

Kushinagar Airport Uttar Pradesh's 3rd to operate international flights

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LUCKNOW: UP's civil aviation sector got a shot in the arm with the Kushinagar airport becoming the third international airport of the state after the ones in Lucknow and Varanasi. The Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) granted the licence to Kushinagar airport, 60 km from Gorakhpur, to operate international flights on Monday.

Officials said that the state government is aggressively pursuing construction of airports in Jewar and Ayodhya from where the international flights are proposed to be operated. This would take the number of international airports in the state to five.

"The airport has been granted licence for visual flight rule (VFR) category," said UP civil aviation secretary Surendra Singh. The VFR is a set of regulations under which a pilot operates an aircraft in weather conditions

generally clear enough to allow the pilot to see where the aircraft is going.

The coming of Kushinagar airport is seen as a key development amid state government bid to lend a push to the Buddhist circuit a route that follows in the footsteps of the Buddha from Lumbini in Nepal where he was born, through Bodh Gaya in Bihar where he attained enlightenment, to Sarnath and Kushinagar in UP, where he gave his first teaching and attained 'parinirvana'.

The Centre had given its nod to UP government proposal to enable Kushinagar airport for international flights. Civil aviation

department sources said that the airport was handed over to the Airports Authority of India (AAI) which entered into a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the state government on October 4, 2019.

Earlier in 2010, the then BSP government had allotted 589.35 acres of land for expansion and development of an airport which had 1644 x 23 metre air strip. “However, the project could not take off,” a senior official in the civil aviation department said.

The BJP, which came to power in UP in 2017, allocated a sum of Rs 199.42 crore and expedited the project. Officials said that the coming of an airport in Kushinagar would allow development of the otherwise socio-economically poor east UP region and help in generation of employment.