

Revue de presse du 16 au 29 mai 2020

Mumbai: The domestic aviation industry, which has been impacted by coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown, will require an additional funding worth Rs 32,500 to 35,000 crore during FY21-23, according to rating agency Icra.

It also said the industry-level debt is expected to increase to Rs 465 billion (around Rs 46,500 crore) over FY 2021-22.

At the same time, the industry is expected to report revenue de-growth of 44 per cent and a negative CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 26 per cent in 2021-2023, Kinjal Shah, Vice President at Icra, said during a webinar on Thursday.

"Considering the daily net loss of Rs 75-Rs 90 crore during the shutdown of operations and the expected weak demand, the Indian aviation industry will require additional funding of Rs 325-350 billion (Rs 32,500 to 35,000 crore) over FY2021-23.

"The industry level debt is expected to increase to Rs 465 billion over FY 2021-22," Shah said. In the forecast, Icra has included an aggregate of all the five private sector players -- IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India -- to make the balance sheet.

It may be mentioned here, that the disinvestment-bound Air India has parked nearly half of its total -- over Rs 60,000 crore -- debt into the SPV to make the heavily-leveraged balance sheet more attractive to the prospective buyers.

According to the rating agency, the aviation industry is expected to report a negative 44 per cent growth in revenue for FY21 owing to an estimated 0.7 per cent growth in the domestic passenger traffic in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The profitability of the industry would also be adversely impacted in the ongoing fiscal due to lower revenues and high fixed costs, which is 35-42 per cent of the total cost of airlines.

14/05/20 PTI/Business Standard

IndiGo has revised the contract terms of pilots who are undergoing training, with new terms including up to a 50 percent cut in salaries and a change in rostering.

Most of these pilots, sources told Moneycontrol, had joined the country's largest airline from Jet Airways, which had suspended operations in April last year.

"These are non-released pilots. They have got a 50 percent pay cut, and the new contract is valid till March 2021," said a senior executive from the industry.

Pilots undergoing training are called 'non-released'.

According to the new contract, these pilots will be on a two-week-on and two-week-off schedule.

Normally, a pilot is asked to be available for the full month, and leaves depend on the rostering. Reduced flying hours impacts the allowances a pilot gets.

Moneycontrol has written to IndiGo for a response, and will update the story accordingly.

The airline had announced pay cuts from May. This was after it had rolled back a similar announcement in April. In a mail to employees, CEO Ronojoy Dutta had said "Leave without pay will range from 1.5-5 days depending on the employee group. Level A employees, who form a majority of

our workforce will not be impacted."
[14/05/20 Moneycontrol.com/Forbes](https://www.moneycontrol.com/Forbes)

Even as routine commercial passenger flight operations remain suspended for last seven weeks due to Covid-19 outbreak, a private cargo aircraft carrying medical essentials arrived at Srinagar International Airport on Wednesday. This is the first private airliner to arrive in Srinagar since March 25 when government of India suspended routine commercial air traffic.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) officials told Greater Kashmir that private airliner SpiceJet operated its maiden cargo flight carrying medical and essential supplies from Delhi to Srinagar. The flight also travelled to Leh before touching down at Srinagar, AAI official said.

"It is a good sign that a private airline cargo aircraft has started its operations to the Valley. The next cargo flight of the same airline is scheduled for May 15," said Santosh Dhoke, Director AAI, Srinagar Airport. However, Dhoke said construction of a dedicated cargo terminal at Srinagar Airport "has temporarily been stopped due to the lockdown owing to Covid-19". The Airport Director added that existing terminal used to handle more than 25 metric tonnes of cargo operations every day. AAI officials said several special flights of Indian Air Force, one flight of Indian Airlines and Jammu and Kashmir government-owned aircraft have arrived at Srinagar during the lockdown period so far. "Life saving drugs worth more than Rs 90 lakh procured by Kashmir-based pharmaceutical dealers from outside companies have been airlifted to the Valley in last 7 weeks. Consignments of life saving drugs including medicines used for cancer, diabetes, renal and cardiac problems have been airlifted to the Valley with help from the IAF," the official said. However, the SpiceJet cargo flight is the first private aircraft to arrive here since March 25.

Speaking with Greater Kashmir, Irfan Hussain Kanth, Regional Manager, North India, Sales and Operations SpiceJet Cargo said apart from bringing medical supplies to the Valley, the airline was keen on supplying fruits and vegetables from the growers here.

[14/05/20 Saqib Malik/Greater Kashmir](#)

Mumbai: German airlines group Lufthansa on Thursday said it plans to resume its services to India, which are currently suspended due to the lockdown in the wake of coronavirus pandemic, by June, when it is expecting to operate to more than 130 destinations globally.

The services in India will be restored to Mumbai from Frankfurt to begin with, subject to regulatory approvals, the airline said in a statement.

With over 106 destinations in Germany and Europe and more than 20 inter-continental destinations, the range of flights on offer for all travellers will be greatly expanded by the end of June, it said, adding that the first batch of flights will be available for reservation in the booking systems from May 14.

"I am proud of our decision to have Mumbai as one of the first destinations for increasing our long-haul services. It reflects the robust demand for flights to and from India, even in these unprecedented times.

"While we fully understand and respect the Indian government's final call as to when this can take place, resuming flights to Mumbai underlines our confidence in how the Indian government is handling the pandemic crisis," George Ettiyil, Senior Director Sales, South Asia, Lufthansa Group said.
[14/05/20 PTI/Outlook](#)

Unless Prime Minister Narendra Modi announces that India has conducted a surgical strike, the Indian Armed forces seldom share their recon missions to the public. News usually involves exchange of fire with Pakistan's army across the border or a terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir. However, Twitter user Anurag Dixit has shared a fascinating thread of an Indian ELINT aeroplane went inside 100 kms in Pakistan territory, stayed there for 12-15 minutes. In his thread, Dixit adds, the plane 'made a fool of their air defence completely and came back. So much so for world's greatest army and its nation.'

Normally I won't tweet about Indian missions based on RUMINT or classified info but since this had its footprint on public internet (intentionally so?) This needs to be told to everyone, especially since this "mission" brutally exposed Paxtan's so called air defence, thread 1/n

Dixit said that the news was flagged by an Indian Open-Source intelligence community (OSINT). These communities collect data from publicly available sources to be used in an intelligence context. ELNIT is electric intelligence and the aircraft was a Boeing 707-337, according to Dixit. Notably, the United States Department of Defence defined the term "signals intelligence" as a category of intelligence comprising either individually or in combination all communications intelligence (COMINT), electronic intelligence (ELINT), and foreign instrumentation signals intelligence (FISINT), however transmitted and such intelligence which is derived from communications, electronic, and foreign instrumentation signals. Satellite-based intelligence-gathering dates back to just after the Second World War. Did an Indian ELINT aeroplane enter Pakistan airspace? Check out this Twitter user's fascinating thread

[14/05/20 Free Press Journal](#)

New Delhi: Cabin crew members of Indian airlines will have personal protective equipment (PPE) like face shields, gowns and masks as part of their attire on commercial passenger flights when they resume operations, industry sources said.

India is under lockdown since March 25 to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, and all scheduled commercial passenger flights remain suspended.

Airlines such as IndiGo, Air India, Vistara and AirAsia India have decided to go with the new attire in order to ensure safety of cabin crew members as they are in close proximity to passengers during flights, the sources said.

[14/05/20 Deepak Patel/Business Insider](#)

New Delhi: Middle row seats in planes are unlikely to be kept vacant when domestic flights resume, violating social distancing norms.

The government is finalising the standard operating procedure (SOP) for airlines after flight services resume in a graded manner.

The draft was prepared after discussions with stakeholders, including airlines and airport operators. Comments have been sought from the stakeholders, according to sources.

The draft document is silent on leaving the middle seat vacant as airlines warned the fares would be more for the other passengers to compensate for the empty seat.

Aviation regulator DGCA had suggested airlines leave the middle seats vacant when commercial flight services were suspended in March.

The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security had also proposed that when airlines resume services on domestic routes they must not sell tickets for the middle seat, and the last three rows should be kept vacant in case a passenger needs to be quarantined mid-flight.

“The implication of this is that on a 180-seat narrow body aircraft, an airline can sell a maximum 108 seats, representing a 60 per cent load factor. Even if social distancing is not in place, demand conditions are expected to be so weak that passenger loads are in any case unlikely to be any higher than that,” aviation consultant Capa India said in a note

“This will naturally increase the average break-even fare,” Capa said.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) said it does not support mandating social distancing measures that would leave ‘middle seats’ empty.

“Evidence suggests that the risk of transmission on board an aircraft is low. And we will take measures such as the wearing of face coverings by passengers and masks by crew—to add extra layers of protection.

“We must arrive at a solution that gives passengers the confidence to fly and keeps the cost of flying affordable. One without the other will have no lasting benefit,” Alexandre de Juniac, IATA’s director-general and CEO has said.

14/05/20 R. Suryamurthy/Telegraph

Weighed down by regulations for years, drones have finally risen up again. While 2020 was expected to be the year of drones, the emergence of this sector in recent weeks is because of the quarantines, lockdowns and Covid-19 safety measures around India. In the times of crisis, drones have come up as an effective and simple alternative to limit human contact for things such as crowd dispersals, sanitisation, deliveries of payloads and goods.

Startups such as Redwing Aerospace Labs, IdeaForge, Indian Robotics Solutions, Asteria Aerospace, Garuda Aerospace and others are providing on-demand drone service to support healthcare logistics, monitoring and surveillance. Will this acceptance for drones open up the market for home deliveries of consumer goods as well?

In India, the buzz for drone deliveries started in 2018, where the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (India) had decided to accommodate delivery of food and goods under Drone Regulations 2.0. Soon, Indian food delivery major, Zomato had also planned to launch drone-based food delivery in India, where it acquired a Lucknow-based drone startup TechEagle Innovations, which was believed to boost its drone delivery plans by creating a hub-to-hub delivery network powered by hybrid multi-rotor drones.

Currently, there are more than 50+ drone tech startups in India, followed by a lot of maker groups and hobbyists. According to Inc42 DataLabs ‘Drone Technology: India Opportunity Report 2019,’ the total funding raised by drone startups in India from 2014 to 2018 was just \$16.56 Mn, which accounts for a mere 2.26% of the total deeptech funding (\$732 Mn) in this period. Hopefully, given the Covid-19 situation, the drone tech is expected to witness a massive surge in the coming years, industry experts said.

Besides Zomato, several hyperlocal and food delivery players, including Dunzo, ShopX, Swiggy and others have been pilot testing drone delivery services in India.

Speaking to Inc42, Kabeer Biswas, cofounder and CEO at Dunzo said that the company has been working with DGCA to test the use cases of drones for quite some time now.

Further, he said that the company is testing hub-to-hub delivery, where the drones deliver the items from one hub spot to another, and once it reaches the destination, the delivery partner then picks it up and delivers the items to the end customers. This, in a way, optimised the delivery mechanism with a lot more deliveries within the geographies, he added.

“We believe that long-distance will become drone heavy, but the last-mile will get a lot more efficient,” said Dunzo cofounder Biswas.

Adding to this, he said that previously it used to take more than an hour and a half to deliver items from one location (Delhi) to another (Noida), but with the hub-to-hub drone delivery model, the whole end-to-end delivery takes about 40 mins. “Other than this, we don’t see that much of an impact coming, as the geographies and the cities that we stay in aren’t that convenient. Those are real challenges” he added.

“Unfortunately, we will have to wait for at least five years before this becomes a reality because of the complications involved,” said Neel Mehta, cofounder at Asteria Aerospace.

Throwing light on the same, Mehta said that there is going to be regulatory oversight on drones as these are flying objects and could fall on someone and could potentially damage property or cause bodily harm. Most importantly, when it comes to delivering packages, there is a huge scale required to perform those operations, and **I don’t think the regulators are prepared to deal with that kind of scale of drone operating over cities for these applications**, he added.

Further, he said that even though technology may be ready, but it will always be controlled by regulations, and this is not just constrained to India, as these things are same, globally.

13/05/20 Amit Raja Naik/Inc42

New Delhi: Close to one lakh foreign nationals have flown out of India over the last two and a half months.

As many as 388 special flights have taken an average of 250 passengers per flight from various cities in India since March 6, said a civil aviation ministry official.

Among the airlines that have operated several such flights are Lufthansa Group carriers, Singapore Airlines, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, British Airways, KLM, Air Canada, Japan Airlines, Ukraine Air, Aeroflot and United.

Operating these flights was not easy as foreigners were stranded all over India. Several Russians, for instance, were stuck from Manali to Rishikesh to Goa when Russia decided to fly them out. First, these countries took India’s assistance in bringing them to the city from where charter flights would take them back home. Some Indian carriers operated charters to fly foreign citizens from one Indian city to another from where they would catch flights to their country.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport authorities said they had facilitated repatriation of over 8,950 passengers with 53 evacuation flights from March 25 to May 14 to destinations such as Tehran, Zurich, Bali, Addis Ababa, Paro, London, Atlanta, Amsterdam, Singapore, Paris, Frankfurt, Kenya, Mauritius, Muscat, and Tokyo.

Of the total repatriation flights facilitated by CSMIA, Atlanta saw over 2,000 passengers evacuated with a total of eight flights operated by Delta Air Lines, highest to any destination from Mumbai during this lockdown period.

While a number of flights were arranged from Ahmedabad by the British high commission to facilitate travel of its citizens stranded in Gujarat — with flights being operated by British Airways evacuating roughly 1,500 people — 13 relief flights have been operated from Ahmedabad over the past month and a half, including two by Air India to Mumbai and linking flights to New York, operated by Delta.

Nearly 1,000 foreign nationals have been repatriated from Kolkata by Atlantis Armenian Airlines,

British Airways, Swiss Air, Sri Lankan Airlines, Biman Bangladesh and Druk Air.

Kerala has seen a number of flights operating — Oman Air airlifting 53 Omanis from Kochi to Muscat, British Airways airlifting 170 UK nationals, Air Arabia airlifting 18 UAE nationals to Sharjah and Swiss Airways flight evacuating 164 Swiss nationals to Zurich. From Thiruvananthapuram, 110 British nationals were evacuated to London while 206 Kuwaitis were evacuated on a Kuwait Airways flight and two Maldivian Airlines flights airlifting 160 to Male.

Since the lockdown, three special flights have flown out of Hyderabad, including a British Airways flight to Bahrain with 135 passengers, an Air Arabia flight to Sharjah with 72 passengers and an IndiGo flight with Kenyan nationals to Mumbai who were then airlifted by Kenyan Airlines.

15/05/20 Times of India

Civil aviation ministry officials hope that a push from Prime Ministers' Office will help in achieving efficient use of airspace and save costs for airlines.

While the aviation sector has been clamouring for fund infusion and tax benefits, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman today announced efficient use of airspace, privatisation of six airports of Airports Authority of India and development of maintenance repair overhaul hub as a part of government package for aviation.

Sitharaman said only 60 per cent of Indian airspace is freely available and restrictions will be eased so that flying takes less time. She added that this will result in annual saving of around Rs 1,000 crore for airlines.

However the policy initiative is not new.

The government had formulated flexible use of air space policy in 2014. The policy allowed for civilian flights through military airspace on certain conditions. For instance a flight route would be available for airlines only during certain hours of the day or there were restrictions on the height for civilian aircraft passing through military airspace.

"But the policy was not really implemented. Now we hope that with the push from PMO we will be able to have better co-ordination with the Air Force and develop many routes bringing cost and time benefits to Indian and foreign airlines," an official said.

For instance flights on Nagpur - Pune or Mumbai - Srinagar routes have to take a detour to avoid military airspace. This adds to 16 minutes of extra flying time and additional cost of Rs 70,000-75,000 per trip, he added.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a review meeting to make civil aviation sector more efficient. It was decided that the Indian air space should be effectively used in such a manner that the flying time is reduced benefitting the traveling public and also helping the airlines in saving costs, a government release had said.

Business Standards 16/05/2020

Continuing with back-to-back announcements, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday rolled out a series of measures as part of the Rs 20-trillion stimulus package to help businesses cope with the lockdown stress, though many of these were important long-term reform steps put together as a Covid deal.

In the latest announcement, the government's focus was on structural reform in sectors such as coal, minerals, aviation, defence, aerospace, power, and social infrastructure. This included an increase in the foreign direct investment limit in defence production to 74 per cent from 49 per cent, disallowing imports of certain military equipment and weapons systems, and privatising power distribution in Union Territories

Sitharaman also said the Centre would end its monopoly in coal mining by auctioning 50 blocks, encourage Rs 50,000 crore worth of investment in coal infrastructure, increase viability gap funding in social infrastructure, and allow greater private sector participation in the space industry.

"Important sectors such as coal, minerals, defence, aviation, space and atomic energy have been covered in the announcements by the FM today (Saturday). The measures and reforms announced will create many business opportunities and contribute to economic transformation," Modi tweeted after Sitharaman's media briefing.

However, apart from the measures mentioned above, many of the finance minister's announcements are either made earlier or long-pending reforms.

Analysts also concurred these were mostly medium- to long-term measures and would not take care of the immediate demand crunch due to the pandemic and the nationwide lockdown, which is in its seventh week.

"The government seems to be relying on this crisis to fast-track industrial reforms, which might otherwise face resistance. The enhanced role of the private sector in coal, minerals, defence, energy, aviation, and space sectors is an element of medium-term efficiency-improving reforms. The proposal to restrict imports of specified defence items, aimed at promoting self-reliance, was long overdue. Once again, it is the supply side which has received emphasis while demand initiatives are still awaited," said D K Srivastava, chief policy advisor, EY India.

KICK-STARTING THE GROWTH ENGINE

COAL SECTOR

- Competition, transparency and private sector participation to be promoted
- Entry norms will be liberalised; 50 blocks to be offered immediately
- **₹50,000 crore** to be spent on building evacuation infrastructure



MINERALS

- Composite exploration-cum-mining-cum-production regime to be introduced
- Distinction between captive and non-captive mines removed



DEFENCE PRODUCTION

- A list of weapons/ platforms for ban on import to be notified with timelines
- Time-bound procurement process and faster decision making



SPACE ACTIVITIES

- Level playing field for private companies in satellites, launches and space-based services
- Private sector to be allowed to use ISRO facilities and other relevant assets



POWER SECTOR

- Power departments/ utilities in Union Territories will be privatised

AIRSPACE/AIRPORTS

- Optimal utilisation of airspace; reduction in fuel use, time
- Will bring a total benefit of about ₹1,000 crore per year
- 6 airports identified for 2nd round of bidding; another 6 for third round



SOCIAL INFRA

- Govt will enhance the quantum of viability gap funding up to 30% each of total project cost
- Total outlay: **₹8,100 crore**



ATOMIC ENERGY

- Establish research reactor in PPP mode for production of medical isotopes – promote welfare of humanity through affordable treatment for cancer and other diseases



Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings, said: The measures are “medium-term in focus and are not related to relief from the pandemic. Hence they are more a continuation of the economic reforms being announced at different points of time and do not address the issues of specific sectors impacted by Covid, which may come in the next round”.

Sabnavis and Srivastava said the size of Saturday’s package was Rs 62,000-63,000 crore. Sitharaman said the Centre would introduce commercial mining in the coal sector.

“There was a government monopoly in coal mining all this while. That will be ended,” she said.

The minister said nearly 50 coal blocks would be offered to the private sector, the Centre would move to a revenue-sharing mechanism, and there would be investments of Rs 50,000 crore in infrastructure development in the coal sector.

However, the proposal to offer coal blocks to private players, and the auction of coal bed methane extraction rights, which she also spoke of, had been cleared by the Union Cabinet in January.

For the minerals sector, the minister said 500 blocks would be offered through auctions. This will require an amendment to the Minerals and Metals (Development and Regulation) Act.

The Centre will introduce a “seamless composite exploration-cum-mining-cum-production regime”, and the distinction between captive and non-captive mines would go, she said.

To boost self-reliance in defence, Sitharaman said the Centre would notify a list of weapons/platforms for which imports would be banned, there would be a separate budget provisioning for domestic capital procurement, the General Staff Qualitative Requirements of weapons/platforms would be simplified, and the Ordnance Factory Board would be corporatised.

However, the last proposal was announced by the defence ministry in November last year.

The biggest step in this sector was increasing the FDI limit in defence production to 74 per cent from 49 per cent under the automatic route.

“The conditions of security and other clearances will continue to be applicable,” she said.

For the aviation sector, the minister said: “Only 60 per cent of the Indian airspace is freely available. Restrictions on utilisation of the Indian airspace will be eased so that civilian flying becomes more efficient.”

Sitharaman said six more airports would be put out for bidding for operation and maintenance under the public-private partnership (PPP) model.

She spoke about making India a hub of aviation maintenance, repair, and overhaul. This initiative, however, had been announced by her in the 2019-20 Budget. The proposals on aerospace management and privatising six airports under phase 3 are also in the public domain, and the Ministry of Civil Aviation has announced them.

“Today’s announcement does breathe some life into the pandemic-hit civil aviation sector, but no mention of bailouts on an immediate basis may attract a mixed response from the industry. Though easing curbs on airspace would certainly bring in long-term efficiency and, on an immediate basis, some relief to airlines, a more meaningful intervention may be required if the aviation sector is not on the recovery path soon,” said Ajay Sawhney, partner, Cyril Amarchand Mangaldas.

Sitharman said the Centre would move to privatise power distribution in Union Territories.

The minister said the Centre would enhance the extent of viability gap funding up to 30 per cent of the project cost for social infrastructure projects like hospitals and schools. The outlay for this increase will be Rs 8,100 crore, which seemed to be the only direct expenditure item announced on Saturday.

Sitharaman said the private sector would be allowed a “level playing field” in the space sector, and private space companies would be allowed to use the Indian Space Research Organisation’s facilities and assets.

Sitharaman also said in atomic energy, the Centre would establish a research reactor in PPP mode for producing medical isotopes and take steps to link India’s robust start-up ecosystem to the nuclear sector.

Business Standards 17/05/2020

NEW DELHI: Hours after the Modi government announced extension of the coronavirus lockdown, Indian aviation regulator DGCA said all scheduled commercial passenger flights have been suspended till May 31 midnight. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said "foreign and domestic airlines shall be suitably informed about the opening of their operations whether international to or from India or domestic, respectively, in due course".

All commercial passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 25, when the lockdown was imposed to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The regulator on Sunday said the suspension of all domestic and international scheduled commercial passenger flights have been "further extended up to 11.59 PM on May 31".

This restriction would not be applicable to domestic and international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by the DGCA, it said.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the nodal department, has announced lockdown 4.0 till May 31 to check the spread of the novel coronavirus.

The ETI 17/05/2020

Covid-19 fallout could lead to a billion fewer airline passengers

The ETI 17/05/2020

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/airlines/-aviation/covid-19-fallout-could-lead-to-a-billion-fewer-airline-passengers/less-in-the-air/slideshow/75788259.cms>

NEW DELHI: **The government will soon start auctioning of six more airports under public private partnership and additional investment by private players in total of 12 airports will be around Rs 13,000 crore,** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) has already awarded three out of the six aerodromes that were bid out for operation and maintenance under public private partnership (PPP).

The announcement about airports was made as part of the fourth tranche of stimulus measures to bolster the country's economy that has been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent lockdown.

Sitharaman said annual revenue of the six airports would be around Rs 1,000 crore while the current

profit is about Rs 540 crore per year. Besides, AAI would get a down payment of Rs 2,300 crore.

Six more airports have been identified for bidding out and the bid process would commence immediately.

These airports are those at Amritsar, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Raipur and Trichy, according to an official.

Additional investments by private players in 12 airports in the first and second rounds are expected to be around Rs 13,000 crore, Sitharaman said.

Last year, the government bid out six airports -- Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Thiruvananthapuram and Guwahati -- for operation, management and development through PPP model.

Another six airports will be put out for the third round of bidding, Sitharaman added.

State-owned AAI manages more than 135 airports and nearly 110 of them are operational.

The ETI 16/05/2020

NEW DELHI: The government today did not announce any cash bailout or tax concessions for the aviation sector and announced intent to **improve airspace management across the country, make India an MRO hub and privatisation of government airports, as part of the bailout package for the sector.**

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman today announced that the government would work towards improving airspace management.

"Today, only 60% of the airspace is available for commercial flights and discussions will happen to ensure that more airspace is made available to commercial flights, which will not just reduce travel time between two destinations but also reduce cost of operations for the airlines," Finance Minister Nirmal Sitharaman announced today.

The other announcements included privatising six more airports currently owned and operated by the state-owned Airports Authority of India. The announcement also included making India a hub for Maintenance Repair and Overhaul (MRO).

Notably, these reform announcements have been made in the past in the Budget speech this year and after a review meeting of the aviation sector by the prime minister.

However, it was not clear whether the government will announce a separate package for airlines or not. When asked whether there will be a separate package for private airlines, Sitharaman replied that they will announce it at a later stage, if there is any.

Aviation industry insiders are clearly disappointed by this announcement.

"What we needed for survival was direct cash infusion to pay salaries for the period of

government-ordered grounding, government-backed credit lines or loans to get back on our feet and sustain losses while demand recovers and waiver of all statutory dues for six months to allow airlines to rebuild their balance sheet,” said an airline industry insider, on a condition of anonymity.

“Now we can almost certainly say two or three airlines will not survive,” he added.

The ETI 16/05/2020

All domestic and international flights will remain suspended till 31 May, the government said on Sunday, as it extended the countrywide lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak by another fortnight.

Only domestic air ambulances, flights for medical services and security purposes, and repatriation flights by Air India will be allowed to operate during this period, the home ministry said in a circular. India suspended all flights since 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. The lockdown has since been extended thrice, every fortnight, from the initial announcement date.

National carrier Air India Ltd on Sunday said it will resume flight bookings only after receiving directions from the government. It asked passengers to follow the Twitter handles of the civil aviation ministry and Air India, and their respective websites, for official announcements on resumption of flights.

An internal memo of Air India said earlier that all its domestic flights, except for charter and evacuation flights, will remain cancelled till 31 May, adding that the date for starting operations will be notified in due course.

“The delay in resumption of flights will hurt airlines dearly. As airline costs keep piling up, revenues have dried up completely. And, to top it, there’s an uncertainty with resumption of services,” said an official with a no-frills carrier.

Spokespersons of IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India were not immediately available for comment.

Indian airlines are losing an estimated to ₹90 crore every day due to the shutdown of operations. The airlines also expect weak demand due to traveller concerns of viral infection when flights resume.

"Considering the daily net loss of about ₹75-90 crore during the shutdown of operations and the expected weak demand, the Indian aviation industry will require additional funding of ₹325 billion-350 billion over FY2021-23," Kinjal Shah, vice president of rating agency Icra, said in a recent report. According to Icra, the profitability of India's airline industry is expected to be adversely impacted in FY21 due to lower revenues and high fixed costs (35-42% of the total cost of airlines).

"Overall, the industry will witness 41-46% degrowth in domestic passenger traffic and 67-72% degrowth in international passenger traffic for the Indian carriers in FY21," added the rating agency. Live Mint Aviation 18/05/2020

The Air India on Sunday issued a clarification regarding news on the resumption of domestic flights amid the nationwide lockdown 3.0 restriction.

The airlines said the flight bookings are currently closed and would resume only after the receipt of directions from the government.

"The Flight bookings are currently closed & will resume after receipt of directions from Government of India", Air India said.

"The WhatsApp message circulating on social media platform is an internal email. The content of this message is misunderstood and are being misrepresented in various media reports. Commencement of commercial domestic and international flights is not in purview of the airlines", Air India said.

The airlines requested passengers to follow ministry of civil aviation, Air India twitter handles and respective websites for official announcement regarding the resumption of flight operations.

Live Mint Aviation 17/05/2020

The government's proposals for privatising more airports and freeing up more airspace for civilian flights disappointed the aviation industry in the absence of any relief measures for cash-strapped airlines that have been grounded for over a month and a half due to the covid-induced lockdown.

"Now we can almost certainly say two or three airlines may not survive the current crisis," said a senior airline official, with a no-frills carrier, who requested anonymity.

"What has been announced is simply a case of rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic, along with perhaps shortening the queueing time for the buffet, while the gaping hole from the iceberg continues to take in water," the official said, adding that the reforms announced were 'business as usual' steps.

The finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced reforms to kickstart the civil aviation industry which have been grounded due to the lockdown initiated to control the pandemic. These included optimal utilization of country's aerospace which would result in shortening of routes, lower fuel costs apart from lower duration for flights.

The government also said that it will put up six airports for bidding under public-private partnership (PPP) model during the third round of airport privatization process.

Private players will make an additional investments to the tune of ₹13,000 crore in 12 airports that were awarded to them earlier under the previous rounds of airport privatisation processes, while state-owned Airports Authority of India (AAI) will receive ₹2,300 crore down payment from airport privatisation processes.

Meanwhile, the government also said that it hopes that India becomes a hub for maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) units after GST (Goods and Service Tax) rate associated with it was reduced from 18% to 5% by GST council in March which also facilitated provisions for claiming input tax credit.

"What airlines needed for survival are direct cash infusion to pay salaries for the period of government-ordered grounding, government-backed credit lines or loans to help airlines get back on their feet and sustain losses while demand recovers and waiver of all statutory dues for six months to allow airlines to rebuild their balance sheet," said another senior airline official, under condition of anonymity.

"What the sector actually got from the finance minister today are some old announcements repackaged as fresh reforms," the official said adding that Indian airlines are staring at dire strait situation with high costs and no income at the moment.

The Indian aviation industry will require funding of up to ₹35,000 crore till 2022-2023 as profitability may take a hit due to sharp fall in revenues and higher fixed costs, credit rating agency, ICRA earlier this week.

The Indian airline industry is currently grounded since 25 March due to a government imposed lockdown to contain covid-19. As a result, Indian carriers are estimated to report a 44% decline in revenue in 2020-21, as compared to the previous year, while the industry's net debt may rise to ₹46,500 crore by 2021-22.

Giving a separate estimate, aviation consultancy firm CAPA India had earlier in May said that **Indian airlines, excluding market leader IndiGo, will need to raise a minimum of \$2.5 billion to survive the grounding due to the lockdown imposed to contain covid-19 pandemic.**

"MROs, and more PPP projects for airports and flexible use of airspace have been on government agenda for sometime. We may expect better implementation and execution," said Kapil Kaul, South Asia CEO of CAPA-Centre for Aviation.

"Overall, I had no expectations for any direct relief and this is not surprising. There is no relief likely (from the government) and medium to long term downsizing of the aviation industry is inevitable unless promoters are able to recapitalise significantly," Kaul added.

Meanwhile, industry experts indicate that the government would have to go back to the drawing board for privatizing airports under the PPP model as a lot has changed in terms of passenger traffic and demand in the past few months due to the outspread of covid-19.

"For this initiative to be successful in upcoming rounds, it would be critical to go back to the drawing board on a number of aspects and tailor the structure and timing with respect to the potential 'new normal' in the sector as well as private sector interest and appetite at this time," said Peeyush Naidu, Partner, Deloitte India.

On Saturday, when the finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman was asked if the government will consider making cash infusions or bail out packages for airlines, the minister replied saying that if any such announcements were being considered, these will be revealed at a later stage.

Sitharaman didn't elaborate further.

"We do need maxium relief for airlines as that is the first point in the aviation sector's functioning.

The minister has said that she will come back to it in terms of relief measures," said Jagannarayan Padmanabhan, practise leader and director, transport and logistic, at CRISIL Limited.

[LiveMint Aviation 16/05/2020](#)

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan will resume domestic flights in a phased manner from Saturday after the government eased some of the restrictions imposed following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country that has claimed the lives of over 800 people.

The Pakistan government last week said that it would begin a phased lifting of the lockdown due to its effect on the economy and the workforce.

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) announced to resume the domestic flights operations from Saturday, The Express Tribune reported.

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and Serene Air will operate flights in the morning and afternoon.

It said that 68 flights will operate from Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, 32 from Allama Iqbal International Airport in Lahore, 32 from Islamabad International Airport, eight from Quetta International Airport and four from Bacha Khan International Airport in Peshawar.

According to the Ministry of National Health Services, the nationwide tally of the coronavirus cases on Friday soared to 37,218 after 1,430 new cases were reported.

A total of 10,155 patients have so far recovered from the virus. The total number of COVID-19 deaths in the country also reached 803 with 33 new fatalities reported during the last 24 hours.

Punjab province reported 13,914 cases, Sindh 14,099, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa 5,423, Balochistan 2,310, Islamabad 866, Gilgit-Baltistan 501 and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir 105.

So far, 344,450 tests have been conducted, including 13,700 during the last 24 hours.

After easing the restrictions for the last four days, the Punjab government on Friday imposed a three-day lockdown throughout the province.

All markets across the province will remain closed except the grocery stores which will remain open from 9am to 5pm. Medical stores will operate even after 5pm.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Imran Khan joined a call by world leaders for a "peoples' vaccine" to combat the coronavirus.

"We must work together to beat this virus," the Prime Minister's Office quoted Khan as saying.
[Live Mint Aviation 15/05/2020](#)

National carrier Air India on Sunday reiterated that flight bookings for domestic travel are currently closed and will resume only after proper instructions from the Union government.

