is that South America's Synergy Group, which was the sole potential bidder to submit the Expression of Interest, will have to put in a fresh Eoi during the next round.

Chhawchharia informed the NCLT that the company had submitted a draft business plan.

One of the persons mentioned above added that there were a few complications with Synergy's conditions. "They needed clarity on the slots, and the aircraft, which is not possible at the moment," he added.

The representatives of Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) clarified that they would "positively" consider allocating summer slots of Jet Airways if a firm business plan is given for the defunct airline by the investors.

A person in the know of Jet's resolution process said, **"The draft business plan is not compliant with our CIRP (corporate insolvency resolution process). We need a final resolution plan and further commitments from Synergy Group."**

The Synergy Group's representatives were to meet the Mumbai Bench of NCLT on December 17. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, they could not be present. The RP informed the Bench that Synergy's representatives would come on December 19. The Bench obliged and posted the next hearing to the said date.

18/12/19 Forum Gandhi/Business Line

New Delhi: Privatising Air India is not a choice but the only way forward, Union Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said Tuesday.

"It is impossible to service the level of debt burden that Air India is currently dealing with. I wake up to the challenge of privatising Air India every day," he said at ThePrint's Off The Cuff in Delhi.

Puri, who is also the minister for housing & urban affairs and minister of state for commerce and industry, was in conversation with ThePrint Editor-in-chief Shekhar Gupta.

Speaking about the civil aviation industry at large, the minister noted that domestic air traffic posted double-digit growth in November for the first time since December 2018.

Puri also spoke about how the sector had the potential to emerge as one of the "critical drivers of Indian economic growth", and the government's aim to double domestic and international airports in India over the next three to five years.

At the event, Hardeep Singh Puri said Air India was a "profit making organisation till the merger of Air India and Indian Airlines".

Gupta, however, pointed out, "It (Air India) was sometimes profitable but most times not."

A large section of Puri's arguments focussed on the idea that though the fundamentals of Air India have improved over the past couple of years, it was impossible to run it with the scale of debt the company has accumulated.

18/12/19 Srijan Shukla/The Print

Mumbai: The government is looking to shift more debt from the balance sheet of disinvestment-bound Air India to asset holding company AIAHL to further sweeten the deal for prospective buyers, according to a senior airline official.

The government plans to sell 100 per cent stake in the loss-making carrier. In efforts to make the disinvestment more attractive, the carrier has already transferred Rs 29,474 crore of debt to Air India Assets Holding Ltd (AIAHL), a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).

"We are evaluating if we can take out some more debt from the balance sheet and park it in the SPV. Earlier, our plan was to give debt in proportion to assets. As part of that, we have already transferred almost half of the total debt to AIAHL," the official in the know of the development told PTI.

The official also said the government is trying to work out some formula to further make the deal more sweeter. On Monday, Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola said the government is working on the debt issue of Air India to make it more attractive to buyers. "However, investors thought that the amount of debt retained by the carrier was not going to sustain so we are working on that also. We will see to it that the debt being parked with Air India is such that any bidder will be able to make it sustainable and if he feels that he can invest and improve profitably," Kharola had said.

17/12/19 PTI/Economic Times

The aviation ministry and the directorate general of civil aviation (DGCA) on Tuesday informed the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) that they will positively consider any concrete business plan for the grounded Jet Airways.

Counsel representing the ministry told the tribunal that it will examine the issue if Jet Airways' prospective investors come up with a concrete business plan. He further said that slots are perishable assets and it cannot be used by other airlines.

The deadline for applying for the next round of airport slots is January 15.

Airport slots, the permit for arrival and departure at an airport, play an important role for potential bidders to value the grounded airline.

The ministry further said that two new foreign investors have shown very early interest for the grounded airline besides South America's Synergy Group, which is the sole company to have shown interest in Jet Airways till now.

Earlier on December 11, the tribunal comprising Bhaskara Pantula Mohan and Rajesh Sharma had asked senior officials from the civil aviation ministry and the DGCA to depute responsible officials for Tuesday's hearing.

18/12/19 PTI/Telegraph

New Delhi: Government's ambitious UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) scheme may not be yielding the desired results, yet, Airport Authority of India (AAI) has chosen to showcase the theme of regional connectivity during the upcoming Republic Day ceremony.

A tableau on the theme of UDAN has been proposed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation on the occasion of Republic Day.

The objective behind the move is to showcase achievements of the Airports Authority, particularly under the regional connectivity scheme.

The AAI has already put out a tender for conceptualising, designing and display of the tableau at Rajpath on January 26.

The government had launched the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) - UDAN during October 2016 to stimulate regional air connectivity by making it affordable.

However, the scheme has not shown the desired level of success.

Under RCS-UDAN, 688 RCS routes have been awarded in the first three phases, out of which only 232 RCS routes commenced, connecting 43 small cities till date.

18/12/19 New Indian Express

Kolkata: Passengers flying out of Kolkata are having to undergo an extra layer of security at the entrance to the airport after Bidhannagar City Police and CISF officials beefed up measures following state intelligence inputs on unspecified threats at the airport by Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) protesters.

Since Sunday evening, Bidhannagar Police is manning multiple checkpoints on roads leading to the airport, randomly checking cars. Security was also enhanced at the airport terminal. Officers of Central Industrial Security Force carried out random checks at the terminal before a flyer went for the security check. Bomb Disposal Squad personnel, too, are making rounds at the airport terminal with sniffer dogs as part of the intensified security measures.

Airlines are also advising flyers to reach the airport early to avoid long queues and subsequent delays.

On Sunday, a person using a Facebook profile by the name of Tariq Ahmed had threatened that CAA protesters would set fire to the airport on Tuesday. Screenshots of the threat were widely circulated

on social media Kolkata Airport and Bidhannagar Police. "We had also received an intelligence alert about an unspecified attack. Hence, we didn't take any chance," said a senior officer of the commissionerate.

"In connection to the existing law and order situation in the state wherein protesters have been targeting central government establishments, we have heightened security measures at the airport. The measures will be in place for the next few days," said J Mercy, the deputy commissioner (airport division) of Bidhannagar City Police.

18/12/19 Tamaghna Banerjee/Times of India

Bhubaneswar: The construction of a parallel taxiway at Biju Patnaik International Airport here has hit the roadblock as the place where the slum dwellers were to be shifted to make way for the taxiway has been taken over by encroachers.

A slum near the airport, called Farm Gate Basti, had been earmarked for the parallel taxiway. The slum residents were to be shifted to Panda Kudia, a rehabilitation colony. But Panda Kudia has been occupied illegally by more than 1,000 people, forcing the enforcement authorities of Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) to postpone the eviction drive on Tuesday after they faced stiff resistance.

Officials said the airport requires close to an acre of land for the expansion of the parallel taxiway, which the BMC is supposed to facilitate by relocating the slum dwellers of Farm Gate Basti.

BDA liaison officer (enforcement) Subhranshu Mohanty said the enforcement team and police returned as people had gathered at the site to prevent eviction drive.

"The unauthorized occupants blocked the road and sat in front of the machines to prevent the team from carrying out the drive. We were forced to stop work. We will make another attempt to ensure that all the illegal occupants are evicted. The identified slum dwellers from Farm Gate Basti will be relocated," he said.

18/12/19 Times of India

Bhubaneswar: Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday invited Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and CEOs of major airlines for an exposure trip to Odisha as he sought operation of more international flights from the state.

Patnaik noted that the state would get an opportunity to present in detail its potential and explain the viability of **Bhubaneswar** as a favoured international destination.

The chief minister said the government would provide necessary support for not only developing the infrastructure for aviation, but also consider incentives in the shape of viability gap funding for airline operations.

"I would like to invite you personally to visit the state of Odisha along with officers of Civil Aviation Ministry and the CEOs of major airlines," he wrote to Puri. "Looking forward to hosting you and your team in Bhubaneswar soon."

Justifying his demand for more international flights, the chief minister pointed out that Odisha had ranked among India's top three investment destination.

An enabling eco-system for entrepreneurship, large pool of skilled human resources and rich mineral resources make Odisha an ideal destination for foreign capital, according to Patnaik.

He underlined that Odisha was having rich tourism potential and the state is already part of the International Buddhist Circuit due to its Buddhist Heritage.

"We are coming up with many such innovative products, which I am sure will be lapped up by the

international tourists and tour operators, the chief minister said.

18/12/19 PTI/Outlook

An IndiGo Airlines Udaipur-Bengaluru flight was removed from the main runway of the Udaipur Airport after smoke was detected in the plane before the take-off on Wednesday. All passengers are reportedly safe.

Earlier in the month, the Ministry of Civil Aviation said 178 passengers stranded at Dibrugarh in Assam have been flown to Kolkata in an IndiGo flight. The stranded passengers have been evacuated in a phased manner, the ministry said in a series of tweets on December 12.

"In a major relief for all those stranded in Dibrugarh, a @Indigo6E flight to Kolkata has departed carrying all the 178 passengers. This would not have been possible without the intervention of the local administration and the airline. Thank you everyone involved," the ministry said.

18/12/19 News Nation

The city of Chennai is likely to get a second airport at Parandur village in Kancheepuram district. This location is deemed to be the most preferable site for the construction of the airport.

The Tamil Nadu government had earlier requested the Central government to approve the construction of a new airport near the city. According to an exclusive report in The Hindu, the state government had come up with two places, namely Parandur and Mamandur, and had requested the Airports Authority of India (AAI) to evaluate the sites. As per the request, officials from AAI had conducted a preliminary study to check the potential of the two locations.

Mamandur was reportedly considered to be less optimal due to the presence of a water body close to the site and the hindrances that might arise due to it during the construction. Eventually, Parandur village was found to be more favourable and **AAI is expected to give the final clearance soon**, the report said.

Only half of the estimated area needed for construction is owned by the state government in Parandur while the remaining 50% of the land would have to be acquired. This is expected to lead to a delay in the implementation of the project.

18/12/19 Dharshana Kathiresan/News Minute

Chennai: Customs department sleuths have seized gold worth over Rs 88 lakh in separate incidents at the airport here over the past two days, officials said on Wednesday.

Acting on a tip, officials rummaged an Indigo aircraft which arrived from Dubai and seized two unclaimed packets wrapped in black adhesive tape beneath one of the seats.

On opening it, gold in paste form was recovered and its value was estimated to be Rs 48 lakh.

In another incident on Wednesday, sleuths recovered gold from a passenger from Dubai who had arrived by an Emirates Airline flight.

The man had concealed it in his rectum.

The contraband, worth Rs 7.1 lakh, was seized.

On Tuesday night, customs sleuths recovered the precious metal in rubbery form from two women passengers on their arrival from Colombo by an Air India flight.

Interrogation revealed that the two had concealed gold worth Rs 27.16 lakh in their rectum, a release said.

18/12/19 Yahoo! News

Mangaluru: The Customs officials at the Mangaluru International Airport arrested a person who was carrying gold weighing 247.7 grms in a form of bar pasted on his head.

In a tweet on Wednesday, the Customs sleuths said the passenger had pasted the gold bar on his head and covered it with false hair. He was checked soon after his arrival by an Air India flight from Dubai.

The gold seized was valued at Rs 9.57 lakh.

18/12/19 UNI

New Delhi: A "major accident" was averted on Tuesday morning at Goa airport when an alert runway controller forced a SpiceJet flight to abort landing after noticing that the plane was on final approach without deploying its nose landing gear, said the Indian Navy spokesperson.

"Alert Indian Navy Air Traffic Services at Goa Airport averted major accident today when the Runway Controller Ramesh Tigga, Leading Airman (Air Handler) noticed that the nose landing gear of the Spicejet Flight SG 3568, which was on its final approach, was not deployed. The Runway Controller immediately alerted the ATC tower where the Duty Air Traffic Controller, Lt Cdr Harmeet Kaur informed the incoming aircraft to abort the landing," said the Indian Navy spokesperson on Twitter.

"The flight landed safely at 0805 hrs under assistance of emergency and safety services. The alert action of Indian Navy Air Traffic and Safety Services prevented the SpiceJet flight and all its passengers from a major accident at Goa airfield today," the spokesperson added.

17/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

New Delhi: Boeing announced on Tuesday it would suspend producing 737 Max planes as the certification process of the safety of these planes by the Federal Aviation Administration would move into 2020.

Boeing said that halting production would help it deliver stored aircrafts and its decision to suspend 737 Max production was determined by "uncertainty about the timing and conditions of return to service and global training approvals." The 737 MAX's have been grounded by aviation authorities across the globe after two fatal crashes in October 2018 and March 2019 in Indonesia and Eithopia respectively killed 346 people on board.

Boeing's decision to halt 737 MAX production could impact India's aviation sector in many ways.

The first discernible impact would be on Ajay Singh-controlled Spicejet, India's second biggest airline in terms of market share. In the end of 2016, Spicejet had firmed up orders for 205 new planes from Boeing with 155 of them being 737 MAXs. The airline has 13 of these planes --all of them grounded. Spicejet's orders with Boeing for its planes were estimated to be at least \$22 billion. In effect, Spicejet is able to operate only 104 planes of its 117 strong fleet. Despite troubles with the 737 MAX groundings, Spicejet still expanded its fleet by 37 planes since during 2019-20 as it sought to capture the market void left by Jet Airways closure. **Boeing's decision to suspend production could trouble Spicejet's aggressive fleet expansion plans. While Spicejet's Singh has recently said that his company would place orders for 100 planes from Airbus, there seems to have been little progress on finalising a deal with the European plane maker.**

If Spicejet decides to go ahead with a mega-deal with Airbus to substitute for the 737 MAX deal, it could push Boeing further to the margins in India's aviation sector. Of the 696 odd planes of various manufacturers in operation in India, only 187 of them are Boeings.

This includes the 14 Boeings operated by the Indian Air Force. Airbus, in comparison, has over 400

planes in Indian skies – accounting for two-thirds of all operational aircraft in the country. Airbus order books are booming in India despite problems with the Pratt and Whitney engines on its A320 Neo aircraft.

17/12/19 Sai Manish/Business Standard

Budget carrier SpiceJet's capacity addition plans may be affected and the development is expected to affect it financially too as Boeing reportedly suspended the production of 737 Max aircraft that the airline had ordered, said a news report.

On Monday, Boeing said it would suspend production of its best-selling 737 MAX jetliner in January, its biggest assembly-line halt in more than 20 years, as fallout from two fatal crashes of the now-grounded aircraft drags into 2020, reported Reuters.

SpiceJet's fleet expansion dreams hit as Boeing likely to delay 737 MAX aircraft deliveries amid suspension of production. Representational image. Reuters

The decision at a two-day board meeting came after the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) refused to approve the jet's return to service before 2020 and delivered what was seen as a public rebuff to Boeing's hopes of moving faster.

As part of the fleet expansion, SpiceJet had ordered 205 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft in 2017, of which 13 have been delivered, said a report in Mint.

"The development does not bode well as continuous delays have impacted and will continue to impact SpiceJet. The delays have impacted the airline's business strategically and financially," Kapil Kaul, CEO for India and the Middle East at aviation intelligence firm CAPA was quoted as saying in the report.

Boeing was doing its best regarding production and certification of the Max aircraft, airplane maker's India spokesperson was quoted as saying in the report.

The 737 MAX has been grounded since March after two crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia killed 346 people within five months, costing the plane manufacturer more than \$9 billion so far.

In March this year, SpiceJet had suspended the operations of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft model after the Directorate General of Civil Aviation's (DGCA) decision to ground all the aircraft model in the wake of the crashes.

SpiceJet has as many as 12 such aircraft in its fleet.

17/12/19 First Post

Arriving late for a flight is never an option: 45 minutes before take-off, or you miss your flight. But how often are flights on time? Data from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation shows that during January-November 2019, no airline has been on time more than 70% of the time.

As per the data, Go Air has the best On-Time Performance (OTP) of 67.6%. This was followed by Vistara (67.4%), Air Asia (66.7%), IndiGo (66.2%), SpiceJet (56.2%). Air India's domestic flights saw the worst OTP with only 42% of its flights being on time.

In terms of reasons for delays, the most common reason was 'reactionary', which means delayed arrival of the aircraft led to delayed take-off. Other reasons included delays due to ATC, operational delays, technology, airports, among others.

This year, Air Deccan cancelled most flights, followed by Zoom Air, TruJet, Air India, Go Air, SpiceJet, IndiGo, Vistara and Air Asia.

