SP'S SHOWNEWS

AN SP GUIDE PUBLICATION

Asia's largest event on Civil Aviation
(Commercial, General, Business Aviation & Advanced Air Mobility)

WINGS INDIA 2026

28TH - 31ST January 2026
Begumpet Airport, Hyderabad, India

SEE US AT STALL NO. 55C

DAY 1

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 28, 2026

PUBLISHERS OF
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INSIDE

CURTAIN RAISER

Wings India 2026: India's Aviation Showcase Takes Flight

Asia's premier civil aviation exhibition and conference returns as a high-impact platform for long-term growth opportunities across India's aviation value chain

ROHIT GOEL

India's civil aviation community is gearing up for one of the most significant events on the global aviation calendar as Wings India 2026 prepares to take flight in Hyderabad from January 28-31, 2026. Organised jointly by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the Airports Authority of India (AAI) and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the event has established itself as Asia's premier civil aviation exhibition and conference, embodying the country's rapid ascent as a leading aviation market. The Begumpet Airport venue will host aviation leaders, policymakers, innovators, investors, manufacturers and professionals from around the world to engage with India's vibrant and fast–expanding aviation ecosystem. The event will be formally inaugurated by Minister of Civil Aviation Rammohan Naidu, in the presence of senior Indian leadership, including alongside high-level dignitaries from India and abroad.

Photo: Airbus

AIRBUS WILL BE SHOWCASING A321NEO, ITS LARGE SINGLE-AISLE AIRCRAFT AT WINGS INDIA 2026

The official theme for Wings India 2026 — 'Indian

Continued on page 3...

SPECIAL FEATURE

India's Airport Boom!

The question is no longer how fast India can build airports, but whether its development model is delivering a smoother, more resilient aviation system

SWAATI KETKAR

India is building airports at an unprecedented pace, commissioning roughly one every 50 days. On paper, this reflects ambition and readiness for a future where India becomes the world's third-largest aviation market. Yet passengers at major metro hubs continue to face long queues, terminal congestion, delayed baggage, overcrowded security checkpoints and strained last-mile connectivity.

The contradiction is stark, while the number of airports has multiplied, the lived experience of flying especially through Tier-1 hubs has improved only marginally. At the same time, several newly commissioned regional airports remain underutilised, operating with low frequencies and sparse passenger traffic. This raises a critical question. Has India's airport development model prioritised asset creation over system efficiency, passenger comfort and network integration?

MORE AIRPORTS, SAME BOTTLENECKS

India's metro airports, especially Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai continue to absorb the bulk of passenger traffic. Despite the proliferation of Tier-2 and Tier-3 airports, congestion at these hubs remains chronic.

Shantanu Gangakhedkar, Principal Consultant and Commercial Aviation Lead, Frost & Sullivan, explains the structural mismatch clearly, "There is a big difference between building hubs and having strong connectivity to those hubs. Though in the past few years India has built many new hubs,

Continued on page 10...

Wings India 2026... *continued from page 1*

Aviation: Paving the Future – From Design to Deployment, Manufacturing to Maintenance, Inclusivity to Innovation, and Safety to Sustainability' — encapsulates the full scope of the four-day event. It underscores India's ambition to strengthen every segment of the aviation value chain, spanning aircraft design, manufacturing, operations and maintenance, while simultaneously advancing infrastructure modernisation. The theme also highlights the sector's strategic priorities of inclusive growth, technological innovation, safety assurance and long-term sustainability as central pillars of India's aviation development agenda.

MOMENTUM THROUGH EARLY GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

Momentum for the show has already been set in motion through an official curtain-raiser held in May 2025 at the Taj Palace in New Delhi under the aegis of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and FICCI. The event saw the formal launch of the Wings India 2026 brochure and mobile application, underscoring the scale of preparations and the emphasis on digital engagement. The curtain-raiser also highlighted the government's intent to use Wings India as a global platform to showcase India's civil aviation transformation.

Wings India 2026 is expected to attract thousands of participants and high-level delegates, reinforcing its position as one of the largest civil aviation gatherings in the region. Although official figures for exhibitors and visitors have not yet been formally announced, the scale of outreach, digital engagement and early registrations indicates strong international interest. Participation is expected from multiple countries, with delegations representing a broad spectrum of the global aviation ecosystem. These include government ministries, airline leadership, aerospace manufacturers, airport infrastructure developers, maintenance and repair organisations, technology providers, regulatory bodies and emerging start-ups. Together, this diverse representation is set to bring an inclusive and comprehensive cross-section of the civil aviation industry under one roof.

EXHIBITION, CONFERENCES AND BUSINESS ENGAGEMENTS AT THE CORE

At its core, the event consists of a major international exhibition showcasing aircraft and component manufacturers, airline service providers, airport infrastructure companies, emerging technology firms in Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) and drones, Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) specialists, and aviation tech innovators. Static aircraft displays and flying demonstrations will complement the exhibition, offering visitors — both industry professionals and members of the public — an immersive view of aviation capabilities and trends.

