

Noida airport opens for business, eyes a 'true aerotropolis' status

GROWTH CATALYST. Aims to boost regional travel options, serve as economic hub for western UP and beyond

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The National Capital Region (NCR) got its third airport on Monday as Noida International Airport (NIA) at Jewar commenced domestic commercial operations, and the Centre is thinking well beyond runways and terminals.

The vision is of a true aerotropolis: a self-sustaining economic universe where manufacturing, information technology, hospitality, cargo, agriculture and aviation services grow around the greenfield facility, generating employment and economic activity for a region that stretches from western Uttar Pradesh all the way to Agra.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu, speaking at the launch of domestic commercial operations, said: "It is the vision of both the Government of Uttar Pradesh and the Government of India that NIA should evolve not only as a transportation hub but as a true aerotropolis."

The ambition, he added, was for NIA to become "an integrated ecosystem" where industries ranging from manufacturing and information technology to hospitality, cargo, maintenance repair and overhaul services, and other aviation-related activities develop organically around the airport.



CONNECTIVITY BOOST. IndiGo flight 6E-2278 receives a water salute as commercial flight operations kick off at Noida International Airport in Jewar on Monday ANI

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

"This airport is not merely about transporting passengers from one place to another. Across the world, wherever airports emerge, tremendous economic activity follows," the Minister said.

The launch itself carried a moment that set the tone for what the government wants this airport to represent. Among the first passengers to fly out of NIA were farmers whose land was acquired to build it.

They were flown to Lucknow in a gesture conceived by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as a symbol of respect and gratitude towards those who made the project possible.

IndiGo became the first airline to operate from NIA, with its inaugural arrival touching down from Lucknow on Monday morning. The first departure from the airport took off for Bengaluru shortly thereafter,

marking the formal beginning of commercial services at a facility that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had inaugurated in March this year. The airline said the commencement of operations from NIA represents a significant milestone in strengthening regional connectivity and expanding travel options for passengers across Delhi-NCR and western Uttar Pradesh.

TRANSITION TRIALS

The airport has completed extensive operational readiness, activation and transition trials ahead of the commercial launch, with international operations expected to follow in the coming months.

For passengers asking the most basic question — how do I get there — the answer is more reassuring than it might seem for a greenfield airport built on the outskirts of the NCR. NIA sits along the Yamuna Expressway, one

of the region's most important arterial roads, and its connectivity network has been designed to serve a vast catchment area.

"Within a one-hour radius, crores of people will have access to this important airport, connecting them not only to destinations across India but also to international destinations in the future," Naidu said.

The proposed Delhi-Varanasi High-Speed Rail Corridor, once operational, is expected to further cement that connectivity, potentially making NIA one of the best-connected greenfield airports in the country and drawing passengers who might otherwise default to the congested Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA).

BUILT FOR SCALE

The cargo infrastructure, too, is already in place and built for scale.

Developed through Air India SATS Airport Services Pvt Ltd, the airport's dedicated cargo terminal has an initial handling capacity of 200,000 metric tonnes annually, with expansion plans that would take that figure to 1.5 million tonnes in the future.

A significant part of that capacity is expected to serve the agricultural economy of western Uttar Pradesh, giving farmers and agri-businesses a direct air link to domestic markets and,

eventually, international ones.

Naidu underlined that the airport's cargo network would serve to ferry agricultural produce alongside products from manufacturing and information technology sectors, a dimension of the aerotropolis vision that goes beyond the conventional airport-as-passenger-hub model and speaks directly to the region's economic character.

The development of an aerotropolis around the airport, Naidu said, would create a strong economic base serving both India and the international community, and would eventually emerge as a major employment generator for the region.

This is a claim that greenfield airports have made before, but one that carries more weight here given NIA's strategic location, the depth of its connectivity ambitions, and the scale of investment already committed around it.

NIA joins IGIA and Hindon Airport as the third airport serving the NCR, bringing much-needed capacity relief to a region that has long strained against the constraints of a single major hub. Its strategic location along the Yamuna Expressway positions it as something more than a pressure valve for IGI if the surrounding ecosystem develops as envisaged.