

Delhi airport congestion to ease by June end, say officials

After intervention of the Planning Commission, the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) Monday assured the government that the congestion at the airport here would be eased by June-end though it sought more employees to supervise security and immigration checks.

DIAL authorities, who met Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia, also gave a presentation on the new infrastructure coming up at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport, including a terminal and parking places, which it said would be functional by June-end.

'DIAL has assured us that the congestion would ease by June-end and that there would be significant improvement before the winter,' Ahluwalia said.

'Such problems persist worldwide, where expansion works are carried out at the existing airports. That is what is happening here.'

He said the government would look into the DIAL demand for more manpower.

Ahluwalia called a meeting with the DIAL to review the renovation work after he personally encountered congestion-related problems during a recent visit to the airport.

Over 12,000 Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) personnel provide security to over 54 domestic and international airports across the country.

Of these, nearly 2,300 CISF personnel are posted at Delhi airport's domestic and international sections, which handle about 20.4 million passengers annually. The number is expected to rise to 37 million by 2010 and 100 million by 2030.

DIAL deputy chairman Kiran Kumar Grandhi said the airport was handling passengers beyond its annual capacity of 12 million.

According to data available, there was an almost 29 percent growth in passenger traffic last year. At present, the international terminal has a capacity of five million passengers but handles eight million.

'We are doing everything to ease the congestion at the airport. We would start the third runway by August this year, six months before the schedule of February,' he said.

Grandhi said the Haj terminal would be upgraded by October this year and will be used for international operations from January next year.

He also said the new Terminal-3, which would be an integrated terminal, will handle about 34 million passengers.

'This would come up by 2010,' said Grandhi. Besides, an international terminal (Terminal-2) would be revamped by July, while the new domestic terminal would be complete by November this year.

Regarding hi-tech equipment and systems being installed at the airport, he said six inline baggage check systems will start functioning by June this year.

'This would ease overcrowding at the manual x-ray machines. These machines would be replaced once the inline baggage systems are in place,' the DIAL official said.

The number of immigration counters is being increased from 28 to 56, while check-in counters are being increased from 78 to 100. This too would be done by June this year.

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