

Revue de presse du 1^{er} au 11 avril 2019

Chennai: Customs officials at Anna International Airport here detected two cases of gold smuggling in the last two days and recovered 954 grams of gold worth at Rs. 31.26 lakh.

Based on specific information, customs officers intercepted Mohammed Affan, 40, of Bhatkal in Karnataka who arrived here from Dubai on Monday morning in an Air India flight. When he was searched, six bundles of rubbery spread wrapped with black adhesive tape was found concealed in his underwear.

After extraction by heat treatment, 690 grams of gold of 24 K purity, worth at Rs 22.61 lakh, was recovered.

On Saturday, customs officers intercepted Ahmad Anas, 26, of Madurai, who arrived here from Colombo in an Sri Lankan Airlines flight. When he was searched, gold in rubbery form, which was concealed in his rectum, was recovered.

On extraction, 264 gram of gold of 24 K purity, worth Rs 8.65 lakh, was recovered.

01/04/19 Sidharth Prabhakar/Times of India

New Delhi: A Sudanese national was apprehended at the Delhi airport on Sunday for allegedly attempting to smuggle 29 kg of white sandalwood pieces, officials said. The accused, A A Rahman Ali Elzain, was intercepted by the CISF when he arrived at the Indira Gandhi International Airport around 7.30am.

The **white sandalwood**, which is **banned for export**, was seized from Elzain. The passenger was supposed to take a flight to Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia.

01/04/19 PTI/Times of India

Kandhar: Intelligence forces have arrested four persons over allegedly attempting to smuggle narcotics in their stomachs to India at the airport in southern Kandahar province.

In a statement, the governor's house said the four persons, who wanted to smuggle heroin to India, were arrested by intelligence operatives.

It said the four persons, who had in total swallowed **180 capsules of heroin**, were being interrogated by intelligence officials.

31/03/19 MENAFN

The Airports Authority of India (AAI) celebrated its 24th Annual Day with an award and dinner night on March 31. The event was organized at the AAI Officer's club with an aim to acknowledge the winners of ACI-ASQ Awards 2018.

The grand evening started with a magnanimous welcome dance which left the audience mesmerized. This was followed by the award distribution ceremony after which AAI Chairman Guruprasad Mohapatra addressed the gathering.

Speaking to those present on the occasion, Mohapatra congratulated the staff of AAI for their hard work and dedication while mentioning the challenges faced by the aviation sector.

A series of awards were conferred to various airports and their in-charges. **The best airport by size and region was given to Bhubaneshwar, Chandigarh and Indore Airports. Kolkata airport bagged the first position in the Swachh Bharat category. There was also another special award which was received by the Mumbai ATC and team for carrying out excellent work during the crisis period due**

to the air space closure by Pakistan.

01/04/19 ANI/Business Standard

New Delhi: Amid high competition, many airline companies have announced discount offers on flight tickets and introduced new routes as well. Companies like GoAir, Jet Airways, IndiGo, Vistara and Air India have come up with many such offers.

GoAir has offered discounts on flight tickets with a starting all-inclusive price of Rs 1,415. The bookings under this offer can be done till April 1, 2019. According to its website, the travel period is from April 1 to April 30, 2019. The lowest price of Rs 1,415 is valid from Bengaluru to Kannur route. According to Jet Airways official website, the airline is offering all-inclusive fares starting Rs 1,165. Along with this, the company is also offering an additional 10 per cent off on four or more guests per booking. This 10 per cent discount can be availed on flight tickets booked through the company's website and mobile application.

According to Jet Airways official website, the airline is offering all-inclusive fares starting Rs 1,165. Along with this, the company is also offering an additional 10 per cent off on four or more guests per booking. This 10 per cent discount can be availed on flight tickets booked through the company's website and mobile application.

State-owned Air India is going to commence operations from the newly-launched Kannur airport in Kerala with a direct flight from the national capital effective April 2. According to the company, the flight will be operated five days a week except on Mondays and Thursdays. It will deploy a CFM-engine powered Airbus A320Neo plane to service the new route.

The company has come up with cashback benefits. According to the website, "CashBack offers can be availed using digibank by DBS Debit Card on the website or app and get Rs 300 as cashback. In case you don't have a digibank account, no worries, simply open a digibank savings account by clicking here and enjoy an additional Rs 500 cashback." This can be availed only on every Wednesday and Sunday till May 31, 2019.

According to Vistara website, the company has announced Dibrugarh as its 24th destination. From April 3, 2019, Vistara will connect Dibrugarh with Bagdogra with daily direct flights between the two cities, and also connect Dibrugarh with Delhi with convenient same aircraft one-stop flight via Bagdogra at a starting all-inclusive fare of Rs. 2,399.

01/04/19 ETNowNews.com

Chennai: Airports Authority of India (AAI) is likely to open the unused international arrival hall for international departures in the first week of April.

The terminal has not been in use since 2013, when the new steel and glass terminals were commissioned as part of the airport expansion work. As it could not be opened for arrival, AAI decided to convert it into a departure terminal early last year and also held meetings with airlines, customs, immigration, ground handling firm and other stakeholders.

A senior AAI official said that the terminal was ready for commissioning. The immigration counters are ready and baggage handling facility is in place. One more meeting will be held with the airlines in the coming week to decide the flights to be handled from the terminal.

"In the first week of April, we may be able to open the terminal for departures. This will help decongest the departure terminal and help the airport to add more flights," he added. Chennai airport has received a few requests from airlines like Al Nippon and Air Italy for starting new flights. The airport will be able to handle around eight million international passengers a year as against the

current 4 million when the new facility is opened for departures.

01/04/19 Times of India

Indian budget airlines Indigo and GoAir may soon start direct flights to Saudi cities Jeddah and Dammam respectively from Kannur International Airport.

This is even as Saudi Arabian Airlines may have to wait longer to operate flights to the newly opened airport in Kerala, despite India deciding last month to hike bilateral airline seat capacities between Indian and Saudi Arabia.

India has allowed Saudi Arabia a 40 percent increase in airline seat quota from this month under the bilateral rights, following the recent high profile visit of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to India.

According to senior authorities at Kannur International Airport, despite the increase in airline seat quota, Saudia will be able to commence operations to the airport only when India's aviation regulator DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation) includes Kannur airport in the list of airports under the bilateral aviation services pact with the Saudi kingdom.

Kannur International Airport, being a new airport, does not figure in India's existing bilateral air services pact with various countries and therefore first need to be made part of the list of airports in India before any foreign airline from countries which fall under bilateral air rights can start operating to the airport.

01/04/19 James Mathew/Arabian Business

New Delhi: Brace yourself for steep spot airfares this summer holiday season. Oil marketing companies have increased jet fuel prices by 1% for April. The hike comes at a time when the peak summer travel season is beginning amid sharp reduction in domestic airlines' capacity due to grounding of large number of aircraft for different reasons.

After the 1% hike in aviation turbine fuel (ATF), a kilo litre (KL or 1,000 litres) will cost Rs 63,472.22 and Rs 63,447.54 in Delhi and Mumbai, respectively. Jet fuel prices had touched four-year high last November (Rs 76,378.8 per kl in Delhi for instance) and had been falling since then due to cooling of crude. But after February, they have been rising again.

The problem aggravated as Jet Airways lessors started grounding planes due to non-payment of rentals. Jet currently operates about 35 planes, out of its fleet of 119. The airline hopes to be operating 75 planes by end of this month if lessors agree.

The aviation ministry and DGCA have called several meetings with airlines to discuss the issue of high spot fares.

01/04/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Kochi: Crisis-hit national carrier Jet Airways may not have Kochi in its global flight map anymore as the only two remaining international services from Cochin International Airport Ltd (Cial) have been cancelled.

The airline has informed Cial authorities that services to Dammam and Doha will not be there in Cial's summer schedule 2019, which began on Sunday. Though the airline has not announced the cancellation of its domestic services from Kochi, sources said that all the four services stand suspended due to unavailability of aircraft.

"As of now, Jet's domestic services from Cial are limited to one Delhi flight and three flights to Mumbai. But these flights were not active most times in the winter schedule. In fact, hardly any services were there for over the past one-and-a-half month. There is less chance for these services to

be resumed during the summer schedule as there are not enough aircraft. Most of the aircraft in Jet's fleet are grounded by the lessors due to non-payment of lease rentals. A confirmation on the revival is likely to be given by next week," said the source.

After its lay-off spree in December, Jet has around 40 people working as ground handling, cargo and office staffs at Cial. Sources said that the salary payment of employees up to the designation of general manager has not been affected so far, but most employees are unsure of the job security. Meanwhile, Cial spokesperson said that Jet Airways has not given any intimation about cancellation of its domestic services.

01/04/19 Times of India

An Indigo airlines pilot is going viral on social media after he spectacularly captured the launch of a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) from INSIDE the plane's cockpit on April 1.

While it may appear to be an April Fools' Day prank to many, Captain Karun Karumbaya did indeed spot the launch of the EMISAT satellite from a distance of 50 nautical miles from Sriharikota, the site of the launch.

In the 44-second clip, the pilot can be heard announcing to the passengers "Ladies and gentlemen, on the right look outside the window you can see the PSLV launch. It is a rocket taking off". He went on to say "Beauty yaar! Wow! That's amazing," as the launch proceeds.

The video has since been going viral on social media. Some even compared the impressive feat to something out of the Hollywood's 2014 space drama "Interstellar".

The EMISAT satellite was launched along with 28 nano satellites of global customers from Sriharikota, a mission which would witness the agency placing payloads in three orbits and conducting space experiments for the first time. The EMISAT satellite is aimed at electromagnetic measurement. ISRO too posted pictures of the successful launch.

01/04/19 News 18.com

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), which has faced concerted criticism over the past year from both the defence ministry and the Indian Air Force (IAF), has announced a record turnover of over Rs 19,400 crore (provisional and unaudited) for the financial year that ended March 31.

This amounts to 6 per cent revenue growth over the previous year's turnover of Rs 18,284 crore.

That comfortably beat the revenue growth of 3.8 per cent during 2017-18.

However, the IAF still owes HAL about Rs 20,000 crore in unpaid dues for aircraft delivered and overhauled and for milestone payments due, Business Standard has learnt.

In January, HAL had to take a bank loan of Rs 781 crore to pay salaries to its 29,000 employees.

At the time, HAL Chairman R Madhavan had told Business Standard: "The IAF owes HAL money for aircraft, helicopters and services that we have already delivered. Current dues are at Rs 15,700 crore and will rise to Rs 20,000 crore by March 31." Madhavan's projection has turned out to be accurate.

On Monday, a HAL statement said: "In FY18-19, HAL has produced 41 new aircraft/helicopters and 98 new engines and has carried out overhaul of 213 aircraft/helicopters and 540 engines."

HAL sources say they built 11 Sukhoi-30MKI and seven Tejas fighters in the year just gone by, as well as five Dornier-228 aircraft, three Cheetal light helicopters and 15 Dhruv advanced light helicopters, totalling 41 aircraft.

In addition, it has overhauled 15 Sukhoi-30MKI (up from 11 the previous year) and several Mirage 2000 and Jaguar fighters, Kiran trainers and a large number of helicopters.

Amongst the research and development (R&D) projects under way in HAL are the Tejas Mark 1A

fighter. HAL is also claiming a breakthrough with the HTT-40 basic trainer aircraft, which it expects to certify this year.

“HAL’s R&D projects are on track and are tailor made for the requirement of the armed forces,” the company said on Monday.

HAL said it “expects continued ‘excellent’ MoU rating for the FY18-19 from government of India for meeting all the relevant parameters related to its performance.”

Senior HAL executives say that more than an ‘excellent’ rating, the company requires cash to meet its monthly running expenditure of Rs 1,300-1,400 crore.

01/04/19 Prime Time Media

Even though when Boeing 737 Max was asked to be banned, it was private carrier SpiceJet who most feared will suffer heavily. Apart from this, it was already in crises Jet Airways that was expected to take a massive hit from the aircraft grounding. With this, Indigo which has continued to hold its lead in the Indian aviation sector in terms of market share was seen to be the most beneficial. However, looks like tables have turned, and **there is a new leader in aviation town. And sadly, it is not Indigo.** Guess what! **SpiceJet has outrun Indigo both in terms of PAX growth and in capacity. Overall, the industry’s passenger load factor has tumbled marginally, due to lower PLF at Indigo (-3.6% YoY) and SJET (-2.3% YoY), which together accounted for over 100% of incremental capacity addition in February.**

However, in PAX growth, SpiceJet has overtaken Indigo on domestic growth of 17% compared to latter’s 14.9% growth in February 2019 month. On the other hand, Jet Airways suffered from its PAX falling 28.2% YoY in February, although PLF remained relatively flat at 89% due to capacity cutbacks. Jal Irani and Vijayant Gupta analysts at Edelweiss Securities said, **“We expect RASKs to surge at Indigo and SJET as the spike in airfares (up 15% YoY according to Yatra.com CEO) would easily offset the slight decline in PLFs.”**

On Indigo, the duo said, **“Indigo continues to log stellar outperformance with PAX growth of over 50% in February.** The airline made an international foray at an opportune time with strong growth thereof offsetting the slowdown in domestic PAX growth. Over the past four years, Indigo’s international market share more than doubled to 7.9% by Q3FY19. With international PAX growth estimated to be 5–10% during the month, we expect continued – and notable – gains in market share for Indigo. Indigo primarily operates on the price-sensitive ME/SE Asia routes, having gained significant share from Jet and Emirates.”

01/04/19 ZeeBiz.com

National carrier Air India will start services between New Delhi, Kannur and Calicut from Tuesday, the authorities at Kannur International Airport announced. Barring Mondays and Thursdays, the services will be available on all days.

Flight number AI 425 will depart from New Delhi (DEL) at 09:05 am and will arrive in Kannur (CNN) at 12:15 pm. The aircraft will then depart for Calicut (CCJ) at 01:00 pm and arrive at 1:30 pm.

For the return journey, AI 426 will depart from CCJ at 02:15 pm and arrive in CNN at 02:45 pm. It will leave for DEL at 03:30 pm and arrive at 06:45 pm.

AI 426 will also connect travellers through Air India’s hub in Delhi to various destinations in the US, UK, Europe and far east. Passengers can directly check-in their baggage for connecting flights from the national capital, the airline confirmed.

01/04/19 Indian Express

Jet Airways pilots on Sunday deferred their April 1 strike plan by another two weeks, hoping that their salary dues would be cleared by then.

At separate open houses in Mumbai and Delhi conducted by their union, the National Aviators Guild (NAG), members decided against going on strike.

Their decision came hours after the airline credited 87.5% of pending dues of their December salaries. "Pilots have decided that time be given to the new interim management till April 14 to clear salary dues," a communication sent to the 1,100-odd NAG members said.

The letter said, "The collective [strike] call is hence deferred to April 15."

Senior pilots said most of the NAG members were not in favour of going on strike. "They are all young and don't want aircraft to be on the ground but keep flying. In fact many of them have been asking to be rostered for duty on the few flights that continue to be in operation," an official said.

Officials informed that though former chairman Naresh Goyal had announced his stepping down on March 25, he actually ceased to hold the position only from March 29. "It was on March 29, that the State Bank of India (SBI) received a letter to this effect in the format it had sought. This had caused the delay, but the moment it happened, SBI released funds that were used to clear pending dues," a senior official said. Among the consortium of banks, only SBI has released funds, he added.

31/04/19 Aditya Anand/The Hindu

The government last week seems to have nudged public sector banks (PSBs) to bail out the bankrupt Jet Airways yet again. Was this a good idea? No, but there was no alternative either.

Jet Airways needed a quick solution to get the planes back in service. Air travel is no longer restricted to the affluent; it is now an important component of public transport. A giant airline which, for a while, was India's biggest domestic carrier, going belly-up would mean punishing ordinary citizens for the follies of banks and the government. People need to travel for work or pleasure and many had done bookings for the summer holidays months in advance.

Also, in a tightly regulated sector that restricts open competition and limits the number of players, the government has a responsibility to ensure adequate air transport in a fast-growing economy like ours. Also, **finding a buyer is always easier when the airline is in operation because its staff, pilots and aircraft are the main assets.**

Let's not forget that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) would also have been affected in a big way during election time. While top leaders may charter flights or heli-drop to their rallies, large teams of party workers have to zip around on commercial flights to arrange their mega-rallies. So, **a bailout of this sort wouldn't have happened without political support.** But is this the best that the bankers could have done? Let's take a look at the deal.

The lenders did well to force Jet Airways to convert a debt of one rupee into 11.4 crore shares giving them a 50.5% stake in the capital; but a lot of other issues remain unclear. Banks will provide fresh funds of Rs 1,500 crore to restore some normalcy in the airline's operations. This is supposed to be against 'security of assets'; but this is mainly the value of the 50.5% equity that the lenders have extracted. **If no buyer materialises in two months, then the share price, which shot up after the bailout, will fizzle out equally fast and lenders will be left with worthless paper and the prospect of liquidation.**

A corporate announcement says that the money will be used to clear dues owed to vendors, creditors, lessors, pay salaries to Jet's 22,000 employees and get more aircraft off the ground again. A committee of experts, along with management consultants and an audit firm, will handle the revival of the airline and, probably, find a buyer.