Photo: PIB

MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION RAMMOHAN NAIDU AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE WINGS INDIA 2026 BROCHURE, THE PROMOTIONAL VIDEO AND THE OFFICIAL UNVEILING OF THE WINGS INDIA 2026 MOBILE APP

Running alongside the exhibition will be the Wings India Conference and Global Aviation Summit, which will serve as a forum for strategic dialogue on issues shaping the future of civil aviation. Ministers, senior policymakers, airline CEOs and industry experts will deliberate on subjects such as sustainable aviation fuel adoption, regional connectivity, airport modernisation, airline business models, innovation ecosystems, workforce development and safety enhancement. These discussions are expected to provide both policy direction and commercial insights for the industry.

Wings India 2026 will also facilitate structured Business-to-Business meetings, enabling meaningful engagement between Indian stakeholders and international partners. These interactions are designed to promote investment discussions, technology transfers, joint ventures and market entry strategies, reinforcing the event's role as a catalyst for global collaboration in aviation.

A key highlight of the event will be the Wings India Awards, which recognise outstanding achievement and innovation across various segments of civil aviation. Organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Civil Aviation and AAI, the awards aim to celebrate excellence among airlines, airports, service providers and individuals, while encouraging best practices across the sector.

Cultural programmes, networking dinners and interactive sessions will add breadth to the event, creating opportunities for informal engagement alongside structured business and policy discussions. Through its integrated programming, Wings India 2026 is poised not just as an exhibition or conference, but as a comprehensive aviation festival where ideas, investments and collaborations intersect.

BOLSTERING INDIA'S EXPANDING GLOBAL AVIATION ROLE

The significance of Wings India 2026 extends beyond the event itself; it represents India's growing stature in aviation. As the world's third-largest domestic civil aviation market, India is rapidly enhancing its civil aviation infrastructure footprint, expanding regional connectivity, and nurturing a skilled aviation workforce. Wings India serves as a reflection and reinforcement of these strides, offering a global platform to highlight partnerships, innovations and investment prospects that will shape aviation through the coming decade.

Wings India 2026 is positioned as a defining milestone for Indian civil aviation on the global stage. More than a conventional exhibition or conference, the event is expected to serve as a platform where future industry trajectories are debated, partnerships are forged and commercial engagements take shape. By bringing together policymakers, global aviation leaders and industry stakeholders, Wings India 2026 aims to set the direction for the next phase of aviation growth in India while reinforcing the country's expanding role in the international aviation ecosystem.

Airbus at Wings India 2026

Airbus has lined up a high-octane show at Wings India 2026, with a comprehensive display of fixed-wing and rotary platforms that are redefining the future of Indian aviation. The company will also showcase an immersive helicopter simulator and its bouquet of aerospace services at the premier Indian airshow at Hyderabad's Begumpet Airport from January 28 to 31, 2026.

On static display, visitors can get up close with the heavy hitters of the Airbus stable, including the A321neo, the world's best-selling large single-aisle aircraft, and the A220, a proven game changer for domestic and regional international connectivity. These will be joined by the H160 helicopter that is redefining helicopter aviation in India and the H125, the world's most-preferred single-engine and multi-mission workhorse that will now be assembled in India in Vemagal, Karnataka.

At Stand 11 in Hall A, Airbus will highlight its latest fleet additions and future-ready technology through scale models of the twin-engine H145 and the groundbreaking single aisle aircraft, the A321XLR. Following its landmark Indian debut earlier this month, the A321XLR stands as the "route opener" capable of flying routes traditionally considered wide body routes.

Photo: Airbus

JÜRGEN WESTERMEIER, PRESIDENT & MANAGING DIRECTOR, AIRBUS INDIA & SOUTH ASIA

The centre-piece of the stand will be the H125 Virtual Reality Simulator. This immersive, new-generation device revolutionises pilot training by providing advanced training solutions that combine the benefits of actual flight and the safety of simulation tools.

"India is a market and an industrial base that is significant for Airbus' success. Our presence at Wings India 2026 reflects the gamut of our activities here - from the 'Make in India' assembly lines for helicopters and military transporters to our digital and engineering hubs in Bengaluru. Whether it is deploying world-class training centers for pilots or sourcing $1.5 billion in components and services annually from Indian suppliers, we are fully invested in building a holistic aerospace ecosystem here in this country," said Jürgen Westermeier, President & Managing Director, Airbus India & South Asia.

Beyond the hardware, Airbus will showcase a suite of lifecycle services engineered to streamline aircraft operations and peak fleet performance. Visitors can also engage with the Airbus decarbonisation roadmap, a deep dive into how Sustainable Aviation Fuel can power the future of flight.

ATR - World Leader in Turboprop Aviation

For more than four decades, ATR has defined regional aviation with a singular focus: delivering efficient, reliable, and increasingly sustainable turboprop aircraft that connect communities around the globe

Photo: ATR

BY EFFECTIVELY LOWERING OPERATING COSTS AND EMISSIONS, ATR AIRCRAFT HAVE HELPED AIRLINES SUSTAIN YEAR-ROUND SERVICES ON ROUTES THAT MIGHT OTHERWISE BE MARGINAL OR UNPROFITABLE

SP'S SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

From remote airstrips to busy short-haul routes, the Franco-Italian manufacturer's ATR 42 and ATR 72 series have become the benchmark for regional turboprop performance. In doing so, ATR has not only led in sales and market reach but also in continuous product innovation and environmental leadership.