"Keeping in mind the prevailing situation due to Covid-19, it is informed that all domestic scheduled flights stand cancelled till 31st May 2020 excepting the flights operating as Charter and Evacuation Flights. The date of commencement of operation would be advised to all concerned in due course," an internal Air India email read.

The e-mail had somehow found its way to social media and was widely circulated on WhatsApp groups. The airline immediately issued a clarification on Sunday afternoon.

"An internal Air India email is circulating on WhatsApp. This is to clarify it is an internal communiqué. Commencement of commercial domestic or international flights will be announced by the

Government of India. Passengers are requested to follow the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Air India Twitter handle and respective websites for official announcement regarding resumption of operations,” an Air India spokesperson said.

Earlier this month, the airline had opened bookings for those passengers who met eligibility criteria and wished to travel from India to London, Singapore and select destinations in the United States on flights operating between May 8 to May 14.

The flights scheduled to ply were part of the ‘Vande Bharat’ mission from Kochi to Abu Dhabi, Delhi to Singapore and Calicut to Dubai and other nations where Indians were stranded due to lockdowns imposed to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

The first scheduled flight under India’s massive ‘Vande Bharat Mission’ to bring back stranded Indians from abroad flew from New Delhi to Singapore on May 7.

With lockdown 3.0 scheduled to draw to a close by Sunday night, the nation and several industrial sectors are gearing up to enter lockdown 4.0, albeit with minimal restrictions in those cities or areas which have reported no new Covid-19 positive cases in the last 14 days.

The Hindustan 17/05/2020

The government’s move to raise capital by privatising half a dozen airports through 50-year concessions will find few takers when the aviation industry is facing acute financial stress, industry experts said.

Investment bankers Mint spoke to expect that if the government proceeds **with the privatisation plan, it might find only two-three serious bidders that are able to raise the required debt and equity in a liquidity-starved market, lowering the chances of fair price discovery.**

One banker said it will be difficult for buyers to do adequate due diligence during lockdown, which would particularly curtail foreign interest. “As the more profitable public airports are going under the hammer first, the government will get less than fair value on many of them,” he said requesting anonymity.

On day four of her five-day economic stimulus announcements, finance minister Sitharaman said the bid process for the six airports will start soon.

The six airports are likely to be **Amritsar, Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Raipur and Tiruchirapalli**, owned and Airports Authority of India.

Airport sale prospects won't improve till airlines can get their businesses in order, said a senior industry expert, who declined to be named. **Indian airlines need a direct cash infusion to pay salaries for lockdown, subvention on airport charges, relaxation on fuel and statutory dues and government-backed credit lines.**

"Now we can almost certainly say two or three airlines may not survive the current crisis," said a senior official with a budget carrier, who requested anonymity. **"What is announced is simply rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic, while gaping hole from the iceberg continues to take on water,"** the official said, were **"business as usual" steps.**

The Hindustan 18/05/2020

NEW DELHI : All domestic and international flights will remain suspended till 31 May, the government said on Sunday, as it extended the countrywide lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak by another fortnight.

Only domestic air ambulances, flights for medical services and security purposes, and repatriation flights by Air India will be allowed to operate during this period, the home ministry said in a circular. India suspended all flights since 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. The lockdown has since been extended thrice, every fortnight, from the initial announcement date.

National carrier Air India Ltd on Sunday said it will resume flight bookings only after receiving directions from the government. It asked passengers to follow the Twitter handles of the civil aviation ministry and Air India, and their respective websites, for official announcements on resumption of flights.

An internal memo of Air India said earlier that all its domestic flights, except for charter and evacuation flights, will remain cancelled till 31 May, adding that the date for starting operations will be notified in due course.

“The delay in resumption of flights will hurt airlines dearly. As airline costs keep piling up, revenues have dried up completely. And, to top it, there’s an uncertainty with resumption of services,” said an official with a no-frills carrier.

Spokespersons of IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India were not immediately available for comment.

Indian airlines are losing an estimated ₹90 crore every day due to the shutdown of operations. The airlines also expect weak demand due to travellers’ concerns of viral infection when flights resume.

“Considering the daily net loss of about ₹75-90 crore during the shutdown of operations and the expected weak demand, the Indian aviation industry will require additional funding of ₹325 billion-350 billion over FY2021-23,” Kinjal Shah, vice president of rating agency Icra, said in a recent report. According to Icra, the profitability of India’s airline industry is expected to be adversely impacted in FY21 due to lower revenues and high fixed costs (35-42% of the total cost of airlines).

“Overall, the industry will witness 41-46% degrowth in domestic passenger traffic and 67-72% degrowth in international passenger traffic for the Indian carriers in FY21,” added the rating agency. [Live Mint Aviation 18/05/2020](#)

NEW DELHI : Indian airlines seeking a comprehensive bailout package said the Centre’s stimulus moves will give little relief considering the fleets are grounded and daily losses increasing due to the lockdown. “We needed government support to survive the lockdown and further support to revive the sector after the lockdown is lifted,” said a New Delhi-based senior airline official, who requested anonymity. “Right now we have received neither.”

The clampdown on Indian aviation began in mid-February with a ban on flights to and from coronavirus-hit countries, including China and Iran. Thereafter, India suspended all domestic and international commercial flights on 25 March when the government imposed the nationwide lockdown.

Since then, the lockdown has been extended thrice, forcing airlines to cancel domestic and international bookings till at least 31 May.

As part of measures to revive the stalled economy, the government announced plans to privatize more airports, free up more airspace for civilian flights and cut taxes to make India an attractive centre for maintenance and repair of aircraft. But, this has left airlines unimpressed.

"The three sops doled out do not have anything direct for the airlines. A couple of countries have helped airlines in the form of soft loans of funding in exchange of a minority stake in the airline," said independent aviation analyst Ameya Joshi, also the founder of NetworkThoughts.

In a letter written by Ficci's aviation committee chairman, Anand Stanley, to aviation minister Hardeep Puri, the industry had asked for tax relief, deferment of payment of goods and services tax (GST) for airlines, bringing jet fuel under GST, reduction in airport charges and overflight fees, taxing passengers on security, temporary reduction of excise duty on jet fuel and financial aid to the sector. He sought direct cash support for Indian airlines for their fixed costs.

The industry was also looking for an easing of requirements for airlines to operate flights on remote and loss-making routes and a freer hand in pricing of tickets. But industry officials said none of these proposals have come through.

While the measures may be positive in the long term, what airlines want right now are direct relief measures, said an aviation report by ICICI Securities.

Aviation turbine fuel prices in India have fallen over 65% year-on-year amid a global drop in crude prices, but high local taxes on the fuel mean that even the benefit of sliding international prices is likely to elude Indian carriers.

According to lobby group International Air Transport Association, Indian airlines are likely to suffer a revenue loss of \$11.2 billion this year, putting 2.9 million jobs at risk as passenger demand falls by 47% due to the coronavirus crisis.

"One challenge for private airlines in India is that these airlines have nearly all borrowings in forex (by way of foreign aircraft leases or foreign Exim-backed loans) and have little collateral to offer for new loans (as they own a low percentage of aircraft, which are anyway mortgaged) and typically have negative working capital and hence they may have difficulty in raising unsecured debt from the Indian banking system to tide over these covid problems," said EY India transactions partner Kuljit Singh.

India's aviation sector, including airlines, airport firms, ground handling companies and airport retailers, is expected to post losses of \$3-3.6 billion in the June quarter, according to aviation consultant CAPA India. **"There is no relief likely (from the government) and medium- to long-term downsizing of the aviation industry is inevitable unless promoters are able to recapitalize,"** said Kapil Kaul, South Asia CEO of CAPA-Centre for Aviation.

LiveMint Aviation 18/05/2020

Bengaluru: The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's announcement to make India a hub for Maintenance and Repair Overhaul (MRO) for aircraft has offered the much-needed relief to an aviation industry gasping for survival in the Covid-19 era. It will open up a huge foreign market as well as generate much domestic employment, the industry says.

Bharat Malkani, president of the MRO Association, said there are 600 aircraft in India and their maintenance and repairs is a billion-dollar affair annually. He said, "The big centres for the MRO industry are in Mumbai and New Delhi. The biggest chunk of operational expenses of any aircraft goes towards maintenance as it ensures safety of the aircraft and passengers.

We have a good domestic market. Hence, these moves will help make us much more effective." D Anand Bhaskar, CEO of Air Works, India's largest and oldest maintenance concern which is into its 70th year now, said, "We presently have only 1% of the global MRO industry share. Making India a hub means the engine, as well as the components, can be overhauled here once the infrastructure is in place.

At present, the parts have to be taken to Europe for repairs." "We have expanded our maintenance services beyond the shores of India and are servicing aircraft from Vietnam, Burma, UAE, Turkey, Nepal etc in our region. Creating an MRO hub will generate huge employment in India," Bhaskar added.

18/05/20 New Indian Express

Indian airlines seeking a comprehensive bailout package said the Centre's stimulus moves will give little relief considering the fleets are grounded and daily losses are mounting due to the lockdown. "We needed government support to survive the lockdown and further support to revive the sector after the lockdown is lifted," said a New Delhi-based senior airline official, who requested anonymity. "Right now we have received neither."

The clampdown on Indian aviation began in mid-February with a ban on flights to and from coronavirus-hit countries. Thereafter, India suspended all domestic and international commercial flights on 25 March when the lockdown was imposed.

Since then, the lockdown has been extended thrice, forcing airlines to cancel bookings till at least 31 May.

As part of measures to revive the stalled economy, the government announced **plans to privatize more airports, free up more airspace for civilian flights and cut taxes to make India an attractive centre for maintenance and repair of aircraft**. But, this has left airlines unimpressed.

“The three sops doled out do not have anything direct for the airlines. A couple of countries have helped airlines in the form of soft loans of funding in exchange of a minority stake in the airline,” said independent aviation analyst Ameya Joshi, also the founder of NetworkThoughts.

In a letter written by Ficci’s aviation committee chairman, Anand Stanley, to aviation minister Hardeep Puri, **the industry had asked for tax relief, deferment of payment of GST for airlines, bringing jet fuel under GST, reduction in airport charges and overflight fees, taxing passengers on security, temporary reduction of excise duty on fuel and financial aid to the sector. He sought direct cash support for Indian airlines for their fixed costs.**

The industry was also looking for an easing of requirements for airlines to operate flights on remote and loss-making routes and a freer hand in pricing of tickets. But industry officials said none of these proposals have come through.

While the measures may be positive in the long term, what airlines want right now are direct relief measures, said an aviation report by ICICI Securities.

Aviation turbine fuel prices in India have fallen over 65% year-on-year amid a global drop in crude prices, but high local taxes on the fuel mean that even the benefit of sliding international prices is likely to elude Indian carriers.

According to lobby group International Air Transport Association, Indian airlines are likely to suffer a revenue loss of \$11.2 billion this year, putting 2.9 million jobs at risk as passenger demand falls by 47% due to the coronavirus crisis.

“One challenge for private airlines in India is that these airlines have nearly all borrowings in forex (by way of foreign aircraft leases or foreign Exim-backed loans) and have little collateral to offer for

new loans (as they own a low percentage of aircraft, which are anyway mortgaged) and typically have negative working capital and hence they may have difficulty in raising unsecured debt from the Indian banking system to tide over these Covid problems,” said EY India transactions partner Kuljit Singh.

India’s aviation sector, including airlines, airport firms, ground handling companies and airport retailers, is expected to post losses of \$3-3.6 billion in the June quarter, according to aviation consultant CAPA India. **“There is no relief likely and medium- to long-term downsizing of the aviation industry is inevitable unless promoters are able to recapitalize,”** said Kapil Kaul, South Asia CEO of CAPA-Centre for Aviation.

The Hindustan Times 19/05/2020

Dozens of companies in sectors that have been the worst hit by the extended national lockdown are on the brink of bankruptcy with the government ignoring their pleas to help cushion the blow from the coronavirus pandemic.

Many of these companies, especially those with weak balance sheets in sectors such as aviation and hospitality, are seeing hopes of a revival dwindle amid a lockdown, now in its fourth phase, that has caused revenue streams to dry up overnight.

The government’s measures, which stressed on structural reforms, have mainly addressed supply-side issues through a liquidity boost and have largely overlooked industry-specific demands for a rescue package. This has put the survival of these firms and the jobs of thousands of people employed by them at risk.

“While the government has taken many steps for small businesses, there have been no direct cash infusion measures. A lack of this could potentially push these companies into bankruptcy as soon as the one-year suspension of the bankruptcy code gets over,” said Kumar Saurabh Singh, partner at law firm Khaitan and Co.

Airlines, which have been grounded since the end of March, had sought direct cash transfers to help pay salaries, and a waiver of airport charges, interest and excise duty. But they have not been given any concessions, apart from a promise to shorten flying routes by easing restrictions on utilization of airspace for civilian aircraft. The hospitality industry, which has also seen revenue slide to near zero, has also drawn a blank.

The automobile industry wants the government to help shore up demand through steps such as an incentive-based vehicle scrappage scheme and reduction in tax rates. But their demands, too, have not been accepted.

“The auto industry was keenly looking forward to some direct fiscal measures, which could have boosted demand and stopped job losses,” said Rajan Wadhera, president of the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (Siam). “The industry will continue to engage with government and seek direct interventions for revival.”

The upstream sector had sought government support as it is key to energy security. To be sure, some experts say the use of liquidity as a tool, rather than extending direct relief to businesses, is the right approach. There was no other way it could have been done, according to former chief statistician of India Pronab Sen.

“The sort of intervention that is needed is so large and wide that the government simply does not have the reach to be able to deliver. Nor does the government have the information or the relationships that are needed to make it effective. Financial institutions have both of these. Using them as the front end (to deliver stimulus) makes a lot of sense,” said Sen.

Sen said the measures announced so far seek to tackle humanitarian problems on the one hand and stalled production on the other. “The sensible thing to do is to keep production units alive. What has been done is essentially towards that objective,” said Sen.

The Hindustan Times 19/05/2020

Despite aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) telling airlines that they will be told about commencing online bookings, most of the Indian airlines, including IndiGo, Vistara and GoAir, have resumed accepting online bookings for both domestic and international travel for June.

However, low-cost carrier SpiceJet has closed its online bookings till mid-June while online bookings for AirAsia are closed for the coming month. A SpiceJet spokesperson said, "Our international bookings are closed till June 15, 2020."

After checking that online bookings were available for passengers, HT contacted IndiGo, Vistara and GoAir, but they did not comment on their online bookings for national and international travel.

DGCA chief Arun Kumar said, "Airlines are doing it at their risk and cost. However, they have to comply with DGCA CAR (civil aviation requirements) on refund, cancellation etc, failing which they will face strict action."

A source from one of the leading airlines said, "The DGCA circular asked airlines to keep bookings closed until further notice. However, it is not possible to keep them closed indefinitely. Hence, majority of the airlines have resumed their online bookings for travels starting June 1, 2020."

Warning travellers, Sudhakara Reddy, president of Air Passengers Association of India (APAI), tweeted, "We understand 6E, SpiceJet, GoAir have started taking bookings for international flights imagining that flights will operate from 1st June. Pl don't fall for it. Ur money will become a credit shell, instead keep it safe at home. (sic)"

"Under the immense pressure of Covid-19 and with no support from the government in terms of direct liquidity infusion for airlines, it is certain that many carriers will cease to exist by the time the aviation sector returns to regular levels. All the airlines are on the brink of breakdown and are looking for ways to manage their cash flows," said an airline source.

“Some cash-strapped airlines have resumed international bookings for the month of June to gather some cash from customers, which shall help them to survive the recovery period. Government and **DGCA so far have not given any directives to airlines to begin international bookings.** The confidence of passenger and travel agents is shaken due to earlier refunds which are stuck. There is a limit to block funds. Unless the government comes with clear guidelines that in June airlines will fly and in case of cancellations refunds will be given, there will hardly be any taker for these tickets,” said Nishant Patti, co-founder of EaseMyTrip.com.

The Hindustan Times 19/05/2020

In what may come as a major relief to businesses, the Union government has withdrawn its order directing employers to pay wages to workers, even with units remaining shut during lockdown.

On Sunday, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had issued a **fresh set of guidelines which will be applicable from Monday. It has repealed the order dated March 29, 2020 which had talked about compulsory wage payment to workers during lockdown.**

“Save as otherwise provided in the guidelines annexed to this order, all order issued by the NEC [national executive committee] under Section 10(2)(I) of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005, shall cease to have effect from 18.05.2020.”

The annexure attached to the order mentions six sets of standard operating procedures – mostly related to movement of persons – that will continue to remain in force. But it does not include the March 29 order.

The MHA had on March 29 issued an order under Section 10(2)(I) of the DM Act asking all employers to pay wages to workers on due date without any deduction even if the establishment was closed during the lockdown period.

“All employers, be it in the industry or in the shops and commercial establishments, shall make payment of wages of their workers, at their workplaces, on the due date, without any deduction, for the period their establishments are under closure during the lockdown,” the March 29 order had said.

Over the past few days, the industry had petitioned the government to withdraw its order on compulsory wage payment as they were themselves facing cash crunch issues. Some industrial bodies had also asked the government to foot the wage bills of companies through payment of grants but it was not agreed to due to fiscal constraints.

The constitutional validity of the government’s order on wages was challenged by several companies who had moved the Supreme Court. On Friday, the apex court asked the government not to take any coercive action against private companies who were unable to pay wages to workers. The SC was to hear the petition this week. The court, terming it as an “omnibus order”, had asked the government to re-examine it.

The trade union leaders have criticised the government's step to withdraw the order. "The order for lockdown 4.0, by a slight of hand, allows employers to get away without paying wages during the lockdown. So no payment of wages and no wage subsidy just where do workers go? Who is responsible for a worker in a containment or red zone or for that matter even in an orange or green zone where full public transport has not been resumed?" Gautam Mody, General Secretary, New Trade Union Initiative said.

But employers have welcomed the step, saying it was absolutely necessary especially in absence of grants from the government to the industry towards wage payment. "We have to work on the principles of 'no work no pay'. Our opinion is that organisations should be considerate towards employees and in a difficult situation like this, minimum sustenance pay should be given but where will they get the income to pay? In many countries, the government have shared the wage bill but it didn't happen in India," M.S. Unnikrishnan, chairman of Confederation of Indian Industry's committee for industrial relations said.

In its petition to the SC, Nagareeka Exports Limited had said that the payment of full salary to workers during the lockdown period when production was zero or "very minimal" would lead to closure of many micro, small and medium scale enterprises and "permanent unemployment of many people, directly affecting the economy."

Before the MHA's March 29 directive, the labour and employment ministry had issued multiple advisories to the industry to not lay-off or retrench workers during the lockdown and asking them to deter from deducting wages. Notably, the MHA order, which was issued under the DM Act, had said the state governments have to issue their separate orders to implement the diktat. Any contravention of the order was punishable under the DM Act.

Business Standards 19/05/2020

The domestic flight operations in India will resume once the state governments are ready to open airports, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday. The Centre alone can not make a decision in this regard, Puri added.

"It is not upto @MoCA_Gol or centre alone to decide on resuming domestic flights. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the govt of states where these flights will take off & land should be ready to allow civil aviation operations," said Puri on social-networking platform Twitter.

Commercial flight operations in the country have been suspended since March 25 when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. India has since extended the lockdown thrice, every fortnight. The fourth phase of lockdown will remain in force till May 31 to mitigate the spread of the virus. The Centre on Sunday allowed interstate travel and local transport during the lockdown 4.0. Most of the states permitted taxis, auto-rickshaw and buses to ply on roads. However, the flight services will remain prohibited till the month end. Cargo, medical evacuation, and special flights have operated during the lockdown.

The Airports Authority of India has issued guidelines for the resumption of flights in a "graded manner". The passengers need to follow stringent social distancing norms like maintaining at least four-feet distance from the co-passengers once the operation resumes. Masks will be mandatory for all.

The civil aviation minister said airport operations are likely to open only in a graded manner with nearly 25-30% of capacity initially. A number of airlines have started accepting bookings from passengers for domestic flights from June onwards. Private carriers like IndiGo and Vistara said they were taking bookings for domestic flights. Earlier, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had pulled up airlines for selling tickets even as the lockdown remained in force.
[Live Mint Aviation 20/05/2020](#)

NEW DELHI: The government will soon allow domestic private airlines to operate flights to bring back Indians stuck on foreign soil, a respite to carriers grounded since late March, officials said.

The decision was taken after aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola on Tuesday convened a meeting with airlines to discuss the economic hit and ways to help the industry overcome the crisis.

"Fares and flights private carriers will operate are still under discussion and will be announced soon," a senior government official told ET.

Currently, national carrier Air India and its low-cost subsidiary Air India Express are carrying out such flights on behalf of the government.

Private domestic carriers can provide evacuation flights to short-haul international destinations because they don't have long-haul aircraft in their fleet, while Air India can continue to evacuate Indians from the US and Europe, officials said.

Airlines will have to take permission from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) before every such flight "since these flights are unscheduled", another senior official said. Such repatriation flights, where passengers are charged for travel, will provide revenues to airlines that are under deep financial stress. Airline executives have welcomed the move. "This is a positive and welcome step as it will allow repatriation of larger number of citizens, who are on waitlists," said an airline executive requesting not to be identified.

"Private airlines offered services at the very beginning and will be glad to do their part," the person said. "This also allows private airlines to get aircraft, crew and operational staff actively working again in preparation for resumption of scheduled flights. Finally, it **creates a revenue opportunity after many weeks of close to zero revenue.** It will make flights more affordable (for those awaiting repatriation)."

The permission for repatriation flights has come after the government did not provide any support to the ailing airline industry in the Rs 20 lakh-crore bailout package announced last week.

The ETI 20/05/2020

New Delhi: Amid the coronavirus-triggered lockdown, IndiGo said on Tuesday its aircraft will provide crucial data on wind, humidity and temperature during all flight operations to the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to help it make accurate weather predictions. "The data, which is imperative for accurate predictions of weather, has been unavailable to the IMD since a majority of flights are out of operation due to the nationwide lockdown, coupled with staff constraints," the carrier said in a press release.

IndiGo said it has incorporated a plan for its pilots to report high level wind and temperatures at different stages of a flight as desired by the IMD across all flight operations.

"The pilot reports will capture and share observations at cruising altitude midway of the destination, at cruising altitude just before start of descent, near 10,000 feet, near 5,000 feet....to support the Wx (weather) forecast model," the airline said.

India has been under lockdown since March 25 to curb the spread of coronavirus. All scheduled commercial flight operations have been suspended for this period. However, cargo flights, medical evacuation flights and special flights permitted by the aviation regulator DGCA are allowed to operate.

Ashim Mittra, Senior Vice President, Flight Operations, IndiGo, said, "We have made pilot reporting compulsory on our flight operations. We will share observations from every flight within 2 hours to the IMD headquarters, so that they can use this data for the benefit of the nation."

The ETI 19/05/2020

The domestic flight operations in India will resume once the state governments are ready to open airports, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday. The Centre alone can not make a decision in this regard, Puri added.

"It is not upto @MoCA_GoI or centre alone to decide on resuming domestic flights. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the govt of states where these flights will take off & land should be ready to allow civil aviation operations," said Puri on social-networking platform Twitter.

Commercial flight operations in the country have been suspended since March 25 when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. India has since extended the lockdown thrice, every fortnight. The fourth phase of lockdown will remain in force till May 31 to mitigate the spread of the virus. The Centre on Sunday allowed interstate travel and local transport during the lockdown 4.0. Most of the states permitted taxis, auto-rickshaw and buses to ply on roads. However, the flight services will remain prohibited till the month end. Cargo, medical evacuation, and special flights have operated during the lockdown.

The Airports Authority of India has issued guidelines for the resumption of flights in a "graded manner". The passengers need to follow stringent social distancing norms like maintaining at least four-feet distance from the co-passengers once the operation resumes. Masks will be mandatory for all.

The civil aviation minister said airport operations are likely to open only in a graded manner with nearly 25-30% of capacity initially. A number of airlines have started accepting bookings from passengers for domestic flights from June onwards. Private carriers like IndiGo and Vistara said they were taking bookings for domestic flights. Earlier, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had pulled up airlines for selling tickets even as the lockdown remained in force.

Live Mint Aviation 20/05/2020

Government of India today said that all domestic flights and civil aviation operations will resume from 25 May in a "calibrated" manner. The Standard operation procedures will be issues for passenger movement soon, it added.

"Domestic civil aviation operations will recommence in a calibrated manner from 25 May. All airports & air carriers are being informed to be ready for operations from 25 May. SOPs for passenger movement also being separately issued by Ministry," tweeted Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Live Mint Aviation 20/05/2020

Les vols intérieurs vont reprendre progressivement à partir du 25 mai en Inde, après deux mois d'interdiction en raison du confinement national décrété contre la pandémie de coronavirus, a annoncé mercredi le ministre de l'Aviation indien.

«Les opérations d'aviation civile intérieure recommenceront de manière calibrée à partir du lundi 25 mai 2020. Tous les aéroports et transporteurs sont en train d'être informés pour être prêts», a tweeté Hardeep Singh Puri. **Le gouvernement n'a donné aucune indication quant à un éventuel calendrier de reprise des vols internationaux au départ et à destination de l'Inde.**

AFP 20/05/2020

Après un choc sans précédent, le transport aérien se met en piste pour redécoller avec un arsenal anti-Covid-19, "clé" du redémarrage, qui devra être harmonisé au niveau mondial pour éviter un "patchwork" de mesures, explique Alexandre de Juniac, directeur général de l'Iata.

"Une des clés du redémarrage des voyages est un processus de contrôle des passagers qui soit robuste (...), qui redonne confiance" et permette "de convaincre les gouvernements de lever les

procédures de fermeture des frontières", estime le patron de l'Association internationale du transport aérien (Iata), qui regroupe 290 compagnies aériennes, dans un entretien à l'AFP.

"On est en train de bâtir quelque chose qui soit à la fois sûr et qui permette de faire fonctionner les opérations de manière économiquement viable", déclare-t-il, écartant avec force l'idée de condamner des sièges pour permettre une distanciation physique à bord.

"Ça n'ajouterait pas davantage de sécurité d'avoir à neutraliser des sièges", assure M. de Juniac.

"En plus, l'impact économique serait absolument catastrophique" et il faudrait alors "augmenter les prix de 50 à 100%", poursuit-il.

Des discussions sont en cours au niveau de l'Organisation de l'aviation civile internationale (OACI) et des grands Etats "pour essayer d'avoir une approche convergente et harmonisée sur l'ensemble de la planète sur le système de contrôle sanitaire" qui sera mis en place par les acteurs du transport aérien. Elles devraient, selon lui, aboutir d'ici "à fin mai".

Il s'agit d'éviter "le patchwork" de mesures de sûreté qui avait suivi les attentats du 11-Septembre, notamment en matière de contrôle des passagers, commente-t-il.

Déclaration sanitaire à l'arrivée à l'aéroport, contrôle de température, port du masque dans l'aéroport et dans l'avion, distribution de nourriture pré-emballée pour limiter les contacts, désinfection de l'avion, limitation du nombre de bagages cabine ou encore une livraison de bagages accélérée: le secteur mise sur une superposition de mesures conjuguée à des systèmes de filtration de l'air très performants dans les avions pour créer un filet anti-Covid.

Les passagers "prêts à être reconquis"

La fermeture des frontières et les restrictions de circulation mises en place partout dans le monde pour éviter la propagation du coronavirus ont porté depuis mars un coup d'arrêt au transport aérien.

"On n'a jamais connu ça. Aucune crise précédente n'a été de ce niveau-là", constate le patron de IATA.

Entre 80 et 90% de la flotte mondiale a été clouée au sol et ce n'est qu'à partir de juin que le trafic redémarrera, d'abord sur les lignes intérieures puis continentales et enfin intercontinentales, selon IATA qui estime qu'il ne retrouvera son niveau d'avant-crise qu'en 2023.

Jusqu'ici, seules "trois ou quatre compagnies" ont fait faillite, selon M. de Juniac, dont le géant Virgin Australia qui a annoncé fin avril se mettre volontairement en cessation de paiements.

Mais des dizaines de milliers d'emplois ont été supprimés.

Si les compagnies survivent, c'est grâce, selon lui, à la réaction "très rapide et très forte" dont les Etats ont fait preuve pour soutenir, sous diverses formes, le secteur partout dans le monde "considérant que c'est un secteur absolument stratégique".

Engagements environnements maintenus

Quant aux engagements environnementaux du secteur, qui doit réduire ses émissions de CO2 de moitié en 2050 par rapport à 2005 selon les règles définies par l'OACI, ils seront tenus, promet-il.

"On est en train d'essayer de convaincre les gouvernements de consacrer une partie de leur plan de support économique à développer les bio-fuels (bio-carburants, NDLR)".

"Le renouvellement des flottes (avec des avions moins polluants, NDLR) sera peut-être un peu ralenti (...) mais il y aura aussi un peu moins d'avions qui voleront et donc un peu moins d'émissions", ajoute-t-il.

Sur la question des contreparties aux aides exigées par des Etats, comme en France par exemple sur le plan environnemental, M. de Juniac estime qu'il est "plutôt compliqué d'alourdir un processus alors qu'on était en train de se noyer".

"De toutes façons, on allait tenir nos engagements environnementaux", affirme-t-il.

Journal de l'aviation 20/05/2020

<https://www.easa.europa.eu/document-library/general-publications/covid-19-aviation-health-safety-protocol>

The Ministry of Home Affairs today removed domestic air travel from the list of prohibited activities during the ongoing nationwide lockdown in order to pave way for the resumption of domestic flights in the country soon.

Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla issued the amendment in the guidelines in his capacity as chairperson of the National Executive Committee under the National Disaster Management Act.

"I hereby order the following amendment in the guidelines on lockdown measures, for strict implementation by ministries, departments of government of India, state, Union Territory governments and state/ Union Territory authorities. **Amendment: In para 2 (i), 'domestic air travel of passengers' is deleted from the list of prohibited activities,**" the order issued by Bhalla said, according to PTI.

The order also said the detailed guidelines for operation of airports and air travel of passengers will be issued by the civil aviation ministry.

Earlier today, government of India said that domestic flights and civil aviation operations will resume from 25 May in a "calibrated" manner. According to the minister, special operating procedures (SOPs) for passenger movement are being separately issued.

"Domestic civil aviation operations will recommence in a calibrated manner from 25 May. All airports & air carriers are being informed to be ready for operations from 25 May. SOPs for passenger movement also being separately issued by Ministry," tweeted Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

Puri also said that the government is considering capping the prices of airline tickets, but "those will be comfortable".

We are looking at some basic measures that could be taken relating to capping prices of airline tickets, but those will be comfortable," said Puri.

The announcements came amid the fourth phase of the lockdown which was imposed by the government on 25 March in order to combat the novel coronavirus outbreak in the country. Commercial flight operations in the country have been suspended since March 25 when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. Currently, the citizens are observing the fourth phase of the lockdown in which several relaxation in the movement and various other operations including availability of services have been allowed in almost all places barring the containment zones in the country.

Live Mint Aviation 20/05/2020

India's decision to resume domestic flights from May 25 was a bolt out of the blue for most of the country's aviation companies.

Top executives at three Indian airlines said they learned about the move when the aviation minister tweeted it. The executives asked not to be identified citing rules on speaking to the media. Most airlines have suspended ticket sales at least until June 1 and were staring at a longer stint on the ground, until the minister announced the government's plan to reopen the skies. Many are puzzled as the lifting coincides with India emerging as a nation where coronavirus infections are spreading at the fastest pace in Asia.

While airlines, strapped for cash due to the shutdown, were waiting for a decision, the short notice makes it harder for them to prepare for operations, deploy staff, arrange for protective gear, and ensure the virus stays away from flights, the people said.

The issue shows the challenge airlines face as the world gradually opens up the skies even as new virus hotspots emerge. The situation is particularly alarming in crowded India, where movement of people from its mega cities to the hinterland has already catalyzed the virus's spread despite a near two-month nationwide lockdown.

Airlines around the world have struggled to remain in business, with some shutting down, as travel restrictions dried cash flows. **The ban on local flights -- which came into effect on March 25, just days after a ban international operations -- prompted industry analysts at CAPA Centre for Aviation to speculate that struggling airlines would have to sell shares to stay alive.**

India's airlines, including InterGlobe Aviation Ltd.'s IndiGo, Asia's biggest budget carrier by market value, SpiceJet Ltd., Singapore Airlines Ltd.'s affiliate Vistara and AirAsia Group Bhd., have 650 planes between them in their fleet. The country is one of the biggest market for Airbus SE and Boeing Co. Infections in the nation of 1.3 billion people were at 112,028, including 3,434 deaths, as of Thursday morning, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

NEW DELHI : With domestic airline operations set to resume from airports across all major cities from 25 May, the new standard operating protocols (SOPs) put in place on Wednesday reviewed by Mint, calls for passenger boarding and disembarkation in batches as per seating arrangements in the aircraft to avoid crisscrossing inside the aircraft.

The long list of do's and don'ts starts from one's home itself. Given that initially **the airlines may only allow web check-ins, the passengers will need to print their boarding passes and check-in baggage tickets before they start for the airport.**

Flying will never be the same again. **From disallowing newspapers and magazines in the terminal building and lounges; to making it compulsory for passengers to have Arogya Setu App on their mobiles, the Indian flyer will have to conform to a new normal which almost sounds dystopian.**

The SOPs for 'recommencement of domestic flights' state that **only personal vehicles or select authorised taxi services or transport services with restricted seating will be permitted to enter the airport.** While passengers will need to reach the airport two hours before departure, only those passengers who have departure in the next four hours will be allowed entry into the terminal building.

