

India has Become the World's Third Largest Aviation Market: PM Modi at Inauguration of Greenfield Airport in Mopa, Goa

December 11, 2022



Prime Minister Narendra Modi; Governor of Goa Shri P.S. Sreedharan Pillai; Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Jyotraditya Scindia; Union Minister of Port, Shipping and Waterways, Shri Shripad Yesso Naik; and Chief Minister of Goa Shri Pramod Sawant.

Present on stage, the Governor of Goa Shri P.S. Sreedharan Pillai ji, popular Chief Minister of Goa Shri Pramod Sawant ji, Union Ministers Shri Shripad Naik ji, Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia ji, all other dignitaries and ladies and gentlemen!

Heartiest congratulations to the people of Goa and the people of the country for this marvellous new airport. In the last 8 years, whenever I got a chance to be amidst you all, I used to repeat just one thing, that is, I will repay the love and blessings you have showered on us with interest; with development. This modern airport terminal is an attempt to pay back for the same affection. I am also delighted because this International Airport has been named after my dear

colleague and the son of Goa, Late Manohar Parrikar ji. Now, through the name of Manohar International Airport, the name of Parrikar ji will be forever etched in the memory of every person who visits here.

As per the decades-long approach regarding infrastructure in our country, the previous governments used to prioritize only the vote-bank rather than the needs of the people. Consequently, thousands of crores of rupees were often spent on low-priority projects. Therefore, often the need for infrastructure for the people was neglected. This International Airport of Goa is an example of the same. It was a long-standing demand not only of the people of Goa but of the people across the country. One airport was not enough. Goa needed another airport. This airport was planned when Atal Bihari Vajpayee's government was at the centre.

But after Atal ji's government, not much was done for this airport. This project was in a limbo for a long time. In 2014, Goa installed a double engine of development. We once again completed all the procedures quickly. And 6 years ago, I came here and laid the foundation stone. There were many hurdles ranging from court-cases to the pandemic from time to time. But in spite of all that, today it is ready in the form of a magnificent airport. At present, it has the facility to handle about 40 lakh passengers in a year. In the future, this capacity can reach up to 3.5 crore. Tourism will definitely get a tremendous boost with this airport. Having 2 airports has increased the possibilities for Goa to turn into a cargo hub as well. This will also boost the export of fruits and vegetables as well as pharma products.

We often hear that tourism expands the soft power of any country and that is indeed true. But it is equally true that when the power of a country expands, the world wants to know more about it.

Manohar International Airport today is also a proof of the changed mindset and approach of the government regarding the country's infrastructure. Before 2014, because of the attitude of the governments, air travel had become a luxury. Mostly the rich people could take advantage of it. The previous governments did not even consider that the ordinary citizens and the middle class would also want to travel by air. That's why the governments of that time avoided investing in such fast means of transport. Not much was spent for the development of airports. As a result, despite having such a huge potential related to air-travel in the country,

we were left behind. We could not tap it. Now the country is working with the modern mindset of development. So, we are also seeing its results.

Since independence till 2014, there were only 70 small and major airports in the country. The facility for air travel mostly existed only in major cities. But we took the initiative to take air travel to small towns of the country. We worked at two levels for the same. Firstly, we expanded the airport network across the country. Secondly, through the UDAN scheme, the common man also got the opportunity to fly in an aeroplane. These efforts have yielded unprecedented results. Scindia ji has told us in great detail that about 72 new airports have been built in the country in the last 8 years. Just imagine, after independence, there were around 70 airports in 70 years! But now, we have more than 70 new airports in just 7-8 years. That is, now the number of airports in India has doubled. In the year 2000, about 6 crore people in the country used to take advantage of air travel annually. Before the Corona period in 2020, this number had crossed 14 crores. Among them, more than one crore people had taken the advantage of the UDAN scheme to travel by air.

Due to all these efforts, today India has become the third largest aviation market in the world. The way UDAN scheme has fulfilled the dreams of the middle class of the country, it is indeed a subject of research by universities and the academic world. Not many years ago, the middle class used to check train tickets first for travelling long distances. Now even for a short distance travel, they look for the plane tickets first. Air travel is their first choice. As air connectivity is expanding in the country, air travel is becoming accessible to all.