A PROVEN GLOBAL FOOTPRINT

ATR's journey began in 1981 as a collaboration between aerospace giants Airbus and Leonardo, with the goal of creating efficient regional aircraft capable of serving the world's most challenging routes. Today, ATR's influence is unmistakable. The company has sold nearly 1,900 aircraft since the programme's inception, with ATR models flown by around 200 airlines in more than 100 countries, opening an average of over 120 new routes every year.

The widespread adoption of ATR aircraft underscores a fundamental truth about regional aviation: demand is not only driven by large city pairs. Instead, it hinges on connecting smaller cities, islands, mountainous terrains and underserved corridors where economic viability and aircraft flexibility are paramount.

INNOVATION AT THE HEART OF TURBOPROP DESIGN

What sets ATR apart in the competitive regional aircraft space is its relentless pursuit of innovation tailored to real-world airline needs. ATR aircraft are powered by Pratt & Whitney Canada's PW127XT engines, which represent a significant evolution in turboprop propulsion. These advanced engines deliver not only a three per cent improvement in fuel efficiency, but also around 20 per cent lower maintenance costs and 40 per cent longer time on wing compared with earlier engine models.

This combination of performance improvements and operating savings underlines ATR's strategy of continuous enhancement rather than incremental change. Such technological upgrades ensure that ATR aircraft remain not only competitive against jets on short haul but increasingly efficient relative to their own previous generations.

ATR has also advanced versatility with variants like the ATR 72-600F freighter, addressing cargo requirements on regional networks, and innovations such as STOL (short take-off and landing) versions that promise even greater airport access flexibility.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

While economic efficiency has long been ATR's hallmark, sustainability has rapidly moved to the top of the company's strategic priorities. Recognising the urgent need to reduce aviation's environmental footprint, ATR has embedded sustainability into every aspect of its operations and product development.

ATR aircraft naturally offer significant emissions advantages over similarly sized regional jets. Robust independent data show that ATR turboprops can emit up to 45 per cent less CO_2 per trip than comparable jets, a direct result of their efficient propulsion and aerodynamic design. This fuel efficiency not only reduces operational costs for airlines but also positions the aircraft as compelling solutions for carriers looking to meet stringent environmental goals.

Beyond the aircraft themselves, ATR's corporate commitment to environmental stewardship is comprehensive. The company's manufacturing sites are certified to ISO 14001 environmental standards, underscoring ongoing efforts to minimise pollution, optimise resource use and preserve biodiversity. ATR's near-term targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—validated by the Science Based Targets initiative—include a 50 per cent reduction in emissions from operational processes and energy consumption by 2030 compared with 2018 levels.

SUSTAINABLE AVIATION FUEL AND THE PATH AHEAD

One of the most tangible sustainability initiatives led by ATR has been in the arena of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF). ATR was among the first regional aircraft manufacturers to demonstrate the viability of SAF at scale, completing the first commercial flight using 100 per cent SAF in both engines back in 2022.

Recognising that SAF availability remains a global challenge, ATR has partnered with industry stakeholders to simplify SAF adoption and broaden its reach. Agreements with SAF aggregators aim to streamline access for operators, ensuring that regional airlines—even those without direct physical SAF supply chains—can participate in emission reduction efforts.

ATR also supports creative mechanisms such as "book and claim" arrangements, which allow airlines to earn environmental credits for SAF use regardless of where the fuel is physically supplied. These innovations exemplify ATR's pragmatic approach to accelerating decarbonisation across the industry.

NEXT-GENERATION TECHNOLOGY: HYBRID-ELECTRIC FLIGHT

Looking beyond SAF, ATR is at the forefront of future propulsion technologies. In partnership with the European Union's Clean Aviation Joint Undertaking, ATR is leading development projects that aim to fly the world's first hybrid-electric regional aircraft by 2030 using an ATR 72-600 test bed. These initiatives, part of Clean Aviation's Ultra-Efficient Regional Aircraft (UERA) programme, integrate hybrid-electric propulsion, advanced propeller systems and high-performance batteries into a next-generation aircraft concept.

ATR's flagship HERACLES project will explore hybrid configurations combining electric systems with engines optimised for 100 per cent SAF compatibility, offering a potential 30 per cent reduction in carbon emissions for future aircraft generations. This ambitious programme situates ATR as not just a leader in current turboprop technology, but a front-runner in defining what low-emission regional aviation could look like in the decades ahead.

ECONOMIC AND CONNECTIVITY IMPACT

ATR's aircraft are designed not only for efficiency and sustainability but to enable route development that jets cannot economically support. Their ability to operate from short, less developed runways expands air connectivity options in underserved regions. This versatility underpins real socio-economic outcomes—connecting remote communities with larger economic hubs, improving access to healthcare and education, and enabling regional tourism and commerce.

By effectively lowering operating costs and emissions, ATR aircraft have helped airlines sustain year-round services on routes that might otherwise be marginal or unprofitable. The enduring appeal of turboprops in global markets—from Asia-Pacific to Europe and the Americas—illustrates the critical role of ATR's products in regional aviation ecosystems.

A SUSTAINABLE, INNOVATIVE FUTURE

As the regional aviation industry continues to evolve under environmental and economic pressures, ATR's leadership position is built on more than historical success. It rests on a future-focused vision that aligns technological innovation with sustainability imperatives and airline operational realities.

