

## Panel forms to help develop Delhi airport as a global transit hub

- A Monitor Desk Report

Date: 02 May, 2023



The government has appointed a committee to suggest ways to develop India's largest airport in Delhi as an international hub in the lines of Dubai and Doha airports, people aware of the development said. A transit hub is an airport used by one or more airlines to concentrate passenger traffic and flight operations, thus serving as a transfer point for passengers before reaching their final destination.

The committee, which will report to civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, will study major global airports and suggest steps required to make Delhi an international transit hub, people cited above said.

Among many other aspects, it will suggest measures like fastening domestic to international and international to international transfer, developing terminals for the country's two major airlines – Air India and IndiGo – and creating a structure of slots for them so that flight arrivals and departures happen at an optimum time to increase connections.

“The government has asked Delhi airport and some of the major airlines to examine global best practices on scheduling to ensure that international and domestic operations complement each other and provide enhanced connectivity essential for setting up India's first international aviation hub,” GMR-group owned Delhi International Airport Ltd said in a statement on Monday.

People aware of the development said that while the Tata group-owned Air India

already functions from Terminal 3, the airport after its ongoing expansion project will allocate IndiGo only from Terminal 1. Currently, IndiGo flights are spread out of all three terminals, which has been an issue for the airline's traffic from international to domestic.

Connectivity from Delhi airport is well spread across continents including America, Europe, Australia, and Asia. Supported by 63 airlines, Delhi airport provides direct connectivity to places like New York, San Francisco, Newark, Chicago, and Washington, in North America.

Between April 2022 and February 2023, the airport handled over 14.50 million transfer passengers, of which around 8.56 million were domestic to domestic transfer passengers. About 2.88 million were domestic to international, 2.73 million international to domestic, and over 3.37 lakh were international to international transfer passengers, according to data shared by the airport.

People cited above said the government and Delhi airport are also discussing setting up an automatic people mover, which will be an inter-airport fast train connecting all three terminals of the airport.

“Such a train is necessary for fast movement of transfer traffic between the terminals,” one of them said. “The question is, how to finance that project? The government doesn't want to put burden on passenger fees to finance it.”

Delhi airport is undergoing an expansion project to increase Terminal 1's area from 60,000 square metres to 169,000 square meters and establish a fully integrated terminal with departures and arrivals under one roof. Once complete, the terminal's capacity will double from 20 million to 40 million.

The project being executed by L&T is worth an estimated \$850 million and will also see a fourth runway measuring around 4,400 meters long and 75 meters wide, developed during second phase of expansion.

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