Weather was the reason for most flights being cancelled, while 32.6% flights were cancelled due to technical reasons. Other reasons included commercial (3.9%) and operational (3.8%).

17/12/19 News Minute

New Delhi: **In yet another Pratt & Whitney (PW) engine trouble for IndiGo, a Kolkata-bound Airbus A320 (Neo) had to return to Bagdogra soon after take off on Monday.** An earlier version of PW engine, which Indian aviation regulator wants off the wings in all IndiGo Neos by January-end, had high vibrations on the aircraft (VT-IJZ) during climb and stalled. Since twin engine can land safely on one engine, this one did so at Bagdogra.

Comments from IndiGo and PW have been sought on the latest engine trouble.

"Flight 6E-958 Bagdogra-Kolkata had air turn back to Bagdogra due to high vibration and stall. The aircraft landed safely," said sources.

"On inspection, low pressure turbine third stage blades were found damaged on this unmodified engine," sources added.

Given the spate of snags on PW unmodified engines on A320 Neos of IndiGo, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has directed the airline to have only modified PW engines on all its Neos by next month end. Neos with unmodified PW engines will have to be grounded after that till engine replacement takes place.

16/12/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Lucknow: **The conditional letter of award pertaining to the Noida International Greenfield Airport, Jewar, was handed over to CEO of Zurich Airport International AG Daniel Bircher on Monday, the UP government said.**

"In the presence of the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, conditional letter of award pertaining to the Noida International Greenfield Airport, Jewar, was handed over to CEO of Zurich Airport International AG Daniel Bircher by UP Chief Secretary RK Tiwari," it said in a statement.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the development of the airport will be done in a time-bound manner.

On Dec 9, the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet approved Zurich Airport International as developer for Jewar airport.

The formal approval of the Uttar Pradesh government comes after a bidding process in which Zurich Airport beat Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), Adani Enterprises and Anchorage Infrastructure Investments Holdings Limited on Nov 29.

The winning bid was then put up before the project monitoring and implementation committee (PMIC) of the state government, before being forwarded to the Cabinet.

"Four bids had come for the airport. On the basis of weighted averages, Zurich Airport International was chosen," UP minister Siddharth Nath Singh had then said.

17/12/19 PTI/NDTV

The union cabinet, headed by the prime minister of India, Narendra Modi, has given its nod to the Aircraft (Amendment) Bill, 2019.

The bill aims to carry out amendments to the Indian Aircraft Act, 1934.

The Indian Aircraft Act, 1934 is a government act to make better provision for the control of the manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, import and export of aircraft.

The amendments would fulfil the requirements of International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

As per the 2019 bill, the maximum fine limit for the breach of airline security has been increased from ₹1,00,000 to ₹ 1, 00, 00,000.

It also focuses on widening the scope of the existing act to include regulations for all areas of air navigation.

Besides, the amendments will also strengthen the role of India's three key civil aviation regulatory bodies namely Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB).

16/12/19 Sanchita Nambiar/Business Traveller

Hyderabad: A UK based business group is planning to enter the Indian aviation sector by acquiring majority stake in Hyderabad-based Turbo Aviation.

Founded by V Umesh, Turbo Aviation is planning to launch a new airline called TruStar to run the commuter air services under UDAN scheme starting next year. It had earlier launched TruJet commercial airliner in addition to other services like aircraft maintenance and ground clearance in the past.

"We had signed an agreement with a large UK business group to dilute majority stake in Turbo Aviation in its favour. We will announce the name of our partner and other details once the security clearances are in place,"Umesh said on Monday. The yet to be operational TruStar airline has already been awarded 10 routes across seven states including Uttar Pradesh under the UDAN Scheme.

According to Umesh, the company's strategic investor has plans to pump in as much as 100 million Pounds (about Rs 950 crore) in the airline company operations over a period of five years. The TruStar plans to launch its operations in February-March next year with an initial fleet of 5 ATRs and 5 Airbus 320s. The company would also apply for Pan-India operations soon thereafter as the foreign partner would want to build a large Indian airliner over a period of time.

Umesh, currently holds 6-7 per cent stake in TruJet as the Hyderabad-based MIAL Group had subsequently got a controlling stake following the launch of the airlines in 2015.

16/12/19 B Dasarath Reddy/Business Standard

Just short of completing four years, Sanjiv Kapoor has resigned as chief commercial officer (CCO) at full-service airline Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines. Tata Sons holds 51% in the airline. Confirming the news, the airline said, "Mr. Sanjiv Kapoor has resigned from his position due to personal reasons and will be discharging his official duties till December 31, 2019."

The airline's chief strategy officer, Vinod Kannan, a Singapore Airlines veteran, would take over as the new CCO, the airline said. "Mr. Kapoor's dedication and contributions to Vistara in the past four years have been well appreciated. The management of Vistara respects his decision and wishes him the very best," said a Vistara spokesperson. Earlier this year, Kannan was inducted into Vistara after having served as COO of Scoot, a no-frills carrier operated by Singapore Airlines.

A native of Kolkata, Kapoor was responsible for managing a wide portfolio of Vistara's commercial and planning functions, including strategy development, network planning, pricing and revenue management, sales and distribution, product development, branding, marketing, and customer experience. He was also responsible for in-flight services and ground operations of the airline, which has a market share of 5.1% in India.

With an MBA degree from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a BA in computer science from Dartmouth College, U.S., Kapoor has spent over two decades in the airline industry. Prior to joining to Vistara, he was the chief commercial officer at budget carrier SpiceJet.

16/12/19 Anshul Dhamija/Fortune India

Mumbai/New Delhi: **Air India needs to survive till it is sold**, the airline's Chairman Ashwani Lohani wrote in a Facebook post on Saturday, in a fresh plea to government for funds.

Lohani's comment comes days after he highlighted the airline's grim financial health in a letter to the civil aviation ministry. Over the past few months, Air India is seeking government guarantee to raise a Rs 2,000-crore loan. So far, the government has not acted on the request. **The airline would default on payment obligations if capital is not raised, Lohani is said to have written in the letter.**

Air India is losing Rs 150-200 crore each month despite 10 per cent year-on-year increase in revenue. Liquidity situation remains extremely tight and salary for the month of November was disbursed on December 11.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri's recent remark that the government would shut down the airline if fails to find a buyer has also made travel agents and vendors jittery.

"Air India needs to survive till it is sold. I wonder why is it so difficult for this appreciation to sink in and also that in this environment of disinvestment, expecting a radical improvement bordering on a turnaround is an impractical thought. That output can be given sans input is a grossly impractical thought," Lohani said in his post.

Lohani's comment is also seen as a response to criticism from retired airline executives on his inability to turnaround the airline.

Lohani did not offer further comments. The civil aviation ministry, too, did not immediately react on the issue.

A senior finance ministry official said that according to rules of strategic disinvestment, the government doesn't infuse cash in organisations that have been identified to be sold. "There were multiple targets to be achieved as part of the turnaround plan. Air India has hardly satisfied any criteria. Staff and salary restructuring hasn't been done. Route rationalisation didn't happen despite instructions from the civil aviation ministry. The government's resources are finite," the official said.

15/12/19 Aneesh Phadnis & Arindam Majumder/Business Standard

Even as Air India's CMD Ashwini Lohani has asked the government to financially support the airline till it finds a suitable buyer, the national carrier's domestic market share has fallen to its lowest level this year.

According to data compiled by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Air India's domestic market share in November was 12.1 per cent—its lowest level in 2019. The airline carried 1.6 million passengers that month. The decline in Air India's market share came even as the number of passengers it carried in November 2019 was 14 per cent higher as compared to the same month last year.

Air India's plummeting market share is significant for various reasons. The Modi government has made it explicitly clear that it is not interested in running the airline. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told Parliament recently that "the airline would have to be closed down if not privatised." **The government believes that it doesn't have the funds to inject in an airline whose net losses touched Rs 8,400 crore in 2018-19 despite improvement in operational parameters. The airline is also saddled with a debt of Rs 58,351 crore. While such statements may hurt Air India's final selling price and prevent the government from realising the maximum disinvestment value, it could also have a debilitating impact on the moral of its employees in the times to come.** Lohani in his public post on social media had said, "Air Indians are indeed putting in their best even at this critical juncture and that is very appreciable. **Air India needs to survive till it is sold. I wonder why is it so**

difficult for this appreciation to sink in and also that in this environment of disinvestment, expecting a radical improvement bordering on a turnaround is an impractical thought. That output can be given sans inputs is a grossly impractical thought."

Air India's declining domestic market share came at a time when there was a window of opportunity to fill the void left by the closure of Jet Airways on both domestic and international routes. Jet Airways shut operations in April this year. In the first three months of 2019, an estimated 3.6 million people flew Jet Airways domestically. In effect, India's airlines now had the opportunity to tap these passengers with one less airline to compete with.

16/12/19 Sai Manish/Business Standard

India's flagship carrier Air India's maintenance, repairs and operations (MRO) arm, Air India Engineering Services (AIESL) is in talks with Vistara and SpiceJet to enter into long-term MRO contracts for maintenance of the airlines' Boeing 737 fleet, sources said. The entity already maintains GoAir's Airbus A320 fleet. However, company officials said they are 'treading cautiously' on long-term contracts ahead of disinvestment plans.

Officials of AIESL said they are unable to chalk out long-term plans for AIESL in the wake of the upcoming divestment of the airline. In a recent response in Parliament, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the government plans to sell 100% in Air India and is in the process of inviting expressions-of-interest.

Meanwhile, **there is little clarity on the treatment of AIESL post disinvestment.** Ashwani Lohani, chairman, Air India in a post on a social networking website on Saturday said the airline needs to 'survive till it is sold'. Air India posted a net loss of around Rs. 8,556 crore in financial year 2018-19.

16/12/19 Financial Express

Kolkata: An IndiGo flight carrying around 180 passengers returned to the Bagdogra airport in West Bengal's Siliguri after developing an engine problem mid-air. According to a flight path put out by the aviation tracker FlightRadar24.com, the IndiGo flight took off at around 12:30 pm Monday before initiating a manoeuvre to return to the airport just a few minutes after take-off.

The IndiGo flight landed back at the Bagdogra airport in Siliguri just after 1pm. The IndiGo Flight 6E 958 was a Siliguri to Kolkata service carrying around 180 passengers. The plane was an Airbus A320 Neo.

Immediate details regarding the kind of engine problem that forced the IndiGo flight to return were unavailable. However, it's a known fact that IndiGo's fleet of Airbus A320 Neo aircraft use an engine variant known to develop snags and/or stop working mid-air.

The engine variant -- manufactured by the American company Pratt & Whitney -- has been identified as a cause behind several recent instances of IndiGo planes making emergency landings. IndiGo's competitor GoAir too operates the same model of IndiGo and has faced similar problems.

16/12/19 Nagarjun Dwarakanath/India Today

Kolkata: The perishable cargo storage facility adjacent to Bagdogra airport will be operationalised soon. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) has finally agreed to take over the perishable cargo storage and according to the agreement with the state Urban Development and Municipal Affairs (UD & MA) department they will be maintaining it for a period of 20 years. "The facility that was set up in 2010 by Siliguri Jalpaiguri Development Authority (SJDA) could not be operationalised. We were in constant touch with the AAI and several meetings were held. Finally they have agreed and soon they will start working on it to make it operative," said a senior official of UD & MA department.

It was in March 2016 when the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) mentioned in its compliance audit that the project had been a non-starter because of lack of initiative by the SJDA. The matter was taken up on priority basis and there were a several meetings between the UD & MA department and AAI to work out the modalities.

15/12/19 Soumitra Nandi/Millennium Post

Belagavi: Belagavi Airport planted more than 5100 trees in close association with Green Saviours team in just two hours at Airport premises on Sunday.

According to Airport Director Rajesh kumar Mourya, **reason behind this is to create a mini forest. Airports Authority of India (AAI) is fully dedicated to reduce the carbon emission and promote all Eco -Friendly practices in all AAI managed Airports in India.**

15/12/19 UNI

Over 100 passengers had already boarded an IndiGo flight at Lucknow airport when they were informed about a technical snag that left them stranded on the aerobridge an entire night.

According to reports in Hindustan Times, IndiGo's flight 6E 278, an Airbus A320neo, which was scheduled to fly from Lucknow at 9:15 pm on Thursday and land in Hyderabad at 11:15 pm the same day, was delayed by over eight hours.

As the Indian low-cost airline could not provide an alternative aircraft, the passengers were forced to spend an entire night on the aerobridge.

Apparently, passengers were informed about the glitch after they boarded the aircraft. One of the passengers on board the flight said the stranded passengers included people of age groups and some who were wheelchair bound as well.

According to reports in News18, passengers shared on social media photos of passengers sitting on the floor of the aerobridge. A passenger, Debanjana Paul, who went through the ordeal wrote on Twitter: '@IndiGo6E made us board the plane and then informed us that the flight will only take off at 6am. Amazing service'.

16/12/19 Khaleej Times

Kolkata: As NRC protests continue to grip Northeast and Bengal, flight simulations towards North Eastern part of India till are facing problems.

Today again some flights have been cancelled from Kolkata Airport.

An airport official from Guwahati airport said UNI here that flights slated to reach Kolkata from Guwahati 6E 0596 have been cancelled. 6E 0573 slated to fly from Kolkata to Guwahati also has been cancelled.

15/12/19 UNI

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Sunday nabbed three people who posed as customs officials at Mangaluru International Airport.

The accused – Riyaz, Mohammed Saheb Karabo and Khazi Aftab—who accosted Mohammad Shamas, a passenger who had arrived from Muscat after completion of his immigration and customs check. When the trio snatched his passport and directed him to proceed with them for further checking, Shamas got suspicious and broke himself free from

their clutches and rushed to the QRT of CISF stationed at the alighting point, for help.
16/12/19 Times of India

A 26-year-old Bangladeshi national was caught at the Kempegowda International Airport here after he flew in from Sri Lanka on a valid Indian passport, officials said.

Hilal Mia, 26, had changed his name to Ridou Sheikh and was living in Shivajinagar for the past two years. He was caught during an immigration check on Saturday, a senior police officer said.

The suspect was born in Hongalakaddi village, Bangladesh, and studied until class 7. He crossed over to India through the Benapole border in 2010 and lived in West Bengal until 2017 before moving to Bengaluru, the officer said.

Mia, the officer continued, produced a fake certificate to obtain the Aadhaar card. He later submitted the Aadhaar card and the house rent agreement to obtain an Indian passport. He also possessed a Bangladeshi voter ID, the officer said.

Mia has been booked under various sections of the Passport Act and the Foreigners Act. A court has remanded him in judicial custody.

16/12/19 Umesh R Yadav/Deccan Herald

Mumbai: Air India subsidiary Air India Engineering Services Ltd (AIESL) is likely to sign an initial pact with the government next month to provide maintenance services for custom-made B777 planes for VVIP travel, an airline source said.

These aircraft, which will be used to fly the President, Vice President and Prime Minister, are expected to be in operations from July next year.

At present, President Ram Nath Kovind, Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi fly on Air India's 26-year-old Jumbos - B747s. These planes are flown by Air India pilots.

"We are in discussion with the government for providing maintenance services to the VVIP planes. Currently all the modalities are being worked out. We are likely to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in this regard in the next one month," the source said.

He said the MoU will be followed by a detailed agreement, which is expected to be in place by March.

"As part of the contract under discussion, Air India will not only be maintaining the planes but will provide components support as well," he said.

15/12/19 PTI/Times of India

New Delhi: The government is creating a new 28-acre facility at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi for housing the new Boeing 777 aircraft which will be used for ferrying the VVIPs including the president, vice-president, and prime minister, said sources.

The Prime Minister's Office is coordinating with the stakeholders including the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Indian Air Force, Delhi International Airport Limited and GMR for setting up the state-of-the-art facility at the IGI airport.

The land on which it is planned to be built was earlier held by the government of India and then handed over to the private developers for infrastructure development.

The aircraft would be flown by the Indian Air Force pilots who are getting trained by Air India which already operates the Boeing 777 in its fleet.

The two planes are expected to arrive in India by middle of the next year. Indian Air Force officials have made several visits to the Boeing facility where they get regularly briefed about the facilities being created in the aircraft and the progress made in this regard.

Sources said that due to the presence of the sophisticated equipment, including missile protection suites and ownership by the Indian Air Force, the planes will have military classification.

15/12/19 Manjeet Singh Negi/India Today

Mumbai: Lack of clarity on the company's future desists Air India's engineering subsidiary AIESL from formulating a long-term business plan despite having both infrastructure and expertise in executing big-time contracts, a source said.