"All the departing passengers must compulsorily be registered with 'Arogya Setu' App on their mobiles and the same shall be verified by CISF/Airport staff at the entry gate. However, Arogya Setu is not mandatory for children below age of 14 years," the SOP said and added, "Passengers not showing "Green" on 'Arogya Setu' are not to be allowed to enter."

This comes in the backdrop of privacy concerns being raised about the app, with privacy advocates who feel the app has several security-related blackholes and can eventually become surveillance tool for the government.

All airports will also have mats or carpets soaked with bleach (sodium hypochlorite solution) placed at entrance for disinfecting shoes and thermal scanners for passengers.

The plan includes use of trolleys to be discouraged in departure and arrival area, and all luggage to be sanitised by the airport operator in the **baggage break up area before putting on conveyer belt, before handing over the luggage to the passengers.**

India suspended all flights since 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown to contain covid-19 that is slated till 31 May.
Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

NEW DELHI: A meeting between officials of airlines and airports and those with the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) was underway Thursday to discuss matters related to resumption of services, sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Mint.

"Only two officials from each airlines and airports will be allowed to meet DGCA officials for a meeting at 9 am," a senior airline official told Mint.

Domestic airline operations will resume from airports across all major cities in the country from 25 May. Flight operations will resume from all major Indian airports, including ones located in tier one cities.

On Wednesday, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri had tweeted that flight operations will resume in a calibrated manner from 25 May.

All airports and airlines have been informed to be ready to recommence operations, the minister had said on Twitter, adding that standard operating procedures (SOPs) for passenger movement are being separately issued by the ministry of civil aviation.

"As per the government announcement made today (Wednesday), **we will be resuming flight operations from Monday, May 25, 2020 in a phased manner,**" market leader IndiGo said in a statement.

"We will share further details and guidelines for passengers, in line with the advisory from the authorities over the next few days," it added.

No-frills carrier SpiceJet's chairman and managing director Ajay Singh said resumption of flight operations will go a long way in lifting overall economic sentiment in the country.

"While the SOP for resumption of operations and details of flights to be operated is still awaited, we are sure that this much awaited move will help a large number of passengers by providing them access to the safest and quickest means of transport," Singh added.

Puri had in an interview to a magazine, earlier in May, had said the government couldn't restrict flight operations to green zones, which had limited number of covid-19 cases. Most tier one cities including New Delhi, Mumbai, and others fall under the red zone with high number of cases.

India had suspended all flights on 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown to contain covid-19. The lockdown has since been extended thrice, every fortnight, from the initial announcement date. The latest and fourth phase will run till 31 May.

Earlier this week, Indian carriers reopened bookings for passenger flights from 1 June even before the government announced its plans to resume flight services from 25 May.

Tickets for trunk routes like New Delhi-Mumbai, Kolkata-Mumbai, New Delhi-Bangalore, have been put up for sale on airlines' websites and online travel websites.

For travel between New Delhi and Bangalore, 1 June, the lowest fare is about ₹5,200, one way, while fares between New Delhi to Kolkata would cost around ₹5,000 on the same date, according to information on travel portals.

However, airlines and online travel agents were yet to put up flight tickets on sale for travel during 25-31 May after the government's announcement on Wednesday evening.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

<https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/SOPQuarantineofPassengers.pdf>

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced several measures to help the aviation sector tide over the coronavirus crisis. This included opening up more air space for civilians flying. The finance minister claimed that the move to open more air space for civilian flights will bring Rs 1,000 crore per year benefits for the aviation sector, facing unprecedented crisis amid lockdown to contain coronavirus pandemic.

As of today, only 50 percent of air space in India is free to use. **The government argued that airline operators will save a significant amount of fuel on shorter routing options on Conditional Direct Routes (CDR) passing through military air space. However, experts contend that there is hardly any room left for further significant shortening of routes, but even if it's done by opening up more air space, there will be marginal effect in terms of savings for the airlines.**

A similar measure was taken by the government in 2017 when 13 Conditional Direct Routes (CDR) were opened for airlines. But these routes were available for airlines depending on the timing and only when not used by the military - mostly one weekend and when the weather was not fit to fly for the military. Moreover, **experts claimed that the additional fuel burn takes place due to traffic congestion and not primarily because of the longer routes.**

"Maximum additional fuel burn takes place while holding over high-density air traffic destinations like Mumbai, Delhi & Hyderabad. Flights immediately North of Delhi are prohibited due to Rashtrapati Bhawan. Therefore all departures/arrivals have to take a longer route around Delhi when flying to/from airports in the North," Captain Amit Singh, Fellow, Royal Aeronautical Society, UK & Former Head Airline Operations, Safety, told International Business Times, India in a statement.

The Rs 1,000 crore benefit that the Narendra Modi government is claiming also looks infeasible. According to a paper presented by India on Civil-Military Cooperation and Flexible use of airspace in the country at the 54th Conference of Directors General of Civil Aviation Asia and Pacific Regions, airlines saved approximately 115 tonnes of aviation fuel from 13 conditional direct routes.

At today's fuel price of Rs 26,000/KL, the cost of 115 Tonnes will be approx INR 10 crore, which is nowhere near the claimed benefits.

Another airline pilot with an experience of thousands of flying hours and an aviation specialist who chose not to be identified told IBTimes India that the **airlines are already using most direct routes and there isn't much room for any more improvements.** He also said that the savings projected by the government is false and the government didn't explain how they calculated Rs 1,000 crore benefits.

"We already fly optimised (most direct routes). In technical terms, they are called Q-Routes and started a few years ago. So there isn't much to improve... The savings projected are false and notional. They haven't explained the calculation and the cost of ATF they have factored," he said.

19/05/20 Shashi Sharma/IBTimes

As the world keenly awaits a credible solution like vaccine to stop the spread of COVID-19, doctor and political leaders around the world are working hard to revive the economy, with least effect from the virus. We have to live with this virus, or this is the new normal has been common saying these days.

But as we look at the restarting the economy, things will change, more particularly towards maintaining hygiene to reduce the chances to getting infected. Things like social distancing, hand sanitizers, face masks are becoming part of our life.

The biggest problem that we are going to face is while travelling, and especially travelling via air. The most hard hit industry, civil aviation is also said to be the biggest transmitter of virus as people fly from all across the world and hence it is of utmost importance for aviation industry to reform the way we travel and focus on safety of passengers.

Just a few days ago, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted a photo of the passengers traveling on the repatriation flight from Singapore to Delhi. In his tweet, the minister quoted the lyrics of popular song 'The Times are a Changing' by Bob Dylan.

The tweet read – "The times they are a-changing! Not a scene from a sci-fi blockbuster but a picture of passengers with face shields on-board the Singapore-Mumbai flight which landed earlier today. Preventive measures are the new normal. Changes are here to stay,"

Mr Puri was true to the sense that flying will become a lot different than it used to be. We bring you top 5 ways air travel will change and what we can expect when flying once the lockdown and travel ban is over-

Not just airports, but health checkup has become mandatory for any person who wants to enter a large complex. However airports are a special case as a lot of people fly in from different areas, increasing the probability of contamination. While temperature checks using thermal gun will be done at the entry, one has to fill form before traveling to reveal the health history. Also, mandatory Aarogya Setu app will help track the health history too.

Airports are usually full of hustle-bustle, especially the ones in India, like the Delhi and Mumbai airports. However, a lot of people will refrain from traveling until the early next year, especially for leisure activities. This will result in deserted airports, mostly filled with people traveling for work or emergency. Also, airports will close all common areas like smoking room, prayer room and dining area.

The only and most efficient way to stop the spread of coronavirus is by wearing Personal Protective

Equipment (PPE). While the face mask is the bare minimum PPE one can wear, it's advisable to use gloves and face shields. This, however, is limited to only passengers. Cabin crew and pilots will be wearing full body PPE including body suit apart from security staff from CISF.

Apart from PPE, regular sanitization is the other option to keep the covid-19 at bay. While airport staff will keep the airports clean including the seating area, planes will also be fully sanitized after each flight. The packed food items served on the plane will be properly cleaned too. However, the biggest newsmaker is the UV bag cleaner installed at the Delhi airport. UV scanners will be installed and all bags have to pass through them.

20/05/20 Arjit Garg/News18.com

New Delhi: Domestic flights to different cities will resume once the State governments express their willingness to open airports, Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri said on Tuesday.

“It is not upto @MoCA_GoI or centre alone to decide on resuming domestic flights. In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the govt of states where these flights will take off & land should be ready to allow civil aviation operations,” said the Minister in a message posted on Twitter on Tuesday.

While the standard operating procedure for domestic flights was yet to be framed, the comment gives airlines a hint of what to expect in the days to come. **Commercial flight operations remain suspended at least until May 31, and only some flights have been allowed domestically to help citizens repatriated from different countries travel from major airports hubs in Delhi, Mumbai, etc. This is also in line with guidelines prepared by the Airports Authority of India for reopening its aerodromes across the country, which said, “flight schedule may be cleared on City Pair basis, so the origin and destination airports are open fully from lockdown situation.”** Railways too were operating to and from those cities that permitted train services, until the protocol was amended on Tuesday.

19/05/20 The Hindu

Kochi: An airfare war has broken out among chartered airliners to bring the film crew of “Djibouti” and “Aadujeevitham” home. Stuck in Djibouti and Jordan, respectively, the teams of artists and technicians are waiting for the resumption of international flight service to fly back to India. Aviation industry sources told TNIE that many airlines, including Air India, are in discussion with the crew to transport them to Kochi airport, and are quoting a fare between Rs 95 lakh and Rs 1.7 crore per flight.

“We have to get a lot of mandatory clearances to operate chartered flights to bring the film crew back home. Air India, being the country’s flag carrier, has a lot of advantage in getting nod from the ministry of civil aviation. But we are also in the race by offering highly competitive rates,” said a senior executive of a chartered airliner.

Chartered airliner Halo Airways Pvt Ltd has submitted a quote to operate special chartered aircraft to transport 90-odd crew members of film ‘Djibouti’ from Djibouti to Kochi, said its CEO Shoby T Paul. “Once we get the approval, an A-320 aircraft will be used from Dubai for the operation which will cost below `1 crore. All the stipulated Covid-19 safety protocols will be followed and we will ensure that all passengers adhere to the guidelines put in place by central government for international travellers,” he said.

20/05/20 Ajay Kanth/New Indian Express

New Delhi: Domestic air travellers were let in a lurch as several private airlines have opened booking for flights from June 1 onwards while it is not yet confirmed whether domestic flight operations will resume from June or not. Also Read - With Over 5,000 Cases Recorded in Last 24 Hours, India Sees Biggest-Ever Hike | Maharashtra Tops Chart

Here's everything you must know before booking a domestic flight Also Read - Amid Expected Major Economic Recession in Asia, Foreign Investors Withdraw \$16 Billion From India.

1. Before lockdown 4.0 was announced, it was highly speculated that domestic flights will be starting during the fourth phase of the lockdown. Also Read - Delhi-Noida Border is Still Closed, But You Can Travel to These States if You Have E-Pass
2. However, the final nod was not given. But there was no booking. Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri has said that it's not the unilateral decision of the Centre. The states are not willing to allow domestic air traffic.
3. But after lockdown 4.0 was announced, private airlines started accepting bookings from June 1.
4. The ticket prices have remarkably gone up for some airlines.
5. But what if domestic flight services are not allowed to resume after June 1? Will the passengers be refunded in cash? Initially, the airlines were in favour of giving credit as a refund. But the civil aviation ministry ordered the airlines to make a full refund of tickets cancelled during the lockdown.
6. "Making a booking for domestic/international travel, for now, is a waste of time and good money. **Wait for new schedules to be announced and approved by DGCA before you spend even a 1,000 rupees for a booking. Keep your money safe,**" Air Passengers Association of India president Sudhakara Reddy said.
[20/05/20 India.com](https://www.india.com/20/05/20)

Kolkata: **Seven small planes scampered out of the city to safety; airline ground staff rushed to secure the larger aircraft with chocks and chain down ground handling equipment; electricians lowered floodlights from high masts in the apron area; engineers anchored aerobridges; and a team inspected the terminal roof, plugging leaks and re-seaming the joints.**

Kolkata airport, which has largely worn a deserted look since March 24, sprung back to life on Tuesday as airlines and airport staff attempted to minimise the damage that might be made by **Cyclone Amphan** that is steadily barrelling towards the city. "Wind speed of 110-115km/hour gusting at 130km/hour is expected to strike the airport around Wednesday evening . Torrential rainfall can cause inundation," airport meteorological office head G C Debnath warned Kolkata airport authorities late Monday evening, triggering evacuation of smaller aircraft. IndiGo relocated four ATRs and SpiceJet flew out three Bombardier Q400 planes. Only Air India subsidiary Alliance Air was unable to shift the three ATR aircraft. "There are 45 planes, most of them Boeing B-737 or Airbus A-320 aircraft that are still stationed at the airport. Chocks have been set to prevent them from rolling. All ground-handling equipment, like step ladders and luggage trolleys, have been secured," airport director Kaushik Bhattacharjee said. A Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) has been issued, suspending all cargo flights from Tuesday midnight till Thursday midnight. On Tuesday, five cargo flights operated to Kolkata; two domestic flights by IndiGO, one domestic and an international flight by SpiceJet and a US-Bangla Air flight from Dhaka.

In the apron area, the 18 aerobridges have been anchored with high-tensile steel wires. The

floodlights from the 40-odd high masts, each 30-m high, have been lowered to prevent them from buckling in the wind.

20/05/20 Times of India

Mumbai airport will use its plants, spread across 76,000 square metre of green landscape, to bring tranquillity and calmness amid the COVID-19 pandemic to air passengers, once operations resume.

The GVK-operated Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) on Tuesday said it is leaving no stone unturned to nurture, maintain, and enhance the area sprawling across 19 acres, which is the most extensive airport garden in India.

“CSMIA understands that anxious travellers will benefit and rejuvenate from the green environment at the airport and is thus working relentlessly with a curtailed workforce to maintain the greenery. This will help boost positivity, improve the overall well-being, and bring a breath of fresh air to comfort passengers, once operations resume,” a Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL) spokesperson said.

MIAL said its maintenance staff adhere to the safety norms directed by the government to maintain the green belts, which will not only soothe passengers but make the airport a safe and hygienic passage to transit.

“The airport’s incorporation of the indoor garden has always helped weary passengers reduce stress and boost positivity. The bold, vibrant colours, and fragrant shrubs will delight and help soothe anxious passengers during this unprecedented time,” the spokesperson said.

CSMIA has an automated pressurised irrigation system that covers 80% of the total garden, which has come in handy to ensure smooth functioning.

“Since the beginning, the airport has always undertaken and implemented measures to maintain a safe and hygienic passage for passengers to travel and will continue to do so to assist passengers with high-quality standards even after the outbreak of the pandemic subsides,” the spokesperson said.

Of the 80 gardeners who used to work on a typical day, a team of minimal landscape gardeners, horticulturists, and irrigation engineers from CSMIA have been deployed to water, repair and nurture the lush greenery all while maintaining physical distancing and following SOPs in place at the airport. The gardeners, irrigation technicians, and other maintenance staff work for approximately five to six hours daily and travel from nearby areas of the airport.

20/05/20 Aditya Anand/The Hindu

New Delhi: Zurich Airport International AG has got the Security Clearance for the development of Rs 29,560 crore Noida International Greenfield Airport at Jewar. Last year in November, Zurich Airports won the contract to build and operate **Jewar Airport, which will act as the second airport for Delhi, for a period of 40 years that includes 4-years construction period in the first phase.**

Zurich Airport International AG manages the Zurich Airport in Switzerland. Last year, this Swiss company emerged as the frontrunner after financial bids for the Jewar airport were opened by Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL). It offered the highest per-passenger fee of Rs 401 to the government.

The first phase of construction was expected to commence in January 2020, with the fourth and final

phase scheduled to be completed by 2050. **The massive Jewar airport is scheduled to begin operations in March 2023, initially handling a maximum capacity of 60 lakh passengers annually. Once completed, the airport in Jewar near the Yamuna Expressway will be India's largest airport.**

The proposed airport will have **six runways**, at par with the world's largest airports. Currently, Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport is the biggest in India with three runways. Jewar airport after completion will be counted along with two of the largest airports in the world that are O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, spread over 7,200 acres with eight runways, and Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport in Texas which has seven runways.

Uttar Pradesh Energy Minister Shrikant Sharma said last year that the first runway of the airport will be ready by 2023. A total of 19 bidders had shown interest in the project, he then told reporters after a meeting of the state cabinet.

The billion-dollar airport project would comprise an area of about 5,000 acres. The construction of the airport would be conducted in phases. In the first phase, 2,500 acres would be used for construction, following which the operations from this airport would be able to benefit 12 million passengers on a yearly basis.

19/05/20 ETNowNews.com

Sydney/Beijing/Helsinki: **In Thailand, you cannot have food or water in flight and must wear a mask. In Malaysia and Indonesia, the plane needs to be half-empty. In the United States and Europe, it's not mandatory for airlines to leave the middle seat open.**

Measures to stem the spread of coronavirus have changed how people travel, as Beijing resident Feng Xueli, 26, found when she took a domestic flight this month. The aircraft was full - allowed under the Chinese rules.

"We needed to wear a mask during the flight and there were PA announcements basically asking for our cooperation with these anti-virus measures put in place, which made me a bit nervous," Feng said. "You also need to go through a lot of temperature checks and security checks when you leave the airport." **Travellers, airlines and airports are grappling with a hodgepodge of rules put in place during the pandemic that will make flying different in almost every country.**

"When flying restarts, you are already working against the clock. There is still a latent fear of travel," said Subhas Menon, head of the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines. "It's not going to be such a smooth passage when you travel because of all of the measures that are going to be introduced." A little more than a year after uneven national responses to the grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX, **the industry is once again facing piecemeal regulation.**

The last trigger for such widespread changes in the way airlines operate was the 2001 attacks in the United States, which ushered in new security measures.

"People globally have understood the security requirements that came after 9/11. We would like to see that kind of standardisation of protocols," said Boeing vice-president Mike Delaney, leader of Boeing's Confident Travel Initiative.

19/05/20 Tribune

Once the COVID-19 pandemic is contained, the airline industry will come roaring back, but it will not be in the form of business as usual. In the beginning, low prices will be used as an incentive in the hope that people who have been cooped up in their homes for the past two months will want to get away and have a summer vacation.

Before we get into why we think that the airlines will come roaring back once the coronavirus crisis has ended, we need to remember that **some carriers were already in trouble before COVID-19 hit**. Monarch, Thomas Cook, and Flybe all went bust while airlines like Alitalia, Air India, and South African Airways continue to limp along thanks to government support.

That government support that poorly managed, overstaffed airlines rely on now has profitable carriers asking for bailouts because the coronavirus decimated their business. Under the pretext of too big to fail, just like the banks during the 2008 financial crisis, several airlines are turning to their national governments for aid.

Over the past ten years or so, the airline industry has been growing exponentially with many airlines retiring older planes for new, more fuel-efficient models, but what they have not been doing is saving cash for a rainy day.

As things stand, the big three American carriers are being bailed out while over in Europe Air-France-KLM, and Lufthansa is in talks to see how much money they can get from their respective governments. No doubt this money will come, but there will be strings attached.

19/05/20 Mark Finlay/Simple Flying

As the lockdown is gradually lifted, airlines are getting ready to take to the skies once more. But airline planners are now faced with a new challenge. Specifically, **how to plan a flight schedule and network given the lack of ability to incorporate behavioral changes which cannot be quantified. Without these the anticipated demand is at best a wild guess. And with fragile balance sheets and liquidity positions at airlines that in some cases can't cover more than two days of expenses, the situation is precarious. As such planners are left with no easy answers.**

The challenge of flying at a loss

To begin with there is the challenge of costs. Airlines are notorious for their high fixed costs. These costs ideally have to be recovered in a manner that provides for returns that at the very least cover the cost of capital. **While declining fuel will most certainly help, the dollar has risen by 8%, financing costs are up by 4% - 7% and airlines are carrying the cost of excess fleet which now is amortized over a lower spread.** Staff expenses have been slashed via forced furloughs at some airlines and salary cuts in others. But these only constitute less than 10% of the total cash outflow. The other outflows remain and the inflows will pick up initially (as folks stranded due to the lockdown get back home before lockdown 4.0) before again settling to very minimal levels. In most cases they will not cover the total cash-outflow. For airlines this poses a challenge. **Because if each time the aircraft takes off there is a net-cash-loss to the airline, then ceteris-paribus the rational decision is to continue to be grounded till demand picks up. A second or even last-mover advantage beats the first-mover advantage in this case.**

The evaporation of demand

Add to that the fact that some segments of demand will simply not return. **Because while the Indian aviation market grew at a CAGR 8% over the last ten years, the truth was that growth was driven solely by pricing and was unequal across segments.** This included weekend travellers, SMEs, students, mid-premium segments and premium segments. And varying yields from segments were a point of contention and competition. **As long as prices were extremely low, everyone took to the skies. This will no longer be the case.** Because price may influence purchase behavior in an atmosphere of optimism but it certainly cannot do it in an atmosphere of fear and general malaise. **With policies around social distancing coupled with the cost of carrying excess fleet, airlines are left with no choice but to raise prices.** That effectively means that some demand segments will disappear.

Planning for behavioural changes

The final challenge for airlines also traces back to business planning, forecasting and an accurate reading trends. The old management mantra of quantifying all things and “what cannot be managed cannot be measured” simply does not work in the current context. Because quantitative data simply do not reflect behavioural changes. And more than anything else the pandemic impacts how we think about travel which then informs how we travel. **For planners the challenge is to look at a broad set of parameters which do not necessarily correlate and to build on that to discern trends. The trends include quantitative and qualitative factors.** And qualitative factors cannot be gleaned at sitting at a desk. One has to be in the market, experience the market and look at other factors that are completely unrelated to understand what is happening. Because there is no formula for this, such an approach often is met with significant resistance.

Airline planners are faced with a world where qualitative inputs that deal with human emotions have to inform business plans. No regression model or forecasting tool can beat sustained interactions across levels -- towards coming up with an understanding of the key drivers and influencers on the metrics that matter. Understanding trends also help understand a change in the competitive environment. This can affect entire business plans and strike at the heart of business viability.

As far as travel is concerned there is likely to be segmentation into essential travel and non-essential travel. Considering all the risks, the safest mode of transport may change. Overall, the perception of air-travel is undergoing a change: from one of convenience to one of risk. For airlines this means revisiting entire network and fleet plans and adapting to the new reality.

As of now there are no easy answers. The past no longer informs the future and aping the west and force-fitting frameworks that may have worked earlier simply does not hold in the current situation. **The return to the skies poses a huge challenge for airlines.**

Business World 19/05/2020

New Delhi: **All domestic and international flights will remain suspended till 31 May, the government said on Sunday, as it extended the countrywide lockdown to contain the coronavirus outbreak by another fortnight.**

Only domestic air ambulances, flights for medical services and security purposes, and repatriation flights by Air India will be allowed to operate during this period, the home ministry said in a circular.

India suspended all flights since 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. The lockdown has since been extended thrice, every fortnight, from the initial announcement date.

National carrier Air India Ltd on Sunday said it will resume flight bookings only after receiving directions from the government. It asked passengers to follow the Twitter handles of the civil aviation ministry and Air India, and their respective websites, for official announcements on resumption of flights.

An internal memo of Air India said earlier that all its domestic flights, except for charter and evacuation flights will remain cancelled till 31 May, adding that the date for starting operations will be notified in due course.

"The delay in resumption of flights will hurt airlines dearly. As airline costs keep piling up, revenues have dried up completely. And, to top it, there's an uncertainty with resumption of services," said an official with a no-frills carrier.

Spokespersons of IndiGo, SpiceJet, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India were not immediately available for comment.

18/05/20 Rhik Kundu/Mint/AviationPros

Centre on Thursday said that limited passenger flight operations of about one-third of capacity would be permitted to operate from May 25.

In a general set of guidelines for passengers and stakeholders issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Centre said: "On the day of commencement, limited operations (about 1/3rd) would be permitted."

"Further augmentation of flights will be done in a calibrated manner."

The guidelines advised "Vulnerable" persons, such as very elderly, pregnant ladies, passengers with health issues to avoid air travel.

Furthermore, it detailed that no physical check-in counters would be allowed at the airport.

"Only those passengers with confirmed web check-in shall be allowed to enter the airport,"

Besides, the Centre advised the airlines to adhere to the lower and upper limits of fares prescribed by the Ministry during the period of COVID-19 pandemic.

The guidelines come a day after Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Wednesday said:

"Domestic civil aviation operations will recommence in a calibrated manner from Monday, 25th May 2020."

"All airports and air carriers are being informed to be ready for operations from 25th May," he said.

Furthermore, the minister said the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the passenger movement would be issued soon.

Ever since the imposition of the nationwide lockdown in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak in the country on March 25, passenger air services were suspended for both scheduled domestic and international flights.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

New Delhi: The civil aviation ministry on Thursday detailed the guidelines passengers, airlines, airport operators and other agencies need to follow to ensure safe air travel as airlines resume operations from 25 May, two months after they were suspended to fight the coronavirus outbreak.

Mint takes a look at the norms to see who all should avoid flying for now.

Containment zone residents

Those who have tested positive for coronavirus are not allowed to fly for sure. This restriction also covers residents of containment zones. **Passengers are expected to certify their status of health through the Aarogya Setu application or sign a self-declaration form.** Air travel by a person who is not eligible will attract penalty, according to the detailed guidelines issued by the ministry.

Respiratory distress

Passengers also have to certify they are not suffering from fever, cough or any respiratory distress. They should also confirm that they are not flying during a period of quarantine. Passengers also have to assure the authorities that in case of any of these symptoms, they will reach out to health authorities.

Covid infection in immediate past

People who have recovered from covid-19 may have to wait for some time before they start traveling by air. Passengers have to confirm to the authorities at the airport that they have not tested positive for covid-19 in the last two months, said the guidelines.

Besides certifying that the passenger conforms to eligibility norms, they have to make an undertaking that they will follow the health advisories issued by the destination state. Passengers also have to make their contact details available to the airlines whenever required by them.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

NEW DELHI : Domestic flights, that are set to resume operations from next week, will have a lower and upper price limit on fares, according to a document from Ministry of Civil Aviation, reviewed by Mint.

The fare limit will be in place during the coronavirus outbreak, the document says, but it is not clear till how long the measure would last.

Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri had earlier on Wednesday tweeted that flight operation will resume in a calibrated manner from 25 May.

The resumption of flights will come with various other caveats, according to a document containing general instructions for commencement of domestic flight services, prepared by the ministry of civil aviation (MoCA) on Thursday.

For instance, airlines will now have to adhere to a lower and upper limit of fares prescribed by the aviation ministry. Only a third of total flights will be operational during the recommencement of operations, and passengers with confirmed web check-in will only be allowed inside the airports, according to an order by the ministry of civil aviation.

Airlines will not provide meals services for passengers, check-in bags will not be allowed inside the cabin, passengers will be required to wear a face a face mask for travel and need to reach the airport at least two hours before their flights. Passengers with red status on Aarogya Setu App would not be permitted to travel.

The civil aviation ministry has divided passenger guidelines into four parts, according to various stages of travel which include origin to airport, at the airport, in the aircraft, and from airport to destination.

"Passengers should familiarise themselves about the new procedures at the airport. Especially, about the norms of social distancing, minimum touch, baggage limitations, covid-19 declaration, registering on Aarogya Setu App, digital payments, use of authorized taxis," the document said.

"Expect slower processes and hence avoid last minute reaching the airport. In the initial stage passenger would be entitled to carry maximum of one hand baggage and one checked-in baggage as per the specifications by the airline of his travel," it added.

The ministry of home affairs on Wednesday removed domestic air travel from the list of prohibited activities under the existing lockdown in place till 31 March.

Passengers will be able to only use home authorized taxis to travel to and from airports.

The Civil Aviation ministry has also tasked airlines to make all arrangements to ensure that the risk of transmission of covid-19 virus is minimized.

"Precautionary measures need to be taken within the aircraft as well at the time of check-in, boarding and arrival at the destination. The airlines shall ensue coordination among the other service providers such as the airports, security agencies, ground handling agencies etc," the document added.

India suspended all flights since 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown to contain covid-19. The lockdown has since been extended thrice, every fortnight, from the initial announcement date. The latest and fourth phase will run till 31 May.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

MUMBAI: Shares of aviation companies, InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, which runs the IndiGo airlines, and SpiceJet Ltd, took off in early deals on Thursday. Not without reason.

On Wednesday, after market hours, aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted that flight operations will resume in a calibrated manner from 25 May. In other words, airlines will restart operations after two months of being grounded to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus disease. **This is a positive development for airlines, as it offers some relief to airlines in terms of operating their capacity vis-à-vis being shut.**

"But it does not mean it will be able to stimulate the needed passenger traffic given how the virus is showing no signs of abating," pointed out a report by CARE Ratings Ltd on 20 May. "We still believe passenger traffic will decline by 30% during FY21 as there will be certain inhibitions and apprehensions of travelling," added CARE Ratings.

Needless to say, passenger traffic growth remains a key monitorable for the sector. The government has announced a cap on fares as long as the country continues to grapple with covid-19. This will limit gains.

According to an analyst, requesting anonymity, **the cap on prices is a negative. "Further, no on-board sales would impact margins to some extent. Overall, unit costs would increase due to all measures to be taken," he added.**

True, **Brent crude prices have slumped over 40% so far this calendar year and that's helpful.** But also note that prices are now up 88% from their lows about a month back.

Another big cost investors need to monitor is aircraft lease rentals. In a recent statement to the stock exchanges, SpiceJet Ltd said lessor payments, which form the bulk of the fixed costs, have been deferred and waived. **Restarting operations could well mean lessor payments would resume again.**

The aviation sector has been one of the worst hit in the covid-19 crisis. Analysts from JM Financial Institutional Securities Ltd wrote in a report on 19 May, **"The various initiatives by airline companies**

– reduction in staff cost, renegotiation of lease rentals seeking deferment and the government reforms announced so far – have yielded little in the face of complete freeze in revenues." The brokerage firm estimates a monthly cash burn rate of ₹200-1,100 crore across airline names, adding considerable stress to balance sheets.

For now, investors are just relieved that operations are resuming. On Thursday, shares of IndiGo soared 10% while those of SpiceJet rose 5%.

But it hardly makes sense to throw caution to the wind, given concerns about low capacity utilisation.

"We lower the ascribed FY22E EV/EBITDAR multiple (for IndiGo) to 7x (vs 7.5x earlier), given the increased risk to earnings if the demand contraction for travel were to be structural in nature – spanning over multiple years," said JM Financial.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

NEW DELHI: Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Thursday said airfares in India will remain capped for three months till 24 August as the country gradually opens up the economy while battling covid-19.

Puri said **airlines have been allowed to operate at one-third the capacity of the approved summer schedule for a month as India reopens the civil aviation sector**, which has been battered by the novel coronavirus crisis.

The minister said the capping of air fares was decided keeping in mind the interest of passengers as well as airlines.

"Starting Monday, 25 May, we will recommence domestic civil aviation in a calibrated manner to a limited extent of the required and approved capacity of the summer schedule 2020," he said.

The cap on air fares has been decided in seven categories starting with flights with less than 40 minutes travel time and in six other categories of 30 minutes of incremental travel time.

Accordingly, the floor and ceiling of the Delhi-Mumbai flight ticket fares will be ₹3,500 and ₹10,000, respectively.

"Tickets in this fare band are split into different buckets. We are putting a second rider. 40% of the seats have to be sold at a fare that is lower than the midpoint of the maximum fare. We are ensuring that the fare does not go out of hand and at the same time, it is viable for airlines also. It is only for the period of scarcity," explained civil aviation secretary Pradeep Kharola.

According to a government announcement Wednesday, domestic airline operations will resume from airports across all major cities in the country from 25 May. Flight operations will resume from all major Indian airports, including ones located in tier one cities.

India had suspended all flights on 25 March when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown to contain covid-19. The lockdown has since been extended thrice, every fortnight, from the initial announcement date. The latest and fourth phase will run till 31 May.

Earlier this week, Indian carriers reopened bookings for passenger flights from 1 June even before the government announced its plans to resume flight services from 25 May.

[Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020](#)

A day after announcing the resumption of domestic commercial passenger flights from May 25, the Civil Aviation Ministry on Thursday issued **detailed guidelines for airlines, airports, passengers and other stakeholders on issues ranging from control on air fares to restrictions on number of bags.**

The ministry said it will prescribe lower and upper limit on air fares and airlines will have to adhere to it "during the period of COVID-19 pandemic".

Passengers will only be allowed to obtain boarding passes through web check-in. They are also required to download the baggage tag for their check-in luggage, which is restricted to a maximum of one bag and a handbag.

Here's a detailed guideline for the air flyers put out by union home ministry. The guideline lists out all the changes you, as a flyer, will have to inculcate to roam freely through the domestic flights.

