

Bhutan's design for Gelephu International Airport unveiled

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Dhaka: Bhutan will be welcoming its second international airport in Gelephu by 2029. The designs for the new terminal, created by architecture studio Bjarke Ingels Group, have been revealed. Located near the Bhutan-India border, Gelephu International Airport will feature a 68,000-square-metre terminal.

A collaboration between BIG and aviation engineering firm NACO, the project intends to handle 1.3 million annual passengers by 2040, and to expand by 2065 to accommodate 5.5 million annual travelers.

The airport's location is set amidst subtropical surroundings with mountains and the Paitha River in the background. The terminal's undulating diagrid structure intended to resemble a stylized mountain range.

BIG has incorporated intricate woodcarvings crafted by local artisans. These carvings, depicting dragons, are a nod to Kachen, the decorative wooden columns found in traditional Bhutanese architecture.

"For the Gelephu International Airport, we wanted to create an experience that feels deeply Bhutanese—calm, welcoming, and connected to nature," said BIG partner Frederik Lyng.

The arrival plaza in front of the terminal will be divided into four zones, each showcasing different native plants from the region. These landscaped areas will incorporate stone paving and seating, creating a welcoming environment for visitors.

Inside, greenery will continue to play a central role. A series of plant-filled spaces will enhance the terminal's aesthetics and air quality. The Forest Spine, a large green courtyard at the airport's core, will act as a natural divider between the domestic and international zones.

Beyond its architectural and environmental features, the airport will focus on passenger well-being. Facilities such as yoga rooms, gong baths, and meditation spaces will be incorporated in line with the overarching vision of the Gelephu Mindfulness City masterplan.

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