The government plans to sell 100 per cent stake in Air India along with budget carrier Air India Express and its 50 per cent stake in ground handling arm AISATS.

However, there is no decision yet on other subsidiaries such as Alliance Air and Air India Engineering Services Ltd (AIESL).

Nevertheless, AIESL is expected to sign a contract with budget carrier SpiceJet for maintaining its entire Boeing fleet, the official said.

The company is also in discussions with Vistara for providing maintenance services for its Boeing 787 planes, which are expected to be inducted in the fleet from February next year, the official added.

"There is no certainty about the future of the company. We don't know whether the government is going to sell it or retain it. Due to this uncertainty, we are unable to chalk out a long-term business plan for the company," the source said.

Set up in 2013 as a separate subsidiary, AIESL provides maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) services, both line and major maintenance, for various type of aircraft in AI's fleet, third party airlines as well as to the defence forces.

It has six MRO facilities across Mumbai, Delhi, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Thiruvananthapuram, along with engines shops and landing gear maintenance facilities.

As much as 90 per cent of AIESL's revenue comes from the Air India group, which has a fleet of over 170 planes.

"The company has both expertise and capability besides having state-of-art MRO facilities pan-India to carry out big-ticket contracts. But we can venture out only when there is a clarity on the future of the company," the source said.

15/12/19 PTI/Times of India

Air India Chairman and Managing Director Ashwani Lohani on Saturday said that the debt-ridden airline needed to survive till it is sold, and that expectation for a "radical improvement bordering on a turnaround" was impractical.

"I wonder why is it so difficult for this appreciation to sink in and also that in this environment of disinvestment, expecting a radical improvement bordering on a turnaround is an impractical thought," Lohani wrote in a Facebook post. "That output can be given sans inputs is a grossly impractical thought. Air Indians are indeed putting in their best even at this critical juncture and that is very very appreciable."

The airline's debt, which stood at Rs 55,000 crore at the end of March 2018, grew to Rs 58,351.93 crore at the end of March 2019. **Last month, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that the airline was expected to be sold by March 2020. Sitharaman claimed there was a lot of interest in Air India.**

In March 2018, the government had planned to divest 76% stake in Air India, ignoring a parliamentary panel's recommendation to give the debt-ridden airline five years to revive itself. The proposed stake sale, however, failed to take off as the government did not receive any expressions of interest from potential bidders by the end of the deadline.

15/12/19 Scroll.in

Guwahati: Over the past few days, Assam saw some of the worst protests against the Citizenship Act. With curfew being imposed and airlines cancelling flights in and out of Guwahati and Dibrugarh (the worst affected places) hundreds of passengers were stranded at the airports.

Sanjeev Jindal, the Regional Executive Director (RED) of Airport Authority of India (AAI), North Eastern Region took the lead and went beyond duty's call to ensure that every passenger was provided with food, water, proper sanitation facilities and was safe and comfortable.

Tents were set up at the Guwahati airport (tents are still there) and food was brought in from nearby hotels to ensure that there was sufficient supply of food and water. Jindal even opened the airport authority's guest houses to accommodate the stranded passengers.

"Our airports at Silchar, Agartala, Jorhat, Guwahati, Imphal, Tezu, Tezpur, Shillong and Lingpui are open for passengers all day and night. We are also allowing the passengers whose flights have either been cancelled or delayed to use the airport guest houses, offices lounges. Besides providing water and sanitation facilities to the passengers, we are also trying our best to provide food to the travelers," Jindal told EastMojo.

It is at the behest of Jindal that the Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) gave around 20 buses to ferry passengers to and from Guwahati airport. AAI ferried two bus load of passengers to Shillong on Friday night with police escort.

"I would like to reassure all the passengers that the AAI and all its stakeholders are working hard and in coordination to serve the people and to ensure that they travel safe," Jindal said.

14/12/19 Irani Sonowal Lepcha/East Mojo

AirAsia India on Sunday announced the appointment of Ankur Garg as its chief commercial officer (CCO), a role in which he will be in-charge of areas such as network and revenue management, marketing and sales, and cargo.

Garg had quit as the vice-president of revenue management at IndiGo a few weeks back.

"Ankur Garg takes over from Mr Sanjay Kumar, AirAsia India's Chief Operation Officer (COO)...Garg will report to Sunil Bhaskaran, MD and CEO, AirAsia India," the airline said in a statement.

15/12/19 Business Line

Srinagar: Flight operations in Kashmir resumed on Saturday after fresh snowfall cleared smoggy weather conditions that had brought air traffic to a halt in Srinagar for the past nine days.

Inclement weather coupled with snowfall, however, forced authorities to keep the Srinagar-Jammu and Srinagar-Leh highways, and the historic Mughal Road closed.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) director, Srinagar, Santosh Dhole said about 17 flights landed and took off from the airport on Saturday.

Meteorological department deputy director Mukhtar Ahmad said the higher reaches are likely to receive snowfall while the weather conditions will improve in the plains. "The weather in parts of Kashmir, especially in the plains, will remain partly cloudy, apart from occasional sunshine on Saturday," he said. The night temperature has increased by almost three degrees Celsius and will rise

further on Saturday, following which it will plummet considerably, Ahmad said.

14/12/19 M Saleem Pandit/Times of India

Mumbai: A passenger, who had concealed gold worth Rs 19 lakh in the waistline of his denim pants, has been apprehended by CISF personnel at the Mumbai airport, a senior official said on Sunday.

Mohammed Ibrahim S was intercepted at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport on Saturday night after undergoing the mandatory physical frisking before boarding a Vistara airlines flight to Chennai.

Around 540 grams of gold was recovered from the passenger. He had concealed it in the waistline of his denim trousers, officials said.

15/12/19 Times of India

Kolkata: Two China-bound Syrian nationals have been apprehended by CISF personnel at the Kolkata airport for allegedly trying to smuggle US dollars worth Rs 69 lakh, officials said on Sunday.

The two passengers -- Al Sabbagh and Bassam Alsabbagh -- were apprehended on Saturday at the Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport and have now been handed over to Customs authorities.

A total of **USD 97,600** was recovered by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel from the two passengers who held a Syrian passport and were bound for Kunming on a China Eastern airlines flight, the officials said.

The travellers had wrapped the dollars in a newspaper and concealed them in their socks while some of it was recovered from their hand baggage, they alleged.

15/12/19 PTI/Outlook

A Bangkok-bound passenger has been apprehended by CISF personnel at the international airport here for carrying foreign currency amounting to Rs 1.02 crore allegedly in an unauthorised manner, officials said on Sunday.

Passenger Anil Kumar was intercepted at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on Saturday night after his activities were found to be suspicious by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel.

A total of Euros 80,450 and 33,150 in Pound Sterling, worth about Rs 1.02 crore, was recovered from the false bottom of a bag that the passenger was carrying, the officials said.

The passenger was initially let off by CISF personnel with a caution that he should declare the cash to the customs authorities before boarding his Air India flight to Bangkok but when it was noticed that he skipped the mandatory procedure, the traveller was apprehended.

15/12/19 PTI/Republic World

The civil aviation ministry is mulling some changes in the regulatory norms for the next round of airport privatisation by keeping a limit on the number of airports a participant can bid for, sources close to the development told CNBC-TV18.

The bidder may be asked to bid for a maximum of two airports in the next round of airport privatisation, the sources said. Under the second round, a total of six airports including Varanasi and Amritsar are likely to be privatised.

In the first round of airport privatisation, there was no limit on the number of airports a participant could bid for. Adani Group had emerged as the highest bidder for the six airports of Ahmedabad,

Lucknow, Mangalore, Jaipur, Guwahati, and Trivandrum.

While the Union Cabinet has approved the bids for Ahmedabad, Lucknow and Mangalore, the concession agreement for the three airports is yet to be signed as the security clearance of Adani Group is still pending, sources aware of the development said.

“The bids for the remaining three airports of Jaipur, Guwahati and Trivandrum are likely to be cleared by the Cabinet once the legal hurdles are clear,” another person aware of the development said.

CNBC-TV18 had exclusively reported on July 25 that **the government was looking to privatise more airports in the second term of Narendra Modi government, and the selection process to finalise a list of 6-10 state-run airports has started.**

14/12/19 CNBC TV18

2,605 passengers at Delhi Airport’s T3 terminal have registered for the Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel project, which allows passengers to scan their faces at a kiosk before checking-in to their flights, Minister of State in the Civil Aviation Ministry, Hardeep Singh Puri informed Lok Sabha on December 12. The Indian government had launched the DigiYatra scheme in 2018, which allows automatic processing of passengers based on a facial recognition system at check points like: entry to airport, security check and aircraft boarding.

While responding to questions raised by Indhiya Jananayaga Katchi MP T.R. Paarivendhar, Suri further informed the House that airports **at Kolkata, Pune, Vijayawada, Varanasi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Cochin, Mumbai and Delhi are covered in the first phase of the DigiYatra rollout.**

Facial recognition systems for biometric authentication of passengers first went active at the Delhi airport’s terminal 3 for Vistara passengers in September, on a trial basis, we had reported. The official launch of these systems at other terminals is contingent upon a successful completion of this trial. At the time, the airport had told us that it wasn’t mandatory for passengers to go check-in through the face scanning kiosks, and willing passengers would have to sign a consent form to have to go through these systems.

The airport had also said that the biometric details of passengers will be stored temporarily and will be deleted after their flight has departed, and that the airport will not store biometrics of passengers. **However, the Delhi airport’s claims were only for the “trial period” and it isn’t clear if these provisions will still exist once these systems officially launch at all terminals of the airport.**

14/12/19 Medianama

Not a day passes without the government announcing some measure of privatisation. Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Puri claims that public sector Air India has to close down if it is not privatised -- a remarkable statement by a senior government functionary for two reasons. First, if the private buyer is supposed to be able to revive the company (for otherwise why should anyone be buying it), then why can’t the government do the same?

Second, even if one accepts for argument’s sake that what Puri says is correct, his saying so is most bizarre because it amounts to a signal to potential buyers to scale down their bids for it.

A large number of public sector enterprises in the Asansol-Durgapur belt of West Bengal are being sought to be privatised, riding roughshod over the demands of the trade unions. Public sector telecom major BSNL’s employees are being more or less forced to accept voluntary retirement, so that the company can no longer remain viable and would have to be sold off. Such examples can be multiplied.

Of course, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, with its total lack of understanding of the significance of the public sector and also with its closeness to the corporate-financial oligarchy, is

prone to dismantling the public sector anyway. But now it feels an added urgency for doing so in order to cope with the fiscal squeeze that the economic downturn has brought in its wake. To stimulate privatisation, international finance capital (and its leading institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) have resorted to a fiddle, namely, to exclude the proceeds from the sale of public sector assets from the fiscal deficit; the government can, therefore, show a smaller fiscal deficit figure, one conforming to the "Fiscal Responsibility" target, by selling public sector assets. This is a completely illegitimate practice, but it is done for ideological reasons, for effecting privatisation.

14/12/19 Prabhat Patnaik/News Click

The proposed airport city at the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru will include three business parks which will be built over 40 acres, according to officials at the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), the operator of KIA. The city complex is planned as part of the airport's Phase 2 expansion project and is currently awaiting regulatory approvals.

The entire project will be spread out over 530 acres and will have a mall, a retail dining entertainment village, live entertainment centre, luxury and business hotels, serviced apartments and 10-acre multi-level car parking facilities. The city is proposed to be located near terminal 1 of the airport, Times of India reported.

A rail link from central Bengaluru is also proposed to the airport city. The plan to build a hub of commercial establishments near the airport has been in the pipeline for over 10 years.

On its website, KIA states that the proposed city will have a business district which will house the headquarters of corporations. "This is envisaged as a high density development integrated with green building and energy-efficiency concept. The development is envisaged as a semi enclosed areas comprising walkways with plazas on ground connecting pedestrian walkway into the Central area. The development is also envisaged to have a roof canopy with continuous membrane, energy conservation, utilise photovoltaic panels to supplement electricity and thus reduce energy consumption", KIA states.

14/12/19 News Minute

Greater Noida: Though development is a must, it's taking a toll on the environment. The Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) is ready to cut over 11,000 trees to pave the way for an international airport at Jewar in Gautam Buddha Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh.

The move to cut trees comes after the YEIDA got permission to chop the trees. Rules say that double the number of trees must be planted to compensate for the loss of green cover.

But the Noida district administration has promised to plant 10 times more trees over 30 hectares of land, according to a report in Times of India.

"Rules prescribe to plant double the number of trees that are felled. But we will plant 10 times more trees to compensate for the loss of green cover. Over 1 lakh trees will be planted in three areas of 10 hectares each. The land for tree planting will be provided by Noida administration, forest department and YEIDA," Arunvir Singh YEIDA Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

However, experts and environmental activists have expressed concerns claiming that planting saplings is not enough, but maintaining them is equally important so that they are grown into trees.

14/12/19 MirrorNowNews.com

Hyderabad: Officers of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 14 kgs of smuggled gold at the Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA), Hyderabad, on December 12. The bullion was

seized from Air India flight AI 952, it was hidden inside seat number 31A and 32A in long strips of black adhesive tape. When the passengers sitting on the seats before were asked to explain, they accepted that the gold was brought in from Dubai. Out of the two passengers, **one is from South Korea and the other is a Chinese national. After unwrapping the tapes, DRI found 112 bars of gold worth Rs 5.46 crore.** The operation was reportedly taken out based on specific intelligence.

14/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: **Indian carriers are estimated to report a consolidated net loss of over \$ 600 million (over Rs 4,230 crore) in 2019-20, according to aviation consultancy CAPA as it downgraded its full-year profitability projection made in June.**

In June, it projected a consolidated net profit of \$ 500-700 million in the optimistic case. **Currently, there are four budget carriers and two full service airlines -- IndiGo, GoAir, SpiceJet, AirAsia India, Vistara and Air India.**

In its quarterly market update report on aviation outlook FY2020, CAPA India said it is the “most significant downgrade within one quarter in more than 16 years”. The carriers are anticipated to post a consolidated net loss of more than \$ 600 million this financial year, as per projection at the end of November.

The financial projections are based on the assumptions that oil prices are in the range of \$ 60-65 per barrel, exchange rate is Rs 70-72 against \$ and that airlines maintain pricing discipline.

Noting that it has revised downwards full-year profitability projections for all carriers, it said the industry has failed to capitalise on Jet Airways’ closure and relatively softer fuel prices, as evidenced by an estimated industry loss of \$ 350-400 million in the second quarter of the current fiscal.

“The potential benefits of consolidation and capacity rationalisation in the wake of Jet’s demise, and relatively benign fuel prices, have largely been squandered. Carriers pursued very aggressive expansion in an effort to capture slots released by Jet, resulting in downward pressure on yields,” the report, dated December 12, said. **About Air India, it said the airline’s privatisation is expected to be well underway before the end of FY 2020.**

13/12/19 PTI/Business Line

India’s aviation sector is finally showing some green shoots of recovery.

Domestic air-traffic growth in November rebounded to double-digit levels for the first time since December 2018, showed data released by the sector regulator directorate general of civil aviation (DGCA) yesterday (Dec. 12).

India’s airlines ferried up to 12.9 million passengers last month, compared to 11.6 million in November 2018, up 11.2%. The growth was mostly led by SpiceJet.

Experts, however, believe November was nothing to write home about. “An 11% growth is not really that great. Demand increased in the festive season, especially from October,” Mark Martin, founder and CEO at Martin Consulting, told Quartz. Last year, the industry had consistently clocked double-digit growth in the festive months of September (18.95%), October (13.34%), and November (11.03%).

“Nevertheless, the latest upward trend is certainly a positive sign,” Martin said.

Since the beginning of 2019, Indian aviation has faced an overall slowdown. Matters aggravated in April when the financially embattled Jet Airways folded up. That month, passenger traffic contracted as airfares rose and capacity fell.

For the first seven months of 2019, growth was just 3.15%, compared to 21.8% last year, data

showed.

13/12/19 Niharika Sharma/Quartz

Two people were injured after lightning struck the IGI Airport on Thursday evening. The incident happened amidst the heavy rainfall that started in the national capital yesterday. The injured were immediately rushed to a well-known hospital in the state, one of which was a foreigner- who also happens to be critical.

