

## Skylimo service between new Bangalore airport and city begins

Leading private charter operator Deccan Aviation Tuesday launched a helicopter service between the new [Bangalore](#) international airport and India's IT hub to ferry commuters hardpressed for time to cover the 40 km on choked roads.

Christened Skylimo, the first of its kind air taxi service in the country, will be operated between the BIA and select hotspots in the city such as Electronics City and Whitefield where a majority of the IT firms are located, and the old HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd) airport.

A Shuttle service to UB (liquor baron Vijay Mallya's United Breweries) City in downtown and the Bangalore Palace grounds will commence shortly.

'The charter service will address the connectivity issue between the new airport and the city, to traverse the 40-80 km distance choked with gridlocked traffic,' Deccan Aviation managing director Captain G.R. Gopinath said at the launch of the service by Karnataka Chief Minister B. S. Yeddyurappa.

The Skylimo service will initially be available only during daytime.

The fare ranges from Rs.4,800 to Rs.5,800 per trip and the distance will be covered in 15 to 20 minutes.

A dedicated helipad has been built at the BIA outside the main terminal for the new service.

The Deccan Aviation has acquired three twin-engine copters one Bell and two Eurocopters that can carry seven to eight passengers per sortie, according to Gopinath.

India's IT capital, Bangalore is home to about 1,700 IT and biotech firms, including global software majors and IT bellwethers like Infosys and Wipro.

The new airport operates about 350-400 flights a day. About 70 percent of the traffic is domestic and the rest is international, mostly between midnight and dawn.

An estimated 30,000-35,000 passengers fly in and out of Bangalore daily on domestic and overseas routes.

With over 2.5 million vehicles choking the city thoroughfares, congested linking roads and narrow connecting lanes, a drive to the new airport during peak hours is a nightmare for any air passenger.

According to the traffic police, about 10,000 vehicles, including two-wheelers, cars, buses and trucks ply every hour on the busy thoroughfare to the new airport.

Plans for an expressway and a high-speed rail link are still on the drawing board. Many blame lack of political will, red tape and an inefficient bureaucracy for the inordinate delays in executing infrastructure projects.

Though the Rs.25 billion (\$625 million) greenfield airport was built from scratch in a record 36

months from June 2005 to April 2008, the state government and the Bangalore metropolitan authorities failed to keep pace with the project to improve the connectivity by widening the roads, building flyovers and providing signal-free dedicated lanes to the airport from the city.

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