The official announcement says that founder Naresh Goyal and his wife Anita will step down from the board of directors but omits many important details that were revealed in media interviews by

Rajnish Kumar, chairman of the State Bank of India (SBI).

01/04/19 Sucheta Dalal/Wire

New Delhi: Two men have been arrested by Customs officials at the Delhi airport for allegedly trying to smuggle out foreign currencies worth Rs 53 lakh.

While one of the accused was intercepted when he was proceeding to depart to Bangkok, another person was stopped for examination when he was completing formalities to leave for Mumbai, a statement issued March 27 by the Customs department said.

Detailed examination of their baggage resulted in the recovery of 5,500 euros, 3,000 pounds, 20,00,000 Japanese yen, \$49,400, 710 Thai baht and Rs 33,000 — equivalent to Rs 53.2 lakh, it said.

Preliminary investigation has revealed that the passenger travelling to Bangkok was given the bag containing the foreign currencies by the other inside a washroom at the international departure area of the airport, the statement said.

02/04/19 India Post

Soothing music is likely to reverberate in the city airport from this month. A tender has been floated for playing music at the facility to de-stress flyers. A source said the Airports Authority of India (AAI) had expressed a desire to introduce music in airports to provide passengers an engaging environment.

“Proper specifications have been made. The songs to be pre-recorded will veer around local cultural heritage, monuments and tourist places. They will be played 8-10 times a day at the airport terminal building. A 30-day content backup will be maintained for uninterrupted play. On/off-location radio jockeys can be deployed as per the feasibility. Also, the coverage of special AAI-related events and events of national importance at the airport will be done,” an airport official said. “Music is a way to lighten the mood of people. In some cases, passengers become anxious. Music can de-stress the atmosphere,” the official pointed out.

Pune airport was declared as a silent facility from January 10 last year.

02/04/19 Joy Sengupta/Ties of India

Indian drone users will have to wait longer to fly legally compliant drones as the government is yet to iron out several operational issues related to testing, certification, and quality control. With the civil aviation regulator missing its April 1 deadline for launching its Digital Sky platform for permitting drones to fly, manufacturers are seeking provisional approvals from authorities to begin operations.

India’s civilian drone law came into effect on December 1, ending a four-year ban on using drones that weigh more than two kilograms. The law lays down the obligations of operators, pilots and manufacturers for the safe operation of drones in Indian airspace. A month later, the civil aviation ministry unveiled its Drone Policy 2.0, which paves the way for wider applications of drones even beyond an operator’s visual line of sight.

The government even created Digital Sky as a single-window online platform for drone companies to apply for permissions and get instant approvals for flight operations, management and registration. This would make operations easy for enterprises running large fleets of drones for applications such as air surveys and food-delivery.

In fact, three days after the Directorate General of Civil Aviation green-flagged the use of drones in December, food-delivery platform Zomato announced its acquisition of drone startup TechEagle

Innovations to enable a hub-to-hub food-delivery network.

While the government's initiatives are likely to attract more investments into India's drone sector, operational challenges around the proposed regulations continue to hold back an industry that's estimated to grow to \$885.7 million in size by 2021.

02/04/19 Niles Christopher/Factor Daily

ATF now costs Rs 63,472.22 per kilolitre in Delhi, up Rs 677 (over 1 per cent) from Rs 62,795 per kl last month, according to the notification by the Indian Oil Corporation. A similar hike in the prices was seen in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai.

"The 1 per cent increase in ATF price is expected to affect air travel especially ahead of the peak travel season," said Sharat Dhall, COO (B2C), Yatra.com.

"The prices may fluctuate in short to medium term. But with capacity expansion underway there might be stabilisation as we head further into the travel season," Dhall said.

The prices are revised on the first day of every month.

Aloke Bajpai, CEO and Co-founder, Ixigo, said, **"With peak summer travel season round the corner and an ongoing capacity crunch due to grounding of planes, hike in ATF can lead to an increase in last-minute fares and aggravate the increasing airfare situation seen since February."**

"But average domestic fares might normalise and even dip 15-20 per cent if attempts to get some grounded planes operational come through," Bajpai added.

The aviation sector is already seeing flared-up fares due to capacity constraints caused by reasons like shortage of aircraft in the wake of grounding of Boeing MAX 737 globally over safety concerns and Jet Airways grounding several flights due to non-payment of dues.

02/04/19 IANS/News Minute

Pune: The airport authorities said Jet Airways would have to re-apply for its slots if the airline failed to resume its flights by April-end.

"At present, Jet Airways is using just three of its slots at the Pune airport and the rest are empty because its aircraft are not flying. Only the airline can give a pinpoint information on when all the flights will resume, but we expect them to be back in business by the end of April. The slots will be with the airline till then. If the airline cannot resume services by April-end, it will have to re-apply for the slots," an airport official told TOI.

The official said the **slots belonging to Jet Airways would be passed on to other airlines in May if things remained unchanged.** "The empty slots can be used by other airlines for flight operations. The airline (Jet) has a month with it and the airport will not be transferring the slots to others during this period," he said.

If one goes through the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)'s summer schedule effective from March 31 to October 26, the to-and-fro flights of Jet Airways stand at 15 and its entire schedule has been approved only till April 25. **All the 15 flights listed in the summer schedule (until April 25) are to/from Delhi, Mumbai and Indore.**

02/04/19 Joy Sengupta/Times of India

Turbo Megha Airways, which operates a regional carrier under brand name TruJet, is banking on subsidised travel scheme – Udan – to grow its domestic presence. The Hyderabad-based airline has started operations on half of its 48 routes won under the Udan bidding. LSN Murty, CEO, TruJet, shares the carrier's plan for 2019 with FEs Arun Nayal. Excerpts:

How many planes do you plan to induct in 2019?

We have 5 aircraft at the moment. We are planning to induct 2 to 3 more aircraft this year. These will be ATRs 500 or 600s. One would be coming in June and others in September or October. We were thinking of subleasing ATRs from other carriers till last year but that did not work out. So now we will look for lessors.

What are your plans for 2019?

Our focus this year is to complete Udan commitments, which form 60% of operations. We are operating on all 18 routes from the first round.

We have started operations on round two routes as well. We plan to start Ahmedabad–Kandla route from May 1 and are also linking Kohlapur and Belgaum from July. We want to stabilise operations under Udan in 2019 and then think about expansion to other parts of the country.

How has the performance under Udan been so far?

Udan routes are working out very well for us. **Our average passenger load factor on Udan routes has been around 70%.** Routes like Hyderabad-Nanded-Mumbai are drawing good response from passengers. We are expecting the passenger count to increase with greater awareness for Udan flights.

How are you placed in terms of availability of pilots?

Our only concern is availability of pilots. We don't have many trained local pilots in the industry. There are no Indian commanders available for ATR fleet. We rely heavily on expat commanders for flight operations.

At present, TruJet has 20 expat commanders out of overall 30-odd pilots. It becomes a cost issue as well due to higher payout to expats. We are looking to train in-house pilots to reduce dependence on foreigners.

02/04/19 Arun Noyal/Financial Express

Two of the three full-service carriers are in significant financial distress and there is increasing pressure on the low-cost airlines. Collectively, the airline industry will register a loss in the range of \$1.5– 1.7 billion dollars for 2018-19. There has been much debate about structural changes but these are yet to happen. In such a situation, leading an airline in India requires unique capabilities. Some of these are highlighted below:

The largest operational expense item for any airline is aviation turbine fuel (ATF). **For Indian carriers, ATF constitutes 35-40 percent of an airline cost base.** Unfortunately, the pricing of ATF in India is based on import parity rather than on the basis of actual cost (including refining and marketing). The industry has long demanded that ATF taxation is rationalised but no such move has been initiated yet.

In spite of the goods and service tax (GST) implemented in 2017, ATF continues to be out of its purview, leading to incredibly thin margins of 2-4 percent in the industry. Compare this to putting one's money in fixed deposits, which are yielding 7-8 percent and the gravity of the situation can be gauged.

Hedging via financial instruments is not an option as that requires expertise and carries additional risk. However, there are other aspects of hedging that can be initiated. Specifically, volume discounts from the oil marketing companies; pre-payment commitments towards an even higher discount; leveraging lower tax rates in states towards fuel uplift (known as tankering); efficiency procedures both on the ground and in the air; and creating a cost focussed culture. Other more complex measures include the direct import of fuel, network optimisation.

The goal is not only to minimise cost but also to have a more predictable cash outflow which then can be addressed via tactical interventions.

From 44 million domestic passengers in 2008 to 121 million domestic passengers in 2018, Indian aviation has come a long way. This growth is forecast to continue with India becoming the 3rd largest aviation market by 2030. But to sustain this growth, airport capacity is required. And airport expansion is lagging far behind.

Airport capacity now poses an imminent threat to Indian airlines. The country has a total of 449 airports but metro airports continue to be key to aviation traffic with about 61 percent of the domestic traffic and about 73 percent of international traffic still originating from the 6 metro cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Kolkata and Chennai. With the exception of Bengaluru which will see the addition of an additional runway this year, the capacity expansion at other airports lags or is non-existent. Airlines are wanting for peak slots to fly aircraft and for parking infrastructure. Use of dynamic parking on a network basis is not sustainable.

For airlines, this means: **optimising existing slot portfolios towards generating yield premiums from prime-time slots.** Additionally, a re-evaluation and rethink of simply flying unviable routes. Airlines that do not have the required market strength will be forced to pull out of some markets completely or move towards a more connected network to generate traffic. Larger aircraft may also be an option but the challenge is filling these up during non-peak hours, which is not done is a cash-drain (think of filling up 22 percent more capacity with a marginally higher cost base but without an uptick in fare levels).

Above all airlines have to work collaboratively with stakeholders including airports, air traffic control and government to see how more capacity can be delivered from the existing resources.

02/04/19 Satyendra Pandey/CNBC TV18

London: Singapore's Changi Airport has been crowned the world's best aviation hub for the seventh time in a row, while New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport featured at number 59, according to the Skytrax World Airport Awards.

The list has been compiled by the UK-based Skytrax, a consultancy firm which runs an airline and airport review and ranking site, featuring 100 airports, CNN reported.

The prestigious accolade was awarded at the Passenger Terminal Expo 2019 in London March 27. The Skytrax World Airport Awards are voted for by customers in a global airport customer satisfaction survey.

"To be voted the World's Best Airport for the seventh consecutive year is a truly fabulous achievement for Changi Airport, and this award continues to underline the airport's popularity with international air travellers," Edward Plaisted, CEO of Skytrax, said.

Singapore Changi Airport is known for its rooftop swimming pool, two 24-hour movie theaters and shopping spots.

The award came ahead of the much awaited Jewel Changi terminal, in April which will feature the world's tallest indoor waterfall.

The airport also nabbed the award for best airport hotel, thanks to its Crowne Plaza Changi Airport, the leisure facilities of which also got recognised.

At number two on the list is Tokyo International Airport (Haneda), up one place from 2018. This hub also won World's Best Domestic Airport and World's Cleanest Airport.

02/04/19 India Post

Kabul: Airspace restrictions in Pakistan due to simmering tensions with India have caused airfares to spike for Afghans who travel for medical treatment, education and business.

Pakistan closed its airspace in February after a suicide bomber from Pakistan-based militant group

Jaish-e- Mohammed (JeM) attacked a convoy in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Following the attack, both countries carried out aerial bombing missions on each other's soil and their warplanes also fought a dogfight over Kashmir.

The restrictions have forced commercial and passenger flights that connect Afghanistan with India, a major trading partner, to double back west through Iranian airspace and then pass south of Pakistan into India.

The detour extends what is usually a two-and-a-half-hour Kabul-New Delhi flight into a five-hour trip, increasing fuel costs for airlines and fares for passengers.

Many Afghans seek what they see as superior medical care and university education in India.

Pakistan's airspace restrictions come as land-locked Afghanistan has worked in recent years to improve trade links for its fragile economy.

Qasim, 37, a Kabul shopkeeper, travels regularly to India for treatment for diabetes.

The cost of a round-trip flight to New Delhi has doubled to \$700, he said, well outside his means.

"All my medicine has finished and I have to go back to India as soon as possible," he said, adding that some friends had remained in India because they could not afford to return home.

"Can you imagine how difficult it is?"

An official at Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority said on Tuesday that airspace remained partially closed but a decision would be made at 6 p.m. (1300 GMT) about whether to re-open.

02/04/19 Orooj Hakimi/Reuters/Successful Farming

Chennai: Despite inadequate passenger amenities, the city airport has registered a 12.5% growth in passenger traffic this year when compared to the previous year. Chennai ranks third among the metro airports in passenger growth as per Airports Authority of India (AAI) statistics for April 2018 to February 2019 and the same period previous year.

AAI officials said the airport saw a good number of passengers in March and was confident that the growth percentage would be good this financial year when compared to last year. The airport saw 10.2% increase in passenger traffic the previous year. Statistics between April 2018 and February 2019 shows that the airport handled 2,08,24,129 (more than 20 million) passengers as against 1,85,05,152 who travelled in the corresponding period last year. Domestic passenger footfalls at the city airport grew 14.1%. The total figure stands at 1,53,52,637 compared to 1,34,53,024 last year. Though the city's growth is better than that of Mumbai and Delhi, neighbouring Bengaluru airport handled around 30 million passengers during the same period, mostly because of industrial growth in Karnataka.

A senior AAI official said the passenger growth was healthy and additions to the existing facility were being planned taking into account the growth percentage.

"We are upgrading the airport to make it capable of handling 30 million passengers a year. The airport will be able to handle more passengers when the new integrated terminal is ready and ongoing work to build taxiways are completed," he added.

02/04/19 Times of India

Panaji: GMR Goa International Airport Limited (GGIAL) is currently facing a loss of Rs 50 lakh per day due to delay in execution of the Mopa project, the concessionaire has stated in its affidavit before the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court's suspension of the environmental clearance (EC) by the ministry of environment and forest (MoEF) for the international greenfield airport will also delay its scheduled commissioning in September 2020 and incur additional cost for the project.

GGIAL has already spent Rs 230 crore on the construction of the airport's first phase, while the Goa government has spent Rs 240 crore on land acquisition, rehabilitation, road widening, consultancy, and other related aspects.

The indicative capital for phase 1 of the development is Rs 1,900 crore, while the cost of the entire project is likely to be Rs 3,000 crore.

"As the construction of Mopa airport is stopped, the project will have an overrun in cost and time," Goa government's director of civil aviation Suresh Shanbhogue told TOI.

A senior government officer said **14.1% of the project has been completed and manpower, comprising 1,500 persons, has been mobilised at the site together with plant and machinery.**

GGIAL has stated that it has tied up with a consortium of banks and the servicing of loans is linked to project milestones.

As on January 18, the major work that was carried out at Mopa airport, site preparation and earth works including excavation and filling up of runways, taxiways, aprons and parking bays, passenger terminal building (PTB) foundations and column works, and excavation of the foundations for the air traffic control (ATC) building.

01/04/19 Murari Shetye/Times of India

New Delhi: Operating a highly truncated schedule, Jet Airways has now told its Boeing 737 pilots that they may take "long break/sabbatical" without pay up to September. The move comes after Jet sent all its expensive expat pilots on furloughs, or long leaves, without pay last week. Meanwhile, Jet's pilot union on Tuesday wrote to aviation minister Suresh Prabhu requesting the government to ensure the airline pay salary dues of January, February and March with interest.

"We have received requests for extended time off due to changes in operational requirement including leave without pay from some pilots," says a communique titled "intent — invite requests for leave without pay."

"Due to changes in operational requirement, Boeing 737 flight crew will be assigned on a 5 day working and 3 day OFF roster from April 11 to April 26, 2019. Additionally, flight crew seeking a long break/sabbatical between April-September, 2019, may put in their requests to the fleet office for approval," it says.

Jet is yet to pay salary of January, February and March to pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers (AME) and senior management team. The pilots and AMEs had threatened to strike work from April 1. When the airline promised to clear their 87.5% salary that is due of last December, they decided to defer the strike call up to mid-April.

The pilots say if Jet does not clear "substantial" part of their dues and give a clear roadmap for paying the remaining, they may strike work from April 15.

On Monday, Jet's Indian pilots' union, National Aviators' Guild (NAG) wrote to aviation minister Suresh Prabhu saying, "The situation (three month dues) is leading to extreme tension and frustration among our members — hardly an ideal situation in the cockpit." NAG has demanded that Jet must pay salary dues with interest from the time the same were to be paid and when they actually are.

02/04/19 Saurabh Sinha/Times of India

Eyeing India's multi-billion dollar fighter jet market, Boeing has offered to build a 21st century aerospace ecosystem in India for co-developing F/A-18 Super Hornet upgrades as part of the country's advanced medium combat aircraft (AMCA) programme.

Two major American fighter jets manufacturers - **Boeing and Lockheed Martin** - are in the race for the Indian fighter jet market. Lockheed Martin has offered to shift its entire F-16 manufacturing base from US to India.