ATR's continuous improvements in engine performance, fuel efficiency, SAF integration and next-generation propulsion technologies highlight a commitment to responsible aviation growth. As demands for connectivity increase and emissions reduction targets tighten worldwide, ATR's turboprop aircraft are uniquely positioned not only to meet today's regional mobility needs but to help shape the industry's transition to a lower-emission future.

In an era where sustainability and economic performance are inseparable, ATR remains the global benchmark in turboprop aviation—proving that responsible air connectivity is possible without compromising operational efficiency or commercial viability.

GEnx: GE Aerospace's Technological Marvel

From composite fan systems and advanced combustor technology to digital maintenance ecosystems, the GEnx engine represents one of GE Aerospace's most ambitious and successful propulsion programmes

SP'S SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

When GE Aerospace launched the GEnx programme in the early 2000s, the global aviation industry was entering a defining period of transition, with airlines demanding step-change improvements in fuel efficiency, emissions performance and dispatch reliability, and aircraft manufacturers designing lighter, longer-range widebody platforms optimised for new intercontinental and point-to-point routes. Conceived as GE's response to this inflection point, the GEnx—short for GE Next-Generation—was developed as the successor to the highly successful CF6 engine family, not as an incremental upgrade but as a comprehensive rethinking of widebody engine architecture.

The objective was to deliver a next-generation propulsion system capable of enabling the new class of long-haul aircraft while setting fresh benchmarks in efficiency, durability and environmental performance. Drawing on decades of experience from iconic programmes such as the CF6 and GE90, and leveraging advances in materials science, aerodynamics, combustion technology and digital monitoring, the GEnx was designed from the outset to power Boeing's newest widebody aircraft, including the 787 Dreamliner and later the 747-8, while achieving double-digit gains in efficiency and emissions performance compared with previous generations.

Photos: GE Aerospace

(LEFT-RIGHT) TECH ADVANCES FUEL THE GENX AIRCRAFT ENGINE. THE ENGINE FAMILY HAS SURPASSED 50 MILLION FLIGHT HOURS.

TECHNOLOGY LINEAGE AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

The conceptual foundations of the GEnx were laid in the early 2000s as Boeing advanced plans for the 787 Dreamliner and later the 747-8, prompting GE Aerospace to identify the need for a new engine that could deliver double-digit improvements in fuel burn and emissions while supporting longer flight cycles and higher utilisation. Rather than pursuing radical architectural risk, the GEnx programme drew heavily from GE's experience with the GE90—the world's most powerful commercial jet engine—refining and optimising its proven aerodynamic and core design principles for a very different performance envelope focused on sustained cruise efficiency, lower weight and extended durability rather than extreme thrust output. Officially introduced in the mid-2000s, the GEnx engine family progressed through extensive development, certification, endurance testing and real-world validation, including its first flight on GE's Boeing 747 flying testbed, before entering commercial service in the early 2010s as one of the most thoroughly tested widebody engines in GE's history.

COMPOSITE MATERIALS AS A STRUCTURAL BREAKTHROUGH

One of the most significant technological breakthroughs of the GEnx programme was the introduction of composite fan blades paired with a composite fan case, making it the first commercial engine to integrate both elements as a fully unified system—an advance beyond earlier applications where composite blades had flown on the GE90 but without a composite case. According to GE Aerospace, this composite fan system delivered multiple, simultaneous benefits: substantial weight reduction that directly improved fuel efficiency; enhanced corrosion resistance that increased durability; and robust structural containment capability that met stringent safety requirements while remaining lighter than traditional metallic structures. The reduced rotating mass of the fan assembly also lowered mechanical stress and loads across the engine, contributing to improved component life, greater long-term reliability, and marking a decisive shift away from conventional metal-dominated engine designs, while laying the foundation for wider adoption of composite materials in future propulsion systems.

ADVANCED AERODYNAMICS AND PRESSURE SYSTEMS

Beyond materials, the GEnx incorporates extensive aerodynamic optimisation across the fan, compressor and turbine sections, including advanced three-dimensional aerodynamic modelling to minimise losses and improve airflow stability. The engine features a high overall pressure ratio derived from GE90 architecture, enabling more efficient compression of intake air and delivering higher thermal efficiency—an essential factor in reducing fuel burn during long-duration cruise segments. GE Aerospace has consistently confirmed that the combined effect of refined compressor aerodynamics and lightweight turbine materials enables the GEnx to achieve up to 15 per cent lower fuel consumption and CO_2 emissions compared with the CF6 engines it replaced, with these performance gains validated through certification testing and reinforced by in-service operational data.

ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE AND THE TAPS COMBUSTOR

Environmental compliance was embedded in the GEnx design from the outset, with a key enabler being the Twin-Annular Pre-Swirl (TAPS) combustor, a lean-burn combustion system that premixes fuel and air more effectively before combustion. According to official GE Aerospace data, TAPS delivers nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions well below international regulatory limits, while also improving fuel–air mixing to achieve cleaner combustion and reduced particulate emissions. This advanced combustor architecture not only ensures compliance with current environmental standards but has also proven particularly important as the aviation industry transitions toward greater use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), for which the GEnx is fully compatible within approved blend limits, supporting long-term fleet sustainability and regulatory readiness.

