

Heavy demand for parking bays at Noida airport

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There is in fact large demand for night parking. In NCR. We had made 25 parking bays as per plan but are now adding nine more," Schnellmann said.

Delhi Airport has a large number, almost 70, parking bays occupied for over 2-3 years now by IndiGo Airbus A320 fleet due to Pratt & Whitney engines issues and planes of grounded GoAir. In fact when the capital was hosting G20 Summit last year, one big concern was where to park aircraft of dignitaries attending the same due to the parking crunch at IGIA. Delhi Airport has for years been unsuccessfully trying to get the grounded planes removed.

So that is one opportunity that the upcoming airport got from airlines it has tied up with -- IndiGo and Akasa. "We are in talks with all other domestic & international airlines (including Tata Group carriers) and are seeing good response from them," the CEO said.



ALL SET FOR GRAND BEGINNING

Given the massive growth in Indian aviation, he expects the second phase of development to kickstart well before the end of this decade. "We target to start operations in April 2025 with an initial capacity of 1.2 crore passenger annually (CPA). Seeing the way aviation here is growing, airlines are inducting planes and in-

terest in NIA, we expect to handle 50 lakh passengers in the first year itself. Handling close to half the capacity in that kind of timeframe is significant for a big greenfield airport," the CEO says. Navi Mumbai Airport, which will open around the same time, will do so when Mumbai's CSMIA is already choked. So

getting flights won't be a challenge for it. Delhi's IGIA, on the other hand, is still some years away from reaching peak capacity. So NIA will compete for traffic with IGIA. Also both the NCR airports have different operators while the two Mumbai Metropolitan Area airports are operated by the same, Adani, group. And UP has aggressively tried to woo airlines by reducing tax rate of jet fuel while Delhi still levies among the highest rates.

As per original plans, NIA is supposed to grow from 1.2 CPA to 3 CPA by nearly doubling terminal 1. Subsequently, a second runway and second terminal (also to be developed in two phases) will see its capacity grow to 5 CPA and then 7 CPA. "Our agreement is that as soon as we got 80% of capacity, the next phase of development starts. So we expect phase two of T1 to initiate in 2-3 years from when we start operations. Hence the before end of this decade timeline," Schnellmann said.

Phase-1 is being developed

at a cost of about Rs 6,000 crore. NIA will in a month or two submit its tariff proposal to the Airport Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA). The CEO didn't comment on whether NIA will have a user development fee (UDF) on incoming passengers too -- something levied at many airports in India to balance the UDF requirement by splitting it between arriving and departing flyers.

"We have put a lot of emphasis on terminal infrastructure being quick & easy to use for both airlines and passengers, thereby achieving cost efficiency. Cost of travel comparable at our airport will be similar that at to other similar sized airports," he said.

NIA will from Day One be capable of handling international flights apart from domestic ones. "We have mixed rotation where domestic and international passengers board and alight from two different levels, respectively. So an aircraft coming from, say, Mumbai, can have its next flight to Dubai," he said.