"What we're talking about is a complete ecosystem of capability – it's building up supply chain, it's building up engineering capacity, technical mechanical capacity. It is bringing the build, not the kit, to India," Marc Allen, president of Boeing International and a member of the Boeing Executive Council, told PTI.

Last month, Allen was named senior vice president of Boeing and president of Embraer Partnership and Group Operations.

Boeing has offered that future F/A-18 Super Hornet upgrades can be co-developed with India, maximising performance, affordability, indigenisation for decades.

The McDonnell Douglas F/A-18 Hornet is a twin-engine, supersonic, all-weather, carrier-capable, multirole combat jet, designed as both a fighter and attack aircraft.

As a result, Allen argued, **the impact will be transformational - building a next gen warfighter in India and a 21st century aerospace ecosystem with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Mahindra along with Boeing industry's partners (GE Aviation, GKN Aero, Northrop Grumman and Raytheon).**

02/04/19 PTI/moneycontrol.com

New Delhi: The luggage allowance for Air India's Mumbai-New York economy passengers has been halved to leave room for extra fuel needed to complete the flight, which has been following a longer route since Pakistan shut down its airspace for commercial flights on 27 February.

Economy passengers flying from Mumbai to New York, or vice versa, aboard Air India will now only be able to carry one piece of luggage weighing 23 kg, down from the earlier allowance of two pieces weighing 23 kg each. This rule, which came into effect Monday, is only applicable to the Mumbai-New York route.

"Due to the ongoing closure of Pakistan airspace, the Mumbai-New York path was obstructed and we needed to carry more fuel... It was becoming difficult for the carrier to deal with the existing payload," Air India spokesperson Praveen Bhatnagar told ThePrint. "Thus, we opted for the one-piece concept."

Pakistan had closed its airspace to commercial airlines on 27 February, the day an incursion by its air force triggered a dogfight with the Indian Air Force (IAF) over the Line of Control. A day before, the IAF had flown into Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to target terror camps of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, which had claimed responsibility for the 14 February Pulwama suicide attack.

02/04/19 Ifrah Mufti/The Print

New Delhi: **India scrambled fighters after radars detected a Pakistani drone near the international border in the Khemkaran sector of Punjab in the early hours of Monday.**

Though Pakistan too scrambled jets in response, there was no airspace violation from either side and tensions quietened down soon after.

With both sides maintaining high operational readiness all along borders, even as they engage in fierce firing duels across the 778-km long LoC in J&K, defence sources said the alarm bells in India's air defence network sounded around 3am on Monday when "a large Pakistani unmanned aerial vehicle" was detected in Khemkaran sector.

The IAF swung into action by scrambling two Sukhoi-30MKI fighters from the Halwara airbase, which led to Pakistan dispatching two F-16s to the border region. **"The Pakistani UAV was picked up by**

both Army units and IAF's mobile observation flights," a source said.

02/04/19 Times of India

Rourkela: The wait for restoration of commercial flight service from the ready to use Rourkela airport run by RSP under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) UDAN continues to lengthen. Blame it on the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and its Airport Authority of India (AAI) for their snail's pace to address technicalities. After resumption of regular flight services from the adjacent VSS airport at Jharsuguda on Sunday, all eyes are now on Rourkela.

Sources in RSP said the successful bidder for RCS for the Rourkela route does not have own aircraft and it is in the process of organising flights operation from May-end. The RSP has met all commitments and the ball is in the court of the AAI and flight operator, they added.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in first week of January had replaced the private licence of Rourkela airport with commercial licence to pave way for commercial use of the airport. After the MoCA tweeted about granting of licence by DGCA to Rourkela airport on January 7, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan in his tweet said, "Thanks Shri @sureshprabhu ji & the #DGCA for issuing a licence for the third airport at the steel city of Rourkela in Odisha.

An airport in the industrial capital of #Odisha will enhance connectivity and benefit both passengers as well as industries surrounding Rourkela." In a parallel development, the AAI has recently deployed its personnel for airport and terminal management, and air traffic control. **Sources said success potential of regular flights on Rourkela route is under scanner with the bidder lacking its own aircraft. Apprehension remains as the Air Odisha Aviation Pvt Ltd (now blacklisted by AAI) also did not have its own aircraft and due to its erratic ways, it failed on the Rourkela route in recent years.**

02/04/19 New Indian Express

New Delhi: The Indian Air Force is set to recommend the name of a young woman squadron leader for a medal for distinguished service after she showed "exceptional" courage to guide India's response to the air raid attempted by Pakistan on 27 February.

Top defence sources said the officer, who is not being identified by ThePrint due to security concerns, took over the reins at the secure control room in Punjab.

She is the one who called for the scrambling of seven MiG-21 Bison aircraft and informed the pilots in the air about the presence of F-16s with AMRAAMs.

"She did an exceptional job and will be recommended for a distinguished service medal," a source told ThePrint.

Multiple sources within the defence establishment have corroborated the role played by the officer. Sources said around 8:45 am on 27 February, the first signs of a possible attack emerged — Pakistan had closed down its civilian airspace and stopped all commercial flights.

Half an hour later, IAF assets picked up multiple aircraft taking off from different air bases.

In total, about 25 aircraft took off, which included F-16s, Mirages and JF-17s.

Noticing the movement, the squadron leader first informed two Mirage 2000s flying Combat Air Patrol sorties north of the Pir Panjal range, and two Sukhoi Su-30 MKIs flying south of the mountains.

03/04/19 Snehes Alex Philip/Print

Indore: The financial turmoil in Jet Airways is set to reduce 14 flights from the city. As per summer schedule that will become effective **from April 16, the maximum number of flights from city airport**

will be 74 on Sundays, while minimum of 66 flights will operate on Tuesdays. At present, 88 flights are in operation. There are two major reasons for expected drop in number of flights from city airport. The ongoing civil work of runway at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai and Jet Airways' financial fiasco have put several flights on hold.

This has adversely affected growth of aviation sector. Aryama Sanyal, director Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Airport, said Jet Airways has suspended flights. This has reduced flights' operation. Similarly, as against the previous plan, the airlines like Vistara failed in rolling out flights from the city.

Jet Airways has suspended six flights for Mumbai and two each for Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Jodhpur. IndiGo has suspended two Bengaluru flights. **Seven airlines operating from the city include Air India, Air Asia, Alliance Air, IndiGo, Jet Airways, JetLite and TruJet. One aircraft of IndiGo and two aircrafts of TruJet make a night halt at city airport.**

03/04/19 Free Press Journal

Malappuram: This year's haj pilgrimage under the state haj committee will begin on July 4 when the inaugural haj flight will depart to Madina from the Calicut International Airport.

Recently, a delegation of the state haj committee had met civil aviation officials demanding the inaugural flight from Kozhikode. As haj committee of India (HCI) allotted pilgrimage under the first phase, pilgrims from **Kozhikode and Kochi** would **directly travel to Madina**, unlike the previous years. The pilgrimage from Kochi also will begin in the first week of July, but the date of the journey is yet to be confirmed, informed the state haj committee.

The HCI had allotted a total of 11,472 seats for the state, and the total number of haj applicants from the state this year was 43,115. Of these, 1,199 applicants are under reserved category for those above 70 years of age. A total of 2,011 women applicants without Mehram have been directly selected, and 8,262 persons have been selected through draw of lots held in January.

Remaining applicants would be considered for 25,000 additional seats which have been allotted for the country this year. The haj committee has directed those who were included in waiting list to produce their passports at its office between April 8 and 20.

03/04/19 Times of India

Washington: The US has approved the sale of **24 multi-role MH-60 'Romeo' Seahawk helicopters** to India at an estimated cost of **USD 2.6 billion**, the State Department has said. India has been in need of these formidable anti-submarine hunter helicopters for more than a decade now.

Designed for hunting submarines as well as knocking out ships and conducting search-and-rescue operations at sea, the Lockheed Martin-built helicopters would replenish India's aging fleet of British-made Sea King helicopters.

The Trump administration on Tuesday notified the Congress that it has approved the sale of 24 MH-60R multi-mission helicopters, which will provide the Indian defence forces the capability to perform anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions.

In its notification, the State Department told the Congress that this proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security of the US by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship.

The sale will improve the security of a major defence partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region, it said.

"The proposed sale will provide India the capability to perform anti-surface and anti-submarine

warfare missions along with the ability to perform secondary missions, including vertical replenishment, search and rescue, and communications relay,” said the Congressional notification.
03/04/19 PTI/Tribune

Airlines flying through the Indian airspace will now be able to offer their passengers Wi-Fi connectivity in the air thanks to India's new “in-flight and maritime connectivity” (IFMC) license. Just not immediately.

India's state run telecom operator, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) procured the license from Inmarsat, a British telecommunications satellite company that offers global mobile services.

BSNL first indicated that flight passengers will be able to use internet on flights within the year in July 2017 after gaining the requisite approvals from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). **In May, last year, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) said that in-flight Wi-Fi would be live within the next 3 to 4 months.**

Even **now**, despite attaining the license, the actual implementation of the technology will take a **few more months**.

Aside from India, North Korea is the only country to not allow in-flight connectivity so far which the Indian government maintains was due to national security reasons.

Once the service is available, it's unlikely to be cheap. TRAI also indicated that it would be the airlines that would set the prices for in-flight connectivity.

Meanwhile, since India didn't have a license, companies like Airtel found workarounds. For instance, it founded the 'Seamless Alliance' during the Mobile World Congress (MWC 2018) along with OneWeb, Airbus, Delta and Sprint to give flight passengers access to the internet.

03/04/19 Prabhjote Gill/Business Insider

Mangaluru: An Air India flight which was supposed to take off from Mangaluru International Airport to Mumbai was cancelled by carrier officials stating the reasons of technical problem and unavailability of pilot.

The Incident occurred on Tuesday April 2.

Many passengers registered displeasure over the decision taken by the officials. Some passengers had to take other airlines to reach their destinations.

The scheduled Air India flight to Mumbai was supposed to take off from Mangaluru International Airport at 12:40 pm. But the officials stated technical reason for the delay and postponed the take off time twice. In the end, the officials gave another reason of unavailability of pilot and cancelled the flight.

First the officials said that spare parts of the aircraft will arrive from Mumbai through Jet Airways around 3 pm. Later they said that spare parts will arrive at 5 pm by Indigo flight. But the flight was cancelled before the spare parts did reach Mangaluru airport.

03/04/19 daijiworld

India's Jet Airways has been forced to ground more than three quarters of its fleet after failing to pay lessors, as the debt-laden carrier struggles to secure bailout funds promised by state-run banks. Jet struck a deal earlier this year to escape bankruptcy under which State Bank of India (SBI) and other lenders were to pump in \$218 million and temporarily own a majority stake in the airline. But it has not got any of the funds so far and has not paid its employees for March, said a person with direct knowledge of the matter.

Once India's leading full-service airline, Jet was founded 25 years ago by Naresh Goyal at a time when state-run carrier Air India was the only real formidable opponent. In recent years, however, Jet has struggled to compete with low-cost carriers such as IndiGo and SpiceJet that now dominate Indian skies.

Jet's operational fleet stood at 28 aeroplanes as of Wednesday, a company spokesman told Reuters, versus 119 planes last year.

At least 69 aircraft have been grounded due to money owed to lessors, showed stock exchange filings by Jet, while the remainder are out of service for maintenance.

Some lessors with direct knowledge of the matter said Jet had told them it would pay for one month's rental and maintenance by the end of last week, but no payment had been received.

"We already have five to six months of delinquencies and we were promised just one month and even that hasn't been paid. This is very disappointing," said one of the people, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter.

Jet did not respond to specific queries on lessor and salary payments but said in a statement that the airline has informed the aviation regulator it is operating a curtailed schedule.

03/04/19 Reuters/IOL.co.za

March is turning out to be a tumultuous month for carriers in India. In March last year, the government started the divestment process for the state-owned Air India and this March, Naresh Goyal was forced to step down as Chairman of Jet Airways.

The reasons for these two happenings are quite similar. **Air India had been posting losses since its merger with Indian Airlines in 2007 and the carrier is estimated to have a debt burden of over ₹55,000 crore — a situation that warranted some action.**

The situation is no better for Jet. The March 2018 quarter saw Jet post a huge loss of ₹1,036 crore compared to a profit of ₹602 crore in the year-ago period. This loss was a reversal from the profits in the earlier three quarters (June, September and December 2017) and pushed the airline's full-year FY2018 bottom line deep into the red (₹767 crore). From then on, it was a rapid descent for Jet with big losses in each of the quarters thereafter — the airline's total loss for the nine months ended December 2018 was about ₹3,200 crore.

Though there were no flight cancellations during Air India's divestment, the situation for Jet was, and continues to be, serious. After the Directorate General of Civil Aviation cleared a truncated flight schedule for Jet as it had grounded over 70 aircraft because it had not been able to pay the lessors, reports came in on Tuesday that the airline had grounded 15 more aircraft.

John Nair, Head-business travel, Cox & Kings Ltd, says that Jet has been a big disappointment. "Over a year ago, Jet was still the preferred choice for corporate travellers but the erratic schedules over the last six to eight months have forced them to switch to other carriers," he says.

The ones impacted the most are AI and Jet's employees. Living with uncertainty for months has led to a loss of morale, particularly amongst Jet's employees. In the latest hit, Jet is offering its Boeing 737 flight crew not only leave with pay but also a 'five work-day and three off-day' roster from April 11 to April 26.

02/04/19 Anand Kalyanaraman/Ashwini Phadnis/Business Line

SpiceJet and IndiGo have been offered nearly 10-12 unused slots of Jet Airways at Delhi airport for an interim period, sources in the know told CNBC-TV18.

A total of 150 flight movements have been affected at the busiest airport of the country due to the curtailed operations of Jet Airways with two-thirds of its fleet on ground and ban on Boeing 737 MAX

planes due to safety concerns resulting in the grounding of 17 planes in the country, a senior government official said.

“Around 6-7 slots have been offered to SpiceJet and 4-5 to IndiGo for an interim period. This will be reviewed once Jet Airways expands its fleet,” a source familiar with the development said.

In fact, some unused slots of Jet Airways at the airports of five metro cities of Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Chennai and Bengaluru have also been offered to other domestic airlines for a temporary period, sources added.

As the fleet size of the airline has been changing rapidly over the last two months, aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) **has also approved the summer schedule for Jet Airways for a period of 26 days spanning from March 31 to April 25.**

Usually, DGCA approves summer schedule of airlines for a period of six months, starting from last Sunday of March and ending on last Saturday of October.

The approved summer schedule of Jet Airways indicates that the airline has temporarily suspended operations to Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Dammam, Dhaka, Hong Kong, Jeddah, Kuwait, Manchester, and Riyadh in international space.

03/04/19 CNBC TV18

Pune: More than 100 passengers on board an IndiGo flight from Pune to Nagpur suffered a mid-air scare after the aircraft, an A320neo powered with Pratt and Whitney engines, was diverted back to Pune soon after take-off.

The flight, according to the sources in the Pune airport, had taken off at around 11:15am from Pune.

“The flight, according to the schedule, had to take off from Pune at 11:05am and land in Nagpur at around 12:30pm. However, only some minutes after the flight took off, the pilot noticed a snag in one of its engines and the flight had to return,” an airport official said.

IndiGo, in its statement, said that soon after taking off, the commander of the aircraft, noticed an engine caution message. **“IndiGo A320 operating 6E-134 Pune-Nagpur. After take-off from Pune, pilot observed engine caution message. The aircraft returned to Pune. It is currently at Pune and being inspected by the technical team,”** an airline spokesperson said.

Sources told TOI that the problem was detected in one of the two engines of the aircraft after which the decision to divert the flight back was taken by the pilot.

“We did feel one unusual vibrations in the aircraft soon after it took off. However, it was a shock when the pilot suddenly announced that due to a technical snag, the flight was returning to Pune. Though I cannot exactly state the timing, the whole thing happened around 10-15 minutes after the take off,” a passenger who requested anonymity, said.

02/04/19 Joy Sengupta/Times of India

Across the globe, the world’s airlines are forced to take the longer route in light of political tensions, diplomatic feuds, and sudden escalations in decade-long conflicts.

Pakistan closed its airspace in February after a suicide bomber from militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed attacked a convoy in Indian-controlled Kashmir. Following the attack, both Pakistan and India carried out aerial bombings on each other’s territory, and their military jets engaged in a sudden battle in the skies above — a dramatic escalation in a long-standing conflict.

While some areas of Pakistan’s airspace has reopened — many of the airspace restrictions implemented over one month ago remain in place. The continuing restrictions have left international airlines, such as British Airways, avoiding overflying Pakistan, and entire countries, such as Afghanistan, unable to fly on routes to India without extreme detours.

Afghanistan's civil aviation authority stated the country is suffering heavy losses following the new restrictions, which force commercial flights between Afghanistan and India (one of its largest trading partners) to fly back west, over Iran, continuing south of Pakistan, and into India.

It's resulted in an additional three hours of flying time between Kabul and Delhi — a journey that would ordinarily take around two hours.