General Instructions for Flyers:

- a. On the day of commencement, limited operations (about 1/3rd) would be permitted.
- c. Vulnerable persons, such as very elderly, pregnant ladies, passengers with health issues are advised to avoid air travel.
- d. No physical check-in at airport counters would be done. Only those passengers with confirmed web check-in shall be allowed to enter the airport.
- e. Airlines should adhere to the lower and upper limits offers prescribed by the Ministry during the period of COVID- 19 pandemic.
- f. A self-declaration/Aarogya Setu App status (for compatible device) would also be obtained that the passenger is free of COVID-19 symptoms. Passengers with "Red" status in Aarogya Setu App would not be permitted to travel.
- g. Passengers will be required to wear the protective gear (Face mask).
- h. The airlines shall not provide meal services on board.
- i. The cabin crew are required to be in full protective suit.

J. Only one check-in bag will be allowed.

k. No newspaper or magazine shall be provided on board by the airlines.

l. Use of baggage/trolleys has to be minimised.

m. Passengers should report at least two hours before the departure time.

1. From Origin to Airport

a. Passengers should familiarize themselves about the new procedures at the airport. Expect slower processes and hence avoid last minute reaching the airport.

b. Passenger to ensure that he/she has made a web check-in and obtained a boarding pass. He/she should also download the baggage tag/baggage identification number.

c. Passengers, before entering the terminal, to ensure wearing of protective gear, as per the prevailing requirement. He will continue to wear the mask throughout the journey.

d. Passenger should travel in an authorized taxi/personal vehicle following the norms specified by MHA.

The passengers are expected to certify the status of their health through the Aarogya Setu app or a self-declaration form.

E. If a passenger who is not permitted to fly, undertakes an air journey he/she shall be liable for penal action.

F. The airlines shall ensure that the boarding pass is issued only after the declaration given above has been made by the passenger. In case of a PNR having more than one passenger, the declaration would be deemed to be covering all the passengers mentioned in the PNR,

j. The passenger shall print the baggage tag and affix it on the bag at a prominent place. In case he/she is not able to print the baggage tag the PNR number and the name of the passenger (as mentioned in the ticket) should be boldly written on a piece of thick paper and affixed to the bag or tag it with the help of a strong string.

2. At the Airport:

i. The passenger should get down from his/her vehicle with the face mask on and with the required documents/e-documents. He would continue to wear his mask throughout the journey.

ii. He/she walks in the forecourt area and arrives at the thermal screening facility near the entry gate.

iii. He should get himself/herself checked for temperature. This will be done by a designated staff of the Airport. The status of "Aarogya Setu" should be displayed to the staff

iv. In case of non-availability of Aarogya Setu, the passenger should be facilitated to go a counter provided by the airport where Aarogya Setu can be downloaded. Children below fourteen years of age would be exempt from this requirement.

v. The passenger shall, then, move to the CISF counter at the entry check-point. He/she shall display/show his identity card, the boarding pass/-e-boarding pass to the CISF staff. The CISF staff on confirming the identity of the person shall allow him/her in.

vi. The passenger shall then proceed to the baggage drop counter.

vii. At the baggage drop counter the passenger shall display the PNR and his/her identification to the staff. The passenger shall also show/indicate the PNR number written/printed on his/her baggage to the staff. **Upon confirmation, the staff shall print the baggage tag, attach it on the bag and accept the bag. Instead of issuing a printed receipt to the passenger, an electronic receipt in the form of an SMS shall be sent to the passenger.**

viii. Passengers are mandated to adhere to the single baggage policy in the initial phase.

ix. Passengers to adhere to the social distancing which would be specified at the airports through markings like circle, square or tensor barrier as specified at the airport to be used by the passenger.

x. Passengers to complete the check-in procedure and baggage drop of at least 60 minutes before departure.

b. Security

1. Security staff will practice 'minimum touch' concept to reduce physical contact with the passengers. Passengers to cooperate with security staff by following the instructions for their own safety and security.

c. Security Hold Area including Lounge, Prayer Room, Kids play area etc,

i. Passengers to proceed to security hold area after security screening.

ii. While waiting in the security hold area they should maintain social distancing and sanitization protocols. Chairs marked 'Not For Use' should not be occupied.

iii. While going around F&B, retail outlets, etc., passengers maintain hygiene and should be aware of the social distancing and locations where sanitizer would be available.

iv. Passengers should dispose of all the bio hazardous material like used masks, gloves, tissues etc. in the yellow colored disposable bins/bags placed at strategic locations at the airport,

d. Boarding

1. **Passenger to collect the safety kit (three layered surgical masks, face shield and sanitizer) from the airlines near the boarding gate.** They should wear mask, face shield and sanitize their hands before proceeding to the boarding gate for scanning of the boarding pass.

2. Check-in of the boarding pass would be done by the passenger by self-scanning of e-boarding pass.

3. Passengers would be required to show their ID card to the airline staff at the boarding gate.

E. In the Aircraft

- a. Throughout the flight, hygiene and sanitation to be maintained by the passengers. Face to face interaction to be minimized.
- b. Passenger are advised to minimize use of lavatory and to avoid any non-essential movement in the aisles.
- c. No queuing at the lavatory and only one companion for children and the elderly to be allowed.
- d. No meal services would be made available in the aircraft. Water bottles to be made available in the gallery area or on the seats.
- e. **Passengers would not be permitted to consume any eatables inside the aircraft during the flight.**
- f. Passengers to note that No paper / magazine will be available in the aircraft.
- g. There would be no on-board sale of any item to minimize the physical contacts.
- h. If any passenger feels uncomfortable, fatigued or have cough, it should be brought to the notice of the crew for handling the passenger.

4. From Airport to Destination

a. Arrival

- i. The disembarkation from the airlines would be sequential and passengers are advised to follow the instructions and not to rush to the exit gate.
- ii. Social distance / sanitation should be maintained at the arrival gate, coaches, jet ladders, ramps etc.
- iii. Trolleys in the arrival area to be used sparingly.

b. Baggage Collection

- i. Passenger to wait at the baggage hold area till the baggage arrives in batches.
- ii. Transit passenger will not be allowed to come out of the transit area.

c. Exit from Airport

- i. Passenger should use the authorized taxi maintaining the prescribed hygiene protocols.
- ii. Only authorized taxis are allowed for taking the passenger from the airport.
- iii. Passengers are advised to follow the social distancing and hygiene while travelling in any mode of transportation.
- iv. On arrival at their destination, the travelling passengers will have to adhere to such health protocols as are prescribed by the destination State/UT.

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

New Delhi: Air passengers will have to wear protective gear that includes face masks and shields, reach airport two hours before the departure of flights, travel light and only after they declare that they are fit to fly.

These are the guidelines issued by the aviation ministry to be followed by passengers during their flights that start from Monday.

For the initial phase, the government expects one third of the flights to start operations. Passengers will have to give a declaration or show green on their Aarogya Setu app. The app, however, is not mandatory for travel.

Passengers have also been advised to reach two hours before the time of departure of their flight and travel light, which means one baggage each for check-in and cabin baggage. Many of these rules were reported by ET first in April.

The rules also mandates passengers to do their check-in through web and tag their baggage themselves.

The government has also advices old passengers and kids to avoid travel during these days.

The ETI 21/05/2020

A day after announcing the resumption of domestic commercial passenger flights from May 25, the Civil Aviation Ministry on Thursday issued detailed guidelines for airlines, airports, passengers and other stakeholders on issues ranging from control on air fares to restrictions on number of bags.

The ministry said it will prescribe lower and upper limit on air fares and airlines will have to adhere to it "during the period of COVID-19 pandemic".

On the day of commencement (May 25), limited operations (about one-third) would be permitted," it said.

It said passengers will have to report at the airport two hours prior to their flight's scheduled departure time and only those who have done web check-in will be allowed to enter the terminal building.

Only one check-in bag would be allowed and airlines will not provide any meal services in flights, the ministry said.

Boarding for a flight will commence 60 minutes before departure and the boarding gate will be closed 20 minutes before departure, it said.

All scheduled commercial passenger flight operations have been suspended since March 25, when the Modi government announced the nationwide lockdown to combat the coronavirus pandemic.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had announced on Wednesday that domestic flights will resume from May 25 in a calibrated manner.

The guidelines said the passengers should expect a slower process at the airport and avoid last-minute arrival.

"Passengers before entering the terminal to ensure wearing of protective gear, as per the prevailing requirement. He will continue to wear the mask throughout the journey," it said.

It said the passengers should not travel if they are staying in a containment zone. The passengers who have been tested positive for COVID-19 will not be allowed to travel.

"The passengers are expected to certify the status of their health through the Aarogya Setu app or a self-declaration form," said the ministry's guidelines.

Vulnerable persons such as very elderly with co-morbidities, pregnant ladies, passengers with ailments are advised to avoid air travel, it said.

Airports have been advised to earmark areas for isolation and COVID-19 testing for suspected passengers. Airports should also have separate areas for change of PPE (personal protective equipment) gear by the staff using it.

The guidelines said the airports would have to ensure easy availability of hand sanitisers at all entry points and also to be available at various touch points.

All food and beverage (F&B) and retail outlets will be opened with COVID-19 precautions. Take-away, digital payments, self-ordering booths at F&B and retail outlets to be encouraged to prevent crowding, it said.

Mats or carpets soaked with bleach (sodium hypochlorite solution) would be placed at the entrance for disinfecting shoes, it said.

The guidelines said passengers are expected to follow social distancing and sanitisation at all times from arrival to departure.

The ETI 21/05/2020

NEW DELHI : India will soon invite bids for privatising six more airports for which requisite approvals are being obtained, civil aviation minister Hardeep Puri said here.

Privatising six more airports was part of the economic stimulus and reform measures that the government announced in five tranches since last Wednesday. "It is only a matter of days before we will have all the requisite approvals. We intend to go ahead with the bidding process quickly," Puri said.

Airports Authority of India (AAI) chairman Arvind Singh, who was present on the occasion, explained that the government was in the process of awarding three airports to concessionaires which were part of the original six that were chosen for privatisation. Of the six airports chosen in the first round of privatisation, the ones at Ahmadabad, Lucknow and Mangalore were awarded to the highest bidder, the Adani Group. The empowered group of secretaries in the government has now decided to award the remaining three-- Guwahati, Thiruvananthapuram and Jaipur- as there is no judicial stay on the matter.

"We are proceeding with awarding these remaining three also. The AAI board has decided to privatise a further six—the airports at **Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Amritsar, Indore, Raipur and Trichy**. The proposal is approved by the civil aviation ministry and a cabinet proposal has been prepared which is under consideration of the government," said Singh. He said that once the decision is taken, the bid process will commence. **Redevelopment of airports with private participation is part of a plan to improve efficiency at airports and to boost the revenues of AAI.**

Live Mint Aviation 21/05/2020

Indian stock markets may continue to remain volatile on Friday tracking weakness in Asian peers.

The Reserve Bank of India governor Shaktikanta Das will address press at 10 am today and major announcements, if any, by the central bank may boost the investor sentiment. SGX Nifty, down 0.3%, suggests a weak opening for Indian benchmark indices.

RBI governor's presser comes ahead of the monetary policy committee meeting scheduled between 3 June and 5 June. The committee is expected to announce its second bi-monthly policy on June 5. India's outstanding bank loans shrank during the lockdown despite a massive liquidity injection by the central bank to spur credit growth, indicating demand for loans is ebbing as the pandemic leaves a haze of uncertainty about the future. Total outstanding non-food credit shrank by ₹1.36 trillion, or 1.32%, to ₹101.83 trillion on 8 May from 27 March, data from the RBI showed.

Private equity giant KKR will buy 2.32% stake in Jio Platforms for Rs11,367 crore, Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) said in a statement on Friday. Its right issue is open for subscription till 3 June.

India's airlines will resume operations from Monday, including at coronavirus hotspots of Delhi and Mumbai, which host the country's busiest airports, likely complicating their return to normalcy after a two-month closure.

In global markets, Asian shares plunged on Friday as US-China tensions curbed investor risk appetite and caused global equity markets to stumble.

Global equities pulled back after Beijing was set to impose new national security legislation on Hong Kong. The move drew a warning from President Donald Trump, who said the United States would react "very strongly" against it.

The back-and-forth between the world's two largest economies stoked worries that the tensions could threaten "Phase 1" of a US-China trade deal reached early this year. That prompted Wall Street shares to slip from the two-month highs made in the previous session on hopes of a economic recovery as governments began to lift their coronavirus restrictions.

The US dollar, seen as a safe-haven, rose amid those concerns. The dollar index, which measures the greenback's strength against six major currencies, was up 0.1%.

Spot gold, also typically seen as a risk-off option, was little-changed after losses of 1% as investors booked profits or opted for cash.

Crude oil futures rose to their highest since March, as recovering demand and production cuts offset investor jitters seen in other markets.

Live Mint Aviation 22/05/2020

India's aviation industry is staring at an uncertain future despite the government allowing gradual resumption of domestic flights from next week as the coronavirus outbreak is likely to keep passenger sentiment subdued after an initial pent-up demand, said industry experts.

The capping of airfares by the government may further hurt carriers who are estimated to be incurring daily losses of ₹70-90 crore, and are still to receive any financial relief.

With travel sentiments staying muted and fares capped, airlines are looking at huge losses in the coming quarters, said Nripendra Singh, industry principal, aerospace, defence and security practice at Frost & Sullivan.

"Some smaller airlines may find it tough to survive and we could see mergers and acquisitions, and consolidations happen," Singh said.

As things stand, India's aviation industry is expected to post losses of \$3-3.6 billion this quarter due to covid-19-related disruptions, with airlines sharing the bulk of the hit, aviation consultancy firm Capa India said in a recent report.

The restart of flights from Monday after two months of suspension will take place amid the fourth phase of the nationwide lockdown set to end on 31 May.

Resumption of operations from 1 June would have given the industry more time to organize logistics issues and re-open bookings, especially as the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for flight operations were issued only on 21 May, said Kapil Kaul, South Asia CEO of Capa India.

Kaul said low fuel price will compensate for higher costs from implementing safety protocols. He said, however, that the government decision to cap fares will hurt airlines.

Airlines as well as passengers will have to follow various rules when flights resume, according to a document containing general instructions for commencement of domestic flight services, prepared by the civil aviation ministry.

For instance, airlines will no longer provide meal services, cabin baggage would be barred, passengers will have to wear a face mask and will need to reach the airport at least two hours before departure. Those with red status on Aarogya Setu app will not be permitted to travel.

Some states like Assam will insist on quarantine for all passengers coming by air, television news channel NDTV reported quoting the state's deputy chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Such measures are only expected to hurt travel sentiments further.

"We don't know what the demand situation will be like," said a senior airline official, requesting anonymity, adding that while there may be pent-up demand initially, it is expected to taper off eventually.

Resumption of flights "will ease the stress of the airlines," said Jagannarayan Padmanabhan, director—transport and logistics, Crisil Infrastructure Advisory, who added that the plan to control fares should not, however, become a precedent for controlling prices later.

"Financial health of airline will have to be looked at individually. This will get panned out in the next 6 to 12 months," Padmanabhan said.

An industry executive expressed hope that the penchant for air travel will help to absorb the covid-19 shock eventually.

"The public has come to rely on air transportation, and it is part of our business and personal lifestyle. The connectivity we all depend on, remains as strong as ever," said Ashmita Sethi, president and country head, United Technologies Corporation India Pvt. Ltd.

Live Mint Aviation 22/05/2020

Airline stocks soared on Thursday after the government declared our skies open for domestic flights again, starting Monday, even as a collective sigh of relief was heaved by people stranded in cities away from home and others with urgent business to conduct in person elsewhere. For now, only about a third of India's 7,800-odd scheduled flights are expected to resume, prompted by the need to keep airports free of crowds. As aircraft immobilized by coronavirus for two months prepare to roll onto runways, a long list of dos and don'ts has also been issued. The safety aspects of these guidelines are mostly sensible. They cover norms to be followed from end to end, all the way from local points of departure, past airport checks, aboard aeroplanes and disembarkation routines to passenger conveyance bound for eventual destinations. Residents of containment zones and people who have tested positive for covid are barred. All other flyers must submit a self-declaration form as an avowal of good health. A "safe" sign flashed by our official infection-tracing app Aarogya Setu is a must for all those aged above 14. The other rules are broadly as one would expect, be it the masks to be worn or the distances to be maintained between one person and the next.

Those who need to fly can draw additional reassurance from experts who have endorsed aviation industry claims that cabin air is filtered for microbes often enough to prevent airborne infection.

What seems overdone, however, are the arbitrary price controls imposed by the Centre for three months. In an effort to contain extortionate pricing as repressed demand is let loose, it has issued airfare bands. A seat on a Delhi-Mumbai flight, for example, must sell only between ₹3,500 and ₹10,000, as reported, with 40% of all seats sold at a price lower than the midpoint. This sounds pro-consumer, but may do more harm than good if it distorts the market's ability to balance demand and supply. Or pushes weak carriers out of the business. **The burden of safety protocols has made air services costlier, the shutdown has squeezed finances, and private airlines gasping for survival need all the strategic flexibility they can get. This should include the freedom to respond to dynamic conditions.** Aviation fuel may be relatively cheap at the moment, thanks to global oil prices being low, but there is no saying what might happen over the next quarter. Moreover, once the initial spurt of flying is over, actual demand for air tickets in the weeks ahead cannot be foretold. Consumer anxiety may persist. **Price controls under high volatility would make it difficult for airlines to optimize operations.** If too few seats are sold on a flight, then rather than fly mostly empty, or cancel it, deep fare cuts may be an airline's best option. On the other hand, if a company would like to experiment with, say, an offer of alternate seats kept vacant for substantially higher fares, such an idea should not be thwarted by fare caps.

It is not as if the government's price concerns are not valid. But then, any attempt by private airlines to collude in pushing fares too high could be moderated by fair-priced tickets available on our public carrier, Air India. Its very presence as an option for passengers would serve to keep private operators in check. In general, markets work best with minimal intervention. **Our special need for safety calls for strict rules, no doubt, but the government should refrain from taking control of aviation variables that are likely to work better if they go by what buyers and sellers want—and the fares their market interactions yield.**

Live Mint Aviation 22/05/2020

NAGPUR: MIHAN India Ltd has cancelled the contract for development of Nagpur Airport awarded to GMR Infrastructure, according to an official.

GMR Airports Ltd (GAL), GMR Infrastructure's subsidiary, had received the formal letter of award from MIHAN India Ltd, the concessioning authority for the Nagpur Airport, for the development, operations and management of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport, Nagpur, which GMR Infrastructure had said in a regulatory filing last year.

Maharashtra Airport Development Company MD Anil Patil told that the contract with the concerned company has been cancelled and the re-tendering process will soon be started for development of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar International Airport, Nagpur.

A query sent to the GMR Group did not elicit any response immediately.
The ETI 21/05/2020

Mumbai: With only a few days in hand, airlines are hurriedly putting together processes to mirror the government's guidelines on resuming flights from May 25. However, the airlines are yet to co-ordinate their flight schedules with airports, which will take considerable amount of time as most major airports are operating with limited space.

"Expecting airlines to start operations in five days is ridiculous and shows no real understanding of the business," said an airline executive. Also, **there is no clarity on additional services that may be offered to business-class passengers and who will bear the cost for protective equipment to be provided to flyers.**

IndiGo has prepared a set of guidelines for arriving and departing passengers.



The airline has already enhanced cleaning of its aircraft. On board, it will supply sanitisers and face masks. While thermal screening has been mandated at airport entrances, IndiGo may do a second round of checks, according to its latest standard operating procedures.

"We have just got provisional approvals for our proposed flight schedules from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. But a lot of work remains. We have been told to deploy a third of our capacity, which means about 834 of 2,500 flights will be operating," said a senior airline executive.

"All airports are open for operations but route dispersal guidelines need to be followed, which means a certain percentage of flights deployed on metro routes should be deployed to smaller cities as well. We need more clarity on that."

"There are so many moving parts — for example, **both Mumbai and Delhi are using only one terminal each.** Movements are down significantly — Delhi says only 13 departures per hour. **Airports need to study our submissions and coordinate with all parties to make sure everything syncs up.** It's not a trivial process," said another executive.

The government has mandated seven ticket price bands, depending on flight duration, which will be valid for three months.

A New Delhi-Mumbai flight has price bands ranging from ₹3,500 to ₹10,000. Airlines are also required to sell 40% of the tickets below the mid-point of this range.

“The glitch is when demand is low and the minimum price is higher than what it would otherwise have been had it been market-determined. **The smallest airline suffers the most as they cannot use pricing as a tool to gain market share. Passengers will choose the bigger players,**” said a senior airline executive. **“If demand is higher, setting a cap will create a supply shortage.”**

The government has limited baggage to one check-in piece not exceeding 20 kilos and one inflight bag.

“Business-class passengers are allowed two bags. With that barred and no inflight services, the front end of the aircraft will have no relevance for the first few months,” said a person.

The ministry has asked airlines to supply face masks, face shields and sanitisers but it’s not clear who will pay for them.

The ETI 22/05/2020

NEW DELHI: The government will set a limit on air fares for three months until the end of August to ensure that passengers are not overcharged as flights resume on Monday after having been suspended for two months due to the lockdown. However, Maharashtra hasn’t taken a decision on quarantine-related matters, which will be critical for flights between Delhi and Mumbai, normally the busiest aviation corridor in India.

“We have decided on limiting fares based on flight duration,” aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri announced at a press conference on Thursday. “We have set seven fare categories under flight durations that start from flights up to 40 minutes till 210 minutes.”

The fare structure was released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Thursday evening, starting at a minimum of Rs 2,000 for short durations and going to an upper limit of Rs 18,600 for the longest flights. While these fare regulations will be in force until August 24, they may be withdrawn before that if the pricing situation is conducive to such a move.

It’s not clear if states will ask passengers to be quarantined upon arrival and what form that may take. Puri said the idea was to ensure that those who fly don’t have Covid-19.

Maharashtra’s concerns

“If I am quarantined for 14 days during a one-day to Kerala and quarantined again upon my return to Delhi, I would never make such a trip,” the aviation minister told reporters. “We are taking all protective measures to ensure that no corona-infected passenger travels in these flights.”

Maharashtra government officials told ET they had communicated to the Centre that any decision to allow flights needs to be taken in consultation with states.

“We already are struggling with a huge number of cases in Mumbai, Pune and other parts of the state,” said one of them. “If we allow flights, then we need to figure out quarantine facilities for the passengers. We also have concerns, for example, if people fly in from states like Gujarat, where there are a high number of cases.”

The state is already under pressure to identify quarantine facilities for people expected to contract the infection and allowing domestic flights will add to this load. Maharashtra is waiting to see what other states decide before taking a stand, the sources said.

Karnataka may do away with quarantining norms for inter-state travelers once domestic flights resume on Monday. Hinting at easing restrictions, Karnataka medical education minister K Sudhakar said quarantining will be a huge challenge when thousands of people enter the state on a daily basis on flights and trains from next week.

The state is likely to release new protocols in two-three days. As of now, about 110,000 people are institutionally quarantined in Karnataka.

This is not the first time that the government has sought to limit fares. It had done so during floods in Kerala and the agitation by Jats that hit road and rail connectivity in Haryana in the past few years.

Aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola said the minimum fare for a Delhi-Mumbai flight ticket will be Rs 3,500 and the maximum Rs 10,000, excluding user development fees, passenger services fees and goods and services tax (GST). The rules mandate that airlines have to sell 40% of their total seats at prices below the median of the upper and lower limit.

“So for a Delhi-Mumbai flight ticket, the median fare comes to about Rs 6,750 and airlines will have to sell a minimum of about 40% of their tickets at fares below the median,” Kharola said.

However, officials added that an airline is free to sell any amount of tickets under any slab, as long as it follows the 40% criterion.

While the government has announced the resumption of flights to all airports, it has mandated airlines to start with at least a third allowed under the summer schedule between metro cities and between metro and non-metro cities.

The government also announced procedures to be followed by passengers while flying. They can either furnish a self-declaration or download the Aarogya Setu contact tracing app and fill in their details before taking flights. IndiGo has said passengers should have the app.

Only web check-in will be allowed initially. Passengers can carry one bag on board and check-in a piece of up to 20 kg.

The ETI 22/05/2020

Global airlines" grouping IATA on Thursday said the government's decision to regulate airfares is a "step back" and carriers need to have the freedom to make their commercial decisions, including pricing of air tickets.

The comments came hours after the civil aviation ministry announced that airfares would be capped for three months till August 24 after domestic flight services resume on May 25.

Commercial domestic and international flights have been under suspension since March 25 when the nationwide lockdown was imposed to curb spreading of coronavirus infections.

"Airlines need to have the freedom to make their commercial decisions, including the pricing of airfares. Hence, we recognise and hope that this is a one-time measure as a result of COVID-19 and will be discontinued on August 24.

"India's Air Corporation Act was repealed in 1994, so the announcement to regulate airfares more than 2 decades later comes across as certainly a step back," IATA Assistant Director (Corporate Communications - Asia Pacific) Albert Tjoeng told PTI.

Airfares were deregulated after repealing the Act in 1994.

According to him, the government should instead make it a priority to support the country's airline industry through practical financial measures during this unprecedented crisis impacting the airline industry worldwide.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is a grouping of nearly 290 airlines. Air India, Vistara, IndiGo and SpiceJet are also members of IATA. PTI RAM MKJ

New Delhi, May 21 (PTI)

After a gap of two months, India's airlines will be airborne with over a thousand flights taking off on Monday with rigorous safeguards aimed at winning back the confidence of passengers.

As per the final schedule drawn up by the civil aviation authorities, there will be about 1095 departures on 25 May, said a government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Indigo flight 6E2625 from Bangalore to Delhi at 40 minutes past midnight will mark the commencement of domestic airline operations after the two-month gap. "The number of flights on first day may vary depending on airlines' booking position," said the official.

Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri had earlier in the day expressed confidence in the arrangements, saying that resumption of domestic operations is expected to go well as had the Vande Bharat mission. **If domestic operations with stringent safeguards to check coronavirus infections go well as planned, it will give the authorities confidence to scale up operations.**

Puri also assured in a 'facebook live' session that Indians who are ordinarily resident abroad but are stranded in India due to cancellation of international flights will soon be able to go back with the government considering arrangements for it.

The proposed facility for NRIs to return may be put in place as early as mid-June. Puri was responding to a question whether NRIs will be able to return by August or September. "Let us say, we must have a more ambitious goal. Why not start by mid-June or June end or July?" the minister said. He also assured that from 15 May, airports and the ancillary industry were ready.

The minister added that if the situation remains predictable, he was confident of starting a good part of international travel, if not all of it, much before August-September.

Live Mint Aviation 23/05/2020

New Delhi: India will try to restart a good percentage of international passenger flights before August, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Saturday, three days after announcing resumption of domestic flights from May 25.

All scheduled commercial passenger flights have been suspended in India since March 25 when the Modi government imposed a lockdown to contain the novel coronavirus pandemic.

"I am fully hopeful that before August or September, we will try to start a good percentage of international civil aviation operations, if not complete international operations," Puri said during a Facebook live session.

"I can't put a date on it (restarting international flights). But if somebody says can it be done by August or September, my response is why not earlier depending on what is the situation," he said.

Live Mint Aviation 23/05/2020

Maharashtra government is yet to decide if it would allow flight operations to resume in the state from Monday as a strict lockdown continues till 31 May.

As covid-19 cases continue to rise unabated in the Maharashtra, government officials said that state government is still deliberating if flight operations should be allowed to resume.

"The situation is fluid at present and will be decided in due course," said an official.

The government has however, communicated its views to Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) that till such time MIAL plans and fine tunes airport operations, they should initiate minimum possible domestic flights from Maharashtra from May 25th which are purely emergent in nature like for international transfer passengers from these cities, medical emergencies, students, and cases on compassionate grounds only.

Union Minister for Civil Aviation Hardeep Puri had on Thursday announced India's airlines will resume operations from Monday, including at coronavirus hotspots of Delhi and Mumbai, which host the country's busiest airports.

The aviation ministry issued detailed guidelines for passengers, airlines, airport operators and other agencies that would transform the flying experience as the focus will now be on ensuring physical

distance between passengers and minimizing contagion through contact and through frequently touched surfaces.

There will be no in-flight meal services for passengers who will be required to wear a face mask and reach the airport at least two hours prior to departure. Only those with a green status on Aarogya Setu app will be allowed to board.

The resumption of flights will help ease the financial burden on airlines who had to bear high fixed costs amid nearly zero revenues during the lockdown.

Live Mint Aviation 23/05/2020

A Pakistan passenger plane with 99 people believed to be on board crashed in the southern city of Karachi on Friday, the country's aviation authority said.

Images aired on national television showed the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight had smashed into a residential area, with clouds of thick black smoke billowing from the site.

"The plane crashed in Karachi. We are trying to confirm the number of passengers but initially it is 99 passengers and eight crew members," said Abdul Sattar Khokhar, the spokesman for the country's aviation authority, adding that the flight was coming from Lahore. The flight typically takes an hour and a half from the northeastern city of Lahore, the capital of Pakistan's most populous province, Punjab, to Karachi.

Khokhar added that the aircraft was an Airbus A320 and was en route to Karachi.

The Pakistan military later tweeted that security forces had been deployed to the area and helicopters were being used to survey the damage and help ongoing rescue operations.

It comes just days after the country began allowing commercial flights to resume after planes were grounded during a lockdown over the coronavirus pandemic.

Witnesses said the Airbus A320 appeared to attempt to land two or three times before crashing in a residential area near Jinnah International Airport. The residential area on the edge of the airport known as Model Colony is a poor area and heavily congested.

A resident of the area, Abdul Rahman, said he saw the aircraft circle at least three times, appearing to try to land before it crashed into several houses.

Pakistan has a chequered military and civilian aviation safety record, with frequent plane and helicopter crashes over the years.

In 2016, a Pakistan International Airlines plane burst into flames after one of its two turboprop engines failed while flying from the remote northern to Islamabad, killing more than 40 people.

PIA, one of the world's leading airlines until the 1970s, now suffers from a sinking reputation due to frequent cancellations, delays and financial troubles. It has been involved in numerous controversies over the years, including the jailing of a drunk pilot in Britain in 2013.

The crash comes as Pakistanis across the country are preparing to celebrate the end of Ramadan and the beginning of Eid al-Fitr, with many travelling back to their homes in cities and villages.

Airworthiness documents showed the plane last received a government check on Nov. 1, 2019. PIA's chief engineer signed a separate certificate April 28 saying all maintenance had been conducted on the plane and that "the aircraft is fully airworthy and meets all the safety" standards.

Live Mint Aviation 23/05/2020

The country's largest airline IndiGo's Bangalore-Delhi flight early on Monday will mark the resumption of air travel in India after a gap of two months, as per the final schedule drawn up by the civil aviation authorities.

Over a thousand flights will take off on Monday as airlines get back to business with one third the capacity prescribed under the summer schedule. **Indigo flight 6E2625 from Bangalore to Delhi at 40 minutes past midnight will mark the commencement of domestic airline operations with rigorous safety precautions to check the spread of Coronavirus infections, as per the final schedule.** There will be 1095 departures on 25 May, said a government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "The number of flights on first day may vary depending on airlines' booking position," said the official. IndiGo had on Friday issued a set of instructions to passengers about the protocols to be maintained while travelling. "Please be assured that we fully intend to build for India, the best air transportation system in the world," the statement had said.

Live Mint Aviation 23/05/2020

Raipur: With domestic air services set to resume from May 25, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel on Saturday called for a mandatory 14-day institutional quarantine for passengers upon arrival.

In a letter to Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, Baghel said the possibility of spread of coronavirus infection could not be ruled out if domestic flight operations restarted.

"The Civil Aviation Ministry has decided to resume domestic flight services from May 25 and no separate Standard Operating Procedure has been issued for passengers," Baghel was quoted as saying in the letter in a statement here.

"Details of each flight with elaborate information about passengers should be shared with states. Even 14-day quarantine for passengers only at state-operated or paid quarantine facilities should be made mandatory," the CM said.

Live Mint Aviation 23/05/2020

MUMBAI : Budget carrier GoAir is likely to resume domestic flight services from June 1, owing to certain "operational and regulatory" issues, sources said on Friday.

Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri had on Wednesday announced, through Twitter, that commercial passenger services on domestic routes will be allowed to operate from May 25 under a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), covering all stakeholders.

By Friday, except GoAir, all other Indian airlines, including national carrier Air India, had commenced bookings for their domestic flights.

"We have bookings from June 1 onwards as the government had earlier disallowed airlines from taking bookings till May 31. We have some issues such as (providing) simulator training to pilots and renewal of certain licences which have lapsed," a source in the airline said.

All these issues will take a couple of days to be sorted out. For this reason, we are expected to resume our services only from June 1," the source added.

Since the airline's employees are on leave without pay, they could not go for simulator training earlier, and currently these facilities are not available due to demand, he said.

"Nevertheless, we are preparing to take off the ground again. We plan to operate 100 flights per day with a fleet of 17-18 aircraft, which is one-third of both -- our almost total number of daily flights and aircraft," another source said.

"We have already got the approval for 85 flights. We have filed plans for another 15 flights," he added.

Response to queries sent to GoAir spokesperson did not elicit any response.

