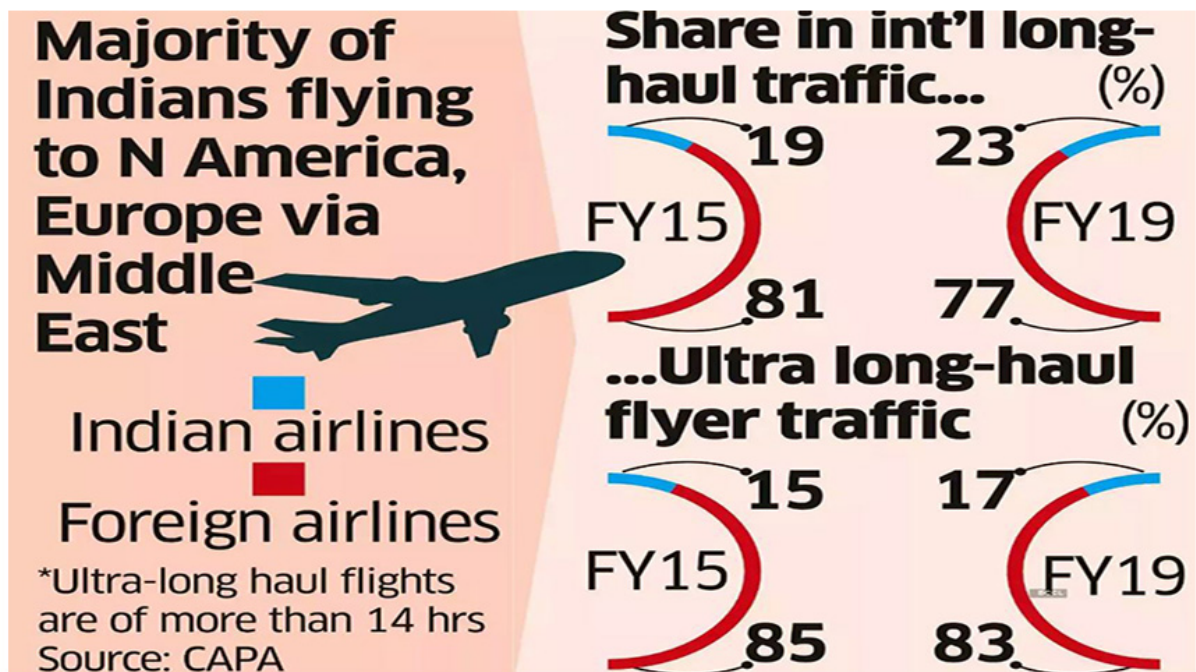


India framing policy to make airports transit hubs for South Asia

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 08 November, 2023



New Delhi: India is framing a national policy to transform its airports into major international hubs that will offer single-point international connectivity to the South Asian region.

The policy, which will need cabinet approval, aims to frame laws for easing security and immigration bottlenecks at airports, allocation of international flying rights and building necessary infrastructure so that airports like Delhi can become transit hubs competing with the likes of Dubai and Singapore's Changi Airport, people involved in making of the policy said.

Hubs aggregate passenger demand from the entire area and offer multiple direct flights to major cities across the world.

In FY20, 69pc of Indian passengers flying to Europe and North America travelled through hubs such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha on foreign airlines.

“This is a big leakage of revenue for airlines and airports and the Indian aviation ecosystem is not being able to take benefit of the growth in long-haul international traffic,” a government official said. “With Air India and IndiGo eyeing more

international traffic, the government is looking to frame this policy.”

A uniform policy, he said, will make it easier for multiple ministries to work in tandem and frame rules.

“Reform of security rules and immigration are governed by the Ministry of Home Affairs while international flying rights are the domain of external affairs,” he said. “Building of infrastructure will be through the National Infrastructure Pipeline. Hence, the requirement of a single framework is necessary.”

There are three aspects to a hub airport – favourable geographic location, the presence of a strong airline and the ability to connect quickly between international and domestic flights. “IndiGo and Air India are strong brands now. The policy will now target to simplify other areas,” the official said.

The policy will seek to reform security rules for faster connections between flights, reducing immigration wait times and developing infrastructure linking multiple terminals of airports.

Sources said that the government has identified certain bottlenecks such as the requirement of double security checks while transiting between domestic and international areas, requirement of immigration only from the city of departure and manpower crunch at immigration desks as reasons that impede smooth connectivity at airports.

Delhi Airport currently has three terminals and the plan is to connect them through a train. Currently, passengers have to leave the airport and take a bus.

“Every hub airport with more than 100 million passengers has a transport model where a passenger can transfer without leaving the secured area of the airport,” the official said. “As a part of the policy, we are deciding on the financial model as this will be a huge capital investment.”

Videh Kumar Jaipurkar, CEO of Delhi Airport, said that the airport is well located to become a major transit hub of the region.

“We are strategically located in the corridor of North America and Europe to South East Asia or East Africa to North East Asia,” he said. “However, other airports, due to their competitiveness have been able to take that traffic.”

Building a hub is about coordination among airlines, airports and government policy.

“That is what we are working on – so that the airport gets its rightful position and airlines benefit financially by offering direct flights,” he said.

The airport has started working on harmonisation of airport slots so that IndiGo and Air India can align their domestic and international network in a way that a passenger can connect in minimum time.

“We are working with both the airlines to create slot banks for European and North American flights so that they can schedule adequate domestic flights within two hours before departure of their Europe and North America flights,” Jaipurkar said.