SERVICE ENTRY AND GLOBAL MATURITY

Since entering commercial service in the early 2010s—first on the Boeing 747-8 in 2011 and subsequently on the 787 Dreamliner in 2012—the GEnx has built an exceptional service record and achieved one of the fastest adoption rates in GE's widebody portfolio. GE Aerospace has confirmed that the engine became the fastest-selling high-thrust engine in the company's history, accumulating tens of millions of flight hours across a global operator base spanning more than 70 airlines worldwide and powering multiple aircraft configurations. By 2023, the GEnx family had surpassed 50 million flight hours, reaching that milestone faster than any other GE widebody engine line, while regional achievements—including two million flight hours with South Asian airlines in 2024 and five million hours flown in Japan—further underscore the engine's operational maturity, reliability and widespread trust among airline operators.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND DIGITAL INTEGRATION

Continued investment in durability and reliability has been a defining feature of the GEnx's evolution well beyond entry into service. Extensive endurance testing—including more than 3,000 dust ingestion cycles simulating severe operating environments—has validated improvements in critical components such as the combustor and turbine blades, reinforcing confidence in long-term durability. These enhancements, supported by real-world operational data, are complemented by GE Aerospace's expanding global services and digital ecosystem, which integrates on-wing technologies such as 360 Foam Wash and AI-enabled inspection and diagnostic tools. Together, these capabilities enable predictive maintenance, extend time on wing, reduce maintenance burden and lifecycle costs, and improve overall performance optimisation, reinforcing the GEnx's value proposition for airlines beyond its initial fuel-efficiency gains.

A DEFINING ACHIEVEMENT IN ENGINE ENGINEERING

The evolution of the GEnx reflects a broader transformation in how commercial engines are designed, built and supported, with GE Aerospace combining advanced materials, refined aerodynamics, low-emissions combustion and digital services to deliver not just an engine but a complete propulsion platform aligned with the long-term realities of global aviation; rooted in GE's proven GE90 architecture and now forming the backbone of modern long-haul operations, the GEnx has redefined expectations for wide-body propulsion through its innovative use of composites, fuel-efficient design and continual evolution driven by rigorous testing, anchoring both the performance and sustainability of many of today's most efficient commercial aircraft.

Business Aviation in India – At an Inflection Point

Despite constrained by policy and operational bottlenecks, India's business aviation sector is transitioning to essential infrastructure, poised for strong growth as reforms unlock its role in national productivity and connectivity

Photos: GMR, Club One Air

(TOP AND ABOVE) ONCE VIEWED AS PERIPHERAL, BUSINESS AVIATION IS NOW EMERGING AS A STRATEGIC PILLAR OF INDIA'S AVIATION AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

RAJAN MEHRA,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & ACCOUNTABLE MANAGER, CLUB ONE AIR

As India's civil aviation ecosystem continues its rapid expansion, the public narrative has largely centred on scheduled airlines, fleet inductions, and airport infrastructure. Yet, running powerfully alongside this story—often understated but increasingly indispensable—is business aviation. Once viewed as peripheral, it is now emerging as a strategic pillar of India's aviation and economic growth.

India today operates approximately 350–400 business jets and turboprops, supported by a civil helicopter fleet of around 250 aircraft. For a nation of 1.4 billion people, vast geography, and a rapidly decentralising industrial base, these numbers remain disproportionately low. This gap does not indicate weak demand—it highlights an ecosystem that has yet to fully unlock its potential.

For decades, business aviation in India carried the perception of being a privilege reserved for the rich and famous. That perception has changed decisively. Business aviation is increasingly recognised for what it truly represents: time efficiency, productivity, access, and resilience.

It enables corporate leadership to compress travel time, execute multi-city schedules in a single day, reach Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities with limited scheduled connectivity, and respond swiftly in sectors such as infrastructure, energy, healthcare, manufacturing, financial services, and governance.

Helicopters further strengthen this value proposition. Their role in medical evacuation, disaster response, offshore logistics, pilgrimage circuits, tourism, and access to difficult terrain positions them as national assets rather than niche luxury tools. India's limited helicopter penetration therefore highlights a critical capability gap that must be addressed as part of broader aviation planning.

The structural foundations for accelerated—and potentially exponential—growth are now firmly in place. India's economic expansion is no longer metro-centric. Airport infrastructure continues to expand steadily. Corporate India is becoming more time-sensitive, globally integrated, and governance-driven. Emerging aircraft financing and leasing structures, particularly through IFSC-linked frameworks, are beginning to reduce capital friction and align India with global best practices.

India today operates approximately 350–400 business jets and turboprops, supported by a civil helicopter fleet of around 250 aircraft

At the same time, legacy constraints continue to hold the sector back. Operational friction—limited hangar availability, inconsistent parking access, and restricted operating windows at congested airports—undermines the flexibility that defines business aviation's value proposition.

Cost and taxation structures still often treat the segment as discretionary consumption rather than productivity infrastructure. Regulatory processes, involving multiple agencies and layered approvals, lack the predictability required for scale. In the helicopter segment, the absence of a structured heliport and helipad ecosystem further weakens utilisation economics.

The solution does not lie in subsidies. What business aviation needs is clarity, predictability, and recognition—time-bound approvals, rationalised taxation aligned with global norms, streamlined procedures, heliport development, and a strong domestic MRO ecosystem.

Encouragingly, India has begun taking meaningful steps in this direction. Club One Air has recently received approval to undertake C-Checks for aircraft within India—a milestone that directly supports Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Make in India' and the development of a robust, self-reliant MRO ecosystem.