Prior to suspension of all commercial passenger services on March 25 due to the nationwide lockdown to combat coronavirus pandemic, the Wadia Group-owned aviation entity had been flying 280 services daily on national routes, in addition to around 60 on overseas routes with a fleet of 54-56 aircraft.

From providing protective gear like face shields and gowns to cabin crew to deep cleaning of aircraft every 24 hours, airlines are taking various measures as they plan to restart curtailed domestic operations from Monday onwards amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Live Mint Aviation 22/05/2020

Domestic flights will resume in India from Monday (May 25) after a two-month lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19.

India's Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri said airlines would be permitted to resume services on one-third of their approved summer 2020 schedule for domestic routes. This will be scaled up gradually.

"After domestic travel has been eased, we will address the issue of international travel depending on the evolving situation," the minister added.

India grounded all domestic and international passenger flights from March 24, initially until April 15. However, the suspension was extended as the government grappled to bring the number of coronavirus cases under control.

There have so far been more than 118,000 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in India and 3,583 reported deaths.

According to data released by India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation, India's largest airline IndiGo will be permitted to operate a maximum of 970 flights across 52 destinations. Vistara will be allowed to operate 448 flights across 25 destinations; Air India 340 flights across 37 destinations; and GoAir 178 flights across 19 destinations.

The schedules run from May 25 until June 30 for IndiGo, Vistara and Air India, while GoAir's network is effective to Aug. 24. Fares will be capped according to seven sector classes, which have been divided according to approximate flight times.

Vistara CEO Leslie Thng welcomed the return of domestic services. "Aviation is a growth engine for the economy and resumption of air travel will give great impetus to the government's overall efforts in helping the country eventually return to normalcy," he said.

India's aviation ministry has issued strict guidelines that airlines, airports and passengers must follow on the domestic flights. This includes a requirement for passengers to wear a face mask and arrive at the airport at least two hours prior to departure.

Airlines will not have to keep the middle seat vacant, but the aircraft will need to be rigorously disinfected after every flight.

Routes online 22/05/2020

Except in the states of Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal, domestic flights in the country will resume operations from Monday, said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on late Sunday.

Flight operations have been shut in the country for the past two months owing to the nationwide lockdown necessitated by the coronavirus pandemic.

"It has been a long day of hard negotiations with various state govts to recommence civil aviation ops," tweeted Puri while referring to the meeting called by Ministry of Civil Aviation of airlines and

airport operators on domestic flight resumption from 25 May. At the meeting, SOPs for states/UTs was also discussed.

While the flight operations will begin from 26 May in Andhra's Vijaywada and Vizag airports, those in West Bengal will recommence from 28 May on a limited scale.

"Operations in Andhra Pradesh will recommence on limited scale from 26 May. For Tamil Nadu, there will be max 25 arrivals in Chennai but there's no limit on no. of departures. For other airports in TN, flights will operate as in other parts of country," Puri further tweeted.

While the flights will take off and land from Mumbai, they will be only operating at one-third schedule, said Puri.

Mumbai airport will handle 50 domestic flights per day and Hyderabad airport will handle 30 domestic flights per day from Monday.

Due to the massive damage caused by Cyclone Amphan recently, West Bengal's Kolkata and Bagdogra airports will handle only 20 flights Thursday onwards.

Airports Authority of India, Chennai, said number of incoming flights will be restricted to 25 per day and that flights to Coimbatore, Madurai and Trichy will operate. Flights from Gujarat, Maharashtra may be kept to the bare minimum possible, AAI said.

"There is no issue in operating any number of outgoing flights from Tamil Nadu," said AAI.

Ending uncertainty over resumption of flights, Tamil Nadu government on Sunday notified Standard Operating Procedures for domestic air travel. **The SOPs say all passengers shall undergo thermal screening for any symptoms of Covid-19 and that asymptomatic people shall undergo home quarantine for 14 days.**

Live Mint Aviation 25/05/2020

NEW DELHI : More than a thousand flights were set to take off on Monday in the first easing of an air travel ban in two months, but the country's busiest route—the one between Delhi and Mumbai—was hobbled by a decision by Maharashtra, the worst affected by the coronavirus outbreak, to limit the number of flights.

Nearly 60% of flights operating on Monday are full, said Nishant Pitti, chief executive and co-founder of EaseMyTrip, indicating pent-up demand for travel, mostly from people who have been stranded in other cities following the surprise travel ban imposed on 25 March. **About 90,000 people have booked for travel between 25 May and 31 May from airlines' websites, travel agents and online platforms**, he said.

There will be an equal number of departures and arrivals at each airport, according to an industry executive who was present at a meeting of industry officials with civil aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola.

The government also signalled its intent to restart more flights by announcing the resumption of its regional connectivity scheme—Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagarik (Udan), which links remote locations across the country. This is in addition to local flights that are being permitted from Monday, accounting for a third of the original summer schedule.

There will be 1,095 departures on the day, said a government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

There was little information on the schedule of flights.

Though the resumption of domestic flights was announced by the central government late last week, the entire operations became shrouded in uncertainty with some states, including Maharashtra and West Bengal, initially opposing the plan.

Later on Sunday, Maharashtra agreed to allow 25 arrivals and departures from Mumbai from 25 May, while other parts of Maharashtra will maintain one-third of flight capacity allocated during the full summer schedule.

"Though the resumption of flight operations is welcomed by airlines, it could have been planned better to avoid inconvenience to passengers with certain states disallowing domestic flight operations," said a senior airline official, who did not want to be named.

The uncertainty on whether flights may be cancelled kept travellers on tenterhooks.

"I'm checking the IndiGo app apart from news websites every five minutes. Why can't they make up their minds? Do they even realize the stress that we are going through," asked Rohan Talukdar, who was due to take a Mumbai-Guwahati flight. Talukdar is booked to travel home with his mother, younger brother and a friend.

India's busiest airport, New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGIA), will handle about 380 flights, including 190 departures and 190 arrivals, on Monday. Airports operators across the country are preparing to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic.

For instance, the operators of the airport at New Delhi have taken measures, including installation of automatic hand sanitizers at various places, putting floor markers, allocation of entry gates and check-in islands for departing passengers.

According to the standard operating procedure guidelines prepared by the Airports Authority of India (AAI), only limited food and beverage shops and retail outlets will be allowed to open at airports, while food will be served in takeaway boxes.

Alcohol will not be permitted unless authorized by local administrations, while spa centres and massage chair facilities will remain suspended as a safety measure to enforce social distancing.

Seating at terminals will now be rearranged so that there is a 1-1.5 metre distance between passengers. Seating zones will be created in the security hold so that every alternate seat is free for departing passengers, with the area frequently cleaned and sanitized.

Airports will now also maintain staff near washrooms, X-ray machines, conveyor belts to implement social distancing among passengers.

Meanwhile, the government announced stringent protocols for non-resident Indians (NRIs) to fly abroad.

The move signals that a gradual resumption of international flight operations is also likely in the coming days and weeks.

Live Mint Aviation 25/05/2020

It's unclear when India will open up to international flights, but the Union health ministry has laid down guidelines for arrivals. This suggests an imminent resumption. But don't expect business travellers, or any other kind, to be cheered by the news. **Past immigration counters, passengers arriving from overseas would have to submit to a seven-day institutional quarantine, and that too at their own expense, followed by another week of isolation at home. Domestic protocols, involving a temperature check, a self-declaration of health and a download of the Aarogya Setu app will also apply.**

Such conditions would mean that only those who absolutely have to will board a plane for India.

Many Indians remain stuck abroad with scarce means to support themselves, and they may be relieved to hear that they can come back. **Globally, the aviation scenario is grim and analysts forecast no return to normalcy for a long time to come. Many airlines are expected to fold up.**

There is also speculation that some air carriers will redesign their aircraft cabins to regain the confidence of flyers. Right now, the tickets being sold are largely for non-discretionary travel.

Live Mint Aviation 24/05/2020

NEW DELHI : The government issued fresh guidelines on Sunday for all modes of travel, including trains, interstate buses and crossing state borders, a day before the planned reopening of domestic air travel. The guidelines issued by the health ministry followed rules listed by the civil aviation ministry to airport operators, airlines, air travellers and other agencies involved in civil aviation.

According to the health ministry guidelines, all states and Union territories will have to ensure that all passengers undergo thermal screening at the point of departure and only asymptomatic passengers are allowed to board the flight, train or inter-state bus. During boarding and travel, face covers or masks will be mandatory and passengers are advised to download the Aarogya Setu app on their mobile devices. As per the guidelines, even asymptomatic passengers will be required to self-monitor their health for 14 days.

"In case they develop any symptom, they shall inform the district surveillance officer or the state/national call center (1075). Those found symptomatic will be isolated and taken to the nearest health facility. They will be assessed for clinical severity at the health facility," the guidelines stated.

"Those having moderate or severe symptoms will be admitted to dedicated Covid Health facilities and managed accordingly. Those having mild symptoms will be given the option of home isolation or isolated in the Covid Care Centre (both public and private facilities) as appropriate and tested as per Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) protocol," the ministry said, adding that states can also develop their own protocol on quarantine and isolation as per their assessment.

The government has asked the airports, railway stations and bus terminals to follow precautionary measures such as social distancing, and ensuring the availability of soaps and sanitisers on flights, trains and buses along with thermal screening at exit points.

After opening up domestic air travel, India has said that it will consider opening up international air travel, too, in a calibrated way, starting with arrangements for the return of non-resident Indians (NRIs) who are ordinarily resident abroad but are struck in India. The health ministry on Sunday also issued guidelines for international arrivals. It said that before boarding, all travellers shall give an undertaking that they would undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days. The safeguards mandate 7 days of institutional quarantine at the traveller's own cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health. For exceptional and compelling reasons, as assessed by the receiving states, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days.

Live Mint Aviation 25/05/2020

With the flight operations set to resume in a "calibrated" manner from 25 May as announced by Civil Aviation Ministry, Hardeep Singh Puri, low-cost carrier AirAsia India has started taking domestic flight bookings for 21 destinations from today.

In a tweet, the carrier said, "AirAsia India is resuming domestic flight operations tomorrow, i.e. 25.05.2020. Passengers undertaking travel to any state are required to read, understand, and comply with the health and other protocols prescribed by the destination State / UT for airline travellers."

"The airline would not be responsible for repatriating or bearing any quarantine or related costs of any guests," it further tweeted.

For cancellations of the tickets, the carrier said that it would "update impacted guests by SMS / email." The cancellation details can be checked in their website: <http://airasia.com>.

In a release, the airline said it would strictly follow the SOPs (standard operating procedures) and guidelines laid out by the regulatory bodies to enable safe travel.

"We are appreciative of the government working collaboratively with all stakeholders to define the new protocols to help open up domestic flying in a calibrated manner keeping the health and safety of passengers and the airline crew in focus.

"The new SOPs and guidelines will pave the way for ensuring and instilling a sense of confidence amongst passengers," Sunil Bhaskaran, AirAsia India Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer quoted to PTI.

Among other measures, the airline would facilitate regular disinfection procedures to control or kill infectious agents using cleaning, sanitising and disinfecting products approved by the public health authority and aircraft manufacturer.

According to the release, passengers would have to mandatorily web check-in, complete their self-declaration form and download the Aarogya Setu app before they arrive at the airport. They have also been advised to report two to four hours prior to the departure time to allow enhanced health and safety processes to take place.

Reverse zone boarding process starting from the rear of the aircraft would be followed, it added. Commercial flight operations in the country have been suspended since March 25 when the government first imposed a nationwide lockdown. Currently, the citizens are observing the fourth phase of the lockdown in which several relaxation in the movement and various other operations including availability of services have been allowed in almost all places barring the containment zones in the country.

Live Mint Aviation 24/05/2020

Ministry of Home Affairs on Sunday issued revised guidelines for all domestic and international passengers. Passengers will have to give an undertaking before boarding that they would undergo a mandatory quarantine for 14 days — seven days paid institutional quarantine at their own cost followed by seven days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health — according to the Health Ministry guidelines released on Sunday.

States/Union Territories have been asked to develop their own protocol with regards to quarantine and isolation as per their assessment in consultation with the Central government guidelines.

Here are the full guidelines for international arrivals:

- i. Before boarding, all travellers shall give an undertaking that they would undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days - 7 days paid institutional quarantine at their own cost, followed by 7 days isolation at home with self-monitoring of health.
- ii. Only for exceptional and compelling reasons such as cases of human distress, pregnancy, death in family, serious illness and parent(s) accompanied by children below 10 years, as assessed by the receiving states, home quarantine may be permitted for 14 days. Use of Aarogya Setu app shall be mandatory in such cases.
- iii. Dos and Don'ts shall be provided along with ticket to the travelers by the agencies concerned.
- iv. All passengers shall be advised to download Aarogya Setu app on their mobile devices.
- v. At the time of boarding the flight/ ship, only asymptomatic travelers will be allowed to board after thermal screening.
- vi. Passengers arriving through the land borders will also have to undergo the same protocol as above, and only those who are asymptomatic will be enabled to cross the border into India.
- vii. Self-declaration form in duplicate shall be filled by the person in the flight/ship and a copy of the same will be given to Health and Immigration officials present at the airport/ seaport/ landport. The form may also be made available on Aarogya Setu app.
- viii. Suitable precautionary measures such as environmental sanitation and disinfection shall be ensured at the airports as well as within the flights.
- ix. During boarding and at the airports, all possible measures to ensure social distancing to be ensured.
- x. Suitable announcement about COVID-19 including precautionary measures to be followed shall be made at airports/port and in flights/ships and during transit.
- xi. While on board the flight/ ship, required precautions such as wearing of masks, environmental hygiene, respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene etc. are to be observed by airline/ ship staff, crew and all passengers.
- xii. On arrival, thermal screening would be carried out in respect of all the passengers by the Health officials present at the airport/ seaport/ landport.
- xiii. The passengers found to be symptomatic during screening shall be immediately isolated and taken to medical facility as per health protocol.

xiv. The remaining passengers shall be taken to suitable institutional quarantine facilities, to be arranged by the respective State/ UT Governments.

xv. These passengers shall be kept under institutional quarantine for a minimum period of 7 days.

They shall be tested as per ICMR protocol available

at <https://www.mohfw.gov.in/pdf/Revisedtestingguidelines.pdf> If they test positive, they shall be assessed clinically. a. If they are assessed as mild cases, they will be allowed home isolation or isolated in the Covid Care Centre (both public & private facilities) as appropriate.

Live Mint Aviation 24/05/2020

Tamil Nadu govt has issued standard operating procedure for incoming flights at the Chennai international airport that includes a 14-day home quarantine for asymptomatic fliers, and institutional isolation for those without facilities for a home quarantine. Apart from 14-day home quarantine, all domestic air travellers coming into Tamil Nadu shall register themselves in TNePass portal.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation had announced the operation of domestic flights throughout the country from 25th May 2020.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami had written to Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri requesting him to avoid domestic flights into the state till May 31.

Here are the important guidelines issued by Tamil Nadu govt:

1. It is mandatory for all the domestic air travellers flying into Tamil Nadu to register their details online in TNePass Portal. After obtaining the flight tickets, the travellers shall register their details in TNe-pass portal following the link <https://tnepass.tneaa.org> duly selecting the airport of arrival in Tamil Nadu.

2. The passenger while applying for TNe-pass shall give the declaration to the following effect, for getting TNe-pass:-

i) I/We am/are not residing in any containment zone ii) I/We am/are not suffering from any fever/cough/ any respiratory distress.

iii) I/We am/are not under quarantine.

iv) If I/We develop any of the above mentioned symptoms I shall contact the concerned health authorities, immediately.

v) I/We have not tested COVID-19 positive in last two months.

vi) I/We am/are eligible to travel as per the extant norms.

vii) I/We make my mobile number/contact details available to the TNe-pass.

viii) I/We understand that if I/We undertake the air journey on false information, without meeting the eligibility criteria, I/We would be liable to penal action.

ix) I/We undertake to adhere to the health protocol and quarantine norms prescribed by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

3. If more than one person travels in a group, the details of all persons shall be entered using the 'add family member' option in the TNePass Portal.

4. Travel permit will be issued with a QR Code in the registered mobile number/ email.

5. The Airline staff shall insist the details of entry pass obtained from TNe-pass before issuing the boarding pass. Separate request has been made to the airlines and operators regarding this.

6. Travellers can use own vehicle or rented vehicle for travel from airport to their home. The vehicle number must be indicated in the Portal.

7. Travellers on arrival in Tamil Nadu airport shall show the details of registration in the TN e-Pass registration desk at the Airport. Passengers who are without entry in TN ePass will not be permitted to move out without making entry. District Collectors shall make available necessary infrastructure in the exit gates of airports to check and take followup action on this.

8. After undergoing medical screening for any symptoms of COVID-19, asymptomatic persons shall undergo home quarantine for 14 days. Travellers who register for institutional quarantine shall be sent for institutional quarantine (Government or Paid facility)

9. All persons entering the State shall remain under home quarantine for 14 days from the date of arrival. However, if the individual does not have facilities for home quarantine, he will be sent to institutional quarantine. He should indicate the same in the TNePass portal.

10. Pick up vehicles for arriving passengers will be permitted to enter Airport with one person (excluding driver of the vehicle) at a designated place subject to social distancing norms. If the persons who pick up the passenger comes in to physical contact with the traveller, they shall also remain under Home Quarantine for 14 days.

Infrastructure requirements at entry of Airports in Tamil Nadu:

A) Temperature checking must be carried out with Infra red thermometer

b) There should be a proper Queue system to reach the desks.

c) All Luggage should be disinfected by the airport authorities

d) All the officials who directly deal with passengers shall use PPEs, masks and protective gear

e) All symptomatic passengers to be send to Isolation facilities in designated ambulances

f) Staff must be exclusively posted for a period of two weeks for Airport surveillance and they must undergo two weeks home quarantine upon finishing duties

- g) Any COVID 19 related symptoms in health staff must be promptly reported to state and they must be tested with RT PCR
- h) All staff who are directly dealing with passengers shall use PPEs/Masks
- i) Passengers must be made to walk to the health desks in a group of 20 maintaining proper social distancing
- j) Wheel Chair facility be made available for the needy.
- k) Public address systems to Airports may be used for informing the passengers of the details.
- l) Airport staff shall follow all the covid-19 protocol

Procedure for going out of Tamil Nadu:

All domestic air travellers shall undergo medical screening as stipulated by Airport Authority and persons with symptoms will be sent to health facility for testing and treatment. Only asymptomatic persons will be allowed to board the flight.

Live Mint Aviation 24/05/2020

NEW DELHI: Around midnight on Sunday, a Delhi-bound IndiGo flight is scheduled to depart from Bengaluru. If all goes as planned, it will be the first commercial flight since the country went into a lockdown on 25 March. More importantly, it will set the ball rolling to spur the Indian economy. In an interview, **Airports Authority of India (AAI) chairman Arvind Singh, who is responsible for creating, upgrading, maintaining and managing civil aviation infrastructure ahead of the resumption of domestic flights, shares his views on the prospects of the Indian aviation sector in the post-covid-19 world.** Edited excerpts:

The first flight is scheduled for Monday. How do you expect it to play out?

Permission has been given to operate a third of the summer schedule. But, on the first day, I expect a bit lower traffic as planes are still getting readied and, in some cities, service engineers have not been able to go to airports. It will pick up steadily.

India was among the fastest-growing civil aviation markets before covid, offering growth opportunities for aircraft and engine makers. What is your outlook for air travel now?

We were the third-largest market and, given that our air travel penetration levels are still low, there is a large untapped demand. If you see the growth rate over the last three-four years, primarily it came from tier-2 and tier-3 cities. Some airports in these cities were clocking over 25% growth in passenger traffic year-on-year, while growth at the national level was just in double digits. Given the fact that we have seen such growth in smaller cities, it should continue once we tide over the current disruption caused by the pandemic. It may take some time to catch up with that growth

trend given the coronavirus crisis and people's lack of confidence in travelling, especially leisure travel. When gradually confidence builds up, we will bounce back because there is a huge unmet demand. Flying as a mode of travel has the advantage of being quick, compared to rail travel, and competitive pricing in this industry has helped it penetrate the market. In some sectors, fares have not changed for a long time. That is because of the penetration of low-cost carriers.

AAI's medium-term goal is to step up capacity four to five times to facilitate 1 billion trips a year.

Will you revisit this target in the post-covid scenario?

Definitely, we will have to have to re-prioritise. There will be a dip in air traffic. Some say it may take two quarters to get back to previous levels, while others claim it could take longer. Even though we had plans for such capacity expansion, there were some airports which were bursting at the seams. They were carrying passengers three to four times more than their capacity and had not been able to expand for many reasons. **This (period of low traffic) will give those airports—Patna, Bagdogra, Delhi and Hyderabad, for instance—the time to catch up and expand terminals.**

Six airports have been privatized in the first round. What about the twelve others that are expected to be privatized?

Yes. Of the first six, we have awarded three and, for the rest, we have got clearances, and will be awarding them soon. The next six—Varanasi, Raipur, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Amritsar and Trichy—we expect a cabinet decision soon and will then invite bids. Apart from that, there is a whole list of airports that the AAI board has identified for future privatization. Based on the experience of the forthcoming six, the next step will follow.

Has covid-19 led to a collapse of the business models of all airports?

Definitely, business models have to be reworked. As traffic may be slow in returning to previous levels, aeronautical revenue from airlines will take a hit. One clear message is that one has to focus on non-aeronautical revenue. That kind of reworking has to be done. Also, commercial contracts, for example, for sale of food and beverages, used to fetch revenue for airports. Since footfalls will decline, that model also needs a relook. It is a challenge for all airports in the country, including those run by the AAI.

What are the non-aeronautical revenue sources beyond contracts for food and beverage sales?

One non-aeronautical revenue source is monetization of land. That is one area that some experts have suggested. The recommendation is that there is a large part of land parcel available with the AAI, and other airports, which can be used for commercial purposes.

Will that be allowed for the airports that are being privatized?

Not this one (the six airports in the second phase of privatization), but there is a thinking. Right now, land use is only for aeronautical purposes. There is a thinking going on whether we should also consider land use for non-aeronautical purposes given that in the current circumstances aeronautical revenue can take a hit for a few years.

What are these options?

Currently, for instance, **AAI can develop land only for aeronautical purposes**. One possible option could be that we give permission for other commercial purposes, which are not aeronautical in nature, such as commercial space development for office and shopping complexes. This will need an amendment to the law.

What about existing airport re-development projects?

Mumbai has requested invoking force majeure provisions in the concession agreement. **We have only deferred revenue share payments till June.**

What are the real estate development options available to existing PPP projects?

They cannot develop land for non-aeronautical purposes. Now, it is restricted to uses that are related to flying, which includes hotels, cargo complexes and warehouses.

There was some discussion about **limiting the maximum number of airports that one bidder can be awarded in a single round of auction**. What is the status?

Right now, the civil aviation **ministry's proposal is to go ahead in the same fashion as the last round. Let us wait for the final decision.**

The national infrastructure pipeline document claims that between now and 2025, airport infrastructure will get about Rs1.4 trillion investments. Under the present circumstances, is this valid?

For Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN), we get funding from the union budget. Operationalizing UDAN airports, which are in smaller and underserved areas, will continue as planned. There will be some re-prioritization in the case of some projects, which of course will happen, but subject to the set of priorities.

Has the pandemic affected efforts to woo private investments?

The Prime Minister took a meeting recently. **The second round of six airports (for privatization) which was in limbo for some time has now been put on fast track. Once the cabinet approves, bids will be invited soon. Let us go to the market. If there is a good response, we will go ahead.**

Will the covid-19 crisis affect India's ambition for efficient and low-cost regional connectivity?

Regional connectivity has been a high impact programme if you look at the areas covered and the number of passengers. From where we were, say, two-three years ago, now 45 new airports are

operational in previously untapped areas. Some bidders, though, had certain financial, land-related or execution-related problems, which led to delays in some cases. You will see a healthy number of airports getting operationalized this year.

How will the development of waterdromes and seaplane services within India, and with neighbouring countries, shape up?

That is one area that has not taken off in the way we wanted it to, but our reviews show that we will be able to operationalise some routes this year in Andaman and Gujarat.

Creating a robust maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) industry from the scratch has been a key goal of the central government. How will AAI take this forward?

AAI's contribution will be in ensuring the availability of land and other elements of the ecosystem as MROs need facilitation at the airports.

Live Mint Aviation 24/05/2020

In a last-minute set of moves that will aggravate airline confusion and passenger suffering manifold, the central government has mandated airlines to curtail flight operations much further to what it had approved last Thursday as they hurtle towards a resumption of operations from midnight.

The government Thursday allowed a calibrated resumption of domestic flights two months after they were suspended as part of a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus crisis.

The aviation ministry had also approved a schedule of flights.

The sudden move of further curtailment means airlines need to hurriedly file fresh schedules for flights in the next few hours. It also means hundreds of passengers who booked tickets in the last few days face more cancelled tickets for which they will get no refund.

In a meeting with airline chiefs, officials at India's civil aviation ministry said they can only operate 25 departures out of the Mumbai airport from May 25. This makes a total of 50 flight movements, less than a fourth of the flight schedule approved by the Centre on Thursday and tenth of the usual number of daily flights Mumbai used to handle before the Coronavirus crisis.

The airline will have to sit and decide with the aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and airport operators, which airline will be allocated how many flight slots.

"There is no way we can do it," said a senior executive of an airline.

The ministry officials also said the airlines can operate just 10 departures from Kolkata and Bagdogra in West Bengal from May 28; 15 departures from Telangana starting May 25, and just 20% of the normal schedule from Vishakhapatnam and Vijaywada starting May 26. The airline chiefs were told a

fresh set of instructions for Tamil Nadu will be given later tonight.

The Centre's move came after states such as Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu opposed the resumption of flights from May 25., saying it would increase the risk of the spread of the virus.

Earlier in the day, Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray tweeted he has communicated to the aviation minister that Mumbai should, for now, initiate "minimum possible domestic flights" like for medical emergencies, international transfers, student travel and travel on compassionate grounds.

Two hours before the evening briefing, Mumbai airport sent an email to all airlines saying they had filed a schedule for 45 departures. The airlines had hurriedly put together a schedule before that was nullified by directions from the aviation ministry in its latest meeting.

24/05/20 Anirban Chowdhury/Economic Times

Three large Indian states have sought to delay the planned opening of their airports on Monday as new cases of the novel coronavirus jumped by a record, complicating the federal government's plan to resume flights after a two-month lockdown.

India registered 6,767 new cases of the novel coronavirus on Sunday, the country's biggest 24 hour jump yet, taking the total to over 131,000.

Airlines are preparing to resume about a third of their domestic flight operations from Monday, even without clarity over which states will allow flights or what quarantine rules may apply to passengers, reports Reuters.

India's western state of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu in the south and West Bengal in the east, major business hubs and home to the country's busiest airports, have said they are not prepared to open for flights amid rising coronavirus cases, according to state government officials.

Maharashtra is home to India's financial capital Mumbai, which has reported nearly 29,000 positive infections, almost a fifth of reported cases in the country.

"It's extremely ill-advised to reopen airports in the red zone," Maharashtra Home Minister Anil Deshmukh said on Twitter on Sunday.

India's federal structure gives its 28 states flexibility to set their own rules, complicating efforts by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to kickstart the economy after the lockdown.

24/05/20 Financial Express

New Delhi: The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has found that 63 per cent of people it surveyed in northern India are gearing to travel within three months of relaxation of the coronavirus lockdown, but most of them have ruled out any international travel.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the survey was conducted online among a limited sample of 250 respondents across Chandigarh, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh.

The survey has also found that post the coronavirus lockdown, hygiene standards maintained by hotels would be the single most important deciding factor for tourists while selecting the place of stay.

Around 68 per cent of the respondents said hygiene standards would determine their choice of hotels.

Around 59 per cent of the respondents said use of protective gear was the most important precaution they would take during travel, with Arogya Setu App being the preferred choice of around one fifth of the respondents.

Close to two thirds of the respondents would like to travel within three months of relaxation of the lockdown. Around 17 per cent of people said they saw travel as an important means of rejuvenation.

While 33 per cent of the respondents are likely to resume travel within a month, about 30 per cent said they would wait for three months. However, about seven per cent of the respondents said that they would prefer to wait for a year.

"More than 70 per cent of the respondents would prefer domestic travel only. Over one fourth of respondents would like to travel both within India and abroad. Only 1.4 per cent of respondents have shown preference for overseas travel," the survey said.

The survey also found that most people are likely to travel for business (37.4 per cent) while around 32 per cent said that they could plan outings to their extended families. However, only 2.4 per cent said they would make advance bookings.

24/05/20 Outlook

New Delhi: With the domestic flights resuming operations from Monday, the Central government on Sunday decided to restart regional air connectivity services under the UDAN scheme on select routes and with conditions. The central government said that the services will be started as per the modalities set by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

Issuing an order, the Central government said that all the operational routes in priority areas which include the northeastern region, hill states and islands are permitted to resume operations.

The order further stated that all operational helicopter routes are permitted to resume operations.

All operational routes with no viability gap funding (VGF) are permitted as well. Also Read -

Heartbreaking Pictures Show Lions Starving In Sudan Zoo, Spark Online Campaign to Save Them.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation said that all operational routes up to 500 km stage length are permitted to resume operations. "And selected airline operators (SAOs) are allowed to operationalise awarded routes under UDAN, including seaplanes on the permitted routes," it said.

"If willing to operate without VGF support, SAOs may operate Tourism RCS routes (T-RCS) or RCS routes with stage length more than 500 km in areas other than Priority Areas. However, other incentives for the respective routes as per the scheme document would continue to be available for

the contract period,” the order said.

24/05/20 India.com

Guwahati: “The birds are back, ready to fly again...” screamed the message from the official Twitter handle of regional director (NE region) of Airports Authority of India on Saturday as northeastern states prepare themselves with strict quarantine SOPs for every disembarking passenger when flight operations resume on May 25.

While an extra cautious Mizoram has asked people not to board any Lengpui-bound flight without prior permission of the state home department, Nagaland and Assam on the other hand have appealed to its citizens not to return unless extremely necessary. But every state has released their respective SOPs which would require passengers alighting at airports to be quarantined and tested for Covid-19.

The dates for flights to Umroi in Meghalaya have not yet been finalized. Meghalaya deputy CM Prestone Tynsong said, “Kolkata-Umroi and Umroi-Kolkata flights are mostly likely to resume next week.” In a tweet, Manipur CM Biren Singh said, “Govt is fully prepared to conduct testing for those stranded #Manipuris coming to the State via flight services.”

All the airports have set up contactless check-in procedure where passengers, after showing their tickets and I-cards through a glass barrier to security personnel, have to get their boarding passes scanned themselves before boarding the flight. The airport’s Twitter handle says, “LGBI Airport Guwahati is getting ready for resumption of flights and taking various measures, specially social distancing and contactless check-in, to prevent from CORONA VIRUS.”

24/05/20 Prabin Kalita/Times of India

Ahead of the resumption of the domestic flights in India on Monday, Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday said that states need not quarantine those arriving passengers who had approval on their Aarogya Setu status and did not show any coronavirus symptoms. **The minister** was holding a Facebook Live session to clarify the guidelines and answer the questions of the people.

An IE report quoted him as **saying that all he could say was if a passenger had the Aarogya Setu app, did not show any symptoms of COVID-19 and tested negative for the disease, then there was no need for destination states to quarantine such travellers.** He further asserted that the Centre had clarified that the app was like a passport for the passengers, which left no reason for the states to demand quarantine.

However, despite his statement, several states continued to require a mandatory quarantine of two weeks for the arriving travellers, leading to confusion among the passengers.

While Maharashtra stated that it is not allowing the domestic aviation sector to resume operations in the state, except for medical purposes or for the transfer of Indians evacuated from abroad, Kerala, Telangana, Assam, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and UT of Jammu and Kashmir have mandated a 14-day quarantine for arriving passengers.

The IE report stated that the Maharashtra government told the authorities at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport in Mumbai that only minimum possible flights should be initiated from

the state starting Monday, and they should only be for emergency purposes.

The Mumbai International Airport Limited (MIAL), which manages the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj airport, had told the state government that once the limited domestic operations resume, an estimated 27,500 passengers would arrive and depart daily at the airport, the IE report said. This figure does not take into account the security, airport and airlines staff, MIAL added.

24/05/20 Financial Express

New Delhi: There will be no delay in delivery of 36 Rafale jets to India as the timeline finalised for the supply of the fighter jets will be strictly respected, French Ambassador Emmanuel Lenain has said.

India had signed an inter-governmental agreement with France in September 2016 for the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets at a cost of around Rs 58,000 crore.

"The contractual delivery schedule of the Rafale jets has been perfectly respected till now, and, in fact, a new aircraft was handed over to the Indian Air Force in end-April in France, in keeping with the contract," Lenain told PTI.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh received the first Rafale jet at an airbase in France on October 8.

"We are helping the Indian Air Force in arranging for the ferry flight of their first four Rafales from France to India as soon as possible. So there's no reason today to speculate that the schedule will not be maintained," the envoy said.

France is reeling under swelling cases of coronavirus and has emerged as one of the worst-hit in Europe.

Over 1,45,000 people were infected by the virus while the death toll stood at 28,330. There were apprehensions that the delivery of Rafale jets could be delayed due to the pandemic.

