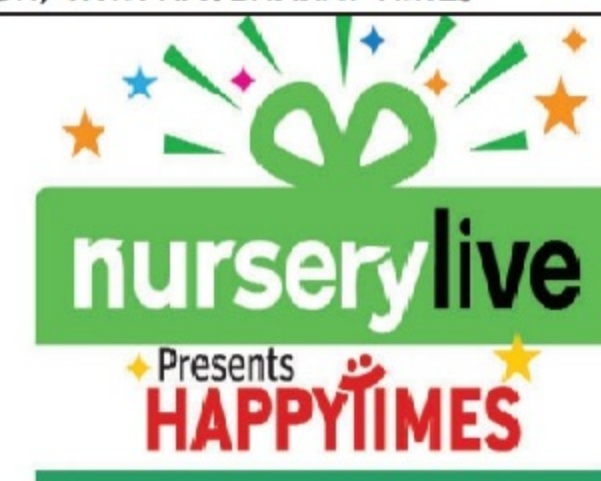


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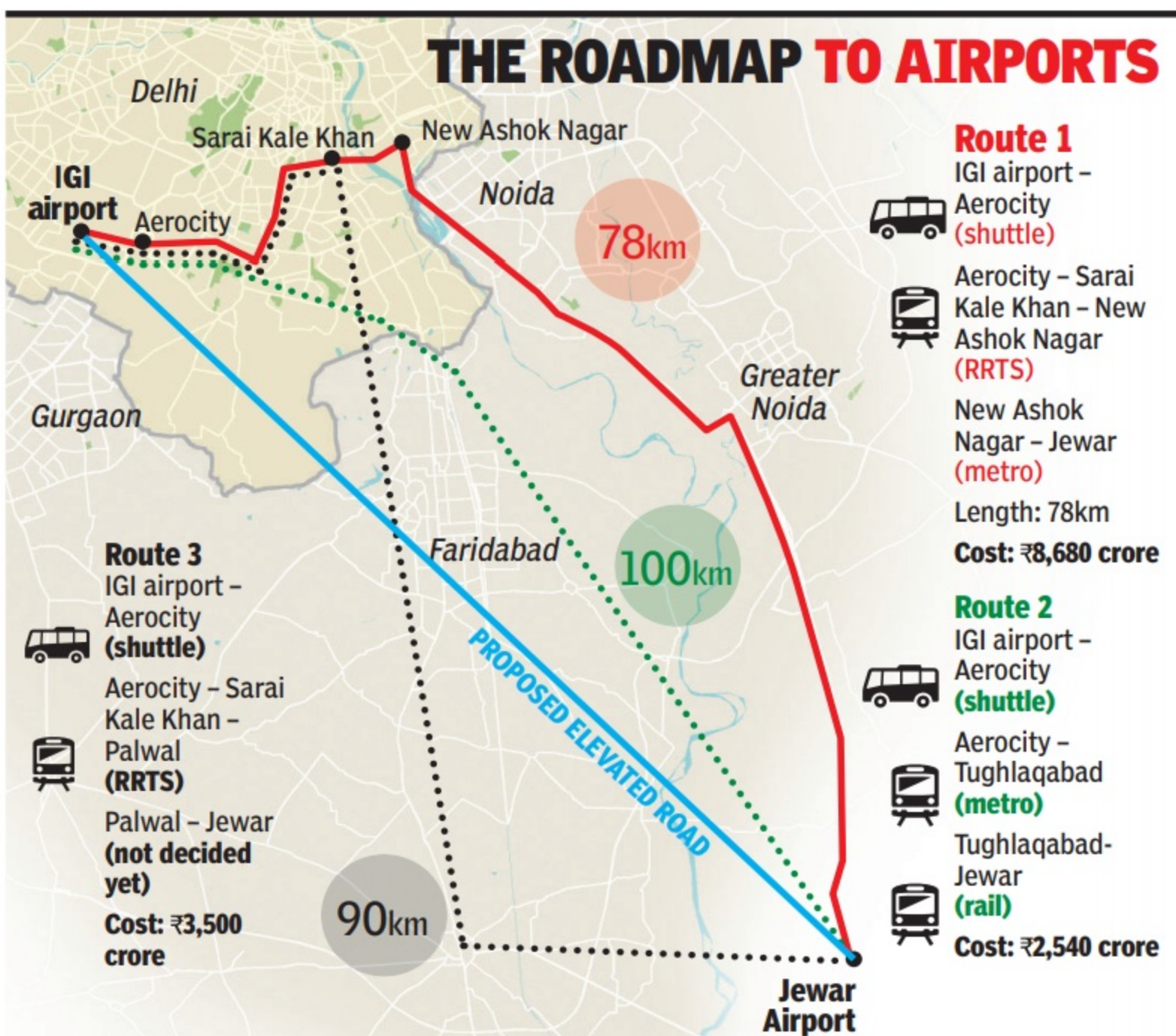
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How to bring 2 airports, 80km apart, closer

3 Plans To Link IGI With Jewar To Choose From

Flew out of Bengaluru, came back via NCR



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Greater Noida: "I'll be back." Like neighbouring Austria-born Arnold Schwarzenegger, Flughafen Zurich AG (FZ) said as much while exiting Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), where it had 17% stake, in early 2017. True to its word, it is back here with a bang in less than three years to build and operate Delhi-NCR's second airport in Greater Noida.