Such progress reduces overseas dependency, saves foreign exchange, shortens aircraft downtime, and builds indigenous technical capability—cornerstones for sustainable growth. Market indicators already point to steady mid-single-digit growth over the coming decade, with helicopters offering even greater upside if infrastructure bottlenecks are addressed. More importantly,

India remains at an early adoption stage. Even modest shifts in corporate travel behaviour could necessitate the induction of hundreds of additional aircraft. Business aviation in India must therefore be viewed not as a niche, but as national productivity and connectivity infrastructure. With perception changing, policy evolving, and capability building at pace, business aviation is no longer waiting in the wings—it is ready for take-off. ●

Embraer's Commercial Aircraft to Take Centre Stage at Wings India 2026

The E195-E2 and the E175 highlight next-generation efficiency, passenger comfort, and right-sized capacity for India's booming aviation market

Embraer will display two of its commercial aircraft, the E195-E2 and the E175, at Wings India 2026 in Hyderabad. Embraer's significant participation in the event underscores the company's commitment to advancing regional connectivity and sustainable aviation in the Indian market, presenting solutions tailored to address the country's unique and expanding aviation needs. Both aircraft types provide airlines the right-sized capacity and strong flexibility to open new routes connecting secondary and tertiary cities.

Photo: Embraer

EMBRAER E195-E2 TECH-EAGLE

The E195-E2 on static display is the world's quietest and most fuel-efficient aircraft. This E2 small narrowbody commercial jet builds on the operational excellence of the first-generation E-Jets. Its sophisticated aerodynamics, its cutting edge wing design and its new technologies deliver a 29 per cent decrease in carbon emissions and fuel burn per seat over the previous generation E-Jets. With typical single-class layouts, seating 132–146 passengers, it offers ideal capacity in the sub-150-seat segment.

The Indian market is expected to require at least 500 aircraft in the 80 to 146 seat range over the next 20 years. The E2 family of jets enables the highest seat profits in the small narrowbody segment and is certified to fly with blends of up to 50 per cent sustainable aviation fuel (SAF). The aircraft have already proven its engine's operability with 100 per cent SAF, further reinforcing Embraer's commitment to emissions reduction and sustainable aviation.

Already a significant part of the Star Air fleet in India, Embraer's E175 is a proven regional jet, with a seat capacity of up to 88 passengers. The aircraft is widely recognised for its reliability, economics and performance capabilities. With an 80 per cent share of the regional market in the United States, the E175 is the backbone of regional connectivity across the US. Recent enhancements to the avionics, cabin and passenger experience have elevated the customer experience in the E175 to be more in line with the best-in-class E2s.

"Embraer's E-Jet programme is one of the most successful in the industry," said Adity Shekhar, Regional Vice President, Sales, Embraer. "The E-Jets family can transform and grow regional connectivity from tier two and tier three cities in India, tapping on 'blue ocean' opportunities."

Embraer is the leading manufacturer of commercial jets with up to 150 seats. Collectively, the E-Jets and E-Jets E2 are operated by more than 80 airlines across 50 countries and more than 1,900 units delivered. Today, nearly 50 Embraer aircraft across 11 different types operate in India, serving the Indian Air Force, other government agencies, business jet operators and Star Air.

As the 'Aviation Innovation Partner' for Wings India 2026, Embraer is offering solutions that directly support India's sustainable growth and ambition for enhanced connectivity. The E2 family, with its unparalleled efficiency and passenger comfort is perfectly suited to unlock new routes and optimize operations for Indian carriers. Customers and visitors can also experience the full range of Embraer's products and services at Booth 9B Hall B at Wings India 2026. ●

India's Airport Boom... *continued from page 1*

the majority of routes have largely remained the same… expanding existing airports should also be looked at apart from only building new hubs."

In essence, the problem is not the absence of airports, but the persistence of airline network concentration. Routes continue to converge around major hubs because that is where demand, connectivity and commercial viability remain strongest.

Suman Ramasundaram, senior aviation leader and former Head of Airport Planning and Development at BIAL, adds that congestion is not just an infrastructure issue, but a planning and regulatory challenge, "Currently Indian airports are not governed by uniform, enforceable Service Level Agreements (SLAs) beyond what is specified in individual concession agreements… Just when one terminal is inaugurated, the future expansion plans are getting drawn out."

She further highlights the limitations of global design standards, "Most major airports are planned in line with IATA's ADRM norms. However, these standards do not fully capture India-specific realities such as additional security layers, higher manpower requirements, large proportion of first-time flyers, and culturally distinct passenger behaviour." As a result, terminals may be compliant on paper but feel overcrowded in practice, especially during peak traffic banks.

NIGHT-TIME CONGESTION AND OPERATIONAL PRESSURE

Another structural factor intensifying congestion is India's 24-hour airport operations and the clustering of international flights during early morning hours. Ramasundaram explains that metro airports face intense terminal pressure between 2 am and 4 am due to international arrival banks driven by airline network dependencies, bilateral constraints, crew rotations and slot availability. This concentration is shaped by airline economics rather than airport planning, resulting in short-duration but extreme stress on immigration, baggage systems, ground transport and terminal flow.

