

PM Modi launches 15 airport projects

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Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh: Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled 15 airport projects worth Rs 9,800 crore, stating that these inaugurations should not be seen through the lens of the upcoming general elections but as part of the nation's journey to become developed by 2047.

Modi, at a public rally in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, virtually inaugurated the new terminal buildings of Pune, Kolhapur, Gwalior, Jabalpur, Delhi, Lucknow, Aligarh, Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad, Shravasti, and Adampur Airports. The 12 new terminal buildings were developed at a total cost of Rs 8,903 crore, with a combined capacity to serve 61.5 million passengers annually.

The PM also laid the foundation stone for new terminal buildings at Kadapa, Hubballi, and Belagavi Airports. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) will undertake the development of the three terminal buildings at

a total cost of Rs 908 crore. Once completed, the combined passenger handling capacity of these three airports will increase to 9.5 million passengers per annum.

"During the election season earlier, people used to just make announcements. No one used to ask them about the status of these projects... Before elections, they would come and lay the foundation stone. Foundation stones used to get lost, and the politicians also used to get lost," the PM said during his speech.

"You must not look at this matter from the lens of general elections... This is a journey for development and by 2047, I aim to make India a developed country," he added.

The PM said that cities like Azamgarh, Chitrakoot, Moradabad, and Shravasti were called "small and backward cities" of Uttar Pradesh. "Now, even here, air travel is beginning. We want to take modern infrastructure to even small cities. Small cities need infrastructure as much as big cities. Urbanisation must not stop, and it should become an opportunity for everyone," he added.

One of the airport projects inaugurated by the PM on Sunday was Lucknow airport's new terminal. The Adani Group runs the Lucknow airport, and its new terminal would now be handling about 13 million passengers per year, which is about three times that of the old terminal.

Another major project inaugurated by the PM was Delhi airport's expanded Terminal 1, which can now serve 40 million passengers per annum, more than double its previous capacity, which stood at 17 million passengers per annum. Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), which runs the Delhi airport, said that its total passenger handling capacity has now crossed 100 million passengers per annum.

The total area of T1 terminal has increased to 206,950 square meters from 55,740 square meters. Earlier, the T1 terminal had no aerobridges and the passengers used to go to the planes using the airline buses. Now, T1 terminal has 22 contact stands, where passengers can board the planes using aerobridges.

The T1 terminal's baggage handling capacity has now increased to 6,000 bags per hour, nearly doubling from the previous capacity, DIAL noted.

In 2023-24 so far, the AAI has operationalised terminal buildings at Chennai, Port Blair, Surat, and Tiruchirappalli airports. The new terminal buildings at Kanpur Airport, Rajkot International Airport, Tezu Airport, and Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhya Dham, were also inaugurated in the current fiscal year.

In the current fiscal year, the government has laid foundation stones for new terminal buildings in Datia, Udaipur, Jodhpur, and Rajahmundry to cater to future demand.

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Minister of Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia has previously stated that the government is focused on increasing the number of airports and heliports in the country from about 150 to over 200 in the next five years.

The two largest aircraft orders globally were placed by IndiGo and Air India last year. In June 2023, IndiGo ordered 500 A320neo family planes from Airbus, while in February 2023, Air India Group ordered 470 planes — 250 from Airbus and 220 from Boeing.

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