The rainfall that set winters in the national capital in full motion affected normal life as cold winds affected routines, forcing the public to stay indoors most of the time. Additionally, **the rainfall also affected air travel as a large number of flights were cancelled or diverted due to the situation at hand. It was also reported that Air India and Vistara flights were affected the most.**

The disruption of flights was confirmed by Air India in a tweet that said, "two flights to Jaipur and few others were been held up at the Delhi airport due to heavy rains and consequent congestion."

Another tweet also mentioned that five Vistara flights were diverted to Ahmedabad and one to Amritsar. The move was initiated due to bad weather in Delhi.

IGI Airport had, in a statement, also said that the rains impacted the airport operations. The statement further asked the travellers to contact airlines for further information and apologised for the inconvenience to the passengers.

13/12/19 TimesNowNews.com

Mohali: Lack of CAT-ILS-III (advanced instrument landing system) at the airport is being felt as due to poor visibility, Dharamshala, Srinagar and Kullu flights were cancelled and 11 others arrived late on Thursday.

Four years on, Chandigarh International Airport remains a cause of discontentment among travellers and flight operators, as they face cancellations and delays.

The airport has also reached the brink of losing its international status, as none of the flight operators are opting for international destinations, apart from Dubai and Sharjah.

Air India has already pulled out the Bangkok flight and now Indigo has announced to suspend its Dubai flight from December 14.

Air India station manager MR Jindal said, "We had to cancel Dharamshala and Kullu flights due to poor visibility. In coming days, cancellations will increase."

GoAir flight from Srinagar was also cancelled due to bad weather at the source airport, said airlines official.

In all, five flights from Delhi arrived and departed late at Chandigarh out of the total 11. Air Vistara's flight UK-667 arrived over three hours late at Chandigarh. It landed at 11.22am against the scheduled arrival time of 8.15am.

13/12/19 Times of India

Hyderabad: The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday told the Lok Sabha that there was no proposal to hand over Begumpet airport land to the defence ministry.

MoS (Civil Aviation) Hardeep Singh Puri informed the Lok Sabha that the airport would not be given to the ministry. He was replying to a question by TRS MPs K Prabhakar Reddy and B Venkatesh Netha. "Begumpet airport was closed for commercial operations in compliance with the concession agreement between Ministry of Civil Aviation and Hyderabad International Airport Limited. The agreement says that Begumpet airport shall not be open or available for commercial and civil

aviation operations once Shamshabad airport is opened. As per the exclusivity clause of the concession agreement, no new or existing airport shall be permitted by the government of India to be developed or improved or upgraded into an international or domestic airport within an aerial distance of 150 kilometres of Shamshabad airport. This rule will be applicable for 75 years since the date of opening of the airport,” Hardeep Singh said. TRS MPs took up the issue as there were reports the Air Force may take over Begumpet airport.

13/12/19 U Sudhakar Reddy/Times of India

India’s drone industry is on the rise – and investors, service providers, drone ecosystem companies and customers who are interested in what could be one of the world’s biggest markets can get an insider’s view at the Drone Festival of India, held January 6 and 7 in New Delhi. Register now at Drone Federation of India, sponsors of the event.

From Deep Kanakia, the Director of Operations for the Drone Federation of India: “The Drone Industry in India is at a point of inflexion where the fundamentals have been proven and the potential has been recognised. For any technological market to flourish there needs to be focus on innovation, financing and having a healthy regulatory environment,” says Kanakia. “India is moving past this inflexion point as it navigates the complexity of having all three factors in place. India’s drone ecosystem is going to grow manifold in the near future in both Drone Services and Drone Manufacturing Sectors.”

The Drone Festival of India hosted in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Aviation of the Government of India is India’s largest UAV conference. Drone Festival of India hosts Keynotes and Panel Discussions on the Drone Policies of the World, Advancement of Drone Technology, Operations and Traffic Management in the Drone Ecosystem and the Future of the Drone Industry.

13/12/19 Miriam McNabb/Drone Life

New Delhi: **The government is going to offer Air India, AI Express and AISATS (airport service company) as a combined entity for sale, like the first attempted round of divestment tried in 2018. The sale of airline arm will be followed by divestment in Alliance Air; the maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) arm AI Engineering Services Ltd (AIESL), and AI Air Transport Service (AIATSL). Last year, the process did not move ahead after the airline arm failed to find even a single bidder. To ensure that the Maharaja’s second divestment bid is successful, the government is reportedly looking at bidders to take on only aircraft-related loan, and not a majority of working capital loan. And the state is also looking at a near complete exit from the airline arm.**

In the 2018 failed-divestment bid, the government had offered to sell 76% of Air India to private bidders. And bidders for the airline arm — AI, AI Express and AI-SATS — were expected to take over debt of Rs 24,576 crore and current liabilities of Rs 8,816 crore. These two conditions are likely to see a major shift this time.

12/12/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

The government has decided to sell its entire 100 per cent stake in Air India under the proposed disinvestment process, Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday.

The national carrier, which has a debt burden of more than Rs 50,000 crore, has been making loss for long and as part of revival efforts, the government has decided on disinvestment.

“After formation of the new government, Air India Specific Alternative Mechanism (AISAM) has been reconstituted and the re-initiation of the strategic disinvestment of Air India has been approved.

“AISAM has approved the 100 per cent sale of Government of India stake in Air India for the re-initiated strategic disinvestment of Air India,” the Minister of State for Civil Aviation said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.

Air India’s net loss in 2018-19 is provisionally estimated to be Rs 8,556.35 crore. The minister said various measures, including enabling swift transition of Jet Airways aircraft to other airlines, have been taken to improve the aviation sector.

12/12/19 PTI/Business Line

As the Indian government plans to invite bids for Air India during the next few months, a top official of global airlines body IATA said on Wednesday that the disinvestment of the national carrier should be done in a fair and transparent manner and in a way that it improves competition within the aviation sector of the country. Moreover, the official said that the Jet Airways’ bankruptcy – which happened in April this year – does raise questions on the sustainability of the Indian aviation sector.

“The only thing that we can say about **privatisation of Air India** is that if it has to be done in a way that would probably maintain or improve the competitive conditions of the market,” **Alexandre de Juniac**, Director General, International Air Transport Association (IATA) said on Wednesday. “And, also, it **should allow the government to devote some of the resources, which it was giving to Air India, to the wider aviation sector probably**,” he told reporters.

According to the last month’s data provided by aviation regulator DGCA, low-cost carrier IndiGo carried around 47 per cent of domestic passenger traffic. SpiceJet and Air India were at number two and three with around 15 per cent and 13 per cent share, respectively.

12/12/19 PTI/Financial Express

Dubai: As many as 177 passengers, who were supposed to fly by SpiceJet flight SG 60 from Dubai to Mangaluru at 12.50 pm of Wednesday, had a horrid time as their flight was continuously deferred by the SpiceJet authorities and finally cancelled the flight after 24 hours of keeping the passengers on hook.

The authorities of SpiceJet did not inform the passengers clearly about the reason for delay. Initially operational issues were cited as the reason for the delay but at the end when the flight was cancelled, it said that the flight is cancelled due to **technical fault in the tire of the flight**.

To increase the agony of the passengers, there was no senior SpiceJet representative at the airport to answer and pacify the anxious passengers. **The passengers were not provided taxi fare to go back to their homes and were also not provided hotel accommodation saying that it is a 'Budget Airline'.**

Food and refreshment was provided only once in 24 hours delay. That too the families, including children and elderly people, were asked to walk two floors up to have a Macdonald's meal.

In total eight mails were sent to the passengers after two or three hours and in each mail the time of the flight was kept on deferring. However, at the end the flight itself was cancelled.

12/12/19 daijiworld

Operations at Delhi airport on Thursday were suspended for a brief period and 17 flights were diverted as heavy rains lashed the national capital, according to an official.

Air India and Vistara are among the carriers whose flights have been impacted.

The official said operations were suspended for little over 10 minutes late in the evening and 17 flights were diverted in the wake of bad weather.

In a tweet, Air India said it has diverted at least two flights to Jaipur, and few others have been held up at the Delhi airport due to "heavy rains and consequent congestion".

Five flights of Vistara have been diverted to Ahmedabad and one to Amristar due to bad weather in Delhi, according to a tweet.

12/12/19 Business Standard

New Delhi: As all decks get cleared for the development of Jewar airport in the NCR by 2024, the highways ministry has started exploring possibility of providing a direct link to the airport from upcoming Delhi-Mumbai expressway. NHAI has been asked to study the possibility of developing a spur from Ballabhgarh on Delhi-Mumbai expressway to Jewar.

Sources said road transport and highways minister Nitin Gadkari's office has instructed the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) to carry out a detailed assessment on the road links to Jewar based on the traffic potential of the airport, which is likely to be ready by 2024.

"We will present the options before minister when he takes a review meeting next month. All possibilities will be explored to provide faster link to the airport," said an NHAI official. TOI has learnt that the new link from Ballabhgarh bypass to Jewar airport could be of 30-40 kms and 80% of the road would fall in Haryana.

The NHAI has already prepared the detailed plan for **extending the Delhi-Mumbai expressway from Sohna to DND Flyway via Ballabhgarh. The tender for this 59-km stretch will be floated in the next one week to expedite the work.**

12/12/19 Dipak K Dash/Times of India

Geneva: A top executive at IATA has said that the Indian Government should not interfere in the domestic airline industry; instead, it should allow market forces to determine the success or failure of the airlines.

"India is a highly regulated market. **The Government in every market sets the rules of the game to provide sufficient infrastructure, but it should see to it that regulatory and infrastructure costs are at a low level.** But it should not interfere with the market. The success and failure of the airlines is up to the market and the consumers," **IATA's chief economist, Brian Pearce told BusinessLine.**

Pearce said while airport privatisation in India has generated good quality investments, it has also generated in high-service charges and is holding back air travel.

He added that Indigo is one among 30 airlines worldwide which has been responsible for the improvement in the aggregate industry-level profitability. "Ranking airlines by economic profit shows that a group of around 30 airlines has been responsible for the improvement over the past 30 years. The top-30 airline group has generated sufficient free cash flow to pay down debt and reduce their debt-to-earnings to more or less investment-grade levels. This provides stability and financial resilience if difficult business conditions emerge."

11/12/19 K Giriprakash/Business Line

Pune: Over 100 Air Asia flyers headed for New Delhi remained grounded at the city airport for nearly six hours due to a technical snag on Tuesday evening.

The flight (I5-732) was supposed to take off at 6:15pm and finally departed Pune around 11:55pm.

"AirAsia India reports a delay on account of a technical snag. While we regret the associated inconvenience, we also confirm that all guests were updated and informed," an Air Asia spokesperson said on the delay.

"Guests at the airport were facilitated as per norms to minimise any discomfort. AirAsia India regrets any inconvenience caused on account of the delay but reiterates that it places the safety and security of its guests above all," the spokesperson said.

The airline, however, did not specify the nature of the technical snag the aircraft, an Airbus A320, had suffered.

In November, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation had told all airlines to send text messages to passengers about any flight delay of over half-an-hour or any kind of changes in the arrangements of gates.

Aniket Mohan, one of the passengers on board the flight, tweeted, "The flight has been delayed by more than 5 hours and passengers are just sitting and waiting with no information provided to them."

12/12/19 Joy Sengupta/Times of India

Airlines on Thursday cancelled flights to various cities in Assam in the wake of unrest in the state.

IndiGo, Vistara, Air India, SpiceJet and GoAir are among the carriers that have cancelled their flights. With respect to the ongoing unrest situation in Assam, a few Guwahati and Dibrugarh-bound flights have been cancelled on Thursday, an IndiGo spokesperson said in a statement.

"We are operating relief flights at capped fares for passengers who are currently at these locations," the statement said.

The airline has waived rescheduling/cancellation for passengers travelling to and from Guwahati, Dibrugarh and Jorhat till December 13.

In a tweet, Vistara said it has cancelled flights "as per government advice due to current disturbances in Assam".

"Flight UK725 (IXB-DIB) and UK726 (DIB-IXB) are cancelled for today. We are offering free change/cancellation to Guwahati and Dibrugarh flights through Sunday, December 15," it said.

An Air India spokesperson said that only its flights between Kolkata and Dibrugarh have been cancelled.

12/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

Geneva: Alexandre de Juniac, a former chairman & CEO of Air France-KLM, became the seventh person to head world airlines' trade body, International Air Transport Association (IATA) when he took on the role of Director-General and CEO from September 1, 2016. A French national, de Juniac faces some tough challenges ahead that which includes protectionist policies and trade wars. **In an interview with a group of Indian journalists, he shares the organisation's stand on the Indian aviation industry, including privatisation of airports.**

While IATA does not really make an intervention with regard to how governments run their aviation industry, how does the industry body like yours view divestment of Air India?

We obviously don't have a position on the divestment. What we can say is that if it has to be done then it should maintain or improve the competitiveness of the market. It should also devote the same resources accorded to Air India to be extended it to the other airlines as well. **It should also not harm the interest of any competing airlines, including international airlines. There should be fairness, equality and transparent.**

During the last two years, several Indian domestic airlines have shut down including Jet Airways. How does IATA view this scenario?

When big players go bankrupt it raises several questions. **Firstly, we can see that the operating cost**

for airlines in India is too high. While the competition is quite high, there is an enormous pressure on P&L and combine that with high infrastructure costs and fuel charges, you know where they are heading. High costs makes life difficult for the operators. What the government should do is to lower the costs relating to taxation. **We know that the Indian government is trying to privatise airports but it is not a magical solution. We have a list of do's and don'ts on how to carry out privatisation.** In one case, we had warned about **the consequences of awarding a contract to a company which had promised highest possible revenues.** We knew that **the operator will increase airport charges.** It did happen and later the government asked them to lower these charges.

12/12/19 K Giriprakash/Business Line

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said that that the Centre has raised the issue of unauthorised drones with respective state governments and union territory.

In a written reply to the lower house of the Parliament, Puri said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) keeps track of the registered civil RPAS.

"Regarding unauthorised drones, Government of India has taken up the matter with respective state governments/ Union Territory administrations," he noted.

The aviation regulator DGCA has launched the preliminary version of Digital Sky Platform, which allows RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems) to register themselves. It also issues their permits as well as their flight path approvals, among others.

It is a must for all RPAS to have a Unique Identification Number (UIN) and all such operators are required to get Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) from the DGCA.

12/12/19 Statesman

The Drone Festival of India hosted in partnership with the Ministry of Civil Aviation of the Government of India is India's largest UAV conference. Drone Festival of India hosts Keynotes and Panel Discussions on the Drone Policies of the World, Advancement of Drone Technology, Operations and Traffic Management in the Drone Ecosystem and the Future of the Drone Industry.

Attend the event to meet and network with Aviation Regulators, Drone Manufacturers, Drone Services Companies, Drone Software Companies, Flying Training Organisations, Pilots, Enthusiasts and Consumers of Drone Services from both Government and Private sector companies in the Agriculture, Cement, Chemical, Energy, Infrastructure, Insurance, Logistics, Mining, Oil and Gas, Telecom, Solar and other sectors.

12/12/19 Suas News

Kolkata: A young couple from Mumbai were arrested at the airport in West Bengal capital Kolkata for allegedly smuggling 24 gold bars valued at around 11.5 lakh concealing them inside belt buckles, jeans tags and large dial wrist watches.

The couple -- Ramchand and Sneha Kukreja, both in their mid 30s and residents of Thane in Mumbai - had reached the city airport from Bangkok and were about to board a flight to Mumbai on Wednesday morning when Central Industrial Security Force officials nabbed them during the security check.

"The man's belt buckles looked suspicious and when we checked them we found thin gold bars concealed inside them. Next we began frisking him thoroughly when we found gold strips attached behind denim trouser tags," said a senior airport official.

The CISF officers then called back the two registered baggage of the couple and found similar bars at

other belt buckles, inside casings of large dial wrist watches and inside two M-seal tubes.
11/12/19 Tamaghna Banerjee/Times of India

SpiceJet, India's second-largest airline by market share, may benefit from the recent cut in incremental capacity by IndiGo Airlines for FY20.

In its recent communication to analysts, India's largest airline by market share InterGlobe Aviation, which runs IndiGo Airlines, cut its capacity addition to 22-23 per cent from the earlier guidance of 25 per cent for FY20. **The airline cut its capacity addition guidance primarily due to engine-related issues of its Airbus A320neo aircraft.**

Analysts believe that SpiceJet may gain reasonably from this cut. Indi-Go's cut in its incremental capacity by 2-3 per cent reduces the industry's capacity which provides some scope for SpiceJet to show some aggression in adding more room.