While the Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) and BCAS implemented operational interventions after public outcry in late 2022, many were ad hoc and later relaxed. However, Ramasundaram notes, "The MoCA along with AERA has now initiated work on a formal SLA framework for major airports with ongoing performance monitoring. Once implemented, this has the potential to significantly improve passenger comfort and service quality, particularly at high-traffic metro hubs."

ARE NEW AIRPORTS IMPROVING THE PASSENGER JOURNEY?

The Civil Aviation Minister's statement that India is building one airport every 50 days reflects remarkable construction momentum. But how much of this translates into smoother journeys? Surabhi Rana, Head of Air Service Development at Noida International Airport, offers a nuanced, data-backed view, "The impact of India's airport expansion is most visible in non-metro and emerging city pairs. Over the past few years, a significant share of domestic traffic growth, over 60 per cent in some periods, has come from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities." She emphasises that this is not merely about convenience, "This is not just about access, it is about inclusion."

However, both Gangakhedkar and Ramasundaram caution that geographic access alone does not equate to smoother journeys. Gangakhedkar further goes on to explain: "There are two parts to this. First, making air travel accessible to Tier-3 and Tier-4 cities will take time before strong demand emerges. Second, most connectivity is still with key Tier-2 airports, so congestion is not necessarily reducing, at least for now."

Reinforces her point, Ramasundaram adds, "New airports improve geographic access for certain catchments, but smoother journeys depend more on flight frequency, airline reliability, landside connectivity and operational maturity than on the mere existence of airport infrastructure." In short, airports are necessary, but not sufficient for better passenger experience.

WHY ARE REGIONAL AIRPORTS UNDERUTILISED?

Low utilisation of several newly commissioned regional airports is one of India's most visible aviation challenges. Gangakhedkar describes this as a demand-cycle issue, "The demand for these locations is still very sparse and cyclical. It will take a few years till we see these new airports in smaller cities see higher demand."

Rana views early underutilisation as natural, "Regional airports are long-term assets, and early underutilisation is a natural phase in market development." She also highlights the importance of diversified revenue, "From an airport perspective, viability increasingly depends on diversifying revenue streams beyond aeronautical revenue.

Photos: PIB

(TOP) PRIME MINISTER MODI AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE NAVI MUMBAI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AT MUMBAI;
(ABOVE) PRIME MINISTER MODI INAUGURATES THE NEW TERMINAL BUILDING OF LOKAPRIYA GOPINATH BARDOLOI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, IN GUWAHATI, ASSAM.

Rana agrees that policy support is essential early on, but long-term success is commercial, "Passenger volumes, airline networks and non-aeronautical revenue performance ultimately determine success." "Many newer airports are policy-driven assets aimed at regional development rather than immediate commercial viability… without well-structured PPP models and balanced concession agreements, airports risk becoming financially stressed assets," Ramasundaram adds offering her more direct assessment:

WHY DO METRO AIRPORTS REMAIN CONGESTED?

Despite decentralisation efforts, metro airports remain the country's dominant gateways. "Tier-1 airports are very well-connected leading to continuous and growing demand, resulting in airlines continuing to prioritise these airports," Gangakhedkar explains. He adds that shifting airline networks is operationally complex due to ground handling, catering, turnaround capabilities and cost structures.

Rana sees metro congestion as a reflection of economic gravity rather than decentralisation failure, "Metro congestion reflects strong economic concentration and network depth rather than a failure of decentralisation." She further stresses the need for system-level planning, "This highlights the need for a shift from airport-by-airport expansion to network-based planning."

Offering a rather blunt opinion, Ramasundaram says, "Congestion at metro airports fundamentally reflects demand concentration… Building airports ahead of demand does not decongest metro hubs; it creates parallel infrastructure that may remain underutilised."

ARE CURRENT INVESTMENTS SUFFICIENT FOR 2030?

With India's passenger traffic expected to more than double by 2030, are current investments sufficient? "Yes," says Gangakhedkar, noting that new airports are planned to support demand for the next 20 years and beyond. However, he cautions that existing hubs must also be prepared for the next five years through expansion or seamless connectivity.

However, Rana warns that the challenge is not whether new airports are being built, but whether investments in comfort, efficiency and passenger experience can keep pace."

Ramasundaram outlines three urgent priorities, "India-specific planning approaches, Regulatory alignment and Targeted investment strategy." Without this, she cautions, Indian airports risk persistent congestion at metros.

CONCLUSION

India's airport development story is impressive, but incomplete. The country has mastered the art of building infrastructure. What it now needs to master is orchestrating the systemaligning airports with airline networks, designing for India-specific passenger behaviour, integrating landside connectivity, and enforcing service standards that scale with demand.

As experts consistently highlight, congestion is not merely a capacity problem; it is a planning, network, regulatory and demand-distribution problem. Regional airports are not failing because they exist, but because demand maturation takes time. Metro airports are not congested because decentralisation has failed, but because economic gravity still pulls traffic into a few hubs.