Consequently, airfares between Afghanistan and India have doubled in price over the recent weeks, predominantly due to the increase in fuel costs for airlines, having to adhere to the airspace restrictions.

Afghanistan-based airline Kam Air and Ariana Afghan Airlines are still offering direct flights to India, but are incurring losses by doing so. Ariana Afghan Airlines has lost \$550,000 in the past month because of Pakistan's restrictions, while Kam Air has lost \$1mn in the same period "as costs rose and ticket sales fell" according to the airline.

The latest of airspace restrictions as a result of the Pakistan-India tensions have once again proven the industry's reliance on Iran, for overflight. Major airlines, including Singapore Airlines, that would ordinarily fly on a more northerly route over Pakistan are now flying south of the country instead, before entering Iranian airspace and overflying much of the Islamic Republic country.

03/04/19 Alex Macheras/Gulf Times

The politically connected Adani Group made news in February by winning projects to develop, operate and maintain five airport projects at Lucknow, Thiruvananthapuram, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Mangalore and Guwahati, on a Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) basis. This also made news because the Adani group has no previous experience in operating or managing airports.

A Right to Information (RTI) application, filed by activist Sanjay Shirodkar with the ministry of civil aviation on 19 March 2019, reveals that the **projects have been announced without even waiting for Cabinet approval**. The RTI response says, "The ministry is still in the process of obtaining approval of the cabinet for awarding the projects in this regard."

The reply further indicates that the finance ministry has not framed any rules that require a business house to have relevant prior experience before applying for the projects.

Mr Shirodkar, who has been relentlessly pursuing the issue of privatisation of airports through the last one and a half decade, filed an RTI application seeking a true copy of the approval granted by the minister of civil aviation for the five airport projects named above, to the Adani group.

In the same application, he also asked for a true copy of rules framed by the Central government in 2007 stating that tenders for sector-specific infrastructure projects do not require firms to have prior experience in that sector in order to participate.

03/04/19 Vinita Deshmukh/moneylife

Mumbai/New Delhi: GVK filed an injunction in the Delhi High Court to block South African partner Bidvest from selling its stake in Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) to a third party to preempt a possible takeover by the Adani Group, said people with knowledge of the development.

In February, GVK had said it will exercise its right of first refusal (RoFR) under the shareholders' agreement to buy out 162 million equity shares representing 13.5% of MIAL from Bid Services Division (Mauritius) Ltd, a subsidiary of Bidvest Group Ltd.

It has time until Wednesday to complete the transaction, failing which the partner could offer the stake back to the Airports Authority of India (AAI), a 26% shareholder in MIAL. If AAI doesn't exercise its right, as per the contract, consortium partners can sell to a third party. AAI has also received a notice from GVK and been made a party to the case. The matter was heard in the court on Tuesday

and will come up next on Monday.

03/04/19 Arijit Barman/Mihir Mishra/Economic Times

Panaji: **Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said here on Tuesday "all necessary steps" would be taken as directed by the Supreme Court to restart work on the Mopa International Airport in North Goa.**

On a local NGO's plea, the SC Division Bench, comprising Justice D.Y. Chandrachud and Justice Hemant Gupta, on Friday stopped construction at the greenfield airport and temporarily suspended environment clearance granted in October 2015.

The court also directed an expert appraisal committee to assess the airport's impact on ecology and submit the report in a month.

Justice Chandrachud also barred all courts in the country from entertaining any plea related to the airport.

At a meeting at the secretariat here on Tuesday, Goa Aviation Department Director Suresh Shanbhogue informed the Chief Minister the temporary suspension of environment clearance might delay the project, especially looking at the monsoon, said a government spokesperson.

The Chief Minister said he would call a review meeting to discuss the matter and assured to personally review on a regular basis the case, the spokesperson said.

02/04/19 Outlook

Immigration officials on Friday caught a 38-year-old Sri Lankan national at Kempegowda International Airport while attempting to return to his hometown in Jaffna on a valid Indian passport.

The accused, Vibulanandam Thasara, had been living in Vellore in Tamil Nadu for the past 16 years with his wife, said a senior police officer. Thasara told officials that he came to India in 2002 on a tourist visa and settled in Vellore. He got a job in a photography processing unit and later married a local woman in 2005.

In 2018, Thasara obtained an Indian identity card allegedly using forged documents and successfully applied for a passport from the regional passport office.

02/04/19 The Hindu

Kolkata : **A woman from Myanmar was held at the Kolkata airport on Monday, who was in possession of USD 1,80,000.** The woman has been identified as Hawa Bibi.

As per the official statement, "the woman was held on April 1 at 8 in the morning. An Air India security staffer had detected the money. The woman was supposed to travel to Dhaka with her son." The statement added, "On inquiry, she failed to produce any valid document for carrying the said foreign currency."

Bibi along with the recovered foreign currency was handed over to the local police for further action in the matter.

02/04/19 New Kerala

IndiGo, India's largest airline, received the 'Best Low-Cost Airlines -Asia' award at Travellers' Choice Airline Awards 2019 by TripAdvisor. The award was received by Mr. Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, Chief

Operating Officer, IndiGo. **The award recognises travellers' favourite carriers around the globe and awards them for their operational excellence.**

Receiving this award, Mr. Wolfgang Prock-Schauer, Chief Operating Officer, IndiGo said, "It gives us immense pleasure to be selected as the best low-cost airline in Asia for the third year in a row by our customers. An independent and unbiased public recognition is always a huge encouragement. This award not only brings pride to the 6E family, but also serves as a testament of all the hard work to provide best in class experience."

Mr. Wolfgang further added, "We will continue to push boundaries and consistently offer our flyers an affordable, courteous and hassle-free service, coupled with the best on-time performance in the country."

The Travellers' Choice Awards are the awards conferred by TripAdvisor in the field of service and hospitality based on overall reviews by passengers and aggregators on the services. Airline is one of the five travel categories identified for the Traveller's Choice Awards and winners were based on airline reviews submitted on TripAdvisor Flights or via one of TripAdvisor's review collection partners from January 2018 to December 2018.

Travellers' Choice award winners were determined based on the quality and quantity of flyer reviews and bubble ratings for airlines on TripAdvisor, gathered over a 12-month period of January – December 2018.

04/04/19 Press Release/IndiGo Airlines

On April 2, 2019, budget carrier IndiGo reported a mid-air engine failure on one of its flights. This was the sixth such incident in a span of two weeks involving its Airbus A 320 Neo fleet.

This was the 13th incident since January this year where this class of aircraft, mainly used flown by Indigo Airlines and Go Air, have reported problems including mid-air engine failures and mid-air turn backs.

The aircraft, powered by Pratt and Whitney (PW-1100) engine, have faced operational and technical glitches since 2017, prompting questions on why the regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is not more stringent on such glitches that involves passenger safety.

Sector experts that Moneycontrol spoke to believe it's time the watchdog ups its ante and "gain some technical expertise" before giving clearance to faulty engines.

"Regulators are at the crux of the problem. They blame airlines and pilots and others that they didn't provide sufficient data or didn't do safety check but are they, themselves, competent enough to determine what is wrong with the aircraft or may be what could go wrong," Mark Martin, chief executive officer, Martin consultancy, told Moneycontrol.

At crux of the problem is **PW-1100 engine by P&W which are used in A 320 Neo aircraft** by France-based plane making giant Airbus. The fleet first reported engine failure in 2017 and has since faced several issues.

"The problem is that Indian DGCA doesn't have the technical competence to evaluate the engine of the aircraft. The previous manpower kept on retiring and they have not been able to replace those people who can evaluate it," Harsh Vardhan, an aviation expert told Moneycontrol.

"DGCA usually keeps non-technical people who are never able to understand the intricacies of it," he said.

04/04/19 Nikita Vashisht/Moneycontrol.com

Kannur: **Kannur International Airport has come up with the allegations that IndiGo Airlines is unwilling to use the BRS (Baggage Reconciliation System), which is causing loss for the airport, and**

if they are not willing to use it the airport company would not be able to continue their service.

According to KIAL authorities, IndiGo has been operating services from this airport since January 25, 2019, but they have refused to make use of the common facilities provided at the airport.

These services consist of **Common user terminal equipment (Cute), Common-use self-service (Cuss) and BRS (Baggage reconciliation system)**, which are available for use by airlines as per Government of India regulations. But IndiGo is unwilling to use BRS, said KIAL in a press release.

“These services are made available by **Sita, appointed by KIAL through global tender**. All other airlines have made use of these services and signed agreement for this. But IndiGo had sought time to sign the agreement with Sita till February 22 2019. However, they have not come forward to sign the agreement during this period or thereafter,” said the release.

KIAL also said checking in passengers without using BRS is leading to avoidable delay and inconvenience for passengers.

IndiGo has been using BRS provided in all major airports like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kochi by the respective airport company, and they are paying the airport companies for using this service. However, it is unwilling to use this service and pay for it in Kannur, it added.

04/04/19 P. Sudhakaran/Times of India

New Delhi: **Airfares have increased by up to 40 per cent between February and March due to various challenges faced by the airlines industry, including the grounding of planes by Jet Airways, pilot shortage and safety issues of the Boeing Max 737 planes.** The average rise recorded for metro and non-metro routes was 29 per cent and 9 per cent, as per the report, the Economic Times quoted Cleartrip as saying.

The highest average rise of 39 per cent was recorded on the Mumbai-Chennai route. It was followed by a 38 per cent rise on the Mumbai-Delhi route. Chennai-Madurai recorded the maximum hike of 24 per cent in airfares in the 'non-metro routes' category.

After the Directorate General of Civil Aviation decided to ground all Boeing 737 Max planes in India, Spice Jet had stopped flying 12 planes, which amounted to 17 per cent of its fleet capacity. Jet Airways had also grounded five Boeing planes.

Recently, an Indigo flight bound for Nagpur from Pune- an Airbus A320 Neo was grounded soon after take-off due to "excessive-engine vibrations", making it the sixth incident of midair glitches in the past two weeks alone.

04/04/19 Business Today

Citing “security reasons”, most private airline carriers are refusing to carry vital pathological samples and certain electronic goods from the Valley, stakeholders said here today. They said the move has been badly affecting healthcare sector and online shopping business.

Owners of several courier companies told Greater Kashmir that pathological items like blood samples being stored in dry ice are being refused to be carried by the private airlines.

“Only the Air India accepts these shipments and is always cooperative with the courier companies.

Patients whose medical examinations need to be done after taking their samples outside the Valley are at the receiving end,” said ZahoorQari, president Kashmir Courier Association.

Qari said the courier companies are forced to send the samples to hospitals and laboratories outside the Valley through surface transport which is time consuming.

Qari said that the cargo-laden vehicles not getting permission to enter the Srinagar airport premises before 8 am “also acts as a hurdle for sending emergency samples for medical examinations”.

He said the courier companies have approached the airport authorities on various occasions to

apprise them of the issue but to no avail.

04/04/19 Saqib Malik/Greater Kashmir

Palakkad: **Suresh Kumar, a native of Nurani, is planning to approach the Ernakulam District Consumer Disputes Redressal Forum against Air India for returning his two white pet Persian cats to Saudi Arabia from Nedumbassery airport though he had completely observed all formalities.** Suresh said that he had been working in Saudi Arabia for the past 25 years and planned to return permanently. He had with him two pet cats for the past 7 years and wanted to bring them to India, He consulted Air India Ltd at their office in Saudi Arabia. They **agreed to transport the pets from Riyadh to the airport in Kochi.** It took 15 days to comply with the formalities for transporting the pets (both of which had microchips) and **Air India granted tickets for the pets to fly along with him to Cochin Airport on March 31. He said when he reached Kochi Airport, exit permission was denied to the pets and Air India returned them to Riyadh without his consent.**

Suresh pointed out the compliance of the veterinarian requirements alone cost 1,456 Saudi Riyals. He had also discussed with officials at the airport for alternatives so that they could be received in Chennai which was also not permitted. Tickets were also purchased in the name of the cats which he had named 'Ponna' and 'Sundari'.

Suresh said the airport authorities, in spite of appealing to them, failed to listen to the pleas to release the two cats. The Air India officials in Riyadh had said there were doctors in the airport and the cats will be released after scanning and check up. He said the airport authorities in Nedumbassery, on the other hand, told him it was a cumbersome process to clear the release of the cats.

04/03/19 New Indian Express

Coming down heavily on Air India, the Election Commission (EC) on Tuesday expressed "serious displeasure" over the national carrier's failure to respond to the show cause notice issued by the EC for using boarding passes with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photo on them. The EC also slammed Air India for its "lackadaisical approach" towards enforcing the Model Code of Conduct.

The poll panel wrote a letter to Civil Aviation Secretary P S Kharola, saying no response by filed by Air India to its notice though the deadline lapsed two days ago.

"The Commission expresses its serious displeasure over the non-compliance of the Commission's lawful instructions and lackadaisical approach towards enforcing the Model Code of Conduct," the EC said in its letter to Kharola.

In its letter, the poll panel directed the Civil Aviation Secretary to conveyed the EC's displeasure to Air India chairman and managing director Ashwani Lohani for "the lapse of the organization".

"The Commission has further directed that action taken against the officer incharge be reported to the Commission within a week," added the EC's letter.

On March 26, a show cause notice was issued by the EC to the Civil Aviation Ministry over the use of photos of PM Modi on boarding pass of Air India as it was in violation of the model code of conduct.

The Model Code of Conduct came into effect on March 10 when the dates for upcoming Lok Sabha poll were announced by the EC. The seven-phase Lok Sabha poll is scheduled to begin from April 11 and the counting will take place on May 23.

The EC had said prima facie Air India has violated the model code of conduct, and referred to clause VII of the code which states that "issue of advertisement at the cost of public exchequer ... Regarding achievements with a view to furthering the prospects of the party in power shall be

scrupulously avoided".

02/04/19 Zee News

Mumbai: For its environment-friendly practices, the Mumbai International Airport has bagged the gold award given by the Airports Council International (ACI).

Called the Asia-Pacific Green Airports Recognition 2019, the award was given to Mumbai airport for completing several projects to address the challenges of climate change under environment management, said a statement issued by MIAL.

04/04/19 Times of India

Kochi : With the government pushing for flood control measures at Cochin International Airport Ltd (Cial), the airport authorities plan to buy a speedboat for emergency and rescue services in the area.

The tendering process has already begun for the procurement of a six-seater fibre-reinforced plastic (FRP) speedboat that could be operated in rivers, inland waterways and backwaters.

According to sources, the deal is expected to be sealed soon and the boat will be acquired before the next monsoon.

Cial officials said that a boat was inevitable to brace for future flood impacts. During the August floods, the entire airport remained flooded making it difficult for rescue operations.

Cial witnessed its most dire situation during the floods last year, which forced the airport to remain shut for 14 days. The most challenging factor was lack of a proper transport mechanism to ply through the storm water.

"We had 10 of our employees trapped inside the airport during the floods. Post floods, Cial has been mooted several plans to address similar situations in the future. As part of it, **we have invited sealed tenders from eligible agencies for the design, construction, testing, registration and delivery of the six-seater FRP speed boat, as these boats could be easier to use in such situations.**

"The tendering is proceeding and we hope to complete it soon. More boats would be purchased in future. Details could not be divulged now," said Cial's spokesperson.

04/04/19 Anantha Narayanan K/Times of India

Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday made it clear that debt-ridden Jet Airways continued to fly 28 aircraft as on date.

The DGCA said, "Grounded 15 planes is already accounted for and was only informed to the stock exchange by Jet Airways yesterday."

On April 2, Jet Airways had informed exchanges that it has grounded 15 planes on non-payment of lease rentals. This is after six of its planes have not been in Operations since March 31.

Earlier, a senior government official said Jet Airways may have an active fleet of 14 planes after the airline had grounded 15 aircraft late Tuesday evening, "Yesterday it was 28 (active planes), " said civil aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola. When asked on the groundings, adding that, "so it would be less than...about 15."

However, the cash-strapped airline insisted that the company is operating with a sufficient number of planes. "Jet Airways would like to clarify certain speculative media reports with reference to the airline's ability to operate on international routes. **As informed to the regulator (Directorate General of Civil Aviation), the airline is operating a curtailed schedule with a sufficient number of aircraft, and is compliant with applicable guidelines,**" said a spokesperson of the airline.

If the airline has less than 20 planes then it becomes ineligible to fly internationally. Hence, the civil aviation ministry and DGCA are expected to examine the matter to check Jet Airways' eligibility to

operate overseas, the official added.

03/04/19 CNBC TV18

New Delhi: **Jet Airways' fleet now comprises less than 15 operational aircraft, news agency PTI quoted Civil Aviation Secretary P S Kharola as saying.** The debt-laden airline that had a total fleet of 119 planes, has been grounding its aircraft in tranches due to non-payment of dues to lessors. "Currently, Jet Airways is operating less than 15 aircraft. The airline's eligibility to fly internationally needs to be examined," he said, reported ANI.

In announcements made since January this year, the cash-strapped airline has rendered more than 54 planes non-operational due to lease rental defaults. After more 15 aircraft were grounded on Tuesday evening, Kharola said the current fleet "would be less than about 15". Till "yesterday, it was 28," he added.