SpiceJet may induct Boeing 737 Max planes in January next, which have higher seat capacity (220 as opposed to 180 in Boeing NG) and are more fuel-efficient (12-15 per cent) than Boeing 737NG (Next Generation) aircraft. **SpiceJet can deploy a part of its capacity in the next six months to gain from last-minute flight bookings which also promise high yields.**

It may replace a few Jet Airways' aircraft with the new Boeing 737 Max. IndiGo followed the same strategy in the past few years by pushing up its capacity in the past few years. SpiceJet also gained from the Jet Airways debacle.

11/12/19 Rajesh Naidu/Economic Times

Shillong: Bids are being invited under the UDAN scheme to build around 30 airports operational to boost tourism activities in Northeast India. Latest reports state that the Centre, under the fourth round of regional air connectivity UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik) scheme, is inviting bids from companies to provide air services to six underserved and 24 unserved airports.

Recently, the Ministry of Civil Aviation stated that the ministry has also recognised **one water aerodrome location, which is up for bidding in the region.** It is expected that this move will not only promote tourism in this region but will also help transform the economic situation around.

Reports further suggest that the Ministry, under UDAN 4 scheme, is providing additional Viability Gap Funding (VGF) of around 25 per cent extra to airlines. In fact, the Centre will bear around 90 per cent of VGF and the remaining 10 per cent will be borne by state governments.

11/12/19 Times of India

New Delhi: Many Air India passengers were stranded at Raipur airport on Tuesday after their plane, that took off for Visakhapatnam, returned due to "technical reasons".

The aircraft is now grounded at Raipur and a relief flight is being arranged, an Air India spokesperson said.

The flight AI651 was to fly to Visakhapatnam and then to Mumbai.

A passenger said the flight, scheduled for 12:30 pm departure, was delayed by an hour, and around 25 minutes after take off, it returned to Raipur. He also claimed that lunch was served only in the evening.

The flight returned "due to technical reasons" and the plane has been grounded. Relief flight is being arranged and would soon depart from Raipur, the spokesperson said in a statement issued at around 08:30 pm.

11/12/19 PTI/Business Standard

Bengaluru: In one of the worst nightmares for any flyer, a GoAir flight carrying 158 passengers, suffered a technical glitch mid-air, 33 minutes after it took off from Singapore's Changi Airport to Bengaluru, in the wee hours of Monday. It had to return to Changi to carry out repairs. Passengers reported to have smelled heavy oil and smoke in the cabin. After repairs were carried out, the flight allegedly took off nearly 43 hours after the scheduled departure time, leaving many stranded at the airport without any information. However, the airline billed it as a 36-hour delay. The incident may give rise to rumours that it was grounded in Singapore. This version was ruled out by the airline. According to an airline spokesperson, "The flight (G8-28) had an air turn back on priority, shortly after take off, following a technical issue." The flight has a scheduled departure time of Indian time 1.50 am (Singapore time: 4.20 am), on Monday and arrival at 6.50 am at KIA. The technical problem that occurred was resolved by the GoAir engineering team, following which the flight was given clearance for take off on Tuesday night around 9 pm (Indian time) he added.

11/12/19 New Indian Express

Greater Noida : Once ready in 2023, the International Airport in Jewar township here in Uttar Pradesh is expected to boost the aviation industry by decongesting the national capital's IGIA as well as expanding the reach of air services to a 'larger population base of the NCR region', experts opine.

Accordingly, industry experts predicted the project to aid airlines to open new routes and add capacity to Delhi sector.

"With Delhi International Airport expected to reach its capacity in the next 3-5 years, it was imperative a second airport to service the NCR region comes up pretty quickly," CRISIL Infrastructure Advisory's Director Jagannarayan Padmanabhan said.

"A successful close of a high value PPP transaction with greenfield development obligation, augurs well for spurring private sector investments in core infra sectors."

Besides, the upcoming airport is expected to open up additional routes along with increasing frequencies from the NCR to other metros and remote regions.

"The new airport's addition will thus allow airlines to start these routes, which will in turn provide convenience to travelers," said Kinjal Shah, VP, Corporate Sector Ratings, ICRA.

10/12/19 New Kerala

New Delhi: Two Airbus A320 Neos on Monday safely returned to their origin airports following snags. An IndiGo Neo saw high vibrations on one of its Pratt & Whitney (PW) engines on a domestic flight. While, an India-bound GoAir Neo had to return to Singapore following oil smell in the aircraft. Both the planes are grounded for checks.

The IndiGo Neo (VT-ITK) was operating as 6E-552 from Delhi to Hyderabad. "There was high vibration in one engine for 15 seconds. The plane safely returned to Delhi," said a senior aviation official.

The GoAir Neo (VT-WJJ) had taken off from Singapore for Bengaluru as G8-028. "This aircraft had to return to Singapore Changi due to oil smell in cockpit and cabin.

A GoAir spokesperson said flight G8 28 "had an air turn back on priority shortly after takeoff following a technical issue. There were 158 passengers on board. The aircraft is currently being attended to by the GoAir engineering team. At GoAir, safety of passengers and crew is of paramount importance and we sincerely regret any inconvenience caused to our passengers. The aircraft has now been cleared to take off for Bengaluru."

10/12/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

New Delhi: **A GoAir flight was on Monday grounded in Singapore following a technical issue.** The GoAir flight number G828 was en route to Bengaluru from Singapore when the smell of oil was reported by the crew in cabin and cockpit mid-air, leading to the grounding of the flight back in Singapore.

There were 158 passengers onboard.

The aircraft is currently being attended to by GoAir engineering team.

Meanwhile, GoAir spokesperson said the safety of passengers and crew is of paramount importance.

The airline further expressed regret for any inconvenience caused to passengers.

As per the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) sources, the matter is under investigation.

Engine maker Pratt & Whitney has been asked to look into the problem and submit a report as soon as possible.

Notably, the budget carrier has been asked by aviation regulator DGCA to replace their faulty P&W engines on their Airbus 320neo aircraft.

10/12/19 TimesNowNews

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has approved a Boeing training facility at Singapore for B787 aircraft as the domestic training facility does not have spare capacity.

"In a first of its kind move, we have granted approval to a foreign Approved Training Organization as per our certification process. In the current case, approval has been accorded to Boeing training facility in Singapore for B787 type of aircraft," DGCA director general Arun Kumar said.

This will help in timely induction of aircraft as more options will be available to Indian operators for training infrastructure. Regular surveillance and oversight will be done by DGCA and we will ensure that training content, qualification of trainers and training devices will be as per Indian standards, Kumar added.

Currently, national carrier Air India has the only domestic training facility for B787 aircraft but it does not have any spare capacity to train pilots of any other airline, sources aware of the development said.

The move is likely to bring much relief to domestic full-service carrier Vistara as it gets ready to induct the wide-body aircraft from February.

The joint venture of Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines started hiring for Boeing 787 aircraft last month as it invited applications for first officers with an experience of minimum 500 hours on B787 after line release.

10/12/19 Anu Sharma/CNBC TV18

Coimbatore: **A Coimbatore bound Indigo flight suffered a technical snag on Tuesday just hours before the take-off.**

The flight was scheduled to leave the Chennai airport at 6:15 in the morning. All the passengers were stranded at the airport.

Congress leader and former Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram was amongst the 147 passengers. The delay affected his schedule and hence he had to cancel his trip to Coimbatore. He later left for Delhi on an Air India flight at around 10 am. More details in this regard are awaited.

10/12/19 ANI/Free Press Journal

Jammu: Jammu and Kashmir High Court on Tuesday dismissed the Public Interest Litigation seeking directions to upgrade the Civil Airport, Jammu as par with the international airports with provision

of inflow and outflow of international flights in view of large number of pilgrims visiting Jammu from outside the country to pay obeisance to Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine in which an application was filed by 10 applicants praying for the reasons stated and to be submitted at the time of hearing. The petition was filed by Advocate Ravi Abrol.

A Division Bench of Jammu and Kashmir **High Court** Jammu Wing Comprising Chief Justice Gita Mittal and Justice Rajesh Bindal **did not find any merit in the petition and dismissed the same.**

10/12/19 UNI

The number of Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) routes that commenced this year connecting the airports in the state doubled, as compared to 2018.

During 2018, nine routes had commenced of these one route between Bengaluru and Vidyanagar was under the RCS-UDAN 1.0 and the remaining eight under the RCS-UDAN 2.0.

According to Airport Authority of India (AAI) data as on December 7, during 2019 eighteen routes were operationalised of which five routes were under RCS-UDAN 2.0 and the remaining 13 routes under RCSUDAN 3.0.

The 18 routes which commenced operations under the RCS are : Bengaluru-Kannur, Hubballi-Kannur, Hubballi-Tirupati, Hubballi-Hindon, Hubballi-Hyderabad, Belagavi-Hyderabad, Belagavi-Ahmedabad, Belagavi-Pune, Mysuru-Bengaluru, Bengaluru-Gwalior, Belagavi-Mumbai, Mysuru-Hyderabad, MysuruGoa, Mysuru-Kochi, Belagavi-Mumbai, Belagavi-Hyderabad, Mysuru-Hyderabad and Bengaluru-Kalaburgi.

Of these one route between Mysuru-Kochi has stopped operations. The Alliance Air flight AI 9893 which used to operate on the Mysuru-Kochi route will be deployed on the Kalaburagi-Mysuru route.

10/12/19 Hemanth CS/Bangalore Mirror

Tata Sons and AirAsia Berhad – promoters of low-cost carrier AirAsia India – have infused Rs 466 crore into the carrier to fund its aggressive expansion plans. While Tata Sons put in **Rs 237.8 crore** into the budget carrier, AirAsia Investment has injected **Rs 228.4 crore**, according to a filing with the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

The promoters had invested Rs 500 crore during the last round of funding in April 2019. AirAsia India, which started operations in June 2014, is awaiting the government's permission to operate on international routes. Tatas, which also run full-service carrier Vistara in partnership with Singapore Airlines, control 51% in AirAsia India while 49% is held by Malaysia-based AirAsia Berhad.

Last week, Vistara promoters had invested Rs 600 crore to fuel the airline's international growth plans. AirAsia is the fifth-largest domestic carrier after IndiGo, SpiceJet, Air India and GoAir with a 6.5% market share in October 2019. Domestic carriers have gained market share since Jet Airways shut operations in April 2019.

AirAsia carried 5.3 million passengers from April-October, up 30% year-on-year from the same period last year. Its domestic market share was 5.9% in March 2019. Since then, the airline strengthened its existing network and added new routes like Mumbai-Goa and Mumbai-Chennai. Its domestic capacity has jumped around 30% y-o-y so far in FY20.

The airline's weekly departures increased by 326 to 1,345 flights in the ongoing winter schedule as compared to the year-ago period. **The Bengaluru-based carrier has plans to increase its fleet size to 100 in the next five years, from 27 aircraft of the Airbus 320 family at present.**

10/12/19 Arun Nayal/Financial Express

Kannur: Chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan has said people's participation is the success of any development project, and hence the residents here and non-resident Malayalis should come forward to invest in Kannur International Airport (KIAL) and surrounding areas.

Inaugurating the first anniversary celebrations of the airport on Monday, he also said there is immense scope for development after the airport became a reality and it would get a further boost once Azhikkal Port is also developed.

"The steps to start industries related to the aviation as well as non-aviation sectors are progressing and they would be realized soon," he said, adding that the land acquisition is going on.

Meanwhile, in order to fully tap the development opportunities, the roads to the airport should also be developed and the efforts are going on in that direction as well, he added.

The new flight service by GoAir to Dammam will start on December 19 while Air India has come forward to operate service to Jeddah, he said.

Though many foreign airlines have expressed their interest to start flight service from here, unfortunately the airport has not received the nod from the Union civil aviation ministry despite the efforts made by the state government and KIAL, he added.

10/12/19 Times of India

Directorate General of Civil Aviation mandated Safety Assessment was carried out for 3C license for Jagdalpur Airport on Monday.

Upgraded 3C license will enable Jagdalpur Airport to allow landing of ATR72 type of 70-seater aircraft. All concerns raised in previous inspection carried out by Directorate General of Civil Aviation for upgrading from 2C to 3C licence, hazards were deliberated and mitigation were agreed upon by all stakeholders.

The stakeholders are Airports Authority of India, Government of Chhattisgarh, ATR72 Pilot and engineer from Alliance Air, Indian Air Force, pilots of Chhattisgarh State plane, NTRO and DRDO.

This Safety Assessment report will be submitted to Directorate General of Civil Aviation for upgrading license to 3C /ATR72. After the grant of 3C licence, Alliance Air is contemplating to start services from Jagdalpur under Regional Connectivity Scheme.

The Airports Authority of India team was led by Rakesh Ranjan Sahay, Airport Director, Swami Vivekananda Airport, Raipur and comprised S.K Sikder, Joint General Manager (Aviation Safety, Kolkata) and others.

10/12/19 Pioneer

New Delhi: To boost tourism in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, the Centre has invited bids to provide flight services to three unserved airports in the region under the fourth round of the regional air connectivity -- Udan -- scheme.

"With focus on connectivity of islands, Udan 4.0 scheme under the MoCA (Ministry of Civil Aviation) has invited bids for three unserved airports in the Andaman & Nicobar Island and one underserved airport in the Lakshadweep Island," it said on Monday.

"The MoCA has also recognised **four water aerodrome locations in the Andamans and two in the Lakshadweep Island that is up for bidding,**" it said.

According to the statement, the Home Ministry is aiming to promote the Cochin-Agatti-Cochin sector and allow more airlines to operate this route.

"Accordingly, as an exception to the scheme, the Cochin-Agatti route has been incorporated under the current version of the scheme to provide additional connectivity to the island region," it said.

Under the Udan 4 scheme, the Ministry is also providing additional viability gap funding (VGF) of around 25 per cent to airlines.

"The MoCA aims to operationalise 1,000 routes and more than 100 airports in five years. This would be achieved by focusing on operationalising routes in priority areas," the Ministry said.

09/12/19 IANS/Outlook

It has been a busy week for international airlines in India. **On December 9, Vistara signed a code share agreement with German carrier Lufthansa. Two days earlier, on December 7, United Airlines, the third largest carrier in the world, started non-stop services between Delhi and San Francisco. Later that day, VietJet Air - Vietnam's low cost airline - launched first direct flight between Hanoi and New Delhi.**

The end of the year will also see Delta Air Lines, another American aviation major, restart its non-stop flight between Mumbai and New York after a decade.

According to a report by CNBC-TV18, apart from Vietjet, six more new international airlines will launch services to India this winter. The other five include Air Tanzania, Arkia Israeli Airlines, Azerbaijan Airlines, Lot Polish, Nok Air, Nok Scoot Air

It's not that earlier part of the year was any less hectic. **While Virgin Atlantic relaunched its service between Mumbai and London, Qatar Airways signed a code share agreement with IndiGo, giving the former greater access to the Indian aviation market. Not to talk about the buzz around Emirates, which signed a codeshare agreement with SpiceJet.**

Lufthansa's George Ettiyil sums up the attraction overseas airlines have for India. "By teaming up with Vistara we will strengthen and expand our position as the leading and most popular European airline in India – a country all set to become the third-largest aviation market in just a few years' time," said the senior director sales for the Lufthansa Group Airlines in South Asia.

09/12/19 moneycontrol.com

New Delhi: In a bid to boost regional connectivity and making air travel affordable, the Civil Aviation Ministry has urged the Defence Ministry to exempt smaller aircraft from payment of landing charges at airports controlled by it.

Exemption from landing charges at Civil Enclaves, airports belonging to the armed forces but used for commercial flights also, would help airlines save on cost and then pass on the benefits to passengers by way of lowering ticket prices.

There are over 23 Civil Enclaves such as Goa, Pune, Port Blair, Srinagar and Bagdogra where scheduled domestic airlines operate.

"The Ministry of Defence has been requested to consider exemption from landing charges on aircraft with a maximum certified capacity of less than 80 seats, being operated by domestic scheduled operators at defence airfields," Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said in a written reply in Lok Sabha.

The defence authorities collect the landing charges at Civil Enclaves as per the Aeronautical Information Circular (AIC) issued by aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). An executive of a private airline said that many carriers have inducted smaller aircraft like ATRs and Bombardier 400s to launch new flights to various tier-II towns. Further, while these aircraft are exempted from paying landing charges at various PPP airports and those owned by and run by Airports Authority of India (AAI), they are required to pay landing charges.