We often hear that tourism expands the soft power of any country and that is indeed true. But it is equally true that when the power of a country expands, the world wants to know more about it. If there is something to see, to know and understand about that country, then the world definitely gets more attracted towards it. If you look into the history, you will find that when India was prosperous, there was a fascination for India around the world. Travellers, traders, businessmen and students from all over the world used to come here. But there was a long period of slavery after that. India's nature, culture, civilization remained the same, but the image of India had changed; the way of looking at India had changed. The subsequent generations of those who were once eager to come to India, did not even know where India was located!

Now India of the 21st century is a New India. Today, as India is building its new image on the global stage, the outlook of the world is also changing rapidly. Today the world wants to know and understand India. Today, on digital platforms, foreigners are narrating the story of India to the world extensively. Keeping all these things in mind, it is now very essential that 'Ease of Travel' is ensured in the country. In line with this thinking, during the last 8 years, India has made every possible effort to increase 'Ease of Travel' and to expand its tourism profile. You will observe that we have simplified the visa process and enhanced the facilities of visa on-arrival. We focused on modern infrastructure and last-mile connectivity. Along with air connectivity, we are also focusing upon digital connectivity, mobile connectivity and railway connectivity. Today, most of the tourist destinations are being connected by railways. Modern trains like Tejas and Vande Bharat Express are becoming a part of the Railways. Trains with Vistadome Coaches are enhancing the tourist experience. We are continuously experiencing the impact of all these efforts. In the year 2015, the number of domestic tourists in the country was 14 crore. Last year it had increased to around 70 crores. Now after Corona, tourism from within the country and all over the world is increasing rapidly. Goa is also getting the benefit of the decision to start vaccination drive on a priority basis in tourist destinations. Therefore, I congratulate Pramod ji and his team.

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We all know that tourism has the maximum potential for generating employment and self-employment. Everyone earns from tourism. It provides opportunities to everyone. And there is no need to explain so much to the people of Goa as they are already aware of these things. So, the double engine government is laying so much emphasis on tourism, strengthening every means of connectivity. Here in Goa too, since 2014, more than Rs 10,000 crore has been invested in projects related to highways. Relentless work is being done to reduce the traffic problem in Goa. Goa has also benefitted a lot from the electrification of Konkan Railways.

Besides these efforts related to connectivity, the government's emphasis is also on promoting heritage tourism. Emphasis has been laid on the maintenance of our heritage, its connectivity and the development of facilities there. The development

of the historic Aguada Jail Complex Museum in Goa is also an example of the same. Using modern technology, we are making our heritage sites more attractive across the country. Special trains are also being run to help visit the pilgrimage sites and heritage sites of the country.

Today I also want to congratulate the Government of Goa for one more thing. Besides the physical infrastructure, the Government of Goa is laying equal emphasis on social infrastructure. 'Swayampurna Goa' is a very successful campaign being run to ensure that 'Ease of living' is growing in Goa and no one here is deprived of the benefits of government schemes. A commendable work has been done in this direction. Today Goa has set a very good example of 100 percent saturation. I hope that all of you will keep doing such development works and keep making life easier for the people. With this wish, I end my speech by congratulating all of you for this grand airport!

Heartiest congratulations to you all! Thanks a lot.



Prime Minister Modi with Union Minister of Civil Aviation, Shri Jyotraditya Scindia; Chief Minister of Goa Shri Pramod Sawant; Governor of Goa Shri P.S. Sreedharan Pillai and other officials.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurates the Greenfield Airport in Goa in the presence of Rajya Sabha MP Vinay Tendulkar; Union Minister of Civil Aviation Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia; Governor of Goa Shri P.S. Sreedharan Pillai; Chief Minister of Goa Shri Pramod Sawant; Union Minister of Port, Shipping and Waterways Shri Shripad Yesso Naik; and Pernem MLA Pravin Arlekar.