After the reports came out, shares of the company fell up to 4 per cent on Wednesday. On BSE, the stock opened on a negative note at Rs 257.80 and further declined 3.90 per cent to a low of Rs 254.55. Similarly, on NSE, the scrip touched a low of Rs 254.40, down 4 per cent from the previous close.

03/04/19 Indian Express

Mumbai: Cash-hit Jet Airways continues to navigate in troubled skies despite the SBI-led consortium of lenders taking over its management control last month as it Tuesday grounded as many as 15 more planes due to lease rental defaults leaving just 20 planes in its operational fleet.

In another development, its pilots body, the National Aviators' Guild has written to the aviation regulator DGCA & airline chief executive Vinay Dube, pressing for payment of three months of salary dues along with applicable interest.

With 15 more planes out of operations, its fleet has woefully come down to just 20 from as high as 123, operating over 650 flights across the country and the continents.

"An additional 15 aircraft have been grounded due to non-payment of outstanding to lessors under their respective lease agreements," Jet Airways said in an exchange filing this late evening.

With this, the number of planes grounded on account of lease rental defaults alone touched 69, which is more than half of its fleet, reducing the overall **operational fleet less than one-sixth.**

03/04/19 PTI/Economic Times

A couple of days ago, Jet Airways informed the exchanges of another 15 Jet Airways aircraft being grounded on account of the lessors not receiving any payments from the airline. There was a lot of commotion about what would be the final operational count of aircraft for the airline at the moment. The National Civil Aviation Policy 2016 states that "all airlines can commence international operations provided that they deploy 20 aircraft or 20 percent of total capacity (in term of average number of seats on all departures put together), whichever is higher for domestic operations." However, the policy foresees nothing and does not talk about any situation where the State will withdraw the permission to fly abroad.

In the case of Jet Airways, there are about 28 aircraft flying now, as per the latest data that LiveFromALounge.com tracked, including nine 737 aircraft and 7 ATR aircraft. The rest of the aircraft operating are all wide-bodies, primarily used to fly abroad. Jet Airways is now the smallest scheduled airline operating pan-India.

When the last Board meeting of Jet Airways was held on 25 March, 2019, the airline effectively

made a barter, where in exchange for the Chairman stepping down, it was to receive an emergency funding of Rs 1,500 crore from the banks, who would effectively become a 50.5 percent plus owner of the airline when the restructuring goes through. The money never came. Jet Airways had to ground another 15 aircraft, and bought some time with the pilots who were threatening to go on a strike with effect from 1 April for non-payment of dues.

And while the law will take its course, there are some good reasons from a passenger perspective to look at why the international flights of Jet Airways are the last bastion, which should be taken into consideration before the government takes a decision.

04/04/19 Ajay Awtaney/First Post

Although Jet Airways' promoter Naresh Goyal released a statement on Wednesday saying he has "signed on the dotted line as required to ensure release of the much needed funds committed by the lenders", the beleaguered airline's woes are far from over. Battling crises on multiple fronts, from grounded planes to disgruntled and unpaid employees threatening to go on strike, it may be racing against the clock to stay afloat.

"Jet Airways won't be able to operate beyond April if it doesn't get the entire promised debt funding of Rs 1,500 crore from its lenders in a week, its top management has estimated internally," sources in the know told The Economic Times.

But the recent Supreme Court ruling that struck down the RBI's February 12 circular - outlining a revised framework for resolution of stressed assets - may throw a spanner in the works. The cash-starved Jet Airways on Wednesday deferred payment of March salaries citing "complexities" in the finalisation of the debt-recast plan, under which the SBI-led consortium of lenders took over the reins of the airline last month.

The resolution plan involves converting the airline's debt into equity - a 50.1% stake - for a notional value of Re 1 per share, as per the RBI's circular, which has now been declared unconstitutional and ultra vires (acting or done beyond one's legal power or authority). Hence, the promised emergency infusion from the lenders to meet operating costs is now held up on "technical" grounds.

Jet Airways chief people officer Rahul Taneja said in a communication to staff yesterday that the **airline is making every "possible effort" to remit salaries at the earliest and will provide "an update on the status of the pay-out by April 9, 2019".** The airline's management has reportedly already met lenders seeking clarity on the future of the resolution plan but no clarity or assurance has been forthcoming.

Meanwhile, the airline's pilots' body, National Aviator's Guild (NAG), has deferred its no-flying call to April 15. The body, which claims to represent around 1,100 of the 1,600 Jet Airways pilots, had announced earlier that its members will not fly from April 1, unless their salary dues were cleared.

"The management has shown us a positive intent by transferring our (December) salary and we thought we should give them at least a couple of weeks to settle down and form the interim board and solve our issues which they have already spoken about earlier," NAG president Karan Chopra said on Sunday. Incidentally, it was on the NAG's pushing that the SBI-led consortium had agreed to infuse interim funding of Rs 1,500 crore.

Chopra had added that the total payout of salary for pilots, engineers and general managers and above-level executives would be in the range of Rs 320-350 crore for the period between January and March this year.

04/04/19 Business Today

New Delhi: **Jet Airways** said it has grounded more planes after failing to pay lessors, as the debt-laden carrier - which also owes salaries to pilots and crew - works to secure bailout funds promised by state-run banks. Jet last month was rescued by State Bank of India (SBI) and other lenders, which will temporarily own a majority stake in the airline and extend a fresh loan of \$218 million. However, Jet is yet to receive any loan money and employees have not yet been paid for the month of March, said a person with direct knowledge of the matter. Once country's leading full-service carrier, Jet's operational fleet stood at about **26 to 28 aeroplanes** as of Wednesday versus 119 planes last year, two sources said.

At least 69 aircraft have been grounded due to money owed to lessors, showed stock exchange filings by Jet, while the remainder are out of service for maintenance, said one of the sources. Some lessors with direct knowledge of the matter said Jet had told them it would pay for one month's rental and maintenance by the end of last week, and that no payment had been received. They said when they asked Jet about payment, they were told only that the airline was addressing the matter. "We already have five to six months of delinquencies and we were promised just one month and even that hasn't been paid ; this is very disappointing," said one of the people, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the matter. Jet did not respond to requests for comment.

04/04/19 Anshul/NDTV

Private equity players TPG, Indigo Partners and the government-anchored National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) are teaming up to submit an expression of interest (EoI) for Jet Airway said multiple sources, even as lenders explore an alternative by way of an operational turnaround if the bidding evokes lukewarm response.

The distressed airline's lenders have also approached Delta Air Lines and Air France-KLM to gauge their interest. One of the sources said teams from the two foreign airline companies are in India, though it could not be independently verified if they will submit a bid. Sources in the civil aviation ministry said they were unaware of the global airlines being approached.

State Bank of India, the lead lender to the airline, had also approached PE funds such as Blackstone to evaluate if they would be interested if Jet's loyalty programme were to be monetised. But sources said that would be possible only after the airline itself is stabilised



Caught In A Bind

WHERE THINGS STAND FOR JET

- Operating a fleet of 26 aircraft
- Unable to pay vendors and salaries to employees
- IOC stopped fuel supply on Thursday and Friday, has resumed now
- Jet slots at airports being reallocated to other carriers
- Banks have sought expressions of interest (EoIs) by April 9

THE ALTERNATIVE

- Lenders to try and keep Jet operational for next six months
- Infuse more money to keep operations going
- Get more industry professionals on board
- Ensure operational turnaround in a timebound manner

The SBI-led consortium of lenders on Thursday asked interested parties to submit EoIs between April 6 and April 9, advancing and shortening the time frame that had earlier been announced.

"The TPG-led consortium will evaluate the EoI conditions once they are made public over the

weekend,” said an official in the know. “TPG and Indigo Partners have been in the mix before, and were engaged with SBI. They needed an Indian partner, and NIIF was the obvious vehicle,” he added. The brass of Etihad Airways led by Cramer Ball, an aviation industry veteran and former CEO of Jet, and Rangesh Embar met SBI officials on Thursday. The meeting set off renewed speculation that the **Abu Dhabi-based carrier, which holds 12% in the troubled Indian carrier, may also throw in its hat. However, Etihad has sought an exemption from making an open offer to Jet shareholders, which the stock market regulator has not yet agreed to.**

Sources said the **Tatas and the Adani Group, which had been approached to bail out Jet, are unlikely to participate at this juncture.** The Adanis did spend time with the airline’s management as recently as January before deciding to bid aggressively for aviation-related infrastructure such as airports.

TPG declined to comment while Delta said it would not comment on “speculation”. Mails sent to NIIF, Indigo Partners and Air France-KLM did not elicit a response till press time on Friday. The Economic Times of India 06/04/2019

Public sector banks, led by State Bank of India, have given themselves 180 days to resolve the Jet Airways account even though the time limit has become irrelevant post Supreme Court order that quashed an earlier RBI circular on debt resolution.

Official sources in the Finance Ministry said that banks have informed the ministry that they were not ready to wait endlessly to restore health of the beleaguered airline and if attempts to bring in a strategic investor fails or is not completed by June 30, lenders may immediately initiate bankruptcy proceedings against Jet. **"All attempts are being made to see that Jet Airways does not fail and its operations are maintained albeit on a smaller scale. Banks, including SBI and Punjab National Bank (PNB) have already decided to provide interim funding support of Rs 1,500 crore to Jet,"** a source in the finance ministry said.

"Now effort is on to bring in a strategic investor. But if there are no satisfactory bids, banks would not wait anymore and refer the airline to National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for resolution," the source added.

Jet first defaulted on loan repayment on December 31. Going by this, the 180 day period from default will end on June 30.

Once the matter lands in NCLT, banks get another 180 days to find a resolution of the stressed asset with an extension of 90 days, if required. Post this, if banks fail to resolve the account, liquidation process starts. "We will go by the 180-day deadline that was being followed as per now defunct RBI circular. With each day the problem at Jet seems to be multiplying and if a resolution is not achieved immediately, there is no point to drag the issue any further but to take the account for bankruptcy. Otherwise, the airline account can become a further drag on the banks," said an official of public sector bank asking not to be named.

The Supreme Court on Tuesday quashed the February 12, 2018 circular of RBI that asked banks to start resolution of an account even if there was one day default in repayment of loans. This resolution would have to be completed in 180 days failing which it would be mandatory upon banks to refer it for bankruptcy proceedings.

Following this order from the apex court, it was widely believed that banks would use extra time now available with them for resolution. But for Jet, PSBs are in no mood for extended period of resolution.

Meanwhile, **the lenders on Saturday invited expression of interest (EoI) from investors looking to**

pick up majority stake in Jet. The EoI would have to be submitted by April 9. Extensions could be considered, if bids are not satisfactory.

A statement issued on Thursday by a consortium of lenders led by the State Bank of India (SBI) said: "The lenders intend to pursue the bank-led resolution plan for sale of stake in the company in a time-bound manner under the present legal and regulatory framework and intend to invite expressions of interest."

Jet Airway's former Chairman Naresh Goyal has said he has cooperated fully and facilitated the bank-led resolution programme for the company. On March 25, Goyal had stepped down from the board of the airline and ceded majority control to the SBI-led consortium.

Under the debt resolution plan, the lenders would inject up to Rs 1,500 crore working capital into the airline and convert their debt into equity, to revive the airline and then sell their stake in it.

The airline owes over Rs 8,000 crore to lenders.

At present, the airline is hard-pressed for funds. It is expected to receive the first tranche of the Rs 1,500 crore promised by banks as part of the debt resolution plan. Industry sources informed that the first tranche of fund is expected in a day or two.

However, without further funding the airline's fleet size is expected to shrink further. It has already shrunk to 26. Jet Airways has been struggling with cash flows for the past six months because of rising fuel costs and intense competition. It has even delayed payment to lessors, airport operators and oil marketing companies besides a part of its workforce to keep the company running.

On Wednesday evening, the airline informed employees that salaries for March will be delayed. Salaries are pending since January.

The Economic Times of India 07/04/2019

Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) should be brought under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime as it will ensure a level playing field for the domestic airline industry, Civil Aviation Minister Suresh Prabhu said.

He said input costs should be competitive for any sector and the ministry has been of the strong view that the fuel should be brought under the GST regime.

Different rates of taxes in states pushes the price of ATF, he said. "Each state has a different tax. Due to this, the refuelling (for airlines) cost completely changes. We feel that it should be done. I hope the GST Council takes a call on that and we are pursuing this with the council continuously. "We will work on it that aviation fuel should also be brought under GST for predictability and for ensuring level playing field," the minister told PTI in an interview. Airlines have been demanding inclusion of ATF in the new indirect tax regime. **Airlines could expect an annual relief of up to Rs 5,000 crore by way of input tax credit if ATF is brought under GST.**

The move could cushion them from the burden of increased jet fuel prices, besides providing relief to customers

The Economic Times 07/04/2019

The Delhi High Court Friday sought responses of the Centre and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on a plea seeking grounding of all Airbus 320 Neo aircraft fitted with the troubled Pratt and Whitney engines. A bench of Chief Justice Rajendra Menon and Justice A J Bhambhani asked the DGCA and the Ministry of Civil Aviation to indicate their stand on the issue by August 8, saying there have been several instances recently of problems with Airbus Neo 320 planes flying on

this specific engine. **On April 2, a Pune-Nagpur flight of IndiGo -- an Airbus A320 Neo -- was grounded soon after take-off due to "excessive engine vibrations". This, according to industry sources, was the sixth such incident in the past two weeks.**

In the application, moved before the high court by former director of Flight Safety of Indian Airlines Captain S S Panesar, it has been contended that the **Airbus aircraft fitted with the Pratt and Whitney (P&W) engines are not 100 per cent safe.**

P&W is an American aerospace aircraft engines manufacturer.

He has claimed that P&W and DGCA have advised airlines not to put two such engines on their aircraft and to substitute one with some other engine.

Apart from that, it has also been advised that the A-320 Neo fitted with P&W engines not be flown over high seas and instead they should take a route which has an airport within 100 miles range, the application has alleged. Another suggestion is "not to fly the aircraft (A-320 Neo) above 30,000 feet because of low density of air", Panesar has claimed in his application seeking grounding of these planes.

He has alleged that the DGCA, ministry and the airlines operating these aircraft -- Indigo and GoAir -- fitted with P&W engines "are not ignorant" about the issue, but they are "ignoring" it and "exposing the passengers to gravest danger".

The application has sought grounding of the aircraft fitted with P&W engines till the manufacturer comes out with a modification to make them "error free".

The application was filed in the main petition by Yeshwanth Shenoy, a lawyer, seeking removal of high-rise buildings from around the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport on the ground that such structures are obstacles for aircraft taking off and landing at the aviation hub.

Shenoy had in March last year sought grounding of all the A-320 Neo aircraft till DGCA certifies that they are all safe to fly.

His application was disposed of after DGCA assured the court that only those A-320 Neo aircraft which are safe to fly would be allowed to operate.

The Economic Times of India 05/04/2019

New Delhi: A lack of clarity on the impact of the Supreme Court order quashing the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) February 12, 2018, circular has delayed the stake sale process of cash-starved Jet Airways. Sources aware of the development said banks were still awaiting approval from the RBI on the legality of debt-equity conversion at Rs 1. As a result, the process of bidding, which was scheduled to start on Saturday, could not take off.

"All legal approvals from the RBI need to be in place including examination of the issue of debt to equity conversion. Unless legal work is done, the bid document cannot be issued," said an executive of a bank which is part of the consortium. Earlier this week, lenders' consortium had announced that expressions of interest (EoIs) from bidders would be invited on April 6. They had set April 9 as the deadline for receiving bids giving investors four days to respond.

Now, the deadline for submission of bids will also be extended as the process has been delayed.

"Whenever the EoI is published, four days will be given to interested parties to respond," the official said. The bid document could be issued as early as Sunday if the legal processes are completed by then. In that case, April 10 would be the deadline for submission of bids, the official pointed out.

On February 14, the Jet Airways board had agreed to a plan wherein a consortium of lenders led by State Bank of India would take over the airline's debt and convert it into 114 million shares for just Rs 1, giving them a 50.1 percent stake in the company.

A delay in the resolution process will further worsen the financial condition of the airline which is left with a fifth of its original fleet. Its creditors including aircraft lessors are threatening to de-register more planes and oil marketing companies have started suspending fuel supplies to the airline. On Friday, Indian Oil Corporation had stopped supply of fuel to the airline for more than two hours due

to non-payment of dues.

06/04/19 Arindam Majumder/Business Standard

Owing to its financial crisis, Jet Airways has discontinued its in-flight entertainment services in all its domestic and international flights. This has caused inconveniences to many passengers in the long haul flights and many passengers have complained about the non-functional in-flight entertainment services including movies, and music etc.

Jet Airways is facing an acute financial crisis resulting in the airlines already having grounded more than 100 of its planes. Jet Airways is currently operating only 25 flights across all its sectors. This financial crisis at Jet Airways has also led to non-payment of salaries to its pilots and its top management for several months.

A Jet Airways spokesperson, in an official statement, has said that it has discontinued its in-flight entertainment services temporarily on all its domestic and international flight effective from 1 April this year.

