

Airports

- ❖ The **structure** of the **Noida Airport** is **witnessing a rapid pace of completion**. Construction has reached the final floor of the passenger terminal, and work has begun on the façade. Further, the runway has been paved and the ATC tower has reached the full height of 38 meters, both targeted for completion by March 2024. The project has also been exempted from the graded response action plan (GRAP) being a critical project, and hence would not witness any delays due to the same. The airport is targeted to be operational before the end of 2024. After completion of phase 1, the airport is expected to handle a passenger capacity of around 12 million annually.
- ❖ The **expansion work** for the **terminal building** at the **Kolhapur airport** is **targeted to be completed by December 10, 2023**. The project entailed investments amounting to Rs 2.74 billion. The inauguration is likely to take place in December 2023 or January 2024. Further, discussions for starting an Instrument Landing System (ILS) and a 180-seater airbus facility were also carried out.
- ❖ **According to sources**, the **Tamil Nadu government** is **working towards getting air connectivity for Thanjavur**. Works are currently underway for a road connecting the proposed terminal and the existing defence airport. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) is likely to invest around Rs 2 billion for the construction of the airport, and it is expected to take a minimum of one year to become operational. Other airstrips that are to be developed under the UDAN scheme include Salem, Vellore, Neyveli, and Ramnad.
- ❖ The **precision approach path indicator (Papi) lights** of the **Bokaro airport** were **inspected by AAI officials**. The lights are installed beside the runways and guide aircraft during landings. A seven-member team conducted the inspection, and a survey will be conducted by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) based on the report by the AAI. The city is scheduled to launch air services from February 2024.
- ❖ **Preparatory work for land acquisition** for the **development** of the **Sabarimala (Dharmasastha) Greenfield Airport Project** commenced on **November 27, 2023**, with **digital mapping** of the **project area**. Besides, the Government of Kerala (GoK) has issued an order for acquisition of 2,570 acres of land in Erumeli and Manimala. Out of which, 2,263.18 acres of land is in the Cheruvally Estate and an additional 307 acres is outside the estate. The project involves development of a greenfield airport at Sabarimala in Kerala on public-private partnership (PPP) mode at an investment of Rs 34.11 billion. It will include world-class aviation infrastructure such as terminal building, runways, taxiways etc. and will consist of various landside and airside aviation facilities.
- ❖ The **feasibility report** for the **runway extension** under the **Umroi (Shillong) Airport Runway Expansion Project** is **likely to be submitted to the Government of Meghalaya by January 2024**. The project involves an extension of runway to facilitate landing of bigger aircraft at Umroi (Shillong) Airport in Meghalaya.
- ❖ The **Madhya Pradesh Road Development Corporation Limited (MPRDC)** has **signed contract agreement worth Rs 39.9 million** with **Ernst and Young LLP** for **consultancy works for preparation of aviation policy and feasibility study for 21 airstrips in Madhya Pradesh**. The work is likely to be completed in one year and six months. The airstrips shall be implemented in the locations like Mandsaur, Neemuch, Datia, Umariya, Seoni, Chhindwara, Khargone, Sagar, Birwa, Ujjain, Jhabua, Shivpuri, Satna, Mandala, Singrauli, Ratlam, Khandwa, Guna, Sidhi, Panna, and Panchmarhi.
- ❖ The **Government of Tamil Nadu (GoTN)** has **granted the administrative sanction** for the **acquisition of 3,774.01 acres of land in Parandur and Kancheepuram district** for the **development of the Chennai Greenfield Airport Project**. A total of 5,746.18 acres is required for the project out of which 1,972.17 acres is government land. The project involves development of new greenfield airport having two runways, terminal buildings, taxiways, aprons, cargo terminal etc. at Parandur in Tamil Nadu at an estimated cost of Rs 200 billion.

❖ **Airports Authority of India (AAI) invited bids for the development of a new terminal building and miscellaneous works for the Belagavi Airport new terminal building project on November 22, 2023.** The last date for bid submission is December 18, 2023. The work is likely to be completed in two years with 2,555 days for operation, maintenance and an all-inclusive comprehensive annual maintenance contract (AICMC) including a defect liability period (DLP) of 2 years at an estimated cost of Rs 2,650.5 million. The project involves the development of a new terminal building at Belagavi Airport in Karnataka. The terminal building will cover an area of 20,000 square meters, comprising 16,400 square meters for the new terminal building and 3,600 square meters for the conversion of the existing terminal into the arrivals section.

Airlines

❖ **IndiGo has launched their artificial intelligence (AI) chatbot, 6Eskai.** The in-house developed chatbot was carried out in collaboration with Microsoft and is powered by OpenAI's GPT-4 technology. It is capable of addressing queries in 10 different languages and offers a platform for booking tickets across the entire network. A 75 per cent reduction in the workload of customer service agents was witnessed during the soft launch. 6ESkai can perform tasks including booking of tickets, applying promotional discounts, web check-ins, answering queries, and others. Further, it can take verbal instructions using speech-to-text models.

❖ **Reportedly, from February 2024, Fly91 is to start flights from Jalgaon on three routes namely Pune, Goa, and Hyderabad.** This is under the UDAN-5.0. Flights on the routes would be operated using a 76-seater ATR. There are currently no commercial flights operating from the Jalgaon airport.

❖ **On November 28, 2023, Air India Express added Gwalior in Madhya Pradesh to its network, commencing operations.** The direct flight connects Gwalior and Hyderabad. The airline would also connect Gwalior to Amritsar, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kochi, Kolkata and Visakhapatnam through one-stop itineraries.

❖ **Starting on December 15, 2023, Vistara is to launch direct flight services from Mumbai to Doha.** An A321neo aircraft would be used for operating the services on this route to be run four times a week. The airline's network comprises of domestic and international destinations, and Qatar is reported its 50th destination.

Finance

❖ **According to sources, a Rs 19.5 billion three-year debt facility has been provided to the GMR Airports jointly by Standard Chartered Bank, JPMorgan, Deutsche Bank, a Varde Partners entity, and Trust Investment.** The proceeds are to be used for the refinancing of high-cost borrowings and partly to invest in subsidiaries. The funds were reportedly raised in the form of senior unsecured bonds on November 22, 2023. Rs 5 billion each was subscribed by Varde-backed Credit Solution India Trust and Standard Chartered Singapore, Rs 4.35 billion each by JPMorgan and Deutsche Bank & Trust Investment Advisors, and the remaining Rs 0.8 billion by Trust Investment Advisors.

Miscellaneous

❖ **Reportedly, indicative blending targets were set for the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF), with the aim to promote biofuels in the country.** A target of 1 per cent blending of SAF initially for international flights is targeted by 2027, and 2 per cent blending target in 2028, initially for international flights.

❖ **The Thiruvananthapuram International Airport received the Environmental Excellence Award at the 23rd annual Greentech Environment Awards 2023 on November 24, 2023, for their performance in the initiatives undertaken for emission reduction.** The airport aims to meet the sustainable development goals including water and wastewater management, energy management and reduction in Scope 1&2 emissions among others.