However, **Lenain asserted that the original timeline for delivery of the jets will be adhered to.** The aircraft is capable of carrying a range of potent weapons.

24/05/20 PTI/New Indian Express

New Delhi: Domestic airlines might be resuming services on Monday after being grounded for two months but scores of pilots and first officers seem to be concerned over lack of clarity on quarantine requirements for them.

Several cockpit and cabin crew members have moved to their home towns from their base stations in the wake of the nationwide lockdown imposed on March 25. Now, many of them are returning to their base stations to report for duty.

On May 20, Minister of State for Civil Aviation Hardeep Singh Puri announced that domestic passenger flights would resume in a calibrated manner from May 25, two months after the services were suspended due to the lockdown to curb spreading of coronavirus infections.

PTI spoke to many captains and first officers from different airlines, including IndiGo, Vistara and

SpiceJet, about preparations for resumption of flights. Many of them raised concerns over issues like quarantine procedures, personal and family safety, and flying into regions badly hit by the pandemic.

'There is no clarity on whether I need to go into home quarantine for 14 days after returning to my base or show up for duty on Monday,' a pilot said, requesting anonymity.

He said several others like him had left their base stations, undertaking inter-state travel amid the lockdown.

'(What happens) if someone is returning from Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal or Rajasthan or going from Delhi to Hyderabad, or Haryana to Gujarat. My airline has sent me a mail stating that I need to be ready for duty but did not say anything about the quarantine procedure,' the pilot said.

He noted that several states have a rule that any outsider has to go for a mandatory 14-day quarantine.

'So does that mean I have to go for a 14-day quarantine after every flight? If that is the system, then I find it illogical. **There is no clarity on this from the civil aviation ministry nor from my airline,' he added.**

A woman pilot said that before all operations were suspended in March, there have been incidents of flight and cabin crew being harassed by neighbours and residential societies.

'People have only grown more concerned about the COVID-19 and there is still fear among crew about how are people in their neighbourhood going to react even though the crew are ready to work,' she said, wishing not to be identified.

Some airlines have told their employees to abide by the rules laid down by local authorities of their city or district and follow guidelines given by their respective Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs).

'In Noida, RWAs have a strict rule. If you were onboard a flight, you have to quarantine yourself for 14 days,' a pilot from a full-service carrier said.

A leading budget carrier, however, has told its crew that anyone living in a containment zone -- place having positive cases -- would not be put on duty.

24/05/20 Yahoo! News

Hyderabad: Back in 1987, a liquor bottle filled with explosives and placed in a carry-on bag in an overhead bin helped terrorists crash a South Korean airliner. All 115 on board died.

Then, in 1994, Al-Qaeda member Ramzi Yousef, architect of the first World Trade Center bombing, detonated liquid nitroglycerin that he had taken on board a Philippine Airlines flight in contact lens solution bottles. One passenger was killed and several were injured in the incident.

In August 2006, a major terror plot was busted by the British police wherein terrorists plotted to detonate liquid explosives disguised as soft drinks carried on board airliners travelling from the United Kingdom to the US and Canada.

Terrorists using liquid explosives to blow up airplanes was a major challenge to aviation security starting the late 1980s which continued through the early 2000s. But now, in the post Covid-19 scenario, as flight services resume across the country from May 25, the Ministry of Civil Aviation's (MoCA) move to allow hand sanitizer bottles (not more than 350 ml) inside aircraft has re-ignited the debate over liquid explosives.

While MoCA decided to allow hand sanitizers inside aircraft after much brainstorming over the security threat it can pose to airplanes, there has not been a single instance to suggest that hand sanitizers, when combined with other chemicals, can be used as explosives. But the fact that is a cause of worry is that some of the ingredients in alcohol-based sanitizers are highly flammable.

What if terrorists carrying hand sanitizers, travelling separately on a plane, are able to ignite hand sanitizers?

This is the new concern for the security agencies. Highly placed sources who took part in the brainstorming sessions which led to flight services being resumed, told Deccan Chronicle that among the many concerns that were raised by various agencies, the aspect of allowing passengers with 350 ml hand sanitizers inside aircraft was a cause of concern, especially as it is flammable.

The brainstorming among officials over liquid explosives and its quantities, the chemicals used in them and past incidents of terrorists using it all were discussed threadbare.

One of the ingredients in alcohol-based hand sanitizers is a combination of isopropyl alcohol and ethanol, which is flammable. For alcohol-based sanitizers, the flash point is 63 degrees fahrenheit, if stored at room temperature, it could ignite if it comes in contact with flames. With hundreds of passengers carrying hand sanitizers, the agencies are looking at yet another challenge in aviation security.

"Across all airports, the terror threat has always been real and imminent. We have ETD checks (Explosive Trace Detection) in place besides all the advanced systems at the airports to detect explosives. Passengers were being allowed to bring quart-sized bag of liquids, aerosols, gels, creams and pastes in their carry-on bags but they were limited to travel-sized containers. Now, we will have every single passenger carrying hand sanitizers inside the aircraft which means presence of large quantities of sanitizers in the aircraft. It is a unique situation and will pose a huge challenge," a senior official from New Delhi said.

An explosives expert told Deccan Chronicle that though hand sanitizer is a high-energy material, there is no evidence so far to suggest that it can be used as an explosive.

"Though it does not explode, it can be ignited with just a spark. Even if it burns, it is low-flame but 350 ml may be enough to create a scare inside the aircraft. But if a group of terrorists were at work inside the aircraft, then obviously the quantity of flammable liquid is much higher which means more damage. It can pose a major threat," he explained.

24/05/20 Vikram Sharma/Asian Age

Mumbai: Air India pilot unions IPG and ICPA on Saturday threatened they might not be able to extend support to the airline's "normal operations" and in the matter of flight duty and time limitations (FDTL), alleging that financial and other issues of employees remain unresolved. The two unions, which represent the pilots operating Boeing and Airbus aircraft of the airline, in a

joint letter to the personnel department, also sought to know the outcome of the various cost-cutting measures which the carrier initiated in March to deal with its precarious finances in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The Indian Pilots Guild (IPG) and the Indian Commercial Pilots Association (ICPA) letter comes ahead of the resumption of commercial passenger services on domestic routes from May 25, which were suspended about two months ago along with international services in the wake of COVID-19 and subsequent lockdown imposed by the government on March 25.

Air India had announced a host of measures to reduce costs, including withdrawing special allowances for pilots and other facilities for its officials, a 10 per cent deduction in allowances (excluding basic pay, HRA and variable dearness allowance) in respect of all employees, except cabin crew, for a period of three months effective from March.

It had also announced undertaking negotiations to review all agreements with lessors and hotels to reduce their rates.

"We have communicated our precarious financial situation to your office with sufficient notice and clarity. Since it has fallen on deaf ears, we would like to inform you, we may not be in a position to extend FDTL and support for normal operations if the management does not take care of the frontline workers categories and move forcefully to generate revenue for Air India," the two unions said in a joint letter on Saturday.

22/05/20 PTI/Outlook

New Delhi: The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI) has asked the Civil Aviation Ministry to form a joint working group (JWG) with airlines to safeguard the interests of the travel industry as well as passengers.

Passengers and travel agents have been complaining for the last few weeks that airlines, instead of giving full refunds for flights cancelled due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, are giving credit vouchers which can be used for booking another ticket at a later date.

In a letter to Civil Aviation Secretary P S Kharola on May 13, TAAI president Jyoti Mayal said the joint working group should be headed by him only.

"This group should work like the GST council along with stakeholders which shall ensure a win-win situation for all in the interest of passengers and the travel trade," Mayal said.

The JWG should consist of representatives of the Civil Aviation Ministry, International Air Transport Association (IATA), airlines and the TAAI, the letter said.

Mayal said the government should ensure that all airlines keep some financial security with the ministry against all defaults.

24/05/20 PTI/Outlook

Air India has started booking for domestic flights. The airline will operate more than 8000 domestic flights each week for the next three months starting 25th May. Civil Aviation Ministry has said that a minimum and maximum fare for three months has been set for the domestic flight services. AIR

correspondent reports that after a two-month gap air travel in the country will reopen on Monday.

Air India will operate a total of 8,428 flights each week for the next three months from 25th May to 25th August. The government has allowed one-third of the operations beginning Monday and has set limits on fares which will be applicable for three months. The fares are capped according to seven sector classes, which have been divided according to approximate flight times. Under the new air fare regulations, the cheapest domestic flight ticket will be for 2,000 rupees while the most expensive will be for 18,600 rupees.

23/05/20 All India Radio

Airlines will resume operations in a limited manner from Monday after the centre and some states climbed down a little from their respective positions after days of hard bargaining.

The centre cut down more flights from the original schedule the airlines announced last week forcing them to cancel extra flights leaving open the possibility of disputes with passengers over refunds. States like Maharashtra agreed to permit limited flight operations after initially asking for more time

In a meeting with airline chiefs late on Sunday evening, officials at India's civil aviation ministry said airlines can only operate 25 departures out of the Mumbai airport. This makes a total of 50 flight movements, less than a fourth of the flight schedule approved by the Centre on Thursday and a tenth of the usual number of daily flights Mumbai used to handle before the Coronavirus crisis. Flights to Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad, Vishakapatnam and Vijaywada have also been cut.

The sudden move will mean resumption of normal flight operations after a two-month break but will also increase inconvenience for hundreds of passengers who had booked tickets in the last few days. Some face the prospect of cancelled tickets for which they will get no refund. Travel companies estimated a total of Rs 100 crore worth of tickets have been sold since Thursday.

Airlines will have to sit and decide the allocation of slots with the aviation regulator, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, and airport operators. The ministry also said the airlines can operate just 10 departures from Kolkata and Bagdogra in West Bengal from May 28; 15 departures from Telengana, and just 20% of the normal schedule to Vishakhapatnam and Vijaywada from May 26. The airline chiefs were told that a fresh set of instructions for Tamil Nadu will be given later tonight.

A senior airline official expressed his frustration with the process. **"There is no way we can do it," he said, adding it will create a "logistical nightmare for airlines, airports and customers".**

The Centre's move came after states such as Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu opposed the resumption of flights from citing the rising cases of Covid-19 and the rescue work that needed to be done in Kolkata after cyclone Amphan.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray tweeted earlier on Sunday that he has communicated to the aviation minister that Mumbai should, for now, initiate "minimum possible domestic flights" like for medical emergencies, international transfers, student travel and travel on compassionate grounds.

But two hours before the evening briefing, Mumbai airport sent an email to all airlines saying they had to file a schedule for 45 departures.

In the meeting, the ministry officials said the latest flight numbers are dynamic and may be changed every day for the next 15 days. They also instructed airlines to inform passengers about different quarantine specifications by different states either through check-in counter executives or text messages or information on their websites.

Between yesterday and today, states across the country have announced their own mandates for quarantine for incoming passengers.

In an official statement Sunday, the Tamil Nadu government said all incoming passengers must register themselves in the state-run TNePAss portal and (if asymptomatic) shall undergo a 14 day home quarantine. In the portal, he will have to make declarations such as whether he has come from a containment zone, is already under quarantine, has developed symptoms or tested positive in the last two months.

The Karnataka government yesterday mandated a seven day institutional quarantine for passengers returning from the six most affected states including Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh.

The UP government has mandated a 14 day home quarantine for all returning passengers. Flyers reaching J&K will be kept in quarantine centres for 14 days

Kerala has said travellers need to register details in the Covid19Jagratha portal. All people entering the state will be under a 14-day home quarantine.

Delhi airport, however, has not curtailed any flights by airlines for now and the first flight out of Delhi airport will depart for Kolkata at 0430 hours in the morning

Airlines, meanwhile, say that there is total confusion over the issue.

“There is a lot of confusion over restart of flights in some states. We are totally clueless about what is happening because we are not informed about the issue. There is nothing official that we can share with passengers over the issue. The central government has made a mockery of itself,” said an airline executive, who did not want to be identified.

Another airline executive said that they are, however, not seeing any major cancellations for now. “Passengers, who have booked on these flights are really desperate to travel, and would like to hold on to their bookings till the last moment,” said another senior executive, who did not want to be identified.

They added that passengers may not be refunded in case flights are cancelled and the money will be transferred in a credit shell, which can be used for travel at a later date.

The ETI 25/05/2020

NEW DELHI: India’s stricken aviation industry on Monday overcame last-minute government flip-flops and mass cancellations to successfully ferry a disparate group of passengers including adults, teenagers and even a young kid who travelled alone to their destinations on the first full day of

normal flight operations after a two-month shutdown. But the day was also marked by uncertainty and chaos at airports as airlines, acting on last-minute instructions from the government, cancelled nearly half the flights that were supposed to depart leaving many irate passengers in the lurch.

Airports resembled hospital wards as passengers and air crew donned full face masks and other protective gear with the Covid-19 scare continuing to paralyse most parts of the country and its economy. India's airlines flew only 532 flights and 39,231 passengers on Monday, which is over half of 830 flights approved by the government last week and a fifth of about 2,500 daily flights before the shutdown in March.



Indigo alone operated about 240 flights on Monday. **Airlines said the operations were handled well considering the short span of time the government gave them to restart flights.**

"Operations appear to have been handled well by airports and airlines, no thanks to the government that only created confusion and obstacles," said an airlines executive on condition of anonymity.

In a change of stance late on Sunday, the government slashed the number of flights airlines can operate following objections by various states. This forced airlines to cancel about 410 flights with a few hours remaining for operations to resume. Many passengers got SMSes and emails after midnight and early on Monday morning while some others were informed only at the airport.

Airlines said the government gave them less than 12 hours to re-plan the schedule, which was badly affected by the cancellations. For instance, Mumbai departures were slashed by more than a fourth to 25 while close to 112 departures from Delhi were cancelled. Mumbai and Delhi, India's busiest airports, together cancelled more than 200 flights.

Airline sources said the number of flights may not increase substantially on Tuesday though airports in Andhra Pradesh will be connected. But they expect the inconvenience to reduce a little as passengers who could not fly on Monday due to cancellations may be accommodated.

 <p>Airlines operated 532 flights, ferrying 39,231 passengers on the first day</p> <hr/>  <p>This was about half the number approved last week and less than a fifth of pre-Covid flights</p> <hr/>  <p>Passengers were required to do web check-in, update details on Aarogya Setu app/physical form</p>	<p>In cities like Mumbai, passengers faced issues in reaching the airport due to lack of transport</p> <hr/> <p>24 local govts have in last two days issued new rules for arriving passengers</p>	 <p>Several states demanded passengers update details on state govt apps, obtain ePasses</p> <hr/>  <p>Many faced cancellations & won't get refund; many were turned away as they didn't obtain ePasses</p>
---	---	---

"Some passengers will be adjusted tomorrow (Tuesday). We are working on it. The inconvenience to passengers are not because of us and there are a lot of other factors responsible," said an airline executive who did not want to be identified. Passengers who flew on Tuesday were mostly those faced with some sort of emergency and had to book tickets at high prices. Neeraj Paseeja, a financial

consultant working in Bangalore, flew home to Delhi to take care of his ailing father who is now on ventilator support.

"I had to take this flight because my father is on ventilator...I would have not taken a flight otherwise. I had to pay high fares as the bookings opened with the highest fare bracket," he said. Nikhil Kumar, who flew with his two cousins from Delhi to their hometown Patna, also complained of high fares. Travel agents pointed to the lack of clarity.

"The confusion over state-level restrictions and quarantine guidelines have resulted in a significant increase in customer queries on our platform, over the last three days," said MakeMyTrip, India's largest online travel agency.

"The last-minute updates from states about travel restrictions has left many flyers anxious with most enquiries coming to us around rebooking options, cancellation and refund policies of respective airlines. Travellers have also been enquiring about airport guidelines, flight schedules, terminal information and web checkin process among others, as they return to airports after 61 days of lockdown

"The problem for passengers began with individual states rolling out their guidelines relating to the operationality of airports and post-travel quarantine rules that left fliers high and dry," said Nishant Pitti, co-founder of EaseMyTrip.com. "With only a fraction of flights allowed to operate from some of the busiest airports, there was a spike in cancellations with majority of the fliers left uncertain of their travel," he added.

The ETI 25/05/2020

MUMBAI: As domestic flight services resumed from Monday, experts warned that getting back into service after a two-month gap could pose several challenges for both the crew and the aircraft as they get re-accustomed to the daily routine of endless check-lists and procedures.

Pilots need to be 'current' with flying and extreme caution needs to be practiced while resuming operations after extensive periods of staying grounded, experts said. Similarly, prolonged grounding requires additional maintenance and checks on aircraft when they are taken out of hangers.

"Suppose I do not drive my car for an extended period and then take it out on the road, my psycho-motor skills and situational-awareness are not going to be as sharp," said Wing Commander K Dinesh, an ex-Indian Air Force aeronautical engineer who runs a flight anxiety solution clinic in the city.

"Now extend that analogy by 50 times when it comes to aviation."

To overcome this challenge, many airlines used every opportunity to give some time in the cockpit during the lockdown to as many of the crew as possible on cargo and repatriation flights, said people in the know. These flights were assigned more than two senior pilots who usually flew as captains, instead of the normal combination of a captain and a first officer, to get a pool of captains ready when normal operations resumed.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation, had released guidelines on "Distance Learning" which was a big help for all airlines, said Captain Ashim Mittra, SVP Flight Operations, IndiGo. "We were also approved to conduct a few training flights on an empty aircraft a day before resumption of

operations, where as many as 80 of our Pilots were able to undertake some practical flying," Mittra said.

On Monday, most flights were assigned only senior pilots or flight trainers to ensure maximum experience in the cockpit, said a pilot with a leading Indian airline on condition of anonymity.

The ETI 26/05/2020

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday allowed the Centre and national carrier Air India to keep operating its scheduled flights with the middle seats filled for the next ten days while observing that the government should be more worried about the health of citizens rather than the health of commercial airlines.

The top court asked the Bombay High Court to decide the **plea against DGCA circulars** expeditiously and said Air India and other airlines will have to follow the order given by the HC with regard to safety measures including maintaining of social distancing inside aircraft by keeping middle seats vacant between two passengers in a row.

A bench headed by Chief Justice S A Bobde conducted an urgent hearing on Eid holiday through video conferencing to hear the appeals of the Central government and Air India against the Bombay High Court order.

"You should be worried about the health of citizens, not about the health of commercial airlines," the bench, also comprising AS Bopanna and Hirshikesh Roy, told Solicitor General Tushar Mehta who appeared for the Centre.

The high court had on May 22 sought response from Air India and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on a petition of an AI pilot claiming that the airline was not following safety measures for COVID-19 while bringing back Indians stranded abroad.

The High Court had directed Air India and DGCA to file affidavits clarifying their stand and posted the petition for further hearing on June 2.

The pilot, Deven Kanani, in his plea claimed that a circular issued by the Government of India on March 23, 2020 laid some conditions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while bringing back Indians stranded abroad due to the pandemic.

However, the condition pertaining to keeping the middle seat between two passengers empty was not being followed by the Air India, he said in the plea.

Kanani submitted photographs of an Air India flight operated between San Francisco and Mumbai where all seats were occupied.

Air India, however, opposed the plea of the pilot and told the high court that the circular of March 23 has been now superseded with a new circular issued by the Government of India on May 22, 2020 that permitted domestic flights to operate from May 25.

The new circular does not say that the middle seat needs to be kept empty, Air India told the court.

The High Court had directed Air India and DGCA to file affidavits clarifying their stand and posted the petition for further hearing on June 2. The court had also allowed Kanani to amend his petition to challenge the circular of May 22.

The ETI 26/05/2020

MUMBAI: Jet Airways, which suspended services more than a year ago due to cash crunch, has offered two of its Boeing planes for operations under the Vande Bharat Mission to evacuate Indians stranded in foreign countries, according to a communication.

The once-storied full service carrier is undergoing insolvency process and its affairs are being managed by insolvency resolution professional Ashish Chhawchharia. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) is being implemented by the corporate affairs ministry.

Besides offering two aircraft, Chhawchharia has mentioned about the need for funds commencement of proposed repatriation flights.

In a letter written to Corporate Affairs Secretary Injeti Srinivas on May 20, Chhawchharia said two Boeing 777-300 ERs can be used for Vande Bharat Mission.

"As desired by you, I have now evaluated if Jet Airways, with its fleet of wide bodied long haul aircraft (Boeing 777-300ERs) can assist the Government of India (under its Vande Bharat Mission) to evacuate Indians stranded in different countries (due to the COVID-19 pandemic).

"Based on the preliminary assessment, I am reasonably confident that Jet Airways should be able to offer two Boeing 777-300ER aircraft to start with, going up to four aircraft, within a reasonable period of time, to participate in the Vande Bharat Mission...", the letter said.

A copy of the letter has also been marked to Civil Aviation Secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola, aviation regulator DGCA's chief Arun Kumar and State Bank of India Chairman Rajnish Kumar.

The current status of the proposal could not be immediately ascertained.

Srinivas and Chhawchharia were not available for comments.

Currently, Jet Airways has 12 aircraft that are either owned outright or are under a financing arrangement.

"Out of the existing fleet, one Airbus A330-200 aircraft is currently operated by Air Serbia (under a sub-lease arrangement), while one Boeing 777-300ER aircraft is currently parked in Amsterdam. The remaining 10 aircraft are parked at various airports in India," the letter said.

The deadline for completion of Jet Airways's insolvency resolution process has been extended till August 21 due to the lockdown.

Earlier this month, fresh Expressions of Interest (EoIs) for the airline were invited and the deadline

for submission is May 28.

The ETI 25/05/2020

New Delhi: After a gap of two months, domestic passenger flight operations resumed on Monday amid reluctance by various states to open up their airports in view of rising cases of the novel coronavirus.

The first flight took off from Delhi for Pune at 4.45 am under strict regulations recommended by civil aviation authorities. The first flight from Mumbai was to Patna and it departed at 6.45 am.

Large number of flights were cancelled on Monday across the country.

For example, aviation industry sources said, around 82 flights -- departures and arrivals -- have been cancelled till now at the Delhi airport.

States like Maharashtra, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, which are home to some of the busiest airports in the country, were reluctant to allow domestic flight services from their airports, citing swelling cases of the coronavirus infection in their states.

The West Bengal government did not relent to a request by the civil aviation ministry to allow flight services.

It was decided on Sunday that the state will gradually permit domestic flights from May 28 under strict guidelines. Andhra Pradesh too did not allow any flights on Monday.

Airlines were jittery in resuming services as multiple states have put in place separate norms and conditions for quarantining passengers arriving there by domestic flights.

The government last week announced the resumption of domestic flight services from May 25 under specific rules and guidelines like a cap on ticket pricing, wearing of face masks by passengers, no food served on board planes and making available details of medical conditions by travellers through the Aarogya Setu app or by filling up of a self-declaration form.

The app gives colour-coded designation to users as per their health status and travel history. It helps the users know if they are near anyone who has tested COVID-19 positive.

The government's decision came as the aviation sector was reeling under severe stress triggered by the coronavirus lockdown that began on March 25.

Many states have expressed serious reservations about the Centre's decision to start flight services.

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar, Punjab, Assam and Andhra Pradesh, among others, have announced their respective quarantine measures for passengers arriving at their airports.

Some states have decided to put passengers in mandatory institutional quarantine while several others have talked about putting them under home quarantine.

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Saturday had questioned the need for quarantine if a passenger shows green status on the Aarogya Setu app. The green status signifies that a passenger is

safe.

Bookings had opened for around 1,050 domestic flights planned for Monday but the revised measures announced on Sunday have led to cancellation of several flights leaving hundreds of passengers disappointed.

The airlines, which were allowed to operate one-third of their capacity, have been busy since Sunday night in further reworking their flight schedules.

Government officials said on Sunday evening that airports in Kolkata and Bagdogra in cyclone-hit West Bengal will not operate any domestic flights between May 25 and 27 but will handle 20 flights each per day from May 28.

The airports in Mumbai in Maharashtra and Hyderabad in Telangana will handle 50 and 30 flights respectively everyday from Monday, they said.

The Maharashtra government had requested the Centre on Sunday to keep air services in the state at a minimum possible level. Mumbai is the country's second busiest airport.

All the flights account for an equal number of arrivals and departures, the officials said.

There will be "limited" flights from Mumbai starting Monday and as per approved one-third schedule from other airports in the state, said Puri on Twitter on Sunday night.

Puri also tweeted to say that maximum 25 flights per day can arrive in Chennai from Monday and there will be no limit on the number of departures. For other airports in Tamil Nadu, flights will operate as in other parts of the country.

The minister said operations will resume on a "limited" scale in Andhra Pradesh from Tuesday following a request from the state government. Flights operate to Vijayawada and Vizag airports in the state.

The Health Ministry on Sunday issued guidelines for domestic travel, advising passengers to download the Aarogya Setu app on their mobile devices and asking states to ensure thermal screening at the departure point of airports, railway stations and bus terminals.

Asymptomatic passengers should be permitted to travel after being asked to self-monitor for 14 days, the ministry said.

Dos and Don'ts shall be provided along with tickets to travellers by the agencies concerned, said the ministry's guidelines for domestic travel through any means - air, bus or train.

The ETI 25/05/2020

Dehradun: Uttarakhand government on Sunday announced that all inbound passengers arriving in the state via domestic flights will have to undergo compulsory paid institutional quarantine in designated hotels.

Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority (USDMA) issued detailed Standard Operation

Procedures (SOPs) for passengers of domestic flights, which are to resume operations from May 25. According to the state government, **"All inbound passengers shall be given a choice to select quarantine centre in the list of hotels on their own on payment basis. The rate contract will be fixed in advance, as per the state government guidelines."**

Meanwhile, the Jolly Grant airport, states biggest airport, is all set to restart domestic operations from Monday and the first flight to Dehradun is scheduled to arrive from Delhi at 8.05 am.

25/05/20 Gaurav Talwar/Times of India

As many as 32 flights flying out of Bengaluru have been cancelled due to restrictions imposed by the Karnataka government. As per reports, flights from Chennai, Mangalore, Vishakapatnam, Kolkata, Goa, Indore, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Vijayawada, Jaipur amongst other cities got cancelled on Monday morning.

Airport sources have claimed that few state governments have given permission to leave from their respective cities and banned arrival.

Reports have also emerged of an Air India flight from Bengaluru to Hyderabad being cancelled at the last moment. Passengers have claimed that they were informed of the cancellation right at the time that their boarding pass was scanned at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru. Only when our boarding passes were scanned at the airport entry we were told that boarding has been cancelled. We don't know what to do now," some of these passengers told news agency ANI.

Domestic flight services resumes in the nation, after an unprecedented suspension of 62 days, early Monday morning. The two states which have refrained from resuming flights from Monday are Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal.

Strict social distancing norms are being followed at airports across the country while passengers are also being thoroughly checked before they are allowed inside the airport.

25/05/20 T Raghavan/India TV

New Delhi: **Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri today shared pictures of air activity above Indian airspace as the government resumed domestic flights after nearly two months.** The screenshot from flight tracking website FlightRadar24 shows heavy traffic over the Indian airspace while airspace above neighbouring countries hardly see any moment.

"Indians soar in the skies again! A beautiful live capture from #flightradar24 shows how our skies look busy again as domestic civil aviation recommences in India from today," he tweeted.

Earlier in the day FlightRadar24 had shared screenshots comparing last week air activity with that at 4:30 am today, when first flights took to the skies.

Domestic flights operated on Monday for the first time since late-March, when the country went into lockdown to break the chain of coronavirus. Many were stuck in cities they were visiting when all flights were stopped.

The flights resumed after what Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said was "a long day of hard negotiations" on Sunday with various state governments that were not on board with the idea.

25/05/20 NDTV

NEW DELHI/MUMBAI : For the first time in his life, Wasim Khan was not with his family in Dhanbad for Eid. He was to leave Delhi on Monday via Air India's 7am flight to Ranchi, but at 3am, a masked man at the airport main gate told him flight AI 0417 had been cancelled.

"No texts. No emails. No explanation. Some people had come from Meerut for this flight," said Khan, angry and tired. "This is utter madness."

Chaos, confusion and long queues greeted passengers as flights resumed after a two-month air travel ban to stem the spread of the coronavirus. Still, thousands of passengers flew on Monday to check on elderly parents, go home from a city they had been stranded in, or to deal with family emergencies.

Many like Khan were, however, let down as airlines cancelled flights at the last minute, highlighting the lack of preparation.

In a surprise announcement on 20 May, civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri said domestic flights would restart, giving airlines and airports about four days to come up with a comprehensive plan to ensure smooth and safe flights. Since then, states have issued their own directives that often contradict the Centre's plan — Andhra and West Bengal have extended flight bans, while Assam and Karnataka require arriving passengers to undergo a two-week quarantine.

Mumbai-based Rohan Talukdar, his mother and younger brother were prepared for a 14-day isolation in a Guwahati hotel near their home. But 30 minutes before leaving home at midnight for their 5am Indigo flight on 25 May, Talukdar received a text that their flight had been cancelled. "My granddad died a week ago. We are supposed to be home during this mourning period, but again, we are stuck." He booked another flight for 26 May which was 18 hours long with stopovers. At 5pm, he received a text saying that too had been cancelled. "That's over ₹30,000 blocked with IndiGo. I have no idea if I will get it back," said Talukdar.

For Anita Devi, 60, the journey from Guwahati to Delhi came as a relief as she needs to help with her daughter's delivery next week. She was to have travelled earlier, but the lockdown upended her plans. "I was very worried I would miss the birth of my grandchild," she said. Her flight had fewer than 25 passengers on board. After landing in Delhi, Devi checked into a hotel where she will stay for a week. "I can't go directly to my daughter's home as her condition is delicate," she said.

Vibhore Kumar was dreading his Indigo 5.50pm flight experience to Ranchi even before he sat in an Uber to reach the Delhi airport. He followed the new travel protocol. Gloves, check. Sanitizers, check. Mask, check. Aarogya Setu app, check. Flight details pasted on the luggage, check. "My mother has been alone at home for so long. I was very worried and wanted to be on the first flight out to see her," he said. His flight was on time. "The check-in was smooth, probably because there are very few

people. **The airport seems strange—it's mostly empty, only the food shops are open, and people are in masks and gloves,**" Kumar said over phone from Ranchi airport after touching down.
[Live Mint Aviation26/05/2020](#)

KARACHI : Pakistan plane crash, PIA plane crash, Karachi plane crash, lower altitude warnings, civil aviation, Flight PK-8303 crash, aviation disasters, Airbus A-320 crash, Karachi ATC, PIA flight crash, **The pilot of the crashed Pakistan International Airlines plane ignored three warnings from the air traffic controllers about the aircraft's altitude and speed before the landing, according to media reports on Monday.**

The crash of the national flag carrier's flight PK-8303 on Friday, in which 97 people were killed and two miraculously survived, is one of the most catastrophic aviation disasters in Pakistan's aviation history.

The Airbus A-320 aircraft from Lahore to Karachi was 15 nautical miles from the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, flying at an altitude of 10,000 feet above the ground instead of 7,000 when the Air Traffic Control (ATC) issued its first warning to lower the plane's altitude, Geo News quoted an ATC report as saying.

Instead of lowering the altitude, the pilot responded by saying that he was satisfied. When only 10 nautical miles were left till the airport, the plane was at an altitude of 7,000 feet instead of 3,000 feet, it said.

The ATC issued a second warning to the pilot to lower the plane's altitude. However, the pilot responded again by stating that he was satisfied and would handle the situation, saying he was ready for landing, the report said.

The report said that the plane had enough fuel to fly for two hours and 34 minutes, while its total flying time was recorded at one hour and 33 minutes.

Pakistani investigators are trying to find out if the crash is attributable to a pilot error or a technical glitch.

According to a report prepared by the country's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), **the plane's engines had scraped the runway thrice on the pilot's first attempt to land, causing friction and sparks recorded by the experts.**

When the aircraft scraped the ground on the first failed attempt at landing, the engine's oil tank and fuel pump may have been damaged and started to leak, preventing the pilot from achieving the required thrust and speed to raise the aircraft to safety, the report said.

The pilot made a decision "on his own" to undertake a "go-around" after he failed to land the first time. It was only during the go-around that the ATC was informed that landing gear was not deploying, it said.

"The pilot was directed by the air traffic controller to take the aircraft to 3,000 feet, but he managed only 1,800 feet. When the cockpit was reminded to go for the 3,000 feet level, the first officer said 'we are trying'," the report said.

Soon afterwards the pilot reported loss of both engines and said he was "proceeding direct" meaning that he was going for a crash landing, Dawn newspaper reported.

Though the controller cleared the PIA flight to land with both runways (25L and 25R) available, the pilot could be heard giving distress signal "May Day, May Day, May Day".

Experts said the failure to achieve the directed height indicates that the engines were not responding. The aircraft, thereafter, tilted and crashed suddenly.

The flight crashed at the Jinnah Garden area near Model Colony in Malir on Friday afternoon, minutes before its landing in Karachi's Jinnah International Airport. Eleven people on the ground were injured.

"My pilots were qualified, their checks and balances, and medical tests were complete. My cabin crew was also qualified and my plane's inspection was also complete," CEO of PIA Air Marshal Arshad Malik said soon after the crash.

The probe team, headed by Air Commodore Muhammad Usman Ghani, President of the Aircraft Accident and Investigation Board, is expected to submit a full report in about three months.

