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'On Track For Commercial Ops At Noida Airport By 2024-End'

CEO Schnellman Says Technology To Aid Seemless Experience

Surojit Gupta & Saurabh Sinha | TNN

Jewar (Greater Noida): Work is on at a frenetic pace as giant machines and thousands of workers give shape to the greenfield Noida International Airport in Jewar. Under a scorching May sun, **Christoph Schnellman**, CEO of Noida International Airport, tells **TOI** that he is confident that commercial operations will commence at the end of 2024 and it will use the latest technology for a seamless experience. Excerpts:

An artist's impression of the Noida International Airport's forecourt

Where are we from the first flight at this airport?

I think we are about a year away from the first flight if you are talking about the test flights, the calibration flights. We are on track to deliver the airport for commercial operations by the end of next year, end of 2024. Commercial operations end of 2024–last quarter of 2024.

As a greenfield airport, how will technology be used to improve passenger experience and drive up efficiency?

NIA will be one of the most advanced airports of India in terms of using technology. We are considering using digital technology at immigration counters and are in conversa-tion with the Bureau of Immi-gration for using the same. This process will make passing through immigration a seam-less experience for passengers.

To meet our deadline of making the airport operational in October-December, 2024, we had earlier placed orders for metal detectors and 2D X-Ray machines (for pre-em-barkation security check or PESC of pas-sengers and cabin bags, the technology currently being used at all Indian airports). But we are working with the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) and other airports to understand how that technolo-gy can be upgraded to use body scanners and computed tomog-raphy (CT) scanners, where pas-sengers don't have to take out liquids and personal electronic devices out of their hand bags for checks. We will have central-ised screening for hand bags for a more streamlined approach that will enable us to have more security check lanes. There will be a perime-ter intrusion detection system that will allow us to do away with watch towers, reduce manpow-er cost and pass on the lower cost to enable af-fordable flights.

When will NIA handle international flights?

We will be an international airport with customs and immi-gration facilities from Day One though we expect the traffic to be primarily domestic (in the initial years at least). We are go-ing to have mixed rotation gates that will allow an aircraft flying in on a domestic route to fly out internationally and vice versa without requiring gate change. There will be no need for sepa-rate domestic and international sides at NIA. There will be dif-ferent levels for international and domestic passengers which will be access controlled as per requirement.

Delhi's IGI Airport will reach peak capacity of handling 10 crore passen-gers annually by 2030. How do you plan to attract air-lines before that when IGIA still has slots?

There is a need today for an additional airport in the NCR. There is a requirement for night parking and for airlines to offer flights at certain (read peak) times. Apart from south and east Delhi, NIA has a huge catchment area that will en-sure adequate traffic for air-lines to mount flights from here. In fact if anything, we are continuously revising our traf-fic projections upwards. The triggers for implementing the remaining three phases (after phase 1 is built) could be activa-ted sooner than anticipated. The ultimate capacity of NIA, as per our plans, is 7 crore pas-sengers annually with two ter-minals and as many runways.