The next phase of India's aviation journey must move from counting airports to optimising experience, from asset creation to system performance, and from policy-driven expansion to commercially sustainable aviation ecosystems. Only then will India's aviation growth translate into smoother journeys, better connectivity and a globally competitive passenger experience. ●

AIRCRAFT ON STATIC DISPLAY AT WINGS INDIA 2026

ORGANISATION	MODEL
Arca Aviation	Tecnam P2006
Arca Aviation	Tecnam P2010
HAL	Hindustan 228 Aircraft
HAL	Dhruv ALH - NG Helicopter
HAL	LUH Civil Helicopter
Sakthi Aviation Defence Systems Pvt Ltd	Diamond DA40 NG
Sakthi Aviation Defence Systems Pvt Ltd	DA62
Sakthi Aviation Defence Systems Pvt Ltd	DA42
Sakthi Aviation Defence Systems Pvt Ltd	L 410 NG
Dassault Aviation	Falcon 6X
CSIR - NAL	Hansa-3(NG)
Airbus	H125
Airbus	H160 ACH
Airbus	A321neo
Airbus	A220
Embraer	E175
Embraer	E195-E2 Profit Hunter
UAC	SJ-100
UAC	IL-114-300
UAC	Aurus Business Jet
Tecnam	P2010 TDI
Tecnam	P2008JC
Tecnam	P-MENTOR
Tecnam	P 2010
Pilatus	PC-24
Air India	Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner
Air India Express	Boeing 737 MAX
Akasa	Boeing 737-8 MAX
Extra Aircraft	Extra 300
Extra Aircraft	Extra 300S
Extra Aircraft	Extra 300L
Extra Aircraft	Extra 260
Extra Aircraft	Extra 300L

LIKELY SHOW STOPPERS AT WINGS INDIA 2026

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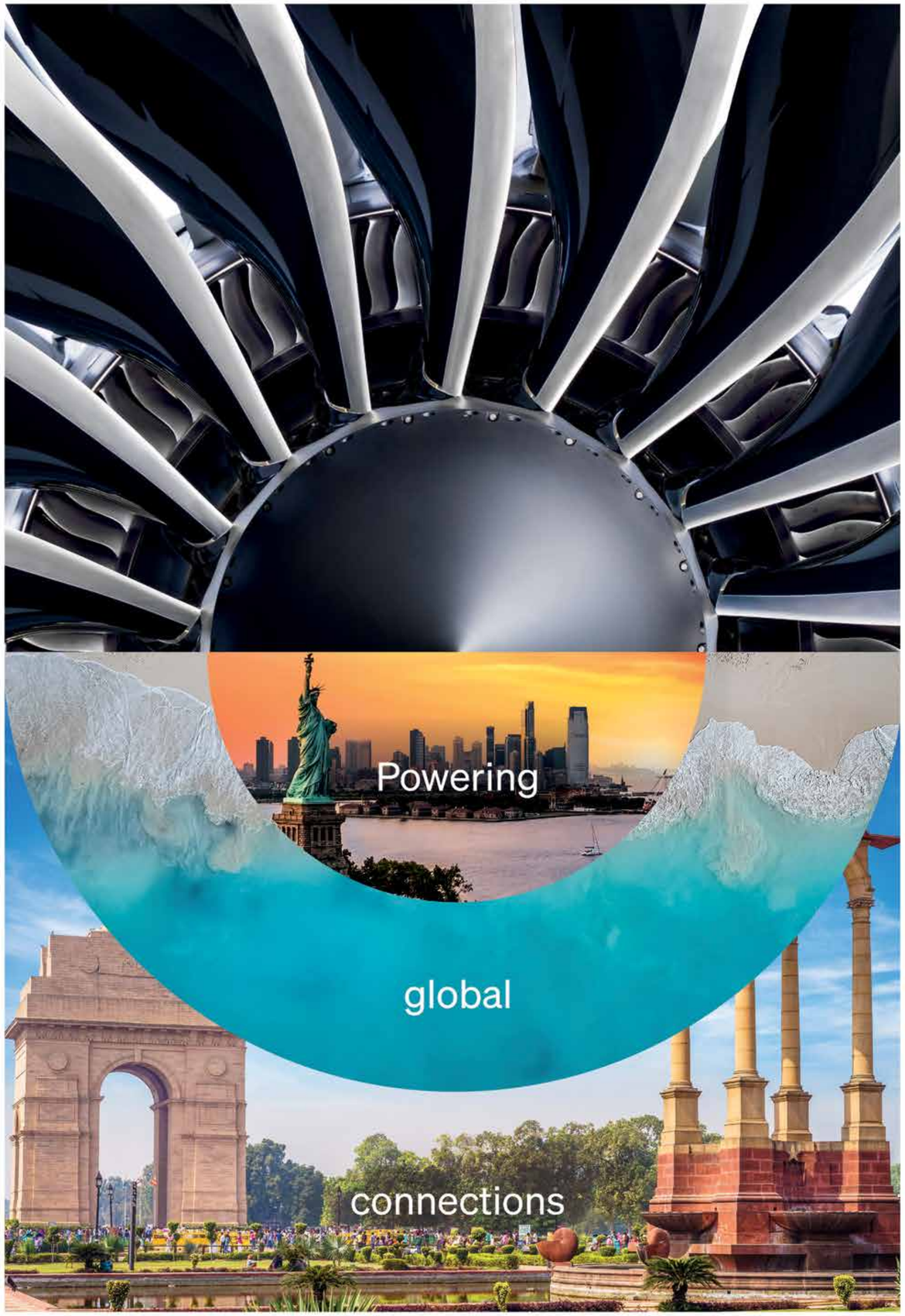

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