06/04/19 Sunday Guardian Live

New Delhi: **Jet Airways, which is fighting a battle for survival and is down to operating fewer than 20 of its aircraft daily, had a troubled beginning from the start, with Indian security agencies, including the Intelligence Bureau (IB) and the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), raising questions on the funding that went into giving birth to the airline. In spite of that, Jet flourished and became the largest carrier by passenger market share in the country by 2010, a position it held until 2012 before reaching a situation where it is struggling to stay afloat.**

In December 2001, the top brass of the Intelligence Bureau had told the then Atal Bihari Vajpayee-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government that it had found substantial evidence to prove that **Jet Airways, which was launched in 1993, was being funded by suspicious individuals, including possibly India's Most Wanted.** However, the government decided to sit on the adverse report.

In April 2002, again a 30-page IB report was shared with the Lal Krishna Advani-led Ministry of Home Affairs and the Syed Shahnawaz Hussain-led Ministry of Civil Aviation, detailing the funding pattern of Jet Airways and why the IB believed that Jet Airways was being used as a tool to turn unaccounted for money into white. After going through the report, Hussain at the time had said that all options, including cancelling the licence of the airline, were on the table and the final call on the matter was in the hands of the Ministry of Home Affairs.

However, again the government decided to sleep on it. The Sunday Guardian spoke to two IB officers, who are now retired, but were involved in framing the report. Both of them confirmed that the report had given extensive information about the funding that went into Jet Airways.

Before the April 2002 report, in March 2000, the Ministry of Civil Aviation had written to the Ministry of Home Affairs, seeking security clearance for the directors of Jet Airways. The Ministry of Home Affairs did not give the security clearance until December 2003, as it had found reasons not to give a security clearance. However, as the later development suggests, the permission was given soon after that.

06/04/19 Abhinandan Mishra/Sunday Guardian Live

New Delhi: **With Pakistan opening its airspace partially from Thursday (April 4), national passenger carrier Air India has started saving on time and fuel for its US and Europe-bound flights,** said an airline official on Saturday.

The national carrier re-routed some of its flights which had to take a longer flight path over Mumbai to reach the US and Europe.

"We are saving 15 minutes on our US and Europe-bound flights since Pakistan opened some of its airspace from last Thursday," a senior Air India official told IANS.

Pakistan had closed its airspace since the Indian Air Force (IAF) strikes in Balakot on February 26. The move has adversely affected international flights to and from India, with Air India being a major victim.

Flights from across the world have either been cancelled or re-routed since the closure was announced on February 27. Pakistan partially opened its airspace, only for the flights bound for the country.

Air India, which operates 33 weekly services to the US and 66 to Europe, has curtailed operations due to the airspace closure. It has clubbed together several US and Europe-bound flights.

Flights to the US and Europe are now diverted over Mumbai and then northwards over the Arabian Sea.

07/04/19 IANS/Khaleej Times

New Delhi: Reports of GoAir stopping Priety Zinta to board its flight were surfacing on social media on April 6. According to the reports, Priety was banned from flying by GoAir because the airline's owner Ness Wadia, Priety's ex-boyfriend, has issued such orders.

Now, the airline has issued a statement claiming that the reports were false and factually incorrect. It has also demanded apology from the sections of media for fabricating a story.

The statement read, **"Sections of the media have reported malicious and factually incorrect story that is false, fabricated and without any basis stating that 'Priety Zinta was stopped from boarding GoAir flight.'"**

The statement went on to say, "GoAir strongly and completely denies any such action. Contrary to the reportage, all the facts-on-ground clearly show that Ms Priety Zinta had a smooth flight Mumbai to Chandigarh GoAir G8-381 on Saturday March 30, 2019. Further, on April 2, 2019 she also booked herself on a return flight G8 382 from Chandigarh to Mumbai but did not show up. This clearly demonstrates that sections of media have reported mischievously and without verifying the facts with GoAir."

Priety, who is now married to Gene Goodenough, was previously in relationship with Ness. The two made their relationship public in 2005. In 2008, they took their relationship to another level and bought Kings XI Punjab team of Indian Premier League together.

07/04/19 India Today

Kolkata: Airport planners and designers have prepared three different proposals for the second-phase expansion of Kolkata airport. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) brass will take the final call.

Speaking to TOI, Kolkata airport director Kaushik Bhattacharjee said the expansion will involve extending only the security hold area (SHA) in the domestic wing as the facility in the existing terminal will get saturated next year. In contrast, the departure lounge where the check-in portals are located has adequate space to meet the terminal's needs for years.

"Providing adequate seating is already tough during peak hours. As flights increase, it will get even more challenging. Also, given the restricted space in the departure lounge for flights parked in remote bays, there is a need for more aerobridges. Both these problems can be solved by extending the SHA. We have, therefore, decided to go in for pier-type construction to extend the SHA to accommodate more flyers and add around 10 aerobridges," Bhattacharjee explained.

Though the plan hasn't been firmed up yet, sources said there were three options on the table. The first proposal is to extend the SHA at a right angle to the existing facility and into the apron area. This new SHA would have five aerobridges on each side. This would require a wide SHA with adequate seats for passengers near the boarding gates on either side.

07/04/19 Subhro Niyogi, Tamaghna Banerjee/Times of India

New Delhi: passengers are suffering as India airlines blocking increase in flights from Gulf countries, says Ambassador Ahmed Al-Banna.

Despite good ties in several other spheres, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is disappointed that the government has completed its term without renegotiating a bilateral “air services agreement” that would allow more Gulf airlines into India.

In an interview to The Hindu, UAE Ambassador Ahmed Al-Banna said it was “unlikely” that the negotiations, which have been pending for more than five years, would be held until after the elections now, meaning a further delay of several months.

“We are not satisfied at all,” Mr. Al-Banna said. “This is a major issue. Our carriers and so many passengers are suffering due to this delay. I have been trying to hold a meeting on this, [but without success].”

The issue had been raised most recently at the Global Aviation Summit in Mumbai in mid-January, and was brought up by the UAE government during External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj’s visit to Abu Dhabi for the joint commission meeting in December 2018.

This is not the first time that the UAE Ambassador has made his concerns public.

06/04/19 Suhasini Haidar/Jagriti Chandra/The Hindu

New Delhi: **The country’s apex consumer commission has ordered Air India to pay Rs 5 lakh compensation to two passengers for changing their pre-booked seats during check-in and failure to provide a wheel-chair, which were confirmed in their electronic tickets.**

“We hold Air India deficient in service in pre-allotting the seats and then changing the same without any explanation, both in the domestic as well as in the international sector and thereby causing inconvenience to the complainants,” a bench comprising NCDRC president Justice R K Agrawal and member M Shreesha said.

It also rejected the airline’s claim that the wheelchair could not be provided to one passenger for transit at IGI airport due to paucity of such chairs. The NCDRC said the commission found that the ticket showed confirmation of a wheel-chair and since the ticket was booked two months in advance, the airline should have issued instructions to the ground staff for providing the same.

The NCDRC order came in a case filed by Air India challenging an order passed by the West Bengal State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in January 2017. Holding the airline responsible for deficiency in services, the state commission had ordered Rs 15 lakh compensation. But the order was stayed by NCDRC.

07/04/19 Dipak K Dash/Times of India

The Punjab State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission while hearing an appeal filed by a Mohali-based flyer, has asked the Air India to pay Rs 1 lakh as fine for harassing a passenger.

The Commission has also asked the airline to pay Rs 5500 to the passenger, which he had paid as taxi fare after he was deboarded, allegedly without any reason.

The case dates back to 2015 when Sardul Singh Ghuman, Associate Professor (Physics) with Sant Longowal Institute of Engineering and Technology in Sangrur was returning from the Netherlands after attending a conference. He took an Air India flight from New Delhi to Chandigarh but he was offloaded by the airline staff, citing security reasons. No explanations were given.

Ghuman missed his flight and was compelled to hire a taxi to reach Chandigarh. He then moved a consumer forum which asked the airline to pay Rs 5500, the taxi fare, however, this did not satisfy Sardul Singh Ghuman. He felt that merely getting a taxi fare reimbursement did not compensate the harassment and the humiliation he faced.

Sardul Singh Ghuman filed an appeal against the consumer forum with the state Consumer

Commission. He told the commission that he faced mental harassment and was compelled to hire a taxi as he needed to reach Chandigarh on the same day.

07/04/19 Manjeet Sehgal/India Today

Jaipur: The Greenfield Airport Project at Shivdaspura may slide down on state government's priority due to shortage of funds.

Two years ago, Jaipur Development Authority (JDA) had planned to acquire 2,094 hectares in 20 villages for the purpose. However, the cash-strapped civic body has decided to shelve the project as it does not have sufficient funds to acquire the land.

A senior official source said, "Financial condition of the civic body is not stable. Every project should be planned meticulously so that it can be completed in due course of time".

Since the announcement of the project, the JDA had put a ban on land conversion and issuing of lease deeds in Shivdaspura. A delegation had earlier requested the government to withdraw orders of acquiring land for the airport.

Ashok Singh, a plot owner, said, "For the past many years, the district lease committee (DLC) rates of the area have not increased as the land is reserved for the airport. Moreover, THE development is stalled as land holders are left in lurch. In Lok Sabha, the civil aviation minister had replied that no airport was proposed in Shivdaspura. Still, the land was kept reserved."

Several times in the past, the protesters have questioned the need for the Greenfield Airport in the vicinity of existing Sanganer airport, which is only 25km away.

07/04/19 Times of India

Dubai: After helping give wings to a fledgling airport that had become defunct within weeks after opening, expatriates from the eastern Indian state of Odisha are seeking direct flights from their home state to Dubai.

"There are 10,000 to 15,000 expats from the state of Odisha living in the UAE. A direct flight to our home state is definitely a need of the hour," said Captain Soumya Ranjan Patnaik, CEO of a shipping company, who has been living in Dubai for 13 years.

Priyadarshini Panigrahi, general manager of a consumer goods company in Dubai, said expats face big difficulties while travelling home. "We have to take a flight to cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata or Hyderabad and spent three to four hours there for layover before taking another flight to Bhubaneswar."

He pointed out that Odias living in other Gulf countries and western countries can also fly via Dubai if there is a direct flight from here to the capital city of Bhubaneswar.

"It will help boost trade between the state and the UAE and benefit the tourism sector here as well."

Manas Panda, director of an electrical company, said: "A direct flight will make our life easier. It not only saves time, but also money as we end up paying tax on the basic airfare twice when we book two tickets to reach home."

07/04/19 Sajila Saseendran/Gulf News

New Delhi: Five flights were diverted to Lucknow from Delhi airport between 8 pm and 10 pm due to heavy rainfall and wind in the national capital region on Sunday. According to IGI Airport officials, two flights of Vistara, two flights of Air India and one flight of Gulf Air were diverted to Lucknow airport this evening.

In a statement, the Vistara Airlines said, "Due to bad weather in Delhi, two diversions reported between 8-8:30 PM, one from Mumbai and the other from Dehradun. Both the flights have been diverted to Lucknow".

A dust storm and thunderstorm hit Delhi following lightening, gusty winds, and light showers at several parts of the city. The sudden rainfall brought the mercury down by 6-7 degree Celsius in the

Delhi-NCR region.

07/04/19 News Nation

New Delhi: Budget passenger carrier **SpiceJet will commence a daily direct flight connecting Mumbai with Bangkok from May 17, 2019.** According to the airline, Bangkok is the second international destination after Dubai that it will connect with a direct flight from Mumbai. The airline already operates non-stop flights from Bangkok to Ahmedabad, Amritsar, Delhi and Kolkata. On the domestic sector, the airline will introduce six domestic flights connecting Mumbai with Kolkata, Chennai and Varanasi, effective from April 18, 2019.

06/04/19 IANS/Sify.com

The institution is closed for the day, but the design and development centre of unmanned aerial vehicles at MIT is droning with activity. I am invited into the conference room where Dr. S. Thamarai Selvi, Director, Centre for Technology Development & Transfer, Anna University, Chennai, is talking to the Dhaksha team. Their immediate concern is to send the tech-team to Thiruvannamalai to help operate their crowd-monitoring drone during the deepam festival. Their tech van is about to leave. Team Dhaksha is special. Mentored by Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam since 2002, it is part of Centre for Aerospace Research, Madras Institute of Technology (MIT), campus of Anna University, Tamil Nadu. "A course named Aviation Electronics was launched by Dr. Kalam under the Department of Science & Technology," said Dr. K Senthilkumar, Director-CASR. "We were procuring weapons and we needed skilled manpower to deploy them. Initially, DRDO came to MIT to train students to understand imported weapons. Anna University admitted both GATE and non-GATE students in the course." Now team Dhaksha designs and develops unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) and true to all initiatives Dr. Kalam touched, creates innovative UAV technologies for various social applications.

The Dhaksha UAV project was launched with a R 20-crore grant from the Tamil Nadu government under TN Innovation Initiative Scheme, said Director Thamarai Selvi. Other government agencies like DRDO funded the photogramatic mapping. Since then, **Dhaksha drones have reached great heights, making customised vehicles for government projects.**

The DARPA award the team won in 2012 was a landmark — the Dhaksha vehicle was chosen for reliability, stability, advanced tech, and cost-effectiveness. "We competed against ten teams. We had to fly the drone over 5 km of pine trees and land it on a church roof." They flew it in Savannah, Georgia, where, with great presence of mind, the team tweaked the machine to fly under different conditions. "It then struck us. Why wait for tech-transfer? Why not start our own research centre in India?"

All the members were offered positions in the U.S. for UAV research, but they chose to come back. "I spent my entire student life with the Dhaksha team," said Dr. Mohammad Rasheed, the integration expert and team member for 12 years. For him, it is a 24x7 obsession. He brings together all the systems — quality of output, UAV testing and flight, architecture. The strength of the lab is the student group, says the team. "We place them in research projects in different domains."

06/04/19 Geeta Padmanabhan/The Hindu

Trichy: **Police have arrested four air passengers who arrived at the Trichy International Airport from Kuala Lumpur for possession of fake passports.**

The accused have been identified as H Chauhan Chandan, 22, and P Kamiesh Prasad, 22, of Kushi Nagar, S Deepak, 21, of Lalganj Basti, and S Jayprakash, 27, of Rampur from Uttar Pradesh. Police said the accused had furnished bogus documents by using a bogus seal on their passports and travelled from Kuala Lumpur on April 4. They were caught during immigration check upon their arrival at the Trichy airport.

Their fraud came to light when immigration officials undertook document and passport check after

their arrival at the airport. Subsequently, all the four were handed over to the airport police.
07/04/19 Times of India

Chennai: Customs officers at Chennai airport on Saturday seized 65 star tortoises and four golden Lord Ganesha idols from two passengers.

The officers intercepted **Venkadesan**, 24, of Chennai who was bound for Bangkok in an AirAsia flight. He was intercepted at the departure terminal after he had cleared immigration.

On questioning whether he was carrying any contraband or foreign currencies or wild life, Venkadesan gave evasive answers. His checked in luggage was recalled and taken up for examination.

The officers found 65 live tortoises in his luggage. They were found concealed in a few small boxes. Later, forest officers identified them as star tortoises, covered under Schedule IV of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and under CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora).

The star tortoises and the passenger were handed over to the Tamil Nadu forest department.

On Saturday night, the officers intercepted **Rajalingam Mahinthan, 30, a French passport holder, who had arrived here from Paris via Delhi in an Air India flight.** As he was evasive in his replies, his checked in luggage was taken up for examination. **Four mall Ganesha idols** were recovered from his luggage.

The Ganesha idols were silver coated. A gold assayer certified that the idols were made of gold of 12 carat purity. They weighed 4kg and were worth **Rs 65 lakh.**

07/04/19 Siddharth Prabhakar/Times of India

Lessors to Jet Airways Ltd are planning to ask India's aviation regulator to de-register many more planes leased to the airline, three sources said, signalling a planned bailout of the debt-laden carrier is failing to assuage their concerns.

About six lessors are expected to apply to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to de-register up to 15 planes that have already been grounded, over the next 10 days, one of the sources with direct knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

This is in addition to the five planes that MC Aviation Partners, a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Corp, applied on Friday to de-register, the source said.

Once de-registered, lessors can take the plane out of the country and lease them to other airlines.

While some lessors have already taken their planes out after a mutual agreement with Jet, sources say the latest applications to do so are on a non-consensual basis.

This deepens the crisis for Jet that has had to ground more than three-quarters of its fleet of 119 planes, many due to non-payment to lessors, leading to hundreds of flight cancellations.

It was not immediately clear which of its lessors were planning to apply for de-registration in the coming days.

06/04/19 Reuters/Business Today

Mumbai/New Delhi: Private equity players TPG, Indigo Partners and the government-anchored National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) are teaming up to submit an expression of interest (Eoi) for Jet Airways, said multiple sources, even as lenders explore an alternative by way of an operational turnaround if the bidding evokes lukewarm response.