New Delhi: **Airlines need to refund the full value of passenger's ticket and compensation equal to 400% of booked one-way basic fare plus fuel charge in case the airlines denies boarding to him or her despite having confirmed ticket and if the passenger does not opt for an alternative flight provided by the airlines. The total amount of compensation can be claimed for this is maximum Rs 20,000, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri told Lok Sabha in reply to a question.**

Members of Parliament Devji M. Patel and Ram Shankar Katheria sought to know what protection passengers have when despite having confirmed ticket airlines deny them seat in the flight due to overbooking. There is a common grievance against the airlines that they book tickets more than the number of seats available to make profit.

In October this year, a total of 1,102 passengers were denied boarding by various airlines. Out of these, the highest was by Air India (822), followed by Spicejet (226), IndiGo (35), Air Asia (14) and least was by Vistara (5). The total amount compensated by the airlines to all these passengers was over Rs 47 lakhs.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) receives details of passengers affected due to denied boarding from the scheduled domestic airlines as part of monthly submission of traffic data. In order to ensure appropriate protection of the air travellers in case of denied boarding, the DGCA had in February this year issued specific guidelines under Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) for refunds. However, **DGCA, primarily being a safety the regulatory body does not regulate the commercial activities of the airlines**, the minister added.

08/12/19 Asian Age

New Delhi: **Despite having a thriving aviation industry that has 625 aircraft flying passengers daily, India has only four domestic Aircraft Maintenance Organisations (AMO) with the capacity and requisite certifications for base maintenance, repair and overhaul needs (MRO) of the planes, out of the 48 approved by director general of civil aviation (DGCA).**

The government says that an estimated 85%-90% of the base MRO is supplied by overseas AMOs. "Given the technical and skill base and in recognition of the potential for attaining self sufficiency in MRO sector, attracting business from foreign airlines, and developing India as a hub for MRO services, various interventions have been made from time to time under National Civil Aviation Policy 2016. There has been renewed focus on development of engine shops, component and airframe MRO in India by aviation original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and logistics services providers," minister of state for civil aviation, Hardeep Singh Puri told Lok Sabha recently in response to a question.

He added that **several steps have been taken for creation of a congenial atmosphere for broad-based development of MRO in the country. These include, exemption of customs duty on tools and tool kits; reduced GST on various spare parts, accessories and consumables; relaxed restriction on utilization of duty-free parts from one year to three years.**

In addition, 100% foreign direct investment is permitted via automatic route for MRO along with liberalised policy for borrowing and lending in foreign currency and Rupees. There are also prescribed modalities for concessional temporary imports of spare parts by foreign airlines for repair of their aircraft in transit, the minister added.

08/12/19 Asian Age

India has the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world and is now considering making it easier for foreign airlines to invest in Indian airlines.

According to an unnamed source in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, tourism website

Shift which is Nordic for “shift” or “transformation” is reporting **that India is considering amending a foreign ownership rule when it comes to domestic airlines.**

When you look at airline ownership rules in India it is a little misleading as the country allows 100% ownership in India-based airlines providing they have government approval.

The truth, however, is that foreign investment in Indian airlines is limited to a 49% stake like Singapore Airlines stake in Tata-owned Vistara.

The reason why the Indian government wants to relax its rule on foreign airline ownership is that it cannot find a private buyer for state-owned Air India.

Debt-laden and overstaffed with around 12,000 employees who enjoy incredible benefits like medical insurance for their entire families for life, if Air India was a horse it would have been shot already.

On a domestic level as a full-service airline, it cannot compete with the private sector and the airfares offered by the likes of Spicejet and IndiGo.

Internationally it has to compete with Gulf carriers Emirates, Qatar, and Etihad who quite honestly provide a better service with more connections to the India subcontinent than Air India could ever manage.

The only thing Air India has that could be enticing to a foreign buyer is coveted landing slots at some of the world’s major airports.

Seriously though, if the Indian government wants to get the loss-making airline of its books it would have to allow the buyer to fire tenured staff and start over with a new business model.

This, of course, is something that airline workers’ unions would never allow, as working for Air India is considered as being a job for life.

08/12/19 Mark Finlay/Simple Flying

The world’s first ISO approved drone standards have been announced Thursday by the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) following a 12-month period of consultation with drone professionals, academics, businesses and the general public.

The final publication of these new international safety and quality Standards for Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) are set to have a massive impact on the future growth of the drone industry throughout the world, and, are the product of several years of cooperation and rigorous interrogation from all sectors of society.

This important first step is part of a wider deliverable by ISO which is expected to trigger rapid acceleration in the use of air drones by organisations keen to reap the rewards of this transformative technology, against a background of reassurance on safety and security within a new framework of approved regulatory compliance.

Thursday’s announcement by ISO represents enormous progress in the standardisation of the global drone industry and is of particular significance in addressing the operational requirements of the more recognised and prevalent air drones, also known as UAS. **The new Standards include protocols on Quality, Safety, Security and overall ‘etiquette’ for the operation of commercial air drones, which will help shape future regulation and legislation. It is the first in a series of emerging standards for air drones, with others due to address General Specifications, Product Manufacture and Maintenance, Unmanned Traffic Management (UTM) and Testing Procedures. The Product Manufacture standards for UAS, which are due to be published next year, will combine with the operational standards already published to establish a full-airworthiness suite of standards for UAS.**

Commenting on Thursday’s announcement, Robert Garbett, Convenor of the ISO Working Group responsible for global air drone operational Standards, Chairman of the BSI Committee for UK Drone

Standards and Founder of Drone Major Group, the world's first global drone consultancy, said: "I am delighted that the operating Standards for air drones have now been approved and published. This success follows four years of collaboration involving ISO, BSI and other national standards bodies from all over the world, reinforced through expert input from a wide range of industry and public sector stakeholders. The Standards will deliver a new confidence among investors in the safety, security and compliance of commercial drone operations, which together with the Product Manufacture and Maintenance Standards, is expected in turn to facilitate a massive expansion in the availability and use of drone technology in the years to come."

"Drones are a transformative global phenomenon, offering an unprecedented economic opportunity for those businesses and countries with the foresight to embrace this technology. My own conversations with Government, businesses and other stakeholders have shown that the new Standards will be enthusiastically welcomed and will empower organisations to discover how they can use drone technology to enhance their competitive position, adding value and creating growth and jobs."

Air safety

A key attribute of the ISO Standards announced Thursday is their focus on air safety, which is at the forefront of public attention in connection with airports and other sensitive locations. **The new Standards promotes an 'etiquette' for drone use that reinforces compliance towards no-fly zones, local regulation, flight log protocols, maintenance, training and flight planning documentation. Social responsibility is also at the heart of the Standards, which strengthens the responsible use of a technology that aims to improve and not disrupt everyday life.** The effectiveness of the Standards in improving air safety will be further strengthened by the continuing rapid development of geo-fencing and counter-drone technology[3], providing frontline protection against 'rogue' drone operators.

Privacy and data protection

The Standards also seek to address public concerns surrounding privacy and data protection, demanding that operators must have appropriate systems to handle data alongside communications and control planning when flying. The hardware and software of all related operating equipment must also be kept up to date. Significantly, the fail-safe of human intervention is required for all drone flights, including autonomous operations, ensuring that drone operators are held accountable.

The exciting future for drones

Air drones are already beginning to provide solutions to some of the most pressing economic, transport, security, environmental and productivity challenges faced by governments and industry throughout the world, reducing road traffic, easing congestion, saving lives through a reduction in accidents and reducing pollution in our cities. As well as speeding up the delivery of large-scale infrastructure projects, drones are expected to reduce the need for some expensive new major transport infrastructure altogether.

New exciting applications for air drones are being developed daily. Revolutionary approaches are emerging for freight and passenger transportation, with drones providing a cost-effective and environmentally responsible alternative to traditional methods, relieving the burden on our already stretched urban road networks. Further applications in the agricultural, maritime, construction and energy sectors among others, are already transforming businesses, with virtually all industries and business sectors set to benefit from the Standard-led adoption of rapidly evolving drone technology.

Impact on the economy

A number of recent reports have attempted to forecast the economic impact of air drones globally. For instance, in its report Drones Reporting for Work, **Goldman Sachs has estimated that the size of the global drone industry will reach \$100 billion by 2020.** Most recently, analysts at **Barclays estimate that the global commercial drone market will grow tenfold from \$4bn in 2018 to \$40bn in five years. They believe the use of drones will result in cost savings of some \$100bn.** These predictions relate solely to air drones, demonstrating that the economic benefits offered by drone technology are vast, with growth set to accelerate across surface, underwater, air & space, as well as emerging hybrid drone applications.

05/12/19 Press Release/International Organisation for Standardisation

France-based Safran Group is considering a \$150-million investment in a new aircraft engine maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) unit in India to cater for its airline customers, according to the company. Safran and GE Aviation own a 50 per cent stake each in the US-based CFM International, which manufactures engines for the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737 types of aircraft. **Currently, around 220 Airbus and Boeing planes in India are fitted with CFM engines. Additionally, there are 485 planes on order from IndiGo, SpiceJet, and Vistara, which will be equipped with these engines and are expected to be delivered over the next five years.**

CFM International, which competes with engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney, won a \$20-billion order from IndiGo to supply engines for 280 Airbus A320neo in June. **Plans to set up an MRO unit in India are being evaluated** following the big order win.

To a query from Business Standard about its plans, Safran said, **“As a long-standing partner of the Indian aerospace industry, Safran is committed to supporting growth in the Indian market.”**

“Given the fast expansion of the CFM fleet in Asia and in India specifically, we are considering the possibility of building a new Safran shop in this region of the world to address the growing MRO needs. This new shop will represent an investment of more than \$150 million,” adds Safran.

Currently, only Air India has capabilities for in-house maintenance of aircraft engines, while all other carriers send their engines overseas for overhaul and major repairs. A domestic MRO will help Indian airlines to reduce costs and save on foreign exchange, besides generating employment for engineers and technicians.

A team of Safran executives visited Air India's MRO facilities in Mumbai a few months ago to check the airline's capabilities. An Air India executive said labour costs in India were half of those in Europe or the US and that would make a maintenance unit attractive for other airlines.

Safran Group is discussing issues related to tax and regulatory framework for MROs with the civil aviation ministry. In India, an 18 per cent goods and services tax is applicable to aircraft maintenance jobs and airport operators charge high royalties on units, making the MRO business in India unattractive. An investment decision will depend on favourable policy decisions, it is learnt. Safran declined comment on the issue of tax structure in India.

According to the MRO Association of India, the size of Indian repair and overhaul market is \$1-1.2 billion. "More than 90 per cent of business generated by Indian commercial airlines is being carried out overseas by large MRO companies in Singapore, Germany, Turkey, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia," the association said.

Wings of Opportunity :

\$1-1.2 billion: Size of Indian maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) market

1,000: CFM engines likely to be in service in India in the next five years

40-45%: Share of an airline's maintenance expense related to engines

Air India carries out in-house maintenance of aircraft engines. All other airlines send engines overseas for overhaul

Business Standards 26/12/2019

The technical workshop on "Environmental Matters in the aviation" which took place on December 10th-12th at the Indian Aviation academy was co-organised under the EU-India partnership on transport and aviation and the EU-SOUTH ASIA APP (AVIATION PARTNERSHIP PROJECT), which aims at advancing cooperation between the EU and South-Asian Country on safety, adoption of EU standards in Aviation, drones and environment. <https://www.eu-southasia-app.org/>.

Main focus: implementation of the CORSIA scheme for offsetting emissions from international aviation.

Experts from EASA consultants Vertis, who conducted the workshop shared the following:

CORSIA is a global market based measure to offset international aviation's CO2 emissions above 2020 levels through international credits, adopted in the ICAO framework to provide a tool to address emissions from international aviation, which are currently left out of NDCs accounting of emissions. The NDCs only address domestic flights.

The regime requires States to monitor, verify and report their CO2 emissions from nationally registered aeroplane operators during 2019 and 2020. The average yearly CO2 emissions reported during that period will represent the baseline for carbon neutral growth from 2020.

On the so calculated baseline, offsetting requirements are calculated according to a dynamic approach to take into account the growth of the aviation sector and that of an individual aeroplane operator.

The CORSIA regime comprises of three implementation phases: the pilot phase (2021-2023), a first phase (2024-2026) and a second phase (2027-2035).

States can choose to participate voluntary from the pilot phase, but will be required to mandatory participate from 2027 (second phase).

When a State participates, national aeroplane operators are required to meet their offsetting requirements on a 3-year compliance period basis by purchasing and cancelling CORSIA eligible emissions units

For more details: <https://www.easa.europa.eu/eaer/topics/market-based-measures/corsia>

IndiGo, India's leading carrier, is pleased to announce their partnership with Chimes Aviation Academy (CAA) to select and train ab-initio pilots as future Junior First Officers under the airline's flagship training programme – Cadet Pilot Programme. The programme is designed to meet the airline's fleet expansion and corresponding demand for pilots.

CAA is a fully India home-grown Aviation Training Organisation which has been training pilots since 2008. **The IndiGo Cadet Pilot Program will be carried out at the CAA Flying School in Madhya Pradesh wherein the selected cadets will undergo a rigorous 4-month ground schooling at CAA in Dhana, followed by 10 months of flight training. Upon completion of training in Dhana, the cadets will proceed to an authorized Training Organization for the Multi-Crew Cooperation (MCC) and A320 Type Rating stage of training.**

Mr. Y N Sharma, CEO and Promoter, Chimes Aviation Academy said “We at CAA are excited about the opportunity to partner IndiGo. We hope to be recognised as a suitable airline flying training institution, in India and the South East Asia Region”.

On the announcement, Capt. Ashim Mittra, Senior Vice President – Flight Operations at IndiGo said, “We are happy to introduce Chimes Aviation Academy as our newest partner to train career-oriented pilots for IndiGo’s flagship training module – Cadet Pilot Programme – an initiative that we believe is changing the airline industry in India and providing aspiring pilots with a life-changing opportunity. This partnership is a testimony to our commitment to establish a steady flow of confident and skilled air pilots over the foreseeable future”.

25/12/19 APN

As the deadline for the privatisation of Air India approaches, much is afoot. This includes union opposition, a lack of investor interest, and an NCLAT judgment for one of Air India’s suitors. The government, however, is firm in its resolve. After all, Air India continues to bleed, with no respite in sight. Its FY19 loss was Rs 8,556 crore; FY20 will likely be worse. This, after the government infused `17,320 crore of taxpayer money over the last five years. Needless to say, the situation is unsustainable. Yet, in the rush to privatise, the connectivity to the North East may have been overlooked.

India’s NorthEast (NE) comprises of the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, also known as the seven sisters. An ethnically, culturally, and geographically diverse region, the NE is connected with the rest of the country through a narrow corridor of approximately 21 kilometres. Within the NE, connectivity initiatives are underway, the most famous being the Bogibeel bridge that connects Dibrugarh to Dhemaji, supplementing the Kolia Bhomora Setu. However, such projects have long gestation periods, and are focused on intra-regional connectivity. Air connectivity, therefore, continues to be the fastest and most economical means.

This connectivity challenge was partly addressed by the poorly thought-out Route Dispersal Guidelines (RDGs). But, in a classic case of intent versus impact, airlines started plying on these routes for compliance rather than connectivity. As such, most airlines include routes that had high demand—Srinagar, Jammu, Guwahati, and Bagdogra—in their network. The structure of the network can be adjusted to ensure compliance.

When this did not work, the government, in 2016, launched the regional connectivity scheme UDAN. This included subsidies for NE routes. However, there have been few takers. In the four iterations of UDAN, UDAN-1 did not have any routes in the NE; UDAN-2 connected Tezpur, Jorhat, Lilabari, and Pakyong (Tezpur and Pakyong operations have since ceased); UDAN-3 connected Lilabari, Guwahati, Imphal, and Dimapur route, but all have been loss-making; and UDAN-4 has six airports from the NE listed as priority areas, and an additional 23 unserved airports. Several airlines have attempted to start operations in the NE, but without much success.

25/12/19 Satyendra Pandey/Financial Express

The Resolution Professional of Jet Airways (9W, Mumbai Int'l) Ashish Chhawchharia issued a new call for Expressions Of Interest (EOI) in the airline with a deadline to submit bids on January 6, 2020.