According to the PIA's engineering and maintenance department, the last check of the plane was done on March 21 this year and it had flown from Muscat to Lahore a day before the crash.

The investigators would have to see what caused both engines to stop working. It could be a bird hit or the pilot accidentally shutting off the wrong engine. It is rare for both engines to shut down simultaneously, the Dawn report noted.

Meanwhile, representatives of pilots' association and aviation experts have expressed concern over the handling of the investigation into the crash of the PIA aircraft by the air force-dominated probe team appointed by the government.

Pakistan Airlines' Pilots Association (PALPA) Secretary Capt Imran Narejo, while talking to Dawn newspaper, said the **"investigation team was not balanced", because it lacked the representation of commercial pilots.**

Commercial pilots better understood the accidents involving commercial jetliners, he explained.

The government appointed a four-member investigation team comprising three officials of the Aircraft Accident Investigation Board, two of whom are Air Force officers, and the fourth member has been co-opted from Pakistan Air Force's safety board. There is no commercial pilot in the team, which has been asked to submit its findings "within the shortest possible time".

Another PALPA official, who did not want to be named, said it was crucial for any incident investigation to include a "rated pilot" for the type of the aircraft (Airbus A-320) involved in the accident.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pakistan government had allowed the limited domestic flight operations from five major airports - Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta - from May 16.

After the plane tragedy, the PIA has called off its domestic operations.

Live Mint 25/05/2020

Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri hailed the resumption of air travel in India by tweeting a live image of the air traffic above Indian skies. The image was taken from Flight Radar 24. The screenshot from flight tracking website FlightRadar24 shows heavy traffic over the Indian airspace "Indians soar in the skies again! A beautiful live capture from #flightradar24 shows how our skies look busy again as domestic civil aviation recommences in India from today," Puri said in the tweet. A day before resumption of domestic commercial passenger flights across India, multiple meetings were held at the Civil Aviation Ministry among various stakeholders.

- The Hyderabad airport will deal with only 30 domestic flights per day from today.
 - For Tamil Nadu there will be maximum 25 arrivals in Chennai but there's no limit on the number of departures.
 - India's second busiest airport -The Mumbai airport -will handle only 50 flights per day.
 - Operations in Andhra Pradesh will recommence on a limited scale from 26 May, and they will be handling only 20 per cent of the pre-lockdown flights.
 - It was decided that Kolkata and Bagdogra will each handle just 20 flights per day from 28 May.
- Indian skies opened up for domestic passenger flights today after a gap of two months. All health protocols, including thermal screening of the passengers, were being followed by officials for both the arriving as well as departing air passengers.

It was announced last Thursday that one-third of the pre-lockdown domestic flights will operate from 25 May. International commercial passenger flight services remain suspended in India.
Live Mint Aviation 25/05/2020

Everything that can go wrong, will. That's Murphy's Law. But in India, the application of any law is often variable. So too, with Murphy's. So while "everything" that could go wrong did not, a lot did on the first day that the country opened up its skies for domestic air travel. It has been a manic Monday so far for air travellers, many of whom had been stuck in places far away from their hometowns and had keenly been waiting for a chance to return. Dozens of flights got cancelled without passengers being alerted before they left for airports, reportedly, with the result that they reached their departure terminals only to find they would not get to travel. Many took to social media to air grievances against airlines for allegedly failing to keep them in the loop of what was going on. **There was a lot of anguish expressed at quarantine norms specified by a few states.** Bangalore arrivals, as many suddenly discovered, would be hauled off for a week's isolation at a government facility, to be followed by a week's lock-in at home. Forms were said to have been issued asking for travellers' details for this, but the plan seemed to have left out onward flight takers. Transit passengers with only a layover in the city were reported to be bewildered by what address information to give and confused by whether they too would be quarantined for a week.

In all, it has been a picture of chaos. If airline officials seemed lost for answers, perhaps it is not entirely the fault of air carrier managements, though it is to an extent. The basic rules for flying were issued by the Central government only late last week, after two months of no flying. This may still have been adequate preparation time, had it not been for the sudden notifications issued by various state governments over the weekend, tightening norms on their own accord. Maharashtra first decided to keep Mumbai airport closed, and then relented a bit, offering to let 25 flights land and the same number take off--all of this, within a span of hours. Karnataka's quarantine order, meanwhile, deterred vast numbers in need of flying to Bangalore. Plans had to be dropped at the last minute. No wonder Indian flyers are fuming at their ears.

What led to dozens of flights being dropped at the nth hour remains unclear at this moment. What we do know is that **India's resumption of flights has exceeded the worst expectations of cynics in its pandemonium. Airline managements and the authorities, at every level of authority, must get a grip of this quickly.**
Live Mint 25/05/2020

They were all dressed up, or rather masked up, with nowhere to go. **Thousands of air travellers received a rude jolt on Monday when they were told that their flights had been cancelled.** Some of them were informed only at check-in counters, reportedly, and others found that they would not be flying at the point where their boarding passes were to be scanned. **If the disappointment and anger of people turned away at airports was understandable, so was the confusion among those who caught flights with little clarity on what would happen at the other end.** For example, transit passengers hoping to catch an onward flight from Bengaluru, after a layover of a few hours, were reported to be anxious about being bundled off for a week's quarantine there. Did this rule apply to all arrivals? Or only those leaving the terminal? Answers were hard to find, helplines were no help, and grievances were aired on social media. Overall, rarely have Indian flyers felt so mistreated. For an industry that has long advertised itself as a kind of hospitality business, this should serve as a moment of introspection. For the authorities that control aviation in India, the fiasco should have set off an alarm. This was the first day of our domestic skies being reopened, and a few hitches here and there were only to be expected. But what we got was far worse. If airlines and various arms of governance do not go into a huddle to sort this mess out, air travel might earn the reputation of being too harrowing to contemplate. This, in turn, would make it harder for the aviation sector to recover and India to return to normalcy.

Our air carriers could argue that they were caught by surprise by last week's decision to allow flights this week. The current lockdown was meant to be in place till 31 May, and perhaps that was their target date. But still, having been starved of revenues for nearly two months, they were seen as raring to resume operations at the earliest opportunity. In other words, they should have been ready for it. To be fair, what may have thrown airlines into a tizzy was the sudden set of complexities posed by various states issuing varied orders over the weekend. As a result, what we witnessed was **policy incoherence of the worst kind. It was soon evident that several states were at odds with the Central government over the resumption of air services on 25 May.** Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh seemed almost defiant of the Centre. Even with strict anti-covid protocols and only a third of the usual services being allowed, opening airports was seen as too risky by these states. Instead of working to resolve such differences with New Delhi, however, administrations such as Maharashtra's and Karnataka's issued local orders that took people's travel plans apart. In a state-level decision taken on Saturday, Mumbai airport was declared closed, a restriction that was revised the next day to permit just 25 daily flights in and the same number out. People with tickets for Bengaluru were in for a bigger shock. Those arriving from places with high corona infections would be held for a week at a state isolation facility.

Whether or not they had refundable tickets, many flyers are said to have opted out. But the swell of people at airports made it clear that a lot of Indians want to fly regardless of far-from-ideal conditions. This represents genuine demand. And it should be met without air travellers having to suffer such uncertainty.

Live Mint 26/05/2020

Après deux mois d'interdiction en raison de la pandémie de coronavirus, les vols domestiques ont pu à nouveau décoller lundi en Inde, de façon partielle et dans une certaine confusion.

Des dizaines d'avions ont pris leur envol au départ de New Delhi et d'autres grandes villes du géant d'Asie du Sud. Un millier de vols internes étaient prévus lundi, ce qui représente un tiers du trafic habituel. Les liaisons internationales restent interdites par l'Inde.

Mais de nombreux vols ont été annulés à la dernière minute en raison de restrictions imposées par les différents États indiens, suscitant la colère de passagers. Malgré l'opposition du gouvernement central, plusieurs États ont décrété une quarantaine de 14 jours aux voyageurs arrivant dans leur région.

Au petit matin, plus de 500 personnes faisaient la queue pour entrer dans le grand terminal l'aéroport de Delhi, toutes portant des masques et se tenant à un mètre les unes des autres pour respecter la distanciation physique. Des agents vérifiaient leur température.

Nombre de voyageurs regagnaient leur foyer après avoir été bloqués deux mois loin de chez eux à cause du confinement national en vigueur depuis le 25 mars, qui a rendu les déplacements impossibles dans le pays.

Protégés par un écran de plastique transparent, des agents de sécurité vérifiaient les documents de voyage ainsi que la présence, sur le téléphone des passagers, de l'application de traçage du gouvernement, Aarogya Setu.

Étudiante à New Delhi, Gladia Laipubam se réjouissait de pouvoir enfin retrouver sa maison, dans le nord-est de l'Inde, après une longue attente. Cependant "l'idée de voler est terrifiante. Tout peut arriver. C'est très risqué", a-t-elle déclaré à l'AFP.

Équipée de gants, masque et visière de protection, une employée d'une compagnie aérienne a confié que ses collègues et elle étaient "nerveux" de reprendre le travail.

"Interagir avec tant de gens à cette époque est si risqué. J'ai dû être en contact avec au moins 200 personnes depuis ce matin", a raconté à l'AFP cette employée qui n'a pas souhaité être identifiée pour des raisons professionnelles.

Cette reprise des vols intérieurs survient alors que l'Inde a fait état lundi de sa plus importante hausse quotidienne de cas de Covid-19 diagnostiqués, avec 6.977 nouveaux malades recensés en 24 heures.

Le pays de 1,3 milliard d'habitants a officiellement enregistré à ce stade 4.021 morts du nouveau coronavirus pour 138.845 cas confirmés.

AFP 25/05/2020

It was a day of delight and despair for passengers as domestic airlines resumed flights on Monday after two months of suspension. While more than 39,000 people flew on Day One, several hundred remained stranded due to last minute cancellations.

Even as airlines were supposed to operate 33 per cent of the approved summer schedule, they were forced to rework their itineraries late Sunday evening following many rounds of discussions between the Centre and states.

The original schedule turned upside down as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana, allowed operations with only limited number of flights.

Airlines operated 532 flights on Monday, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri tweeted. While commercial domestic operations were pegged at around 410 flights, Puri's estimate perhaps includes Vande Bharat operation flights. Normally, 3,000 domestic flights operate daily.

Industry sources estimated the average passenger load on Monday at around 55 per cent, with IndiGo operating half the total flights.

For some flights, fewer than 10 passengers turned up. Alliance Air's Delhi-Jaipur and Delhi-Dehradun flights flew with two and three passengers only, executives confirmed.

While flights from Delhi to Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Northeast states saw 100-plus passengers each, Bengaluru and Mumbai-bound flights from the Capital had lower number of passengers. Short-duration visitors, including business travellers, will not be required to undergo isolation in Maharashtra, the state said in its standard operating procedures for domestic air travel on Monday.

"Passengers who are coming to the state for less than a week and have planned for onward/return journey will have to share details of the same and will be exempted from isolation," the government order said.

Among other states Karnataka is giving exemption from quarantine to businessmen visiting for urgent work. **But this exemption would be granted on production of negative Covid-19 test report.** Last-minute cancellations turned out to be a spoiler, adding to gloomy passenger sentiment over mandatory quarantine in some states.

"We had bookings for Dehradun, but we saw some cancellations last night. A few passengers reported at the Delhi airport and refused to fly after hearing of quarantine measures in Uttarakhand," said C S Subbiah, CEO of Alliance Air. He said loads were higher on return flights to Delhi. Operational stability and safety were more important on day one and the numbers would increase gradually with passenger confidence, he said.

Similarly in Bengaluru, some passengers opted to return to the cities from where they had travelled after landing. They were not prepared to go through the quarantine process. "We had deployed staff outside terminal entrance to help passengers with all the formalities. Operations were smooth," said Hari Marar, managing director of Bangalore International Airport Limited.

At Mumbai and Delhi airport, however, passengers complained of long queues. Passengers faced other hassles too. "Air India was the last airline to inform passengers regarding cancellation of their flights," said Nishant Pitti, CEO of EaseMyTrip. In fact, many reached airports as Air India had texted customers much past midnight and had failed to make changes on their website.

Some of the cancelled flights were still showing confirmed, said Pitti.



Live Mint Aviation 26/05/2020

They were all dressed up, or rather masked up, with nowhere to go. Thousands of air travellers received a rude jolt on Monday when they were told that their flights had been cancelled. Some of them were informed only at check-in counters, reportedly, and others found that they would not be flying at the point where their boarding passes were to be scanned. If the disappointment and anger of people turned away at airports was understandable, so was the confusion among those who caught flights with little clarity on what would happen at the other end. For example, transit passengers hoping to catch an onward flight from Bengaluru, after a layover of a few hours, were reported to be anxious about being bundled off for a week's quarantine there. Did this rule apply to all arrivals? Or only those leaving the terminal? Answers were hard to find, helplines were no help, and grievances were aired on social media. Overall, rarely have Indian flyers felt so mistreated. For an industry that has long advertised itself as a kind of hospitality business, this should serve as a moment of introspection. For the authorities that control aviation in India, the fiasco should have set off an alarm. This was the first day of our domestic skies being reopened, and a few hitches here and there were only to be expected. But what we got was far worse. If airlines and various arms of governance do not go into a huddle to sort this mess out, air travel might earn the reputation of being too harrowing to contemplate. This, in turn, would make it harder for the aviation sector to recover and India to return to normalcy.

Our air carriers could argue that they were caught by surprise by last week's decision to allow flights this week. The current lockdown was meant to be in place till 31 May, and perhaps that was their target date. But still, having been starved of revenues for nearly two months, they were seen as raring to resume operations at the earliest opportunity. In other words, they should have been ready for it. **To be fair, what may have thrown airlines into a tizzy was the sudden set of complexities posed by various states issuing varied orders over the weekend.** As a result, what **we witnessed was policy incoherence of the worst kind.** It was soon evident that several states were at odds with the Central government over the resumption of air services on 25 May. Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh seemed almost defiant of the Centre. Even with strict anti-covid protocols and only a third of the usual services being allowed, opening airports was seen as too risky by these states. Instead of working to resolve such differences with New Delhi, however, administrations such as Maharashtra's and Karnataka's issued local orders that took people's travel plans apart. In a state-level decision taken on Saturday, Mumbai airport was declared closed, a restriction that was revised the next day to permit just 25 daily flights in and the same number out. People with tickets for Bengaluru were in for a bigger shock. Those arriving from places with high corona infections would be held for a week at a state isolation facility. Whether or not they had refundable tickets, many flyers are said to have opted out. But the swell of people at airports made it clear that a lot of Indians want to fly regardless of far-from-ideal conditions. This represents genuine demand. And it should be met without air travellers having to suffer such uncertainty.

Live Mint Aviation 26/05/2020

NEW DELHI : Air travel got off to a chaotic restart with fewer than half the scheduled 1,095 flights taking off on Monday, leaving behind scores of angry travellers who had been waiting for nearly two months to get back home or to their jobs.

Airlines scrambled to revise their schedules late on Sunday night as states restricted the number of flights that could take off or land in major hubs such as Mumbai and Chennai, leading to last-minute cancellations.

Finally, **only about 532 flights took off,** according to civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri.

"From no domestic passenger flights yesterday to 532 flights and 39,231 passengers today, action has returned to Indian skies," Puri said in a post on Twitter. "With Andhra Pradesh set to resume operations from tomorrow (Tuesday) and West Bengal from 28 May, these numbers are all set to increase."

States, especially those worst-affected by the coronavirus pandemic such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, are reluctant to lift the curbs as they fear it will worsen the severity of the outbreak. Travellers were also inconvenienced by the quarantine rules set by some states.

“The problem for passengers began with individual states rolling out their guidelines relating to the operationality of airports and post-travel quarantine rules that left travellers high and dry,” said a senior executive with an online travel portal who did not want to be identified. He estimated that about 20% of total tickets for Monday were cancelled.

India’s largest airline, IndiGo, operated about 200 flights and SpiceJet around 80 on the first day of eased curbs.

Many passengers had to return from airports as airlines failed to inform them about flight cancellations until just a few hours before boarding.

“Till midnight, we had no clarity for a flight which was scheduled to depart at 11am. In the morning we were told the flight was cancelled,” said a communications professional seeking anonymity. Other passengers, who finally managed to travel after a tense wait, said their experience wasn’t smooth.

Manvi Ghildiyal, an IT professional who wanted to travel to Dehradun from Pune, said she had to pay double the fare to book a local taxi for the airport.

“What caused discomfort was the poor coordination between what the rule book said and ground realities,” said Ghildiyal. “We booked directly from the website and it didn’t mandate us to take printouts; only PNR and flight details were to be written on paper and stuck to bags. At the airport we were asked to show printouts to cops standing behind the glass window. Fortunately, the airport gave free printouts,” she said.

With the initial uncertainty about flights, many are waiting for operations to stabilize before they book tickets.

The lower limit on fares on key sectors like Delhi-Mumbai and Delhi-Bangalore were triggered on Monday, which showed people are able to travel at affordable rates. The airline regulator last week issued seven bands of ticket pricing with lower and upper limits.

The lowest cap for Delhi-Mumbai at ₹3,944 per one-way ticket was triggered on an IndiGo flight, while the lowest on Delhi-Bangalore route for one way was ₹4,994, according to EaseMytrip.
[LiveMint Aviation 26/05/2020](#)

Precarious and worsening financials of some of India's biggest airlines, including the state-owned Air India's - may have been a key reason behind the Centre's sudden decision to start flights even

before working out crucial details with state governments.

With states refusing to play ball, some due to political rivalry while others for fear of spreading coronavirus, it's the unsuspecting flyer who is bearing the brunt of the Centre-state disharmony.

Keeping the passengers' issue aside for a moment, the question that arises is: why did Centre restart commercial flights without consulting state governments? Why was there a rush to re-start flight operations without tying up the loose ends? An aviation analyst points out the **Union Civil Aviation Ministry was perhaps anticipating bankruptcies in the sector, particularly for some carriers, if the airlines stayed grounded for a few more weeks.**

Airlines like SpiceJet and GoAir are literally on a wing and a prayer. SpiceJet, for instance, had negative net worth of Rs 773.4 crore in December 2019. As per Mumbai-based Centrum Broking, SpiceJet is expected to report net loss of Rs 1,178 crore in FY20 which is more than the annual net profits that the airline has ever generated since it was acquired by Ajay Singh in 2015. The no-frills airline was incurring some of the costs - employee expenses and depreciation - even when it was grounded for two months during the lockdown. As a result, it reportedly paid only part salaries for most employees while sending others on furloughs to bring down the fixed costs. Domestic carriers are losing Rs 75-90 crore per day, and their debt level is expected to rise to Rs 46,500 crore in FY22, according to rating agency ICRA. Airlines have a long list of creditors (lessors, airports, oil companies) who are waiting to get paid. They also have Rs 3,700 crore of pending refunds to the passengers. Some airlines have stopped paying staff salaries from April.

Ironically, just two days before formally giving a go-ahead signal, Union Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri had tweeted that it's not up to the civil aviation ministry alone to decide on resuming domestic flights. "In the spirit of cooperative federalism, the government of states where these flights will take off and land should be ready to allow civil aviation operations," Puri had tweeted on May 19.

It seems that the minister was aware of a probable resentment from some state governments for these flights. By putting a start date, the minister has perhaps worked backwards in convincing 'opposing states'. His strategy of doing a formal launch (on May 21) paid off because otherwise it would have been challenging for the central government to bring these states on the same page. But why did states agree? In a pandemic like this, no state government can afford to abandon its natives when a majority of other states would not be doing so.

26/05/20 Manu Kaushik/Business Today

New Delhi: Airports across the country handled 325 departures and 283 arrivals with 41,673 passengers till 5 pm on Tuesday even as flight cancellations continued with passengers facing difficulties.

Moreover, domestic operations resumed in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday, a day after the restart of air travel across India.

West Bengal was the only state where no domestic services took place.

As major airports like Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad have a severe cap on the number of flights

they can handle, **cancellations continued on Tuesday.**

Just like Monday, a section of passengers reached their airports on Tuesday only to be informed that their flights have been cancelled. Many people vented their ire on social media.

"Smooth operations of domestic civil aviation operation. Our airports have handled 325 departures & 283 arrivals with 41,673 passengers till 5pm on 26 May 2020, the second day after recommencement of domestic flight," Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Tuesday.

"Final report for the day will be prepared after details come in at midnight," he added.

Chennai airport was scheduled to handle only 20 arrivals and departures each on Tuesday, said senior government officials, even though Puri on Sunday night said that it can handle up to 25 arrivals per day and has no limit on the number of departures.

Even in Andhra Pradesh, where domestic services resumed on Tuesday, Vijayawada and Vizag airports were scheduled to handle just eight flights each during the day, officials said.

On Sunday night, the central government had said these two airports can handle up to 20 per cent of the pre-lockdown flights from Tuesday onwards.

The Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, which is India's largest, was scheduled to handle around 277 flights on Tuesday, the officials said, adding that around 25 flights were cancelled during the day.

On May 23, the government officials had said they expected Delhi airport to handle around 380 flights per day from May 25 onwards.

Mumbai airport, India's second busiest airport, handled just 41 flights on Tuesday. On Monday, it had handled 47 flights.

On Sunday night, the central government had clarified that Mumbai will handle a maximum of 50 flights per day from Monday.

26/05/20 PTI/Outlook

New Delhi: The Central Industrial Security Force on Tuesday reported 20 fresh coronavirus cases, with 18 from its unit that guards the Delhi airport, officials said. The over 1.62 lakh personnel strong force has a total of 78 active COVID-19 cases, while 132 personnel have recovered from the disease till now.

According to official data, the force reported **20 fresh cases since Monday**, with **18** from its unit that guards the **Indira Gandhi International Airport**, while one case each was detected from its NTPC Koldam unit in Himachal Pradesh and from the Punjab and Haryana secretariat in Chandigarh.

According to official data, the force reported 20 fresh cases since Monday, with 18 from its unit that guards the Indira Gandhi International Airport, while one case each was detected from its NTPC Koldam unit in Himachal Pradesh and from the Punjab and Haryana secretariat in Chandigarh.

"All the 18 personnel detected positive from the Delhi airport unit were already under quarantine as part of contact tracing of other infected personnel. They were not on duty," a senior CISF officer said.

"Now that their test reports have come, the personnel have been shifted for medical isolation," the officer said.

A total of 25 personnel from this Delhi airport guarding unit are under treatment at present.

The Delhi airport CISF unit has been continuously working to facilitate passengers boarding or de-boarding special rescue flights from or to India during the lockdown period and the unit is now securing the IGI after a limited number of regular commercial flights began from Monday.

26/05/20 PTI/OneIndia

New Delhi: An Air India security staff, who flew on Delhi-Ludhiana flight on March 25 when the domestic air travel was resumed after a two-month gap, tested positive for COVID-19.

The 50-year-old who is a resident of Delhi was among the eleven people who travelled to Ludhiana on May 25 on board AI91837 Air India flight. The fellow passengers have been kept under state quarantine.

"A 50-year-old man who is a member of security staff in Air India and is a permanent resident of Delhi has tested positive for coronavirus. He came from Delhi on 25th May on board a domestic flight," District Public Relations Office, Ludhiana said, ANI reported.

The infected passenger has been kept in a local quarantine centre.

All commercial passenger flights had been suspended since March 25 when the lockdown was first imposed in the country to contain the spread of coronavirus. Last week, restrictions on the operations of the domestic flight services were lifted after a gap of two months with the government allowing Indian carriers to recommence one-third of their total flights from each airport.

Meanwhile, 24-year-old passenger, who travelled in a Chennai-Coimbatore IndiGo flight tested positive for COVID-19 on Tuesday. The passenger, an employee of a private hotel in Chennai, has been admitted to the ESI hospital in Coimbatore.

As per the district authorities, the patient travelled in 6E 381 IndiGo flight from Chennai on May 25 and arrived at the Coimbatore airport at 8 pm on Tuesday.

More than 100 other passengers, who were on the same flight as the patient, however tested negative for the infection. The fellow passengers have been asked to undergo home quarantine for 14 days and contact the health department if at all they develop any symptom.

26/05/20 TimesNowNews.com

New Delhi: A day after the restart of air travel across India, flight cancellations continued with passengers facing difficulties, even as domestic operations resumed in Andhra Pradesh on Tuesday amid reluctance due to rising number of COVID-19 cases.

Except West Bengal, domestic flights traversed the entire country on Tuesday.

However, as major airports like Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad have a severe cap on the number of flights they can handle, cancellations continued on Tuesday.

Just like Monday, a section of passengers reached their airports on Tuesday only to be informed that their flights have been cancelled. Many people vented their ire on social media.

Chennai airport is scheduled to handle only 20 arrivals and departures each on Tuesday, said senior government officials, even though Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Sunday night said that it can handle up to 25 arrivals per day and has no limit on the number of departures.

Even in Andhra Pradesh, where domestic services resumed on Tuesday, Vijayawada and Vizag airports will handle just eight flights each during the day, officials said.

On Sunday night, the central government had said these two airports can handle up to 20 per cent of the pre-lockdown flights from Tuesday onwards.

The Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, which is India's largest, is scheduled to handle around 277 flights on Tuesday, the officials said.

On May 23, the government officials had said they expected Delhi airport to handle around 380 flights per day from May 25 onwards.

Mumbai airport, India's second busiest airport, handled just 47 flights on Monday and is expected to handle a similar number on Tuesday.

On Sunday night, the central government said it will handle a maximum of 50 flights per day from Monday.

West Bengal would be resuming domestic flights from Thursday.

However, its Kolkata and Bagdogra airports will handle only 20 flights each per day.

On Sunday night, the central government had announced that Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal will not handle any domestic flights on Monday and major airports like Mumbai, Chennai and Hyderabad will see reduced operations from Monday onwards.

West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu had expressed reluctance in resuming domestic flights from Monday due to rising number of COVID-19 cases.

The officials said the first flight on Tuesday to Vijayawada landed from Bengaluru at 6.55 am, carrying 79 passengers. The Spicejet flight returned to Bengaluru with 68 passengers, they added.

At the Vizag airport, the first flight landed from Bengaluru at 7 am.

"At Vijayawada, four flights are of IndiGo, two each are of SpiceJet and Air India," they added.

Visakhapatnam airport is scheduled to handle eight flights on Wednesday, the officials mentioned.

After a two-month suspension due to the coronavirus pandemic, domestic flights resumed in India on Monday with 532 flights carrying 39,231 passengers to their destinations. Around 630 flights

were cancelled.

26/05/20 PTI/Outlook

Bengaluru: Several flights out of Kempegowda International Airport were cancelled on Monday, but passengers of an Air India flight to Hyderabad were upset as they learned of the cancellation of their flight only after they reached the airport.

It was sheer chaos with a group of people shouting at an airline executive for failing to inform passengers about the cancellation. The flight was to take off at 8am. Ranganadh Kotta, a software engineer, said, "I spent Rs 1,500 on a taxi to reach here from Bellandur. Now we will spend a similar sum to get back home. I am demanding that Air India at least reimburse my return fare for my cab." Preksha Dokar, a researcher, said that all that was needed was one SMS alert. "After reaching here, we looked at the board and found out that the flight was not running," Preksha added. The AI executive assured the passengers that fares would be refunded within 48 hours.

Dr Sreedevi C and her friend Dr Vijayanthi were upset as they are about to start their postgraduate course in radiology at Nizam's Institute of Medical Sciences. "We need to report for the start of the PG program by tomorrow. That is why we booked our flight ticket today. We reached the airport at 5.30am for the flight. We are shocked to know that it is cancelled," she said.

They ran back and forth between counters to check for other flights to Hyderabad. "It is a question of our future. Even if they had informed us through SMS or email, we would have at least booked tickets on another airline. Now, we just have to go back home," she said. Air India was unavailable for comment.

26/05/20 S Lalitha/New Indian Express

Hyderabad: The Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) was a visual of chaos on Monday as rules and regulations of social distancing went for a toss when flights started getting cancelled and confused passengers panicked for information and help. While the people who had early morning flights had a smooth experience at the airport, as the day progressed, crowds increased and **passengers complained about how the no-contact regulation was broken multiple times with boarding passes and tickets handed over to passengers by airline officials.**

Speaking to Express, Sayantan, a techie who was supposed to travel to Kolkata, said, "When I arrived at the airport, and even during the early morning hours, there was no crowd, and social distancing was being followed to the T. Our temperatures were checked with contactless thermal scanners and our IDs were checked remotely. We were asked to be seated in the lounge post the health check-up. A few hours later, we were informed that our flight has been cancelled."

However, Saiju Gangadaram, travelling to Bengaluru, during an afternoon flight, shared a video of an absolute chaos during the boarding near the aerobridge. Passengers can be seen crowding together near the aerobridge leading to the aircraft. Many were spotted walking around in groups instead of being seated on the chairs marked away from each other. He wrote on Twitter, "What is the use of all the pain taken by citizens? What is the use of the Aarogya Setu app (sic)?"

Another passenger, Gourav Goel, who was at the RGIA at around 5.00 pm, shared a picture of passengers crowding around Air India officials to collect a piece of paper being distributed. Gourav took to Twitter to explain what was happening: "Airindia announcing names and distributing Boarding Passes violating guidelines for operation during covid. Clearly not prepared for operation."

#airindia #resumedomesticflights #rgia (sic)"

26/05/20 New Indian Express

New Delhi: Strange are the ways of the world. Bhopal suddenly seemed far and distant since the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown was announced on 24th March 2020. An hour and a half's flight or an overnight train away, a weekend hop to met folks, family and friends often, the 750 odd kilometres between Delhi and Bhopal seemed to carry the weight of distance now.

With state borders closed and lockdown extended to almost two months, I waited for this new normal to normalise with what was the known normal. So when the resumption of flights was announced, I booked a flight back home on day one.

I am at the Indira Gandhi International Airport on May 25, 2020, all geared to take the Air India flight from Delhi to Bhopal. I booked an Air India flight ticket for 5 pm departure on May 23 and the ticket price was a regular one under INR 4000. As a prep, read the SOP for travellers at the airport and saw some of the videos on Twitter shared by journalists.

While doing the web check-in on 24th May, the boarding pass issued was for 8 pm and seats previously chosen were different so there was a lot of confusion whether the flight was departing at 5 pm or 8 pm on May 25.

The helpline call numbers had a long waiting and so we waited with multiple screenshots on flights schedules saying that it will depart at 8 pm.

Finally, while news of multiple flights came through in the first half of 25th May, we got to know that the flight we had booked was cancelled but passengers on this flight would be shifted to another one that would be flying to Baroda via Bhopal from Delhi at 5 pm.

So we reached the airport- I and my childhood friend with her three-year-old kid.

All our bags were thoroughly sanitized - showered and sprayed at a point in the line to have our tickets/boarding passes on the phone checked. There are marking on the floor to maintain social distancing.

An airline kiosk asked us regarding our flight and reconfirmed that the original one was cancelled and that we would be accommodated in the Baroda bound flight AI 819.

The CISF officer at the gate checked the ticket and the identity card like pre-lockdown journeys but while standing behind a glass wall now. Even asking to lower the mask to crosscheck and match the face. Once inside, between the two entrance doors, the sanitizer-soaked carpet sanitised shoes. An official asked if the Arogya Setu app was on the phone and I showed it to him. The thermal scanner checked the temperature and I was inside the airport.

The check-in bags were scanned again and Air India and airport staff were there to help travellers take out a printout of the boarding pass at the kiosk.

The lines for the bag drop kiosks were also marked to maintain social distancing and everyone at the airport was seen wearing masks, a lot of people were also wearing gloves and some even wearing the face shield.

The check-in bag was dropped and I headed for security check line again marked with lines on the floor to indicate the place to stand and maintain social distancing.

The CISF officer in a PPE suit checked my boarding pass and I was at the security check counter as usual. Except the lady checking wore a double protective face shield.

The T3 airport seemed to be open to inch back to life. The shops and eateries were open but they were empty. No one was browsing or even window shopping for now. But having the shops open did give a sense of things inching back to normal.

A coffee at Starbucks was a takeaway with only one person allowed to order.

At the boarding gate, the seats in the waiting area had yellow strips marked to not sit on them to maintain social distancing.

Just before boarding, the Air India ground staff gave all the passengers a safety kit - a face shield, masks and pouches of sanitizers.

And before boarding the flight, at the boarding gate, thermal scanning of body temperature also done once again.

The airline crew is wearing Protective suits from head to toe. Announcing restriction of movement inside the aeroplane to passengers.

The middle seats in the flight haven't been booked and are empty as of now. Everyone is adhering to wearing the face shields, wearing masks and maintaining physical distancing. Except for three-year-olds who are tough to convince for now, but still are being cajoled.

It's a quieter airport on day one as flights resume in the new normal way of life as with learning to live with Covid19 for the time being. A heavily sanitized airport and aeroplane. And we collectively wait to take off in this flight due in a few minutes, while in our own little bubbles covered by face shields, masks, gloves and armed with sanitizers - as we resume what used to be normal in the new normal.

(Nanditta Chibber is an Author and a Media & Communication Professional based out of Delhi.)
[Mirror Now News 26/05/2020](#)

NEW DELHI : A total of 832 flights carrying 58,318 passengers operated on Monday, said Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday, revising his earlier figures.

On Monday evening, Puri had said that total 532 flights carrying 39,231 passengers had operated during the day.