The distressed airline's lenders have also approached Delta Air Lines and Air France-KLM to gauge their interest. One of the sources said teams from the two foreign airline companies are in India, though it could not be independently verified if they will submit a bid. Sources in the civil aviation ministry said they were unaware of the global airlines being approached.

State Bank of India, the lead lender to the airline, had also approached PE funds such as Blackstone

to evaluate if they would be interested if Jet's loyalty programme were to be monetised. But sources said that would be possible only after the airline itself is stabilised.

The SBI-led consortium of lenders on Thursday asked interested parties to submit EoIs between April 6 and April 9, advancing and shortening the time frame that had earlier been announced.

"The TPG-led consortium will evaluate the EoI conditions once they are made public over the weekend," said an official in the know. "TPG and Indigo Partners have been in the mix before, and were engaged with SBI. They needed an Indian partner, and NIIF was the obvious vehicle," he added. The brass of Etihad Airways led by Cramer Ball, an aviation industry veteran and former CEO of Jet, and Rangesh Embar met SBI officials on Thursday. **The meeting set off renewed speculation that the Abu Dhabi-based carrier, which holds 12% in the troubled Indian carrier, may also throw in its hat. However, Etihad has sought an exemption from making an open offer to Jet shareholders, which the stock market regulator has not yet agreed to.**

06/04/19 Arijit Barman, Dheeraj Tiwari, Mihir Mishra/Economic Times

New Delhi: In A close replication of events that unfolded before Kingfisher Airlines was grounded in 2012, India's largest oil marketing company Indian Oil Corp temporarily halted supply of aviation turbine fuel to cash-strapped Jet Airways across the nation two days in a row.

According to sources, the oil company stopped supply to Jet Airways at noon on Friday resulting in operational disruption for the airline, which is already flying a curtailed schedule. The supply was resumed later in the day around 5 pm.

On Thursday, too, fuel supply to Jet was halted for a few hours during the day.

The development came in light of Jet Airways' inability to purchase fuel on credit given its financial woes. Low-cost carrier SpiceJet, too, faced fuel supply cuts in 2014 when it was on the verge of a shutdown but later received funding from its founder Ajay Singh.

Jet's lenders, led by State Bank of India, which have taken control of 50.1 per cent stake in the airline, had said on March 25 they would infuse Rs 1,500 crore in the airline as an emergency measure but banking sources have said that the amount has not yet been pumped in to the airline. SBI is the lead lender to Jet Airways, which has a debt burden of more than Rs 8,000 crore.

Besides, the carrier's founder Naresh Goyal and wife Anita Goyal quit the board. The shareholding of Goyals have come down to 25 per cent from 51 per cent earlier. On Wednesday, Naresh Goyal, the former chairman of the airline, said he had agreed to every term and condition laid down by lenders to ensure timely release of funds for the airline.

The lenders said on Thursday, after a three-hour long meeting with the Jet Airways' management, that they will be proceeding with the next step of the airline's resolution plan inviting bids from potential buyers of their stake in Jet starting Saturday. The once-second largest airline has drastically curtailed its operations since last month following severe cash crunch and is operating only 26 planes of its 119 aircraft fleet.

06/04/19 Indian Express

A SpiceJet Boeing 737-800 aircraft on Saturday was damaged after it encountered severe rain and turbulent weather.

The flight which was bound from Bagdogra to Chennai landed safely at its destination.

A SpiceJet spokesperson said: "SpiceJet Boeing 737-800 aircraft encountered severe rain and turbulent weather enroute to Chennai where it landed safely".

The spokesperson further informed that the passengers of the flight disembarked from the aircraft normally.

06/04/19 ANI/Business Standard

New Delhi: **Pakistan has opened one of its eleven air routes enabling west-bound flights from India to make use of its airspace. Airlines such as Air India and Turkish Airlines have reportedly started using it.** This comes after Pakistan closed its airspace for commercial flights amid escalated tensions with India.

"Pakistan has been opening its airspace in tranches. On Thursday, it opened one of the 11 routes for west-bound flights. Therefore, airlines such as Air India and Turkish Airlines have started using it," a senior official was quoted by PTI.

The route P518 was opened on Thursday evening. However, as per reports, American airlines company United Airlines announced on Friday about the suspension of its flight connecting Newark airport and Delhi for two weeks.

"Since the route P518 that has been opened passes over south Pakistan, the air travel time for west-bound flights from Delhi will not decrease substantially," the official clarified.

As per reports, Pakistan had opened its airspace for all flights except for Bangkok, New Delhi and Kuala Lumpur on March 27 itself.

Pakistan had closed its airspace completely after Indian Air Force (IAF) carried pre-emptive aerial strikes on a terror camp in Pakistan's Balakot.

On February 26, after IAF's aerial strikes, majority of the airlines had suspended their Delhi-bound flights as it was commercially not feasible for them to take a longer route through the Mumbai airspace.

Reportedly, the Air India flights bound from Delhi-Washington and from Delhi-Chicago have been stopping at Mumbai for the purpose of refuelling and change of crew.

06/04/19 Business Today

Coimbatore: **In perhaps a first for the country, markets regulator SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) has approved an 'Airport' specific fund. 'Taking Off To The Future Airport Fund', which can raise a capital of up to Rs 10,000 crore (\$1.5 billion), has been approved by SEBI as a 'Category II Alternative Investment Fund' (AIF).**

Chennai-based 'Taking Off To The Future Investment Management LLP' is the sponsor and the investment manager of the fund.

The management and operation of 'Sponsor/Investment Manager' is led by its designated partner **Gigi George**.

George currently serves as the managing director of 'Taking Off To The Future Private Limited', an infrastructure company that has a presence in the airport sector.

George is planning to develop Chennai's second airport on 3,500 acres of land at Mamandur, about 80 kms south of the city. "We have identified four projects including the second airport for Chennai and a project in Central Travancore, Kerala (for investments)," George said.

"There is a lot of interest from large pension funds based in the US and Canada, sovereign wealth funds and private equity funds," he said.

"Investors would start getting returns from the fund from the third year," George said. "The potential is huge. But the issue in India is that it is not easy to get capital for large projects with long tenure," he said. The fund would receive contributions from banks, corporates, institutional investors, insurance companies, pension funds, high net worth individuals and other investors in India and abroad as permitted under the AIF Regulations.

The fund is targeting a minimum capital contribution of Rs 3,500 crore and a maximum capital contribution of Rs 7,000 crore. "The 'Trustee' and the 'Investment Manager' shall have the option, at their discretion, to revise the target capital commitments, subject to the maximum size of the fund, not exceeding Rs 100 billion (Rs 10,000 crore)," the fund said.

06/03/19 M Allirajan/Times of India

New Delhi: The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on Saturday detected high volume of US Dollar from a foreigner at Kolkata airport, an official release said here.

On April 6, around 1055 hrs at Security Hold Area of Kolkata Airport, a CISF personnel noticed some suspicious image, seems to be currency note inside the bag of a passenger.

The passenger's bag picked was up for physical check. During physical checking, no suspicious items found inside the bag, but the empty bag was found unusually heavy.

06/04/19 UNI

Bhubaneswar: A Bangladeshi youth has been arrested in Biju Patnaik International Airport in Odisha capital, on charges of possession of fake passport.

The Airport Police apprehended one Ayan Sraman (29) of Jaldi village under Banskhal police limits in Chittagong of Bangladesh. He was detected when travelling from Bangkok airport to Biju Patnaik airport on a Thai Air Aisa flight.

According to police reports, Sraman was found with a passport issued by Regional Passport Office, Kolkata in the name of Biswanath Mandal. Upon searching him, the police found a Bangladeshi passport, two Aadhar Cards, two mobile phones and a notebook on his person. He could not produce valid passport or visa documents to establish his identity.

Official sources also revealed that he had procured the fake Indian passport from Bangladeshi agents to seek jobs in India under a fake identity.

06/04/19 Odisha Sun Times

The Tatas are learnt to be interested in acquiring the cash-strapped Jet Airways, which has been put up for sale by its Indian lenders.

In a bid to find a buyer at the earliest to mobilise an estimated ₹8,500 crore for revival, banks, led by the State Bank of India (SBI), on Thursday decided to invite expression of interest (EoI) from interested parties on April 6, 2019 and the Tatas are planning to submit a bid, people familiar with the development said. The last date for submission of bids is April 9. A Tata Sons spokesperson said, "We do not comment on market speculation."

In November last, the Tatas, who run Vistara and AirAsia India in joint ventures, held preliminary discussions to invest in Jet Airways. Tata Group chairman N. Chandrasekaran even took the proposal to the Tata Sons board for approval. However, they withdrew because Jet's promoter wanted to retain control over the airline, which was not acceptable to the Tatas.

In November last, the Tatas, who run Vistara and AirAsia India in joint ventures, held preliminary discussions to invest in Jet Airways. Tata Group chairman N. Chandrasekaran even took the proposal to the Tata Sons board for approval. However, they withdrew because Jet's promoter wanted to retain control over the airline, which was not acceptable to the Tatas.

Earlier, it was estimated that they would invest about \$1 billion to acquire a controlling stake in Jet, but now there has been a sharp erosion in value as the airline is on the brink. Analysts estimate Jet's total liability at more than \$2 billion, including bank and aircraft loans of ₹7,500 crore. Little is known about how much debt had been accumulated in last six months.

"The last six months has been damaging for Jet Airways. The delay has eaten away the company. Six months back, the valuation could have been better. Now, it is up to the banks on how much haircut they can accept," said Ansuman Deb, aviation analyst, ICICI Securities.

It is understood that Singapore Airlines, which holds 49% stake in Tata SIA Airlines that runs Vistara, is assisting in the bidding process and may pick up a stake.

05/04/19 Lalatendu Mishra/The Hindu

GVK is in advanced negotiations with a combination of National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) and Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) for Rs 6,500-crore funding in its flagship

airport in Mumbai to counter advances by Gautam Adani to buy into it.

The decision to court the sovereign wealth funds (SWFs) is being seen as an effort to bring in a white knight, said multiple sources aware of the negotiations, when **the stake sale exercise in the Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) has escalated into a full blown legal battle between GVK and its South African partner Bidvest.**

NIIF, India's first SWF, and ADIA, the world's second largest SWF, are likely to infuse the funds through a combination of equity and debt, valuing MIAL at Rs 12,500-13,000 crore as apposed to Adani's Rs 9,500 crore. The duo is likely to buy 49% at GVK's airport holding company GVK Airport Developers that owns 50.5% of MIAL for Rs 3,000 crore equity.



Additionally, they are negotiating a structured debt instrument to infuse Rs 3,500 crore. GVK will use the proceeds to buy out the two South African JV partners Bidvest and ACSA from MIAL, and also the three existing lenders ICICI, HDFC Bank and Yes Bank. The Reddy family's entire MIAL shareholding is pledged with these banks. The holdco is believed to have Rs 5,000-5,200 crore of debt. GVK's promoters took the loans to finance an Australia project and the Bengaluru airport venture.

Sources add, if GVK fails to service its debt obligations in future, NIIF-ADIA could take over the airport from them. Citi and Morgan Stanley are believed to be advisers in the deal. The Bangalore airport, once part of GVK's portfolio, is now controlled by Prem Watsa's Fairfax.

Spokespersons of GVK and ADIA declined to comment. Mails sent to NIIF did not generate a response till press time on Sunday. MIAL is a joint venture of GVK and South African investors Bidvest and ACSA. GVK Airport Developers own 50.5% of MIAL, AAI 26%, Bidvest 13.5% and ACSA 10%.

The GVK-led consortium has been running Mumbai airport since 2006 and is also building a second one in Navi Mumbai for about Rs 16,000 crore.

MIAL owns 74% of the planned Navi Mumbai International Airport Ltd, while the rest is held by local nodal body City and Industrial Development Corp (Cidco). **The Adani Group made a formal offer earlier this January for the 23.5% held by the two South African companies, prompting GVK to ringfence itself. The deadline to buy ACSA's stake by exercising the right of first refusal (RoFR) clause is believed to be April 10 while last week GVK filed an injunction in the Delhi High Court to block Bidvest from selling its stake to a third party after that deadline lapsed on April 3 and sought more time.**

After Adani's overture, GVK had said in February it will exercise its RoFR under the shareholders' agreement to buy out 162 million equity shares representing 13.5% of MIAL from Bid Services Division (Mauritius) Ltd, a subsidiary of Bidvest Group Ltd. After the February notification to the exchanges, GVK had informed that it would also buy ASCA's 10% stake too and hike its shareholding to 74% but its efforts to raise financing have failed so far. As per the agreement, the invocation of the first right of refusal can happen only once.

The court is expected to resume hearing the matter on Monday.

Since one year, GVK has been hoping that its holdco monetising exercise for a 49% stake sale will help raise funds for a buyback at the operating company level (MIAL). Other than NIIF and ADIA, talks have also been ongoing with PSP Investments of Canada and Spanish conglomerate Ferrovial.

The Economic times of India 08/04/2019

Singapore/New Delhi: The idea was to shore up confidence in one of India's biggest brands, squeezed by low fares and high costs. But some lessors quickly lost patience as the bank did not provide details and Jet's founder angrily defied them to take back planes.

At one point, the airline's usually jovial founder and chairman, Naresh Goyal, banged his fist on a table, jarring some of the lessors who had flown to Mumbai from Dublin, Singapore and Dubai, said one person who attended the discussions. "That meeting went horribly wrong," recalled the executive from a global leasing firm, who did not want to be identified because the meeting was not public.

Goyal's emotional outburst and Jet's subsequent failure to pay up as promised may have pushed the relationship between the airline and its lessors to a breaking point, two other executives who were at the meeting said, prompting some to take the drastic step of pulling their planes from its fleet.

That has led Jet, which blazed trails in one of the world's fastest-growing air travel markets, to cancel hundreds of flights. Saddled with more than \$1.2 billion in debt, and with dwindling revenue, the airline has said it also owes money to banks, pilots and suppliers.

It was not immediately clear how much money Jet owes.

Jet did not respond to multiple requests for comment but has said it is "actively engaged" with all its lessors. Goyal did not respond to requests for comment.

"Aircraft lessors have been supportive of the company's efforts in this regard," Jet said in its most recent statement to the Mumbai stock exchange on April 2.

The loss of aircraft and friction with lessors is just the latest major setback for Jet, which has been struggling for years, beset by an insurgent group of low-cost Indian competitors.

Purchases of wide-body aircraft 13 years ago and ambitions for the international market may have set Jet on its current course, industry insiders say.

The 26-year-old airline has posted losses in eight of the past 10 years and its share of the domestic passenger market has fallen to about 15.5 percent in 2018 from 22.5 percent in 2015.

About 60 percent, or more than \$600 million, has been wiped off Jet's market value over the past year.

Now, with the airline's running out of ways to make money, state-run banks, led by SBI, took a temporary stake in Jet, promised a new loan of 15 billion rupees (\$216 million) and forced 69-year-old Goyal to resign as chairman.

On Monday, Jet's lenders laid out terms for potential bidders to buy up to 75 percent stake in the carrier. Expressions of interest are due on Wednesday, with final bids due on April 30.

But lessors remain concerned, and some, such as Avolon, SMBC Aviation Capital, Aircastle and a subsidiary of Mitsubishi Corp, have asked India's aviation regulator to de-register a combined 18 planes, according to the regulator's website.

"Despite Goyal's departure from Jet, lessors don't seem to think the carrier can be rescued, judging by the urgency in repossessing aircraft," said Shukor Yusof, the head of aviation consultancy Endau Analytics.

That adds complications for any potential new investor, two industry sources said.

"How we do business with Jet in the future will depend a lot on the new investor and how they

manage the relationship," said one of the executives who was at the January meeting.

Aercap Holdings, GE Capital Aviation Services, Avolon and BOC Aviation are among the big lessors grounding Jet's aircraft, leasing and industry sources say. Aercap, Avolon and BOC Aviation declined to comment. GE Capital Aviation Services said Jet was a long-standing customer and it remains in regular contact with the airline.

09/04/19 Anshuman Daga/Aditi Shah/Reuters

Global private equity firm TPG Capital and international airline such as Lufthansa are among six entities who are believed to have shown interest in the "expression of interest" stake sale process of the debt-ridden Jet Airways, sources said.

The development comes as lenders of the debt-ridden airline invited EoI for stake sale in the airline to recover their dues worth Rs 8,000 crore.

Sources said that TPG Capital, private equity firm KKR, Blackstone, Lufthansa, Singapore Airlines and Delta-Air France-KLM are among the companies approached by the lenders.

When contacted, a Tata Group spokesperson, said: "We don't comment on market speculation."

As per the document issued by the State Bank of India (SBI), the lead lender in the consortium, it offered stake from 31.2 to 75 per cent of the company on a fully diluted basis.

However, it was not known whether ex-Chairman Naresh Goyal or major equity owner Etihad Airways would be selling their stake on a pro-rata basis.

The airline owes Rs 8,000 crore to lenders, led by the SBI. On March 25, Goyal had stepped down from the board of the airline and ceded majority control to the SBI-led consortium.

The consortium of banks then appointed SBI Caps to take out the EoI and conduct the process of their stake sale in the airline.

