

Air India completes one year under Tata

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India's veteran airline, Air India, completed one year with Tata group on Friday (Jan 27). Airline's chief executive officer Campbell Wilson said Air India's progress has been nothing short of stunning. Wilson said it is "finalising a historic order of new aircraft."

"Taken together, the progress over the last 12 months has been nothing short of stunning, even if so much of what we have been working on has been behind the scenes, building platforms and capabilities so that our future ambitions can take flight. There is of course much more that needs to be done, and everyone internally and externally - is hungry for us to do it," Wilson says in a letter to Air India employees.

Wilson's statements come as the national carrier is embroiled in the controversy of two mid-air peeing incidents.

On January 27 last year, the soft-to-software conglomerate took over the management and control of Air India from the government, after 69 years. Through the divestment, the government had sold off its 100% stake in the state-owned national airline, including Air India's 100% shareholding in Air India Express Ltd and 50% in Air India SATS Airport Services Private Ltd. Tata Group made the

winning bid at ₹18,000 crore to bag the airline in October 2021. The airline is now handled by Tata Sons' wholly-owned, newly-formed subsidiary Talace.

Shedding some light on the airline's achievement in the past year, Wilson said the total operating aircraft have increased by 27% to 100, whereas the number of average daily flights have increased by 30%. According to Wilson, weekly international flights increased by 63%, 16 new international routes were either launched or announced, the average daily passenger uplift surged by 72% and the average daily frequency per domestic has witnessed a rise of 81%.

In order to bolster its presence in the domestic aviation industry, Tata's Air India acquired a 100% stake in AirAsia India (AAI) in November last year. AirAsia India was a joint venture between Tata Sons and AirAsia Group, with the former owning an 83.67% stake, while the latter owned the remaining 16.33% stake. Later the same month, Tata Sons signed an agreement with Singapore Airlines (SIA) to merge Vistara with Air India. The move is touted to be Tata group's strategy to consolidate its aviation businesses under one umbrella. Singapore Airlines, the flag carrier airline of Singapore, owned a 49% stake in Tata-SIA Airlines, which operates Vistara, while Tata group held the remaining 51% stake.

However, the past two months have been nothing short of turbulence for Tata's Air India. The aviation regulator directorate general of civil aviation (DGCA) has slapped penalties worth ₹30 lakh and ₹10 lakh on the carrier this month, in relation to two mid-air urination incidents. Both incidents—where two male passengers in inebriated conditions urinated on their female co-passengers—have garnered much criticism over the mishandling of the situation by the airline.

Following the incidents, the national carrier also revised the in-flight alcohol policy. The revised guidelines say the airline's crew can refuse further serving of alcohol, if needed, tactfully.

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