"Airports are abuzz and passengers are back in air. 58,318 passengers flew to their destinations on 832 flights on the first day, 25th May till midnight," Puri said on Tuesday afternoon on Twitter.

On Monday evening, he had said on Twitter, "From no domestic passenger flights yesterday to 532 flights and 39,231 passengers today, action has returned to Indian skies."

It is not clear if the minister has included the international repatriation flights being operated under Vande Bharat Mission in his revised figure of 832 flights.

[Live Mint Aviation 26/05/2020](#)

After over 60 days of lockdown, air travel has finally resumed. But the decision came after a considerable amount of back and forth, leaving passengers in the lurch. When the civil aviation ministry announced the resumption of air travel from 25 May, online travel agents witnessed a flood of bookings. Most airlines started accepting bookings, assuming all states would play ball. However, states such as Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu said they weren't prepared to open up yet.

Sneha Maloo, a 30-year-old brand consultant working in Mumbai was restless to go back to her home town, Kolkata. When the air travel was finally allowed, Maloo went ahead and booked her ticket. However, poor coordination between the Centre and the state left her frustrated. "There was no clarity with states asking for more time. Ultimately, I cancelled my flight," she said. Cancelling her ticket meant she had to shell out cancellation charges.

After a weekend full of negotiations, the official announcement on Sunday said that some states such as Maharashtra would operate only a select number of flights (25 arrivals and 25 departures). This means a number of passengers who had booked their tickets hoping all flights would resume are now in a fix.

"The whole situation is messy and there are people who bought tickets for as much as ₹34,000 for a Delhi-Mumbai round trip. Since there was no immediate cap on fares, some airlines took advantage of the situation. And now Maharashtra is not allowing more than 25 flights. So what happens to people who booked such expensive tickets? Passengers are being exploited due to lack of clarity," said Sudhakar Reddy, president, Air Passengers' Association of India (APAI). There is absolutely no clarity on whether passengers will get cash refunds or will have to settle for credit shells in case their flight doesn't operate. Mint reached out to SpiceJet and GoAir but did not get a response.

If you're displaced due to the lockdown or need to travel for other reasons, here are five things you must keep in mind.

Cancellation policy

The policy varies from airline to airline and given the situation, it's very important to understand the terms and conditions. If you end up cancelling your ticket, you could lose over 50% of the cost.

Akanksha, co-founder and managing director, Refundme.in, a company providing services for air passengers to claim compensation, said the civil aviation ministry has come out with guidelines on how to travel, but there's no mention of refunds in case of cancellation of flights.

"The guidelines with respect to cancellation under normal circumstances will apply. In the past, airlines have issued credit shells or the option to reschedule the flight," said Akanksha. "In the initial days after the window opened, most tickets bought via online agents were non-refundable," she added. It's advisable to check the cancellation policy with your airline, and travel only if you are okay with rescheduling your flight or settling with credit shells.

Credit shells policy

Since the lockdown, there have been multiple instances of airlines taking in bookings despite the ministry's advice to refrain from doing so. Passengers who made bookings are now stuck with credit shells or the option to reschedule because air travel was suspended.

You may think credit shells are as good as a cash refund, but they come with a host of terms and conditions. "Credit shells, typically, have a tenure of one year. Also, you can't change the sector (the city of departure and arrival) and the name of the passenger," said Nishant Pitti, co-founder and chief executive officer, EaseMyTrip, an online travel booking portal.

Note that even if you book a ticket later using credit shells, you will have to pay the difference in fares. In case the new fare is lower, you will not get a refund.

Cost of quarantine

If you do end up getting on a flight, take note of the various guidelines on quarantining. Almost every state has released guidelines on what passengers will have to do on arrival. While some states such as Rajasthan and Odisha have prescribed mandatory home quarantine for 14 days, others such as Uttarakhand have mandated institutional quarantine on payment basis. Karnataka, on the other hand, is following a combination of home and institutional quarantine. Other than this, most states have mandated covid-19 tests on arrival.

Note that the cost of institutional quarantine, too, could burn a hole in your pocket. "Try and weigh the options. Before planning the trip, take the cost of quarantine into consideration," said Akanksha.

Travel insurance

You may think travel insurance will come handy if your flight gets cancelled, but understand that the cover will kick in only if the airline doesn't give credit shells or the option to reschedule. "We are selling travel insurance policies, but if there's a clear advisory that flights won't operate, then the claim is not honoured. If there's no advisory and the airline doesn't refund in some form, the claim will be honoured," said Biresh Giri, appointed actuary and chief risk officer, ACKO General Insurance. You could make a claim in case you miss a subsequent flight due to cancellation or delay of the previous flight. However, Giri said force majeure could also come into effect if the claim incidence is 30-40% of the total policies bought. In case that happens, insurers could deny claims arising out of cancellations.

Book from the airline

With so much uncertainty, if you still wish to go ahead and book tickets, it's advisable to book directly from the airline's app or website. According to Akanksha, this could help you get your money back in case the airline offers a cash refund. "Some online travel agents take cash refunds from the airline and issue credit shells, which could become a problem," she said.

As the lockdown eases and states negotiate their stance on air travel, tread carefully and assess the pros and cons before you book a flight ticket. While you might want to fly home as soon as possible,

or have something important lined up, keep in mind that there are still risks involved, for both your health and your pocket.

Live Mint Aviation 26/05/2020

NEW DELHI : Air India on Wednesday said a passenger who was onboard an Alliance Air flight from the national capital to Ludhiana has tested positive for coronavirus and a total of 41 people, including five crew members, have been quarantined.

The flight was operated on May 25, when domestic flight services resumed after remaining grounded for two months due to the nationwide lockdown to prevent spreading of coronavirus infections.

Alliance Air, which operates regional flights, is part of Air India.

"A passenger travelling on AI91837 Delhi-Ludhiana flight of May 25 was found COVID positive on May 26. All the pax (passengers) of this flight are now under quarantine," an Air India spokesperson said.

He also said the airline is following all the norms laid down by the civil aviation ministry and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

According to the spokesperson, there were 36 passengers and five crew members in the flight.

On Tuesday, IndiGo said that a passenger who travelled on 6E 381 from Chennai to Coimbatore on May 25 evening tested positive for COVID-19.

Live Mint Aviation 27/05/2020

An 11-member team of technical experts of Airbus aerospace company visited the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi and inspected the runway, air traffic control tower and radar control station as part of its initial investigation into the PIA air crash involving its aircraft that killed 97 people, according to media reports.

The team of experts from an Airbus facility in the French city of Toulouse reached Pakistan on Monday to carry out an independent probe into Friday's mishap.

The crash involved the Netherlands-headquartered international aerospace company's Airbus A-320, which plunged into a residential area minutes before landing reportedly due to engine failure.

The team inspected the runway of the Jinnah International Airport here, where the plane made a failed attempt to land before going up and crashing in a nearby residential area, The Express Tribune reported.

They also visited the air traffic control tower and the radar control station.

The team will also inspect the mishap site where the national flag carrier's flight PK-8303 from Lahore crash landed, the report said.

The experts will also provide technical assistance to their Pakistani counterparts to investigate the reasons behind the crash, one of the worst in the country's aviation history in recent times.

The experts are expected to take the aircraft's black box recorder which contains the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder and any other evidence that would help with the investigation, the report said.

The team will fly back to France after completing the 16-hour investigation, the report said.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan aviation authorities on Tuesday said that they have shared the findings of their initial investigation into the crash with the Airbus team.

"We are providing all possible assistance to the technical experts of Airbus," Abdul Hafeez, a spokesperson for PIA, was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper.

The report said the authorities have cordoned off the crash site and also secured the plane's black box to facilitate the investigation.

The Pakistani probe team is expected to submit a full report on the crash in about three months.

According to the PIA's engineering and maintenance department, the last check of the plane was done on March 21 this year and it had flown from Muscat to Lahore a day before the crash.

The aircraft was handed over to the PIA in 2014 and had completed 47,100 flight hours and 25,860 flight cycles until its crash on Friday.

The Express Tribune in its report stated that the bodies are identified through DNA testing and so far, 41 bodies have been handed over to the family members of the deceased.

PIA is engaged in the 24-hour emergency response centre to assist the victims' family members, a PIA spokesperson was quoted as saying in the report.

The PIA has immediately started delivering Rs 1 million each to the victims' families, the official said.

Meanwhile, the injured from among the crash site in the Model Colony area are under treatment at different hospitals in Karachi.

Eighteen homes were damaged and 11 people were injured when the plane crash landed in the residential area.

A survey team has also begun its work to assess the damage caused to the property where the aircraft crashed, the report said.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pakistan government has allowed the limited domestic flight operations from five major airports - Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta - from May 16.

Business Standards 28/05/2020

General aviation companies expect a good demand for charter flights over the next three months as they offer better convenience and safety than regular passenger flights.

Non-scheduled domestic operations, which include private and charter flights, began on Monday. International charter companies are expected to resume operations as soon after the government, on Tuesday, issued guidelines for transporting stranded Indians from overseas.

In the first two days, Delhi airport saw 22 non-scheduled flights. Prior to March 24, the airport handled around 25 such flights daily.

"Traffic-wise we are getting back to pre-suspension figures and we are hopeful of growth," said Anurag Srivastava, CEO of Bird ExecuJet Airport Services, which handles general aviation operations at Delhi airport.

"Charter companies are anticipating business from NRIs and well healed Indians who are looking to return to India.," said Atiesh Mishra, founder of AJM Jet Management.

"We are sanitizing all planes prior to each departure and have adequate personal protective equipment for pilots and crew. We see substantial growth in business in next three months. I believe many passengers would switch to charters seeing overall inconvenience in travelling in regular passenger flight in the current environment," said Rajan Mehra, CEO of Club One Air which operates ten planes.

A charter flight can cost a customer from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 3.5 - 4 lakh per hour depending on the type of aircraft.

Passengers taking charter jets have to take all safety related precautions like downloading Aarogya Setu and wearing a mask.

Under the new norms for domestic travel, passenger of charter flights have to report 45 minutes before departure (for airlines it's two hours). The guidelines also do not put a cap on number of luggage pieces one can carry on a charter flight. However, there will be no meal service on domestic charter flights and food can only be provided for health reasons on emergency medical services flights.

Those keen to return to India on a charter flight will have to register themselves with the local Indian embassy and take health precautions. However pre-packed snacks can be served on international flights according to the guidelines.

Business Standards 27/05/2020

An asymptomatic passenger who travelled on an IndiGo flight from Bangalore to Madurai on Wednesday tested Covid-19 positive during the mandatory testing at the quarantine facility in Madurai. This is the fourth such case after domestic flight operations resumed on May 25.

The airline said that the infected passenger observed all precautionary measures including face mask, face shield and gloves, like other passengers on-board the aircraft.

"All our aircraft are regularly sanitised as a standard operating procedure and the aircraft that operated this flight too was immediately disinfected as per protocol. The operating crew has been

home quarantined for 14 days and we are in the process of notifying other passengers as per government guidelines, to ensure safety of our passengers and staff,” an IndiGo Two passengers who travelled on May 25 (the first day of flight resumption after two months) were found to be infected with the virus. These passengers had travelled from Ahmedabad to Guwahati on the SpiceJet flight SG 8152.spokesperson said.

“Covid-19 tests were conducted at Guwahati after landing and the passengers were quarantined. The test reports came on May 27. The operating crew has been quarantined and SpiceJet is coordinating with government agencies in notifying other passengers who had travelled with them,” the airline had said.

Another passenger on a Delhi- Ludhiana Air India flight on May 26 too had tested positive for Covid-19. As a result of this, the national carrier had to quarantine 36 passengers and four crew members in Punjab.

The Hindustan 28/05/2020

A Bhopal-based high net worth individual hired a 180-seater A320 plane of a private carrier to ferry four family members to New Delhi, in a bid to avoid crowd at the airport and in flight amid the Covid-19 outbreak, officials said on Thursday.

The person, who is a liquor baron, chartered the aircraft to send to Delhi his daughter, her two children and their maid, who were stuck in Bhopal since the last two months due to the coronavirus-induced lockdown, sources said.

The plane arrived here from Delhi on Monday with crew only and flew back with just four passengers for whom it was specially hired, they said.

“The A320 180-seater plane arrived here on May 25 to carry four members of a family, probably due to the coronavirus scare. It was chartered by someone and there was no medical emergency, an airline official said, refusing to divulge any further details.

Bhopals Rajabhoj Airport Director Anil Vikram could not be contacted for comments.

According to aviation experts, the cost of hiring an Airbus-320 is about Rs 20 lakh.

Domestic commercial flight services resumed from Monday, after a nearly two-month break due to the coronavirus-enforced lockdown.

The Hindustan 28/05/2020

A joint forum of Air India employees and staff unions has sought a Rs 50,000 crore financial succour from the government for the national carrier, stating that the airline is a necessity for the country.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Joint Forum said that Air India is a “necessity” for the country, especially in times of crises, and a financial package will not only help the flag carrier but also the entire aviation sector and the economy.

The prime minister earlier this month announced a Rs 20 lakh crore package, which combined the government’s earlier announcements on supporting key sectors as also measures rolled out by the Reserve Bank of India, to help revive the economy amid the coronavirus pandemic crisis.

Leading rating agencies have forecast the Indian economy to contract by 5 per cent in the current fiscal due to the impact of the crisis.

“We thank you for the financial package of Rs 20 lakh crores to boost industry and the economy. As you will agree that civil aviation is of paramount importance in today’s context and therefore it is extremely necessary to boost the aviation industry and restore normal operations at the earliest, which is crucial for the economy to stabilise.

“In view of this, we request you to kindly grant Air India a financial package of Rs 50,000 crore which will go a long way in ensuring that Air India emerges as the strongest and best airline of India,” the Joint Forum said in the letter.

Stating that Air India has once again played a crucial role for the nation by bringing back stranded Indians from all parts of the world including several offshore stations at a time when airlines all over the world had ceased operations due to the pandemic, the Forum said that the carrier “even at peak of the COVID 19 pandemic operated flights to and from Wuhan which is the origin and centre point of the coronavirus.” Besides, Air India staff went out of the way at considerable “personal risk” to ensure smooth operations of several cargo and charter flights all through this period thereby facilitating the smooth movement of medicines and medical equipment between India and many other countries including China, it said.

Air India has always performed national duties irrespective of the serious risks involved, it said adding it has been established beyond doubt that Air India is a necessity for the country especially in times of crises.

The Hindustan 28/05/2020

Some states were not ready to resume domestic flight operations, said aviation minister Hardeep Puri, underlining that they had to be persuaded to come on board. The minister talked about the Centre’s exit strategy from the lockdown, why the government may not be able to provide a financial bailout to airlines in an interview with Hindustan Times’ Anisha Dutta.

Here are the edited excerpts from the interview:

Q: Domestic flight resumption took off with a lot of confusion over flight cancellations. Has the situation improved now?

A: It is not correct to use the term confusion here. There was uncertainty because some states decided to not resume flight operations on May 25. We have had multiple discussions with them prior to the announcements on the domestic flights. We had also issued a central SOP for domestic travel but many went ahead and issued their own guidelines. Many of their SOPs came in very late and our meeting with the airlines ended by around 9 pm. Many cancellations occurred due to this.

The situation is now stabilised and much better with just six cancellations on day two and 445 flight departures ferrying 30,944 passengers and 447 arrival flights with 31,697 passengers.

Q: Would it not have been easier if states were taken on board prior to the announcement?

A: The states have been on board from day one, contrary to what is being said. Discussions with them started as early as May 15. **When we announced the resumption on 22nd, we had held several rounds of discussion, before deciding to give it three more days. There were a few things. First, whether the state is willing to accept, some states were not keen but when they were told economic activity is needed, they changed their mind.** Second, are the airports ready? All our airports were ready on the 15th, airlines were ready but they wanted six days' notice.

What happened in this was two or three states could not take flights, they told us very frankly our doctors and all are not in a position, they are in a cyclone condition so we said you take your time...It is not a question of explaining why but the press became a commentator, it played headlines like "total chaos" and some people said let's not fly. What is the chaos? The chaos is on some flights being cancelled. What are the reasons some flights are cancelled? It is very clear because the state government has a problem. Second issue was that the SOPs were issued by the states very late. Now the SOPs are in place. Andhra Pradesh has opened up. West Bengal will on May 28.

Q: There are a few Covid-19 positive cases reported in flights since the resumption. Were you prepared for it?

A: We were. We have taken the precautions at airports where you don't need any human contact; you print out your boarding pass, your luggage gets sanitised, then you are inside the aircraft with the protective gear and the aircraft is also disinfected. We have taken as many measures as humanly possible. But I keep saying there is a risk in everything. There is a massive conflict between those who want things to desperately open and go about their work and those who pick up any case and make a big thing about it. **Airlines are equipped to deal with cases. If they have a positive case and they decide to ground the crew, the airlines will have to pay that price.**

Q: What about international flight operations, are we prepared to resume?

A: **I don't see that happening for some time. International civil aviation traffic is dependent on something completely different, it depends on other countries, international trade and business activity.** Will the demand of international traffic continue to be low, what will be the new norm?

Aravind Panagariya had said, even when you had big disruptions earlier trade still picked up globally. I see it picking up again, but it is too early to say. In India we have a pretty stable domestic traffic, it will pick up as people will want to move.

Q: But you had earlier said it could resume by August?

A: **I was asked if you will be able to start international civil aviation by August or September, I had said we could do that even earlier. What does that mean? We have two months to go. We are already scaling up the number of people we are bringing back through Vande Bharat Mission.** Our idea was to bring those people back who were genuinely stranded and distressed. But many of the people coming back are not stranded in the manner in which we originally envisaged when the scheme was announced.

Q: How much is your estimate of the total debt in the aviation sector?

A: **You can only do a damage assessment when the resumption has taken place because the damage is on a continuing basis.**

Q: Do you see any Indian airline closing down?

A: **I hope not but they are under stress. I am not going to get involved in that but there are two issues involved. As a government, we have to be acutely cautious and mindful of all that needs to be done on the health factor and make sure people are safe and that is paramount, but equally we also have to be conscious about what is happening to the economy. It's been two months since airports and airlines have not had any revenue, even parked aircraft on ground also cost money. And even if you don't have 100% flights running, you can at least have some cost being recovered.**

Q: When can we expect a financial bailout of the sector?

A: First of all if financial bailouts were taking place why would so many global airlines have gone bust?... It is a difficult situation. We have given a large number of measures to mitigate their stress. But I am not sure that the system as it is structured right now is geared to giving any bailout. Even the media sector is facing a lot of financial stress, many newspapers are going to go and channels are also facing problems. Is the government going to give a bailout? I can be polite and say, yes press is

very important but I don't see that happening. **The business model of airlines is particularly precarious. But the government can't give billion dollar bailouts. It doesn't happen for any sector in India. We will support their demands on Aviation Turbine Fuel taxation, that will get rationalized among other measures but we can't bailout an individual. That will mean we are giving taxpayers' money to bail out an individual business.**

Q: What happens to the Air India divestment plan?

A: It is on. **Air India has to be divested, there is absolutely no question on that. At this stage, to keep anything going by way of subsidy is almost impossible to justify.**

Q: Will we see further **easing of restrictions after May 31?**

A: **One hundred per cent.** I am speaking in my personal capacity, of course.

Q: What is the exit strategy from the lockdown going forward?

A: Mr Rahul Gandhi says lockdown has been a failure. Let us look at the situation, you had two months of lockdown, at the very least the lockdown has succeeded in keeping the numbers at a very low level. The mortality rate today is 2.7%. It has come down from 3%, total number of cases, my figure may not be exact, at 150,000 and around 70,000 recovered. But the lockdown achieved another significant objective—it kept the numbers low and it gave us time to build the health infrastructure. We were able to go from complete import of PPEs to a massive domestic production, where today we are one of the largest producers of PPEs in the world.

Reviving the economy, agriculture sector, opening factories, starting construction etc, that is the exit strategy.

Q: So, you're saying **the main idea of the lockdown was to get time to prepare the medical infrastructure, and be prepared for more cases?**

A: When the virus hit us, we were one of the first countries to act fast on it. I cancelled flights from China in a big decision, we stopped flights to the extent possible from other hotspots, we began screening, as our international airports we screened more than 15 lakh people coming in, we evacuated people from outside and finally and most importantly we were able to get a system in

place to prepare our health infrastructure across states. Our figure now looks high but the total number of deaths is very low, about 4,000 or so, those are the number of deaths you have in five days in traffic accidents. The mortality rate is 2.7% whereas for SARS it was 17%. You have to learn to live with the virus.

Mr Gandhi said lockdown was a failure, what is plan B? **Lockdown has not been a failure, it has enabled us to control the numbers and build your infrastructure and to prepare for the exit strategy.**

You have to, in any system, take precaution, which we did in a timely manner and succeeded in controlling the numbers. Being permanently in lockdown is not a solution, you have to prepare an exit strategy. Mobility is an essential part of the exit strategy. **When you are in lockdown, the economic activity takes a severe beating and you have to revive that. The strategy is to open up the supply chain and start operation of essential goods and services and mobility is very much a part of that.**

The Hindustan 27/05/2020

The Rajasthan government is exploring possibilities in new sectors such as maintenance, repair and overhauling (MRO) of aircraft to boost the state's economy, officials said.

The government has directed the industries department to study possibilities of MRO in the state following Chief Secretary D B Gupta's meeting with various departments on Tuesday to discuss ways to boost the economy and provide employment.

In wake of the Rs 20 lakh crore stimulus package recently announced by the Centre to kick start the economy amid the Covid-19 pandemic, Rajasthan is keen on new sectors such as MROs.

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman recently said that steps will be taken to make the country a hub for MRO of aircraft.

“Rajasthan has tremendous potential in this area. We have the required infrastructure with 19 state owned airstrips,” said Kesari Singh, Director Aviation department.

A senior official, who participated in the meeting on anonymity, said the meeting focused on how economy and employment can be boosted and in relation to aviation, it was exploring MROs and privatisation of airports.

He said Rajasthan has 32 air strips, 19 of which are state-owned, and rest is of air force and private.

The state is coming out with a new aviation policy, which will cover MROs and aviation academy too. “Currently, there are around 4-5 MROs operational in India (Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bangalore) but still aircraft are going to other countries such as Dubai, Singapore, France etc. Growth in aviation sector necessitates the development of adequate MRO facilities for aircraft. The state can facilitate and incentivise the proposal for setting up new MRO centres,” he said.

Around 60-70 flights operate daily from Rajasthan and if MRO is available then aircraft do not have to fly out and spend large sums. The MRO will not only generate employment but help in providing training to students of aeronautic engineering, he said.

The official said the state government in recent years has worked on developing airstrips in the state and almost all are capable of handling big planes. “Jhalawar airport is bigger than Jaipur, and there big planes such as Airbus can land. Earlier, there were discussions to develop MRO at Jhalawar. On the same lines, now dialogues could be held with stakeholders such as Airbus and Boeing,” he said.

The Hindustan 27/05/2020

Even as most states have strict quarantine and testing norms for passengers arriving by domestic flights, some like Delhi, Goa, etc had comparatively easier standard operating procedures (SOPs). But now with some passengers testing positive for coronavirus upon arrival, a further clampdown of stance by the states on free movement of air passengers could be on the cards. Goa has already moved to compulsorily test all arriving passengers, unless they were able to produce a negative test-certificate.

As of early Thursday, as many as four passengers, at least two of which were asymptomatic, had tested positive upon arrival. All four of these travelled on the first day of resumption of flight operations. Tuesday, India's largest airline **IndiGo** reported a 24-year old person on its Monday flight from **Chennai to Coimbatore** tested positive. Another passenger, a 50-year old, on board an **Alliance Air flight from Delhi to Ludhiana** was also found positive on Tuesday. On Wednesday, two passengers who flew to **Guwahati from Ahmedabad on SpiceJet** flights also reported positive for the virus upon arrival.

In SpiceJet's case, red-flags are also being raised at the fact that since one of the passengers was flying from Ahmedabad to Guwahati via Delhi, the passenger should have been tested at Delhi itself but wasn't since there is no mandatory testing for those arriving at the Delhi airport.

Since it opened its airport to domestic passengers, the Goa government has changed its standard operating procedures twice. Earlier it had given three options — either get a Covid negative test certificate issued within 48 hours prior to the date of arrival by a lab authorised by ICMR or get test done at the airport for Rs 2000 and wait for results, or choose home quarantine. With the number of cases showing an increase, the Government has now removed the option of home quarantine with **everyone having to undergo compulsory testing if they didn't have a Covid-19 negative test certificate.** Goa so far has 68 active cases of which 31 are active.

Even as the Centre announced the restarting of domestic flight operations with a two-day notice, it failed to extensively consult with the states. Hours before the recommencement of domestic flights, airlines were informed of the demands of certain states to operate curtailed schedules that led to cancellation of flights on the first day itself.

28/05/20 Pranav Mukul/Indian Express

New Delhi: **In a great news for air passengers, India's largest carrier in terms of market share IndiGo and AirAsia India have started refunding passengers for tickets that were booked on flights, which the airline had to cancel due to one reason or the other.**

However, there is no clarity on the procedure or time to be taken to redeem credit shells issued to passengers, who were booked on fights that were cancelled during the lockdown announced by the

government to contain the spread of virus.

“All passengers – booked on AirAsia and IndiGo - who want refund instead of credit shell would be refunded and we have started refunding money to customers in their bank account, as these airlines have also started refunding us,” said Nishat Pitti, CEO & co-founder at Easemytrip.com.

“According to me, it will boost trust factor among customers to book future tickets which are generally lower priced,” added Pitti.

Passengers of all other airlines, however, will have to wait till these airlines start refunding. But with market leader IndiGo starting the refund process, other airlines may follow soon.

Airline sources said that they have started refunding of tickets but did not commit anything on the credit shells issued earlier.

28/05/20 Mihir Mishra/Economic Times

MUMBAI: With homebound students, young professionals, small-time businessmen and workers accounting for most travellers, airlines have managed to operate flights at about 50% occupancy rates, although industry insiders say demand will plunge once the spate of essential travel is over.

Civil aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri wrote on microblogging platform Twitter that airlines ferried 30,136 passengers on 367 flights till 5 pm on Thursday.

This means airlines are operating with only 82 passengers on average per flight. Most aircraft in India have 180 seats.

The number Puri cited for previous days also threw up similar occupancy numbers.

Load factors for low fare carrier IndiGo, which carries nearly half of India’s domestic passengers, was below 50%, said an IndiGo executive.

Majority of the travel is from metros to non-metros, primarily cities in the east and northeast like Patna and Guwahati. Those routes are seeing 60% loads or slightly higher. Flights to metros are barely filling more than 40%,” said a senior airline executive on condition of anonymity.

The average loads are closer to 40% for full-service carriers such as Vistara and are coming down for low cost carriers as well.

AirAsia India filled up 51% of its flights on average on Wednesday, down from 55% on Tuesday.

Vistara and AirAsia India did not respond to emails.

As the government suspended flights beginning March 25 as part of a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 virus outbreak, airlines have been forced into drastic cost-cutting measures, such as slashing salaries and terminating employee contracts. Globally, some airlines have already gone bankrupt.

It has not been easy on flyers either.

Many have been forced to shell out more for travel and deal with unexpected cancellations by airlines.

Sindhiya Poddar, a doctor from Delhi, paid Rs 10,700 for an IndiGo flight to her hometown in Guwahati.

Yash Chansoria, a young advertising agency executive, faced ticket cancellations twice in the course of a day before he finally booked a ticket for Mumbai-Delhi on Vistara and an IndiGo flight for Delhi-Amritsar. The two tickets cost more than Rs 10,000.

Although the government has capped ticket prices for the next two weeks, flyers are still finding it expensive.

Yash Chansoria, a young advertising agency executive, faced ticket cancellations twice in the course of a day before he finally booked a ticket for Mumbai-Delhi on Vistara and an IndiGo flight for Delhi-Amritsar. The two tickets cost more than Rs 10,000.

Although the government has capped ticket prices for the next two weeks, flyers are still finding it expensive.

Swapan Singh Gehlot, a mushroom farmer from Delhi, sent 10 of his workers to Patna, paying for their tickets on an IndiGo flight, with each ticket costing Rs 6,800. Gehlot opted for flights after he realised that trains would only be available after June 15.

Sonu Mulla, a labourer in Mumbai bought tickets for himself and friends on a flight to Kolkata, only to realise that it had been cancelled. IndiGo, later, booked Mulla on another flight.

“I first paid Rs 30,000 for my family and two friends. The ticket price for the latest flight is Rs 27,000. Will I get the remainder back?” – he asked

Sitangshu Chakraborty, a retired banker who returned to Silchar, Assam from Delhi on a SpiceJetNSE 4.77 % flight said social distancing norms were thrown to the winds once they landed as passengers jostled for space in small shuttles and no one helped even senior citizens pick up bags.

Instances of flyers testing positive for the Covid-19 virus are also likely to affect demand.

A total of at least 15 passengers have been found positive on flights. IndiGo confirmed 12 cases on four flights since Monday. SpiceJet on Wednesday confirmed that two of its flyers had tested positive, while Air India and Air Asia India had one flyer each testing positive. Still others have tested positive a day or two after landing while being under quarantine.

The ETI 28/05/2020

While a large part of the economy is still reeling under the lockdown or struggling to restart, the aviation sector has resumed operations and is slowly adding flights. Aviation minister Hardeep Singh Puri tells Mihir Mishra in an interview that he expects states to follow the rules announced by

the union health ministry on flight operations. He also expects that interest in Air India will increase post Covid-19. Excerpts:

Flight operations began earlier this week but we saw a lot of confusion. In hindsight, do you think it could have been handled better?

First of all, you need to see that the operations started after you have been in a state of complete lockdown for 60 days. **In civil aviation, lifting the lockdown means you have to have all your systems ready. Which means in practice that your airports have to be ready. All your airport systems have to be functioning. Your airlines have to be ready to carry out operations. And most importantly, you must have the state governments, both from the point of departure and arrival, on board.** There is one thing I want to tell you, and I don't think any state government can suggest to the contrary. We were in discussions and are in discussion with them (states) on a daily basis. I think we did very well. We had only one day of uncertainty and dislocation one day. I think it was commendable. It is a great tribute to the team.

But some states say their reservations have not been taken into account?

Look, **when you're coming out of a lockdown and you are going into recommencement of civil aviation, which is one of the critical drivers of growth, you are actually taking a small but important step in the restoration of economic normalcy.** We deal with the concerned minister (in a state) and we deal with the chief minister. If I turn around and say that I am ready, that is only after consultations with states. I would not announce commencement without taking states on board. Look at the case of West Bengal, which was hit by cyclones. We did not start the flights on the same day as other states and flights to the state started today (Thursday). Telangana also started flights a day later than the other states.

Several states have also come up with quarantine requirements, which create an uncertainty for flyers who would like to take a short visit. Are you speaking to states in this regard?

We are constantly speaking to states and some have relaxed their quarantine requirements too ... I fully understand their concerns, when they have to balance their internal health requirements and work towards opening up their economy. We would like the states to follow the guidelines issued by the union health ministry on the issue. (Guidelines require passengers to follow social distancing and allow home quarantine for asymptomatic passengers. Symptomatic passengers will have the option of isolating themselves at home or at a government-certified centre. The interview took place before Karnataka announced restriction on the number of flights from five states)

Are you satisfied with the first few days of operations? Do you expect it will continue and will be sustainable?

Airlines operated 460 departures by midnight on Wednesday and carried 34,226 passengers and those number are set to increase further today (Thursday), as flight connections to West Bengal also started. Some positive cases were detected in a few flights and questions are being raised about safety. Let me tell you, airflow in airplanes are designed in a way that the chances of the spread of virus are the least. I say that these Covid-positive passengers were detected because we have the right systems in place and they are functioning efficiently.

Do you see the Covid-19 situation impacting the government's plans to divest a stake in Air India?

I would not like to talk much on Air India, as the process is currently under way. We have only delayed the process by two months. And we have to slow the process ... I think the AI divestment will

become a more attractive proposition after this, because they have access and routes.

Are you satisfied with the operations of Vande Bharat flights?

In the first week, we brought back about 64 flights and about 13,000 people. In the second one, we have doubled it, you know, we have taken a total of 30,000 or so (people back). In the next phase up to 16 June, we will be bringing back many more than that — in the range of 50,000 Indians.

The ETI 29/05/2020

NEW DELHI: A total of 460 domestic flights, carrying 34,336 passengers, were operated on Wednesday, Civil Aviation Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said on Thursday. Domestic flight operations resumed in India on Monday after a gap of two months. A total 428 and 445 domestic services were operated in the country on Monday and Tuesday, respectively.

"India is flying high. Domestic operation figures for May 27, 2020 (till 23.59 hrs): Departures 460 with 34,336 passengers handled. Arrivals 464 with 33,525 passengers handled," Puri said on Twitter.

If a flight takes off before midnight and lands in another airport after midnight, its departure and arrival are counted on different days, leading to a seeming mismatch in the figures of a particular day.

International passenger flights continue to remain suspended in the country. All scheduled domestic passenger services were suspended in India from March 25 to May 24 due to restrictions in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Airports in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana and Tamil Nadu have been allowed to handle a restricted number of daily flights as these states do not want a huge influx of flyers amid the rising number of COVID-19 cases.

The ETI 28/05/2020

