

**Press Information Bureau
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First International Flight to Nagpur Airport on 16th October 2005

The Nagpur Airport is being renamed as "Dr. Ambedkar International Airport" and the first international flight to Nagpur is commencing on 16th October 2005. Air Arabia, a carrier of UAE is starting a new service on the Sharjah – Nagpur – Sharjah sector from the 16th October 2005. Shri Sharad Pawar, Union Minister of Agriculture, Food & Public Distribution, Consumer Affairs, Shri Vilas Rao Deshmukh, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Shri Vilas Muttemwar, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Non-Conventional Energy Sources, Shri R.R. Patil, Deputy Chief Minister & Home Minister, Maharashtra and Shri Praful Patel, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation will be present on the occasion.

The Union Cabinet had approved the declaration of the existing airport at Nagpur as an "International Airport" and renaming of the Nagpur Airport as "Dr Ambedkar International Airport" on 8th April 2005. .

The Government of Maharashtra has proposed to develop a world class Multi-modal International Passenger & Cargo Hub Airport at Nagpur (MIHAN) integrated with the existing Nagpur airport. A high level Steering Committee was constituted for this project, where the representatives of Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airports Authority of India were also members. Under the guidance of the Steering Committee, Maharashtra State Road Development Corporation (MSRDC), the nodal agency for the project, appointed a Consortium of internationally reputed Consultants led by M/s. L&T Ramboll Consulting Engineers Ltd., Chennai for Techno-Economic-Feasibility Study (TEFS) for this project. The consultants after the study have recommended that considering the potential demand for passenger and cargo traffic, particularly the transiting traffic between South East Asia and Europe, a world class International Hub Airport should be set up at Nagpur by integrating/upgrading the existing airport. The TEFS has indicated that the project could be financially viable and induce considerable development in Central India, particularly, in Vidarbha Region. Ever since, there have been consistent demands from parliamentarians and general public of Maharashtra and neighbouring places to declare Nagpur airport as an International airport.

The basic premises of Maharashtra Government to create an aviation hub at Nagpur are that about 400 aircraft over fly over Nagpur, which is the centre of the country. Their contention is that creation of infrastructure will automatically create air traffic. Maharashtra Government also wants to convert industrial estate of Butibori into Special Economic Zone for which requirement of an international airport is essential. Declaring the airport as international is expected to help in developing tourism and international trade in the region as well as enable optimum utilization of the airport.

The existing Nagpur airport belongs to Airports Authority of India (AAI). AAI has developed the runway and associated pavements for B-747 operation. The airport has a new passenger terminal building complex suitable to handle 650 passengers at a time. International Haj flights have also been operating from this airport during the last two years. Air India is planning Haj operation with B747/A310 aircrafts every year. Nagpur has been designated as one of the embarkation points for Haj pilgrims.. Presently 52 flights are operating through Nagpur Airport every week

which include flights by Indian Airlines, Jet Airways, Air Deccan and Alliance Air. Indian Airlines is planning to convert five B737 aircrafts into freighter/cargo aeroplanes, all of which would be placed in Nagpur making Nagpur the hub for cargo and freight services of Indian Airlines. Air Deccan also proposes to introduce a new service between Nagpur and Nasik six days a week from 30 October 2005.

Declaration of an airport as international depends upon traffic potential and demand from airlines for operation of international flights. The following facilities at domestic airport are considered sufficient for declaring a domestic airport as 'International airport'.

- (i) Runway length should be 9000 feet to cater to medium capacity long-range aircraft (MCLR e.g B-767) or equivalent type of aircraft, as these aircraft constitute majority of aircraft used in international operations.
- (ii) Availability of Ground Landing Facilities, Instrument Landing System for operation of aircrafts at night.
- (iii) Requirement/demand from Scheduled National/International Airline Operators.
- iv) Availability of Customs, Immigration, Health, animal and plan quarantine services.
- v) Bilateral agreement between the States (Nations) or it may be offered a point of call to foreign carriers for operations.

Renaming the existing airport of Nagpur including the MIHAN project after the name of Dr. Ambedkar, has also been a long-standing request of the parliamentarians and the general public of Maharashtra.

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