

## India-Kuwait expand aviation ties

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Dhaka: India and Kuwait have agreed to increase their bilateral air traffic rights by 50pc raising the weekly seat entitlement from 12,000 to 18,000 per side.

This marks the first major revision to their air services agreement in almost 20 years.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in New Delhi following talks between Samir Kumar Sinha, Secretary of India's Ministry of Civil Aviation, and Saif Mohammed Al Suwaidi, Director General of Civil Aviation of the UAE.

The agreement builds on discussions held during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kuwait in December.

This marks the first capacity enhancement since 2006, when the weekly seat quota was raised to 12,000 from 8,320.

The revised pact aims to ease fare pressures, improve accessibility, and offer more options for passengers, particularly for the large Indian expatriate population in Kuwait, many of whom hail from Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

At present, about 40 daily flights operate between the two countries. Kuwait Airways leads with 54 weekly flights, followed by IndiGo with 36, while other carriers include Jazeera Airways, Akasa Air, and Air India Express.

The expanded capacity also allows Indian airlines better access to airport slots in Kuwait, addressing long-standing scheduling challenges that have constrained operations.

“The revised agreement supports India’s broader strategy to strengthen air connectivity with Gulf nations and facilitate trade, tourism and remittance flows,” India’s Ministry of Civil Aviation said in a statement.

The Gulf region is one of the largest aviation markets for India, with millions of Indian nationals working across Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia and other countries.

Notably, Indian carriers have been seeking more seats and slots in Gulf countries to expand their operations and compete more effectively with Middle Eastern airlines.

The ministry said the pact reflects India’s ongoing efforts to modernise bilateral air service agreements to align with current market dynamics and passenger demand.

Kuwait’s aviation authorities have also welcomed the development, which they see as an opportunity to further strengthen ties with India and enhance connectivity for their own citizens travelling to Indian cities for business, healthcare, and leisure.

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