The operator, known for Swiss clockwork-precision operation at its flagship Zurich Airport, has also learnt from the Bengaluru experience that keeping local sensitivities is crucial. At the start of this Millennium when Karnataka decided to build one of India's first greenfield public-private partnership

airport in Bengaluru, Siemens Projects and FZ together had majority stake in Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL).

They built a no-frills airport in Bengaluru — unlike the contemporary more ornate Hyderabad and later Delhi's T3 or the fanciest of all, Mumbai T2 — which passengers could quickly enter and exit. But the international developers did not build a VIP terminal, which did not go down well with then undivided Andhra MLAs and ministers. A VIP lounge was added much later.

In 2009, FZ first sold 12% stake in BIAL to GVK Group. Then in 2017, it sold the remaining 5% to Indo-Canadian billionaire Prem Watsa's Fairfax India Holdings. At that time, FZ had said: "Zurich



FRESH START: Bircher said he sees India as an upcoming market with great potential

Airport remains committed to the Indian aviation market and will actively consider new investment opportunities where our local experience and recognised international airport operator expertise

can generate a significant impact. India remains one of Zurich Airport's selected strategic investment markets."

Apart from Zurich, FZ operates eight airports in Latin America and describes India, Indonesia and the Philippines as "future focus markets."

Daniel Bircher, CEO of Zurich Airport (Asia operations), told TOI: "We see India as a huge upcoming market with great potential. Jewar airport will be able to cater to the huge crowd of Delhi as well as UP. Additionally, Noida and Greater Noida are developing as big industrial hubs and will be a huge catchment area requiring air connectivity soon."

Bircher added, "It is too early to mention the plans for construction and features or services that will be available. However, customer sa-

tisfaction has always been our top priority."

Asked why did they not round off their bid of Rs 400.97 to Rs 401 — none of the three other bidders had quoted in decimals — he said, "The decimal number was not a calculation. It was just a personal wish of one of our board of directors." Among the four bidders, this was the only group that is investing 100% foreign equity with no Indian partners. "The company has an experience of operating multiple airports across the world," the CEO said. The group is currently operating the Zurich airport in Switzerland, Curaçao International airport in Caribbean Islands, Bogota airport in Columbia, two airports in Chile, including Iquique and Antofagasta, and four airports in Brazil.

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Greater Noida: In four years, flying in and out of Delhi-NCR will mean taking a flight from IGI Airport near Gurgaon or the 80-km-distant Jewar airport in Greater Noida traversing the national capital's monster traffic.

Like New York's JFK and Newark airports or London's Heathrow and Gatwick, a significant number of flyers will also need to transit between IGI and Jewar airports. By 2024, the IGI airport will be handling over 10 crore flyers annually and the Jewar airport will begin its flight with a capacity of 1.2 crore passengers per annum.

With such volumes and distance involved, it is imperative to have seamless travel options between the two international airports of Delhi-NCR. And with decks being cleared to hand over the greenfield project to a global firm, the Yamuna Expressway Authority has now accelerated efforts towards connectivity between IGI and Jewar airports.

The Yamuna Expressway

Authority CEO has asked the National Capital Region Transportation Corporation (NCRTC) to prepare a detailed project report (DPR) on multi-modal connectivity between the two airports, already proposed by state-run engineering consultancy RITES, and also written to the state government seeking funding for the same.

FLYING HIGH

"The three options suggested by RITES to connect both the international airports include the use of metro, train and rapid rail transit system (RRTS). We have asked the NCRTC to study the RRTS routes and prepare a DPR on its feasibility. They should be able to submit the DPR within three months," CEO Arunvir Singh said.

"We have also written to the state government regarding funding for metro connectivity as it will incur high cost from our side. The elevated road proposal is also being monitored at the state level and we are expecting a response from the govern-

ment soon," he added.

RITES had earlier submitted three proposals to the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority (YEIDA) to connect the two airports.

The shortest connectivity route (78 km) is a new metro line — from Jewar airport to New Ashok Nagar metro station — on Blue Line via the Yamuna expressway and Noida-Greater Noida expressway. Then, the route will link New Ashok Nagar and Aerocity via Sarai Kale Khan through the proposed Delhi-Meerut RRTS corridor.

The final 4km — from Aerocity to the IGI airport — will be linked through automated people movers (APM, a small-scale automated transit system for small distances). RITES has estimated a total cost of Rs 8,680 crore for this option, the most expensive of the three plans.

The CEO had earlier written to RITES to submit a revised report on road connectivity between the two airports. This was because the road travel option, suggested by RITES earlier, was "inadequate and impractical", officials said.