"The lenders, pursuant to the guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India, are in the process of formulation of a resolution plan for resolving stress in the company, inter alia, involving change in control and management of the company," the EOI document said.

The purpose of the EoI is to provide information about the company to enable interested parties to make assessment about the proposal prior to the submission of their bids.

The time period for submission of EoI is till 6 p.m. on April 10.

09/04/19 IANS/Business Insider

After going soft on the management for over the past few months on pending salaries, Jet Airways domestic pilots body, the National Aviators Guild, on April 9, threatened to take legal recourse unless the dues are not cleared by early next week.

Meanwhile, airline chief executive Vinay Dube in a communication to the staff said the management "continues to work with the consortium of lenders on the resolution plan."

In a legal notice to Dube, the guild that claims membership of around 1,100 domestic pilots, said each day they are left worried as salary arrears keep piling up.

Pilots along with engineers and senior executives have not been paid for the last three months amid cash-crunch in the airline that began last July, and saw an ownership change last month with banks taking majority shares and founder chairman Naresh Goyal leaving the airline and halving his stake-holding in the airline.

Along with these staff, the airline has defaulted on the payment of March salaries to other employees as well.

While delaying salaries of its entire 16,000 workforce for the third time since last September, on April 3, the airline had informed employees of providing an update on April 9. But the management today had nothing concrete to share.

"My client (NAG) calls upon the management to pay their salaries dues for January, February and March, by April 14 and future salaries by the first of every month. Failing which my client shall be constrained to resort to all constitutional and legal means to get their salaries," read the legal

notice.

Late March, the guild had warned of a "no flying call" from April 1 over delayed salaries, which they had deferred to April 14.

"Non-payment of salaries is leading to extreme stress, anxiety and frustration amongst the pilots--hardly an ideal situation for them to be in the cockpits. It hardly needs to be said passenger safety--the prime concern of all--requires pilots fly stress-free," said the legal notice.

09/04/19 PTI/Moneycontrol

New Delhi: **With prime slots occupied by Jet Airways at the congested Mumbai airport getting vacated, rival airlines have been grabbing the opportunity to expand their operations from the base.**

On Monday, India's largest airline IndiGo announced expansion of its international network from the city, besides launching additional domestic destinations, to cater to the demand following withdrawal of several routes by Jet Airways.

The three new overseas services include daily non-stop flights to Jeddah and Dammam and Abu Dhabi, while the domestic services will be launched to cities such as Indore, Kochi and Patna among others, IndiGo said in a release.

"We are strengthening Mumbai as a key travel hub for domestic and international connectivity from India. We are adding Jeddah and Dammam effective June 5 and July 5, respectively. Mumbai is the commercial hub of India and we see great potential connecting the Middle East with this city," said William Boulter, chief commercial officer, IndiGo.

Jeddah being the commercial capital and the gateway for Haj, Dammam being the growth centre in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi being a major cultural and commercial centre in UAE, are critical markets for strengthening IndiGo's presence in the Middle East, he further said.

The services on the Mumbai-Abu Dhabi route will be operational from June 5, the airline's release added.

"Additionally, given the rush in summer traffic and the shortfall in industry capacity, IndiGo is temporarily adding approximately 20 new departures each from Mumbai and Delhi in a phased manner from April 15," the airline said.

Other carriers, including Vistara and AirAsia India, too have expanded services from Mumbai with Jet vacating slots.

09/04/19 Indian Express

Pune: Ajay Kumar, a working professional based in the city, has been waiting for over a month for his ticket refund from Jet Airways for his cancelled flight. So, are many others.

"I had booked a Jet Airways ticket for Rs 4,000 for the March 5 Delhi-Guwahati flight but it was cancelled. I have been calling the customer care number but am not able to speak to the airline representative. In fact, I had to book another ticket for Rs 7,500 to travel to my destination. A couple of days ago, I received a call from the airline representative asking about my PNR number, but I am yet to receive the refund," Kumar told TOI.

Jet Airways had cancelled 60% of its flights to different destinations but there are many like Kumar who are waiting for refunds for their cancelled flights. Kalyan Dharamsheel, a businessman, whose flight to Chennai from Pune was cancelled in the second week of March, said, "How can the airline take such a long time to process my refund? The airline representative took down my details, but I am yet to receive the money (Rs 11,000) I paid for the two tickets. I have tried to contact them but have not been able to speak to their representatives."

While the spokesperson of the airline refused to divulge details of the number of refunds they were processing on a daily basis due to the vast number of cancelled flights across the country, sources said that the number was big. Presently, the airline is flying with a fleet of just 28 aircrafts.

09/04/19 Joy Sengupta/Times of India

New Delhi: **The aviation regulator plans to ask airlines to come up with immediate and medium-term plans to increase domestic flights and check the spike in fares.**

Official sources said the regulator would be meeting the airlines on Wednesday. They have been asked to come out with an “immediate and medium-term plan to augment the additional capacity in the market”.

The regulator will also discuss ways to increase capacity, which would be over and above the flights approved for the summer schedule.

It had approved last month a nearly seven-month-long summer schedule beginning March 31

Data showed airfares had increased substantially compared with the spot ticket prices available during the same period last year.

A travel portal said the Delhi-Mumbai spot fare was now over Rs 11,000. Similarly, Mumbai-Bangalore fares have increased to about Rs 13,000.

“In the last few weeks, fares have been higher by 15 per cent year-on-year on an average for last minute bookings,” Balu Ramachandran, head — air and distribution, Cleartrip said.

The shortage of planes and high seat occupancies are expected to push fares higher in the short term.

Demand for flights is higher from April to June because of holiday travel as most schools and colleges are closed at this time of the year.

Jet Airways’ domestic pilots body — the National Aviators Guild — on Tuesday served a legal notice to the airline, setting an April 14 deadline for the new management to clear their salary dues.

Jet Airways pilots along with engineers and senior executives have not been paid for the last three months. Along with these staff, the airline has defaulted on the payment of March salaries to other employees as well.

Jet has massively reduced its operations from its main hub Mumbai to just about 32 flights on Tuesday, an airline source said.

09/04/19 Telegraph

An entity set up to finance affiliates of Etihad Airways PJSC said Jet Airways India Ltd. has become the third carrier in the group to fall behind on interest payments.

EA Partners I, a vehicle created in 2015 to allow Etihad to provide funds to airlines in which it owned stakes, said in a statement that the Indian carrier failed to make a payment on March 19 on account of “temporary liquidity constraints.”

Etihad set up two vehicles, EA Partners I and II, which sold \$1.2 billion of bonds to raise funds for several airlines. The structure was designed to provide financing for the airlines while minimizing the burden on the balance sheet of their Abu Dhabi-based parent company.

The airlines each guarantee as much as 20 percent of the bonds, making regular contributions into a cash pool from which coupons are paid to investors who bought the securities.

EA Partners I’s \$700 million of bonds maturing in September 2020 have been trading at about 40 percent below face value after two other airlines in the group, Air Berlin and Alitalia, started insolvency proceedings in 2017. Etihad owns a 24 percent stake in Jet Airways.

09/04/18 Luca Casiraghi/Bloomberg

Big plans for the aviation infrastructure! **The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in its manifesto for Lok Sabha polls 2019 has promised huge development for the nation’s aviation sector. With regard to the establishment of new airports, the party has promised that in the next five years, that is by the year 2024, they will double the number of functional airports in the country, if voted to power. According to the manifesto, in the year 2014, there were a total of 65 functional airports. While today, there are as many as 101 functional airports in the country. The Modi government aims to double this number.**

Meanwhile, in the last one year, several airports have been inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The state of **Sikkim** was finally put on the aviation map as PM Modi inaugurated the **Pakyong** greenfield airport in the state. The airport is spread across 201 acres and is approximately 30 kilometres from the state capital Gangtok. In addition to this, the **Hollongi airport** was also inaugurated by PM Modi in the state of **Arunachal Pradesh** in the month of February. The airport becomes imperative for providing regional air-connectivity to the state and for boosting the tourism potential.

Apart from these airports, the **UDAN (Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik)** scheme or the RCS (regional connectivity scheme) was launched by the government in the year **2017**, with the objective of making it affordable for the common man to fly. Under the UDAN scheme, **the number of regional airports in the country increased significantly**. Inaugurated recently, the Hindon Air Force Station in Delhi-NCR will let passengers fly at affordable air ticket prices to places like Pithoragarh, Jaisalmer, Gorakhpur, Allahabad and Kannur. Additionally, popular tourist heartlands like Hampi, Gangtok and Shimla will be easier with the UDAN connectivity flights to these places.

09/04/19 Nikita Prasad/Financial Express

Chennai: **Air Intelligence Unit (AIU) sleuths of the Customs department have foiled bids to smuggle Rs 27 lakh worth gold and foreign currencies worth Rs 19 lakh at the Chennai International Airport.** Two passengers — Mohamed Hassali (27), and Subaiyar Ali (32) — both from Ramanathapuram, who arrived from Colombo on Monday, were intercepted at the exit of the arrival hall on suspicion of carrying gold. On personal search, **gold in rubbery material was found concealed in their rectums.** On extraction, two gold ingots weighing 590 grams and worth Rs 19.3 lakh were recovered.

09/04/19 New Indian Express

Hyderabad: **The Flight Simulation Technique Centre (FSTC), a registered standalone Approved Training Organisation (ATO), has received a state-of-the-art full-flight Airbus A320 NEO simulator at its newly-opened facility here on Sunday.**

A second Airbus A320 NEO Full-flight Simulator (Level D) would also be delivered by Canada's CAE Inc later this year. The CAE would deliver a number of complementary lower-level training devices too, including an IPT-Integrated Procedures Trainer, that would be ready for training.

The FSTC has already installed the region's first Bombardier Q400 simulator and is ready for training to extend simulator services to operators in India and also to international carriers operating the Bombardier's Dash8 in the region, said Sanjay Mandavia, founder and director of FSTC.

"We are expanding our training infrastructure to address the demand for Airbus A320 NEO training to be provided in India," said Capt. Mandavia. Co-founder D.S. Basraon said: **"With this new delivery from the CAE, the FSTC will be the first independent operator to offer a range of new training solutions and equipment for the rapidly expanding Airbus A320 NEO fleet".**

The FSTC aims to become Asia's leading ATO for training pilots both locally and abroad. The A320 NEO Simulators being ready for training in the second quarter of 2019 are perfectly timed to address an increasing requirement for training infrastructure to support the growing installed base of A320 Neo aircraft in the region, they said.

07/04/19 The Hindu

The resolution plan for Jet Airways, which is operating with about a fifth of its original fleet, has run into further trouble. Even as there's no sign of any investor so far, the lenders have decided to ask for expressions of interest (EoIs) for a stake sale on April 6. They have set April 9 as the deadline for receiving EoIs, giving investors three days to respond. To prevent Jet from being grounded, lenders' consortium led by State Bank of India will release Rs 150 crore as emergency

fund to the airline, which has a debt of more than Rs 8,500 crore besides unpaid dues to lessors and employees.

The resolution plan prepared by the lenders had estimated an emergency fund of Rs 1,500 crore for the airline, but after a lengthy meeting of bankers and Jet executives on Thursday, a decision was taken to infuse Rs 150 crore for now. There was no consensus among the bankers on the resolution plan or the committed amount of Rs 1,500 crore. With the additional funds, the airline, left with 26 planes, will manage operations for only the next few days. It has assured the government there will be no further groundings.

The proposal for releasing priority funding of Rs 1,500 crore is likely to be put to vote on Friday following which a final decision will be taken. People in the know indicated that there's a likelihood of the vote not going through. Banks have made it clear that they will pursue other options, including a reference to the insolvency court, if the stake sale process fails to result in "an acceptable outcome."

In a joint statement late Thursday evening, lenders said they intended to pursue the bank-led resolution plan for the stake sale in the company in a time-bound manner under the present legal and regulatory framework, while inviting expression of interest from potential bidders.

"Lenders are cognizant that the outcome of the efforts will depend on the interest shown by the parties in stake sale," the statement added in a sign of things to come.

A senior public sector bank executive associated with the Jet Airways rescue plan said lenders were trying to give support but the financial situation was grim. "It is already operating with a small fleet. We had prepared an estimate of Rs 1,500 crore for interim funding. It was a preliminary figure and that keeps increasing. Unless there is a concrete investment proposal, it will be a difficult situation." Another banker pointed out that not all lenders are willing to release more funds into the company, not even priority funding. **"The resolution plan involved funding from the original promoters, and in the absence of that there should be a commitment from a new investor for further funds to be released,"** said a bank executive.

In an indication that the crisis is getting bigger, Jet Airways CEO Vinay Dube and CFO Amit Agarwal briefed civil aviation secretary Pradeep Singh Kharola on the current state of operations. State Bank of India chairman Rajnish Kumar too briefed the secretary. **"Jet Airways has assured that its fleet size will not go down below 26 planes. Safety and convenience of passengers will be kept in mind before any decision on Jet Airways is taken,"** Kharola said.

Lessors have been grounding Jet's fleet over non-payment of dues. Other suppliers and vendors too are stepping up pressure. On Thursday, oil marketing companies briefly stopped fuel supply to the airline over non-payment. However, operations resumed soon after. "Jet Airways continues to operate as per schedule," the airline said in a statement.

Business Standards 05/04/2019

As many as five companies are said to have submitted expressions of interest (Eo-Is) in picking up stakes in Jet Airways that have been put on sale by lenders as part of a rescue plan, said two people aware of the matter. However, the lenders have extended the Wednesday deadline by two days, in the hope that Etihad Airways, which hasn't submitted an EoI, will show interest.

ET couldn't ascertain the names of the investors but both people cited above said the Eo-Is were either "non-serious" or lacked critical details on how the bidders will recapitalise Jet. This is the first stage of the bidding process and the EoIs are non-binding.

“As part of the (bidding) process, we are in receipt of some Eols and some more persons have expressed desire to participate if additional time is provided,” said a spokesperson of SBI Capital Markets, which is overseeing the process. “Accordingly, in order to allow better participation in the process the domestic lenders have agreed to extend the timeline for submission of Expressions of Interest which have been updated and made available on the websites.”

Lenders led by State Bank of India have been trying to persuade Etihad, which owns 24% of Jet, to increase its investment to help revive the carrier. Etihad though has been insisting on an exemption from the takeover norm that requires investors to make an open offer for a further 20% stake if they exceed a 25% threshold. Etihad’s board is supposed to take a decision on whether to invest further in etc.

Meanwhile, Jet continued to grapple with financial woes. Indian Oil Corp. (IOC) stopped supplies to it between 3 pm and 8:30 pm, forcing it to delay all flights till after 9 pm, according to two people aware of the matter. Moreover, **a cargo agent in Jet’s main global hub Amsterdam seized a Boeing 777 plane’s bellyhold cargo in the afternoon, grounding the aircraft**, sources said.

“Flight 9W 231 from Amsterdam to Mumbai of April 10 was cancelled due to operational reasons,” Jet said, without elaborating. “Guests... are being re-accommodated.”

Since Tuesday, Jet has been flying 22 planes, down from 124 in December. Jet disputed this, saying it still has 26 planes flying.

On Wednesday evening, the airline’s founder Naresh Goyal signed an agreement to pledge more shares. The stake he’s pledged is now up to 41.1% out of his total 51% holding. The lenders have however approved Goyal retaining a 9.9% shareholding in the airline that will be unencumbered, which means that it will not have to be pledged. In effect, this means he will continue to have a presence in the airline.

Goyal’s move will allow the lenders to put a higher number of shares on the block as part of a revival plan, up from 31.2%. **The lenders’ plan to take over more than 50% of Jet’s shares was stalled following a recent Supreme Court judgement that quashed a Reserve Bank of India circular that overhauled rules for debt restructuring. The lenders are pushing hard for a rescue to stave off Jet’s referral to bankruptcy court.**

The **Tata Group**, speculated to be a strong contender, **doesn’t appear to be interested in participating in the process**. A person close to the group said it has invested heavily in building two brands — Vistara and AirAsia India — and buying another airline doesn’t make business sense. Instead, picking up routes abandoned by Jet Airways would be more advantageous.

SBI, Etihad, Tata Sons and IOC didn’t respond to queries.

Jet has grounded planes, delayed salaries, defaulted on loans and laid off staff. Its management has estimated the airline won’t survive beyond April without a fund infusion. The delay is said to be a concern for the aviation ministry, which feels that this will hurt revival chances.

“The banks are under pressure to find a solution to the Jet Airways crisis but delays are hampering the prospects of revival further,” said a senior aviation ministry official. “Delay in finding a way out for the airline is only taking the airline to a point of no return.”

Apart from extending the deadline, the lenders also issued **clarifications on bid requirements**. An investor will have to specify how much equity it intends to pick up and the amount of debt it will take on. The bid document had said earlier that the new owner will take over control and management of Jet and settle its obligations.

Lenders have initiated the bidding process as Jet was unable to honour its debt obligations, the bid document said. **The fund infusion can be by way of loans, according to clarifications. The shares can be taken over either via acquisition or subscription**, the clarification said.

The Economic times of India 11/04/2019