The first call, initially announced on July 20, resulted in just one valid EOI from Synergy Aerospace. However, the South American holding subsequently failed to submit a valid business plan for the revival of the airline despite numerous extensions of the deadline.

The liquidator said that the new call would allow other entities to join or re-join the bidding.

Reportedly, two new investors showed interest in Jet Airways in recent weeks. While their precise identities have not been disclosed, one has been reported to be an Indian entity backed by UK investors, while the other one is reportedly a "fund based in West Asia".

Indian conglomerate Hinduja Group, which showed interest in Jet Airways in summer 2019 but ultimately did not bid, said it remained interested in the carrier but only if it was allowed to acquire it without liabilities.

"The National Company Law Tribunal wasn't giving us protection from past problems. So, if we were to go into Jet Airways, we would face past problems. We said we need a clean sheet," chairman of the group's India operations Ashok Hinduja told The Mint.

Hinduja underlined that the initial interest of the conglomerate in Jet Airways came after the government and the creditors requested it to invest in the then-functioning airline.

Prospective bidders were discouraged by the unclear status of Jet Airways' slots at Delhi Int'l, Mumbai Int'l, and London Heathrow airports. In particular, the Indian authorities have so far been providing contradictory information as to whether Jet Airways would be able to regain its former slots, which have since its collapse been reallocated to other Indian carriers.

25/12/19 ch-aviation

From now onwards, all the core operations, including commercial, finance, training and operations of AirAsia India will be directed independently by Tata Sons, not its Malaysian parent, AirAsia Berhad, holding 51 and 49 per cent shares respectively.

This happened after both companies agreed to amend a controversial brand licensing agreement, which was signed in 2013, and handed power and rights to use the AirAsia brand.

However, it was mired in controversy as key decisions needed approval from the parent. Besides, this also raised concerns that the daily management was being handled by foreign nationals. India's civil aviation regulations mandate the effective control of airlines jointly owned by Indian and foreign entities lie with the Indian firm.

People in the know said both entities were finalising the revised agreement. A draft agreement submitted to the Ministry of Civil Aviation and reviewed by Business Standard says that sales and distribution, revenue management, network planning, catering and in-flight services, finance and corporate finance, customer experience, engineering, and leasing contracts will now be under the sole discretion of AirAsia India.

These require approval from the parent under the present agreement. A spokesperson of AirAsia Berhad directed the queries to the Indian unit, but the AirAsia India spokesperson refused to comment.

In case you don't know, AirAsia Berhad has similar agreements with the other three affiliates — Thai AirAsia, Philippines AirAsia, and Indonesia AirAsia. These, along with AirAsia India, pay annual fees for using the AirAsia brand.

In view of this recent move, a Tata group executive said and I quote "Earlier, a lot of core functions such as revenue management, sales, and leasing needed expertise of the joint venture partner, but now the airline is fully capable of handling the functions."

The Tatas have already appointed key executives from its group firms in Air Asia India. In 2018, it appointed Tata lifer Sunil Bhaskaran as chief executive. Last month, it appointed Titan's Vikas Agarwal as chief financial officer. And has appointed Tata Steel executive Ranganathan R as advisor to the CEO, recently.

25/12/19 Kanishka Gupta/Business Standard

The Indian government is yet again making a push towards connecting unserved and underserved airports via the UDAN policy (now in its fourth phase) while preparing for the privatisation of an additional six airports. Even so, the challenge of developing regional airports remains. The Airports Authority of India has spent over Rs 1,100 crore on this effort yet the facilities and operations at these airports remain woefully inadequate. While the rhetoric is high, traffic levels are low. Viability is suspect. And consequently, airlines are reluctant to include these airports in their networks. What will it take to change this?

Historically, a regional airport is one that sees traffic of fewer than one million passengers per year. For India with a total of 449 airports, the majority of airports are in this category. Those with scheduled services sometimes see footfalls of as little as 7,000 passengers. Most regional airports operate at a loss.

Because traffic is the lifeblood of any airport and revenue generation is mostly linked to traffic, these miniscule traffic volumes effectively mean that smaller airports are challenged to provide an adequate return. **By the numbers, estimates for the Airports Authority of India (AAI) indicate that 75 percent of the airports owned by AAI are registering losses – most being regional airports. With the profitable airports being privatised, AAI is set to receive a stable revenue stream which can then be deployed towards developing regional airports.** This in addition to the healthy cash-balance that is in excess of \$2 billion. Thus indications are that heavy investment into developing small regional airports will likely be a focus area for the future.

But along with developing infrastructure, there also has to be an effective strategy geared at developing traffic, tourist footfalls and connectivity. On this front, several avenues remain unexplored.

25/12/19 Satyendra Pandey/CNBC TV18

Chennai: People of Indian origin who live abroad continue to find it difficult to travel to India on holidays because a change in norms regarding travel documents was not communicated in time by the ministry of home affairs to travel and tour operators and airlines.

The rule issued by the ministry says that people of Indian origin who are below 20 years should have their OCI (overseas citizenship of India) card re-issued on renewal of their foreign passports and those who have attained 50 years have to get the OCI card re-issued for travel to India.

Many people of Indian origin living in UK, the US, Europe and other countries who travel to India to visit friends and relatives during Christmas and New Year and to attend social functions could not travel after airlines refused to board them. Many had to cancel their trips planned three to four months ago. Others who could not avoid travel had to spend Rs 2,000 to get a fresh visa, pay rebooking charges of close to Rs 12,000 and pay difference in fare.

Basheer Ahmed of Metro Travels said that several families whose trips got cancelled because airlines did not allow them to board could not travel because flights are full for the next two weeks and air fares are high. People from Tamil Nadu have got affected the most because a good number of diaspora live in the US and Europe.

Return air fare is in the range of Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh from destinations in Europe to Chennai for travel in the last week of December and first week of January.

Zawahir, who holds a French passport, and hails from Mayiladuthurai, said, "I had to leave behind three of my children because the airline did not allow them to board the flight at Paris because their new passport numbers were not on the OCI card on December 16. The airline received an instruction from the Indian embassy but the travel agent who booked my ticket did not know about the new rule. I had to come to Chennai for a wedding which could not be avoided. I sent the children back home with a friend."

25/12/19 V Ayyappan/Times of India

New Delhi: The Indian Commercial Pilots' Association has written to Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri refuting statements he had made in the parliament and highlighting the "ground reality". The association said that their "patience is running thin" and that they are in "no position to continue working with uncertainty looming large at Air India".

The association has also said that Air India pilots' salaries are not at par with other airline and that they haven't received their dues on time for the past 2-3 years. It has affected their "livelihood and families," stated the association in a statement.

In the parliament, Puri had said that the Air India pilots are very well looked after and that their salary in relation to other air carriers is very good. The pilots responded by saying that "the ground reality is very different". "The salary of co-pilots is definitely not at par with other air carriers. These pilots are only paid half of what other air carriers are offering," they said in the statement.

The Air India pilots said that they haven't received their salaries and flying allowances on time for the past 2-3 years. "Flying allowance constitutes 70 per cent of pilots' pay package and we are facing severe financial constraints due to delay in flying allowance. As we write to you, we are yet to receive the flying allowance for the work done in the month of October 2019. We have been living with uncertainty for the past 2-3 years, and as a result, many employees have defaulted on their loan and other payments. This has greatly affected our livelihood and our families," they said.

24/12/19 Business Today

Mumbai: Disinvestment-bound Air India looks to fill three director level positions and has invited applications from suitable candidates for the posts.

Executive director-level officials are currently officiating the **positions of director operations, commercial and personnel**. "Ministry of Civil Aviation invites application for the posts of Director (Operations), Director (Personnel) and Director (Commercial) in Air India Ltd," the ministry said in a public notice. **The last date for submission of application in the ministry is January 13, 2020, according to the notice.**

Amrita Sharan has been performing the role of director personnel since June last year; Amitabh Singh has been officiating as director operations at the flag carrier since November 2018. Minakshi Malik has been officiating as director commercial since May this year. The post of director personnel has been lying vacant since January 2017 when the then incumbent Nikhil Jain moved to the National Hydro Power Commercial in the same capacity.

24/12/19 PTI/Business Insider

About 35 Lakh passengers have flown under the regional air connectivity scheme - Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN) till date.

The scheme was launched in October 2016, to provide connectivity to un-served and under-served

regions through the revival of existing airstrips and airports.

Civil Aviation Ministry said, the travelling time has reduced drastically and the public at large is benefited for the purpose of tourism, medical emergencies and religious shrines.

It said, 134 routes commenced in the last one year.

23/12/19 All India Radio

New Delhi: **With Pratt & Whitney (PW) engines on GoAir Airbus A320 Neos also developing snags soon after take off, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has decided to check engines that have done over 3,000 hours.** This decision was taken by DGCA chief Arun Kumar after two instances of snags in last three days.

Arun Kumar said: "We are carrying out precautionary checks on engines, which have done more than 3,000 hours. We hope to arrest the slide and bring back normalcy."

On Monday, a GoAir A320 Neo (VT-WGL) operating as G8-546 from Guwahati to Kolkata witnessed high vibration on one of the two PW engines and then the engine stalled when the aircraft was in climb phase passing 1,500 feet.

"There was a loud bang sound from the engine. A passenger reported tailpipe fire. All other engine parameters fluctuating. The pilot shut down the engine as a precautionary measure," said a DGCA official. Since twin-engine planes can land safely on one engine, this aircraft did so by returning to Guwahati.

"During ground inspection low pressure turbine stage 3 blades were found damaged, say sources.

A GoAir spokesperson said flight G8 546 from Guwahati to Kolkata "did an air turn back due to a technical glitch. The flight landed safely at Kolkata airport with 132 passengers on board."

"The aircraft is being inspected and rectified by GoAir engineering team. Alternate flight arrangements are being explored to accommodate the passengers to their destination. GoAir regrets the inconvenience caused to its passengers," the airline said.

This Sunday, a GoAir Neo had to return to Mumbai soon after taking off for Chandigarh due to PW engine trouble.

In the last two months the DGCA has issued a number of orders for IndiGo and GoAir -- the only Indian carriers using PW-powered Neos -- to replace an older and more snag-prone variant of PW engines urgently. It had asked the two airlines to ensure that no Neo has both unmodified PW engines under both its wings.

24/12/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Despite severe headwinds in the aviation sector, the recruitment of pilots and staff crew by airlines has gone up substantially in the past two years.

According to data released by the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MOCA), the hiring of pilots has gone up by 88.4 per cent while cabin crew recruitment saw rise of 82.8 per cent.

The past financial year has been very eventful starting with the fluctuation of the rupee, high ATF costs, grounding of Boeing 737 Max, the possible demise of Jet Airways and the potential disinvestment of state-run Air India and the overall economic slowdown. At the same time, several airlines have placed huge aircraft orders, expanded their operation network and hired expeditiously to meet the demands of a growing passenger base.

According to the MOCA data reviewed by BusinessLine, as of December, 2,301 pilots were recruited via recruitment exams held by scheduled airlines. In comparison, 1,221 and 1,696 pilots recruited in 2017 and 2018 respectively.

With 1,088 pilots hired in 2019, IndiGo remained at the top of the ladder of recruitment which was 148 per cent higher than in 2017. SpiceJet hired 398 pilots compared to 143 pilots in 2017. Air Asia hired 246 pilots which is 173 per cent higher than in 2017. Vistara too hired 224 pilots which is 194 per cent higher than that of 2017.

State-run Air India's pilot recruits dropped from 232 pilots in 2017 to 21 pilots in 2019. GoAir had hired 109 and 275 pilots in 2017 and 2018 respectively, but in 2019, the airline only hired 179 pilots.

24/12/19 Forum Gandhi/Business Line

Ahmedabad: Widespread protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) across different parts of the country were also one of the reasons for flight movements getting disrupted. Airline spokespersons say their pilots could not reach the airport in time at various destinations due to road blockage, forcing airlines to arrange for alternate crew members, which also triggered delay in flight movements.

Some 23 flight departures were delayed from the city airport on Monday — 11 operated by GoAir, seven by IndiGo airlines and five by SpiceJet. Apart from bad weather and poor visibility, CAA protests in Delhi, Lucknow and Kolkata, among others, too added to the delay in flight movements, which had a cascading effect on flight operations to other destinations including Ahmedabad.

"A combination of factors such as inclement weather, low visibility and anti-CAA protests in certain parts of the country have disrupted multiple flights across GoAir's network. This was further aggravated with flight duty time limitations (FDTL) of the crew," said a GoAir spokesperson.

Flights to Delhi, Mumbai, Jaipur, Jaisalmer, Chennai, Bengaluru, Nagpur, Lucknow, Hyderabad, Indore, Varanasi and Goa, among others, operated by these three airlines were delayed from 30 minutes to 3 hours and 40 minutes, confirmed sources.

24/12/19 Times of India

Flyers boarding flight from Delhi airport (Del) or arriving in the national capital are being greeted by India's 'tallest' artificial Christmas Tree, GMR-led Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL) said on Christmas eve. An artificial Christmas Tree has been installed at approach road to Terminal 3 to wish travellers merry Christmas! With an aim to create a festive ambience filled with fanfare and enthusiasm for the passengers travelling during the Christmas and New Year's eve, Delhi Airport has been beautifully decorated.

Indira Gandhi International Airport is decked up with Christmas decorations, starting even before one enters any of the terminals of Delhi airport. The "Tallest Christmas Tree" has been installed on the Delhi Airport's Terminal 3 (T3) Departure road. **The Christmas Tree at Delhi Airport is a 101-foot structure. It is made of over 20,000 Christmas ornaments and 8 lakh pine grass. 80 men worked round the clock for over 2 weeks to create this.**

"Christmas fever grips Delhi Airport, once again! The airport welcomes you with India's tallest majestic Christmas tree on the T3 departure road and several other Christmas decorations at the entrances. The security hold area witnesses a never seen before 18ft Moving Santa, which has already captured the hearts of children and adults alike. A Rotating tree depicting Santa's Toy Factory and a Ferris wheel placed at the terminal add to the Christmas Vibes at Delhi airport," DIAL CEO Videh Kumar Jaipuria said.

24/12/19 Debjit Sinha/Financial Express

IATA is in talks with the Indian civil aviation officials to adopt the worldwide airport slot guidelines which will help new airlines get slots at various airports in the country.

Once adopted, more international airlines will be able to fly into India, connecting more cities worldwide and it could also help the government's UDAN scheme.

Lara Maughan and Dimiter Zahariev, the authors of the IATA's worldwide airport slot guidelines (WASG), told BusinessLine that **the slot guidelines have become the backbone of how the airlines plan their schedules together.** "It is important to have these guidelines as airports have increasingly become congested," Maughan said. **They also said that it is important for India to have an independent co-ordinator to monitor the airport slots and apportion them to all the airlines equally.**

Maughan and Zahariev have worked around the existing airports and their infrastructure to open up more slots, primarily to accommodate new entrants. **"While creating more infrastructure has always been a challenge for airports, it has not prevented more airlines being launched,"** Maughan said.

23/12/19 K Giriprakash/Business Line

Chennai: Hong Kong Aircraft Engineering Company Limited (HAECO Group), a leading Aviation Maintenance, Repair & Overhaul (MRO) specialist, today announced it will continue to work with Ramco Systems to bring the global software specialist's advanced Aviation solutions to four more business units in Hong Kong, Xiamen and Jinjiang.

HAECO's partnership with Ramco began last year when HAECO ITM Ltd, a HAECO Group company which provides Inventory Technical Management solutions, adopted Ramco's Aviation Suite. The proprietary platform is equipped with advanced supply chain planning and optimisation, covering Customer Contract Management, Supply Chain Management, Inventory Management, Financial Management, and Component Engineering including Reliability Management.

Following the successful collaboration, the group will now implement Ramco Aviation Suite, integrated with a new HR and Finance solution, at its Component, Repair and Overhaul (CRO) services facilities in Hong Kong and Xiamen; Landing Gear Services facility in Xiamen; and Composite Services facility in Jinjiang.

24/12/19 PRNewswire/Benzinga

Guwahati: A Kolkata-bound Go Air was forced to return to the Guwahati airport Monday morning for an emergency landing following a technical snag. While initial details about the technical snag were scarce, locals reported finding broken metal parts near the Guwahati airport.

The GoAir Flight G8546 -- a Guwahati-Kolkata service -- took off from the Guwahati airport at around 11:15 am. A flight path on the aviation tracker Flightradar24.com shows the Go Air flight started turning back to the airport almost immediately after taking off.

Shortly after, the Go Air flight made an emergency landing at the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport in Guwahati. All 157 passengers on board are safe.

A local present near the airport at the time said that some villagers came across broken metal pieces. "At that time, I was inside a room and heard a big sound like as plane crash. I was shocked to hear that sound," the local said.

23/12/19 India Today

Mumbai: The government on Monday said it has invested over Rs 300 crore in the airport infrastructure till November this fiscal.

In an official statement, the aviation ministry also said while as many as 10 airports commenced operations in 2019, 335 routes have been awarded, covering 33 aerodromes during the year. "Rs 304.49 crore has been spent on upgradation of existing and new airports from April to November this year. "Also, 10 airports became operational till December 7 in 2019, of which four are underserved (Lilabari, Belgaum, Pantnagar and Durgapur) and the remaining ones unserved ()," the release said. According to the ministry, approximately 3.4 million passengers flew under the government's regional connectivity scheme, Udan, till date, with 134 routes commencing operations between January and October. As many as 335 routes were awarded during the year, covering 33 airports, comprising 20 unserved, three under-served and 10 water aerodromes, the release added. "It (Udan scheme) has a direct bearing on major airports since the smaller airports have been connected to various big cities. The travelling time has reduced drastically and public at large is benefited for the purpose of tourism, medical emergencies and religious shrines, among others," the government claimed. Airports such as Belgaum, Prayagraj, Kishangarh, Hubli and Jharsuguda, launched under the Udan Scheme, were the busiest in terms of traffic during the year, the release stated. The government said the fleet size of the domestic carriers surged to 624 from 529 when Jet Airways ceased operations in mid-April. The total number of operational aircraft of major scheduled airlines stands at 624, which is more than the aircraft operational at the time of Jet Airways in business, as per the release.

23/12/19 PTI/Outlook

NEW DELHI: Indian airlines are expected to lose over \$600 million (₹4,273 crore) in FY 2019-20 as compared to a previous estimate of full-year profit of \$500 million to \$ 700 million (₹3,561 crore to ₹4,985 crore), aviation consultancy and advisory agency CAPA India said on Tuesday.

"This is CAPA India's sharpest downward revision in financial projections (of the airlines) within one quarter," it said in a tweet.

Two of the largest airlines in India, InterGlobe Aviation Limited-operated IndiGo and Ajay Singh-controlled SpiceJet, which are both listed on the BSE, reported huge losses during the September quarter.

SpiceJet plunged to a consolidated loss of ₹461.22 crore in the three months ended 30 September, from a year-earlier net loss of ₹ 382.72 crore. The losses of the budget airline would have been higher if the company didn't make a provision for compensation from Boeing Co. due to the grounding of 737 Max aircraft.

Meanwhile, IndiGo plunged to a wider-than-expected quarterly loss during the September quarter with higher maintenance and overhaul costs outweighing the increase in passenger traffic. The country's largest domestic airline posted a loss of ₹ 1,062 crore in the September quarter (Q2) compared with a loss of ₹652 crore an year ago.

".A series of events during the current fiscal such as discontinuation of operations of Jet Airways, grounding of the Boeing 737 Max aircraft due to technical issues with its flight control software and issues with the Pratt & Whitney engines of Airbus 320 Neos have impacted the industry's capacity and thus passenger growth," credit rating agency ICRA said in a report released last week

"While the aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices have been benign in the current fiscal, the yields continue to be under pressure. Coupled with rupee depreciation, this has squeezed the RASK-CASK

(revenue per available seat kilometre - cost per available seat kilometre) spread, exerting significant pressure on the operating profitability of airlines," it added.

CAPA India expects domestic air traffic to grow at 3-4% annually during FY 2019-20.

"This is subject to IndiGo meeting regulatory deadline to replace engines on close to 100 aircraft by 31 January 2020, or DGCA relaxing deadline," it added.

LiveMint Aviation 24/12/2019

NEW DELHI: Air India (AI) has stopped issuing air tickets to government agencies on credit basis, due to non-payment of dues, said the spokesperson of the public carrier on Thursday.

"AI has stopped issuing air tickets on credit basis till the dues amount are not cleared," said the official spokesperson.

Tickets on credit are not being issued to the government departments or agencies against whom the pending dues is ₹10 lakh or more.

Around ₹268 crore dues are pending with different government agencies, sources told ANI here.

According to sources, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Airports Authority of India (AAI), Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and Labour Commission have been exempted from the list of agencies to whom the tickets on credit will not be issued.

Sources said: "AI has started this exercise since the past three months to settle the dues (₹268 crore) from various government agencies through the official channel."

"AI had also sent reminders to the concerned agencies several times regarding settlement of dues but these agencies failed to clear their dues due to which the AI management has decided to stop issuing tickets to them on credit," added sources.

According to sources, AI has stopped issuing tickets on credit to "IB, CBI, ED, Defence and paramilitary forces among other agencies."

"Air India has recovered around ₹50 crore from the agencies in a recent month," AI spokesperson told ANI.

Live Mint Aviation 26/12/2019

NEW DELHI: The disinvestment department is likely to issue the expression of interest (Eoi) for the debt-ridden Air India after the winter holiday season which will ensure greater participation by foreign buyers.

"Tentatively the Eoi could be any time after January 10", said a source.

While the government is keen to sell off the loss-making state-owned carrier Air India, attempts to showcase it as an attractive proposition to buyers have not been successful.

Air India has some unique strengths to offer to a potential acquirer which foreign airlines will prefer: its prized international slots and a strong presence in the Indian market. Roadshows were recently held in Singapore and London to gauge investor interest for the debt-laden national carrier.

Last month Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri told Parliament that the bleeding carrier will have to be shut down if it fails to find a buyer.

A group of ministers overseeing the sale of Air India has already approved selling the entire government stake in the carrier. Government is considering a plan to exclude \$7 billion of the airline's debt in a bid to make the airline more attractive to the buyers

Selling Air India hasn't made any profit since its 2007 merger with another state-owned domestic operator Indian Airlines Ltd. Air India is saddled with \$11 billion or ₹58,000 crore in debt.

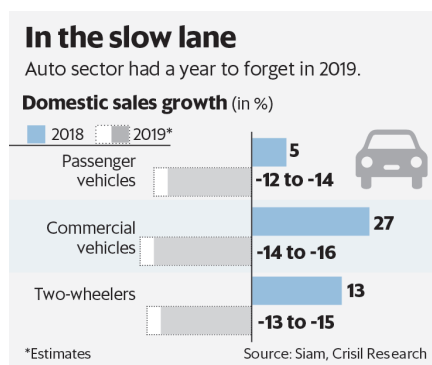
Selling Air India won't be easy due to its ₹58,000-crore debt. Vedanta chief Anil Agarwal recently said Air India would find takers, but its huge debt is an issue. Vedanta, he said would look at BPCL once its EoI comes out.

Live Mint Aviation 26/12/2019

As a tumultuous 2019 grinds to a close, all hopes are now pinned on 2020. With gross domestic product (GDP) growth slowing to 4.5% during the July-September quarter for 2019-20, manufacturing activity contracting, private investment drying up and inflation slowly creeping up, Indians have been desperate for some signs of green shoots going into 2020.

On one side, there is now a groundswell of expectations that the government will initiate a fiscal stimulus programme. On the other hand, there are also some hopes that the economy will finally show some signs of responding to the government's past spending. Credit rating agency Crisil Ltd agreed to decode, exclusively for Mint, some of the early sectoral portents. The Crisil study has shortlisted six sectors that have a salutary effect on economic growth.

Automobiles



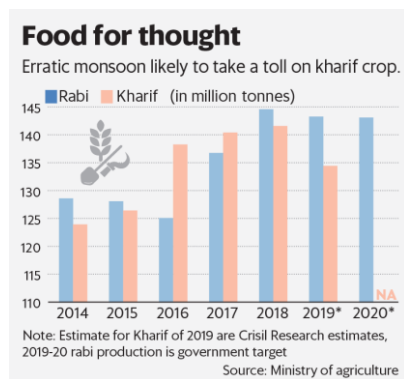
Graphics by Paras/Jain.

The automobile industry in 2019 was impacted by three critical factors—moderation in economic growth (lowering private consumption and freight demand), NBFC liquidity crunch (making financiers more risk-averse) and inventory liquidation before the implementation of BS-VI norms. Regulations

like insurance and safety norms led to an increase in two-wheeler and passenger vehicle prices, while the revised axle norms lowered commercial vehicle sales.

In Q1CY20, OEMs are expected to focus on liquidating BS-IV inventory and at the same time, cater to expected advance purchases before the implementation of BS-VI norms from 1 April 2020. Moreover, with a modest pick up in the economy, benign fuel prices and an expected normal monsoon, automobile sales are expected to grow in mid-single digits in CY20 despite the BS-VI price hike.

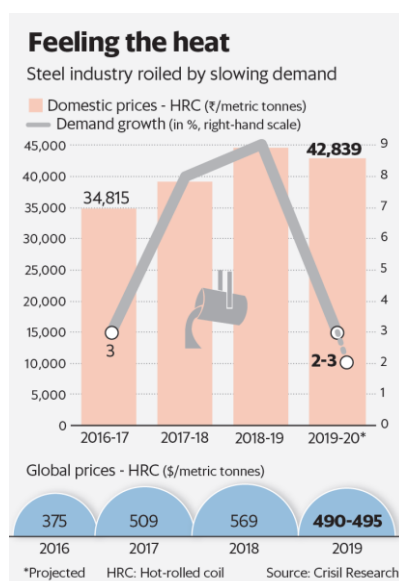
Agriculture



Graphics by Paras/Jain.

The agriculture industry in 2019 began with a 19% growth in rabi crop profit, led by a 9% increase in wheat minimum support price and higher mandi prices of gram. A delayed onset of south-west monsoon followed by excess rainfall and flood-like situations in certain parts is estimated to lead to a lower kharif crop output. However, kharif profitability is expected to increase by 7-8% year-on-year, driven by higher mandi prices for majority of crops. In 2020, we expect rabi farm profitability to be driven by an increase in crop productivity amid higher water availability for crop growth. Moreover, better crop management practices amid higher hybridization, adoption of advanced agrochemicals and an expected normal monsoon is expected to push kharif crop productivity and profitability.

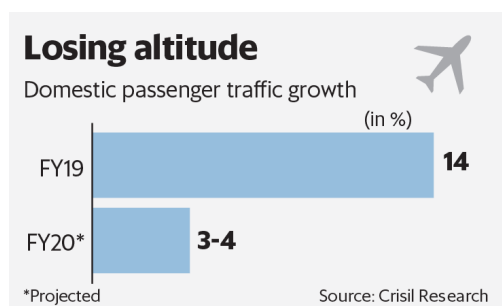
Metals (Steel)



Graphics by Paras/Jain.

Global steel prices dropped 13% in January-November 2019 due to weak demand, unseasonal jump in global inventory levels and trade tensions despite a 34% run-up in global iron ore prices in the same period. Steel prices in India mirrored the trend, falling 12% from ₹42,000 per tonne in January to ₹35,000 per tonne in October 2019 with prices picking up in November. Not surprisingly, Indian steel manufacturers' Ebitda spreads contracted 590 bps year-on-year in the first half of fiscal 2020. After a robust 7.5-8.5% growth in the last two fiscals, the domestic steel industry is expected to witness a mid-cycle slowdown at 2-3% this fiscal, given muted construction investments and weak automotive market. Recovery in global market, domestic demand growth, and upcoming iron ore auctions will be key determinants of the sector's performance in the near term.

Aviation

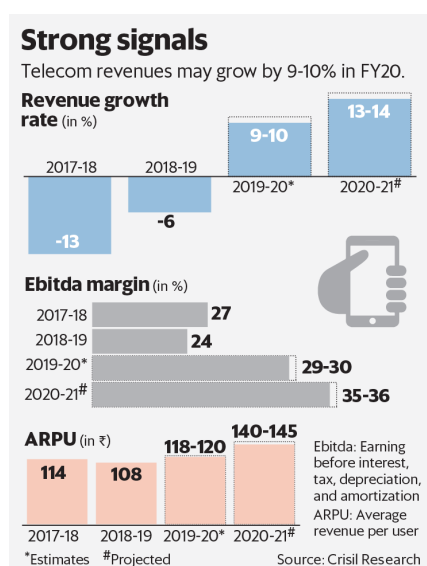


Graphics by Paras/Jain.

Crisil Research expects domestic air passenger traffic growth in India to slow to 3-4% in fiscal 2020 from 14% in fiscal 2019, considering the non-revival of Jet Airways and grounding of Boeing 737 Max aircraft. This was also reflected in H1 fiscal 2020 data where domestic passenger traffic growth was a mere 2%.

In fiscal 2020, EBITDAR (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, amortisation and lease rentals) margin of the industry is expected to improve by at least six percentage points compared with fiscal 2019 levels, led by firmer fares, soft crude oil prices and a cut in excise duty on aviation turbine fuel.

Telecom

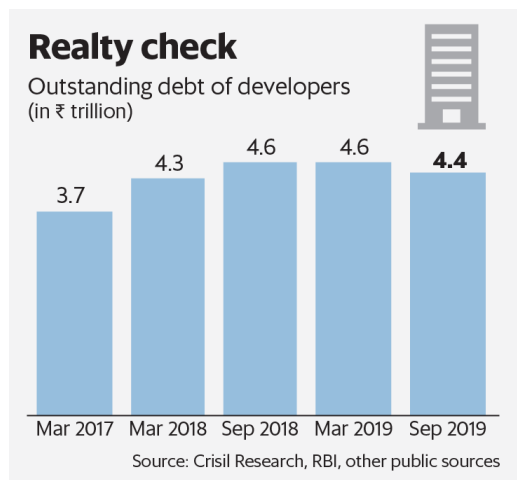


Graphics by Paras/Jain.

After witnessing aggressive price war over the last three years, telecom tariffs showed some signs of stabilization towards the end of fiscal 2019. Following a marginal improvement in profitability on the back of improving ARPU, the industry was dealt a severe blow post a Supreme Court order on adjusted gross revenue (AGR), resulting in incumbent telcos reporting highest-ever quarterly losses in the second quarter.

Recent steep tariff hikes (over 40% in December 2019) by the telecom operators comparatively brightens the outlook on operating metrics. In this scenario, we expect industry revenues to grow by 9-10% and 13-15% in fiscal 2020 and fiscal 2021, respectively. However, the pay-out to the telecom department poses a significant uncertainty risk and can impact the sustainability of incumbent telcos, especially ones who need to continue investing for 4G ramp-up.

Real Estate



Graphics by Paras/Jain.

Residential real estate witnessed a muted performance in CY19. During the year, capital values remained under pressure on account of muted demand. Further, new project launches in key cities remained subdued as developers focused on project completions. On the funding side, the leveraged developers continued facing challenges in refinancing. In fact, outstanding debt of developers declined to ₹4.4 trillion as of September 2019 from ₹4.6 trillion in March 2019. It should be noted that in the past, developer loans have grown at robust annual average pace of 13% between fiscals 2015 and 2019. The alternative investment fund announced by the government recently has successfully completed fund-raising for its first tranche and is already considering potential investment opportunities. While the fund is a step in the right direction to sort supply-side issues, its success largely hinges on demand revival, which is likely to remain sluggish in CY20 as well. On the other hand, low to moderate vacancies in good quality commercial and retail assets has led to healthy growth of 3-7% in lease rentals in CY19. This has prompted both private equity funds as well as developers to increase their exposure to these assets. We believe an upward trend in lease rentals will continue in CY20.

Live Mint Aviation 24/12/2019

Mumbai: A SpiceJet pilot who was caught by customs officials for smuggling gold into the country has been dismissed from service. This is the third instance of a SpiceJet pilot being asked to leave in recent months for inappropriate behaviour.

The case goes back a few months, when the pilot and his family landed at Delhi from Dubai on a

SpiceJet flight. "Based on passenger profiling, he and his wife were intercepted by customs after crossing the green channel, which means they had nothing to declare," said a source. Their cabin bags were X-ray scanned and customs recovered four gold bangles from his wife's bag. The pilot was found wearing a gold bracelet and a gold chain, all of which added up to 700 gm of gold. "The pilot and his family were arrested by the customs and later released on bail. The customs also sent a letter to his airline giving details of the incident," the source said.

SpiceJet carried out an internal inquiry and found that the Delhi-based pilot had argued with customs officials and tried to use influence by calling some politicians and other authorities.

29/12/19 Manjun V/Times of India