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Indian airlines suspend MidEast operations amid conflict

MUMBAI: Indian airlines suspended and diverted several international flights on Saturday as airspace closures across the MidEast disrupted operations following escalating conflict involving Israel and Iran.

IndiGo said it had temporarily cancelled all flights

Air India Express said for change and cancellation waivers on impacted flights, guests can visit the "Manage Booking" section on website or Chat with Tia on WhatsApp at +91 6360012345.

to and from the MidEast due to restrictions around Iranian airspace. "In view of evolving airspace restrictions around Iran and the MidEast, all flights to and from the MidEast are cancelled till 0000 hrs," it said in a post on X.

Services have been halted to and from Dubai, Jeddah, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Dammam, Bahrain, Sharjah, Kuwait and Ras Al-Khaimah. The airline said safety considerations were behind the decision. "Our teams are continuously monitoring the evolving situation and recalibrating operations to minimise disruption as much as possible," IndiGo said. Air India confirmed that its Delhi-Tel Aviv flight was

forced to return due to the closure of Israeli airspace. The flight was diverted to Mumbai.

An airline official said the Boeing 777 aircraft had been airborne for over five hours and was over Saudi Arabian airspace when the decision was taken, according to data from

Flightradar24. Air India also announced a wider suspension of MidEast operations. "We will continue to assess the safety and security environment for our flight operations and adjust operations proactively as required. Our teams will be extending all necessary support to pas-

sengers," it added.

The largest operator from India to the Gulf region, Air India Express, with an average of 110 flights daily, cancelled all its operations. IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet too have cancelled all their operations. The cancellations are likely to continue though airlines are adopting a watch-and-wait approach as of now. Following the air space closure in Abu Dhabi and reports of explosions in Dubai, Air India Express, which operates 55 flights in each direction, cancelled all its flights.

A source said: "We have suspended all our flights to the MidEast. We oper- (Cont. on page - 2)



Stranded passengers at Mumbai airport.

Online travel agencies may emerge as AI winners, says Morgan Stanley

NEW DELHI: Online Travel Agencies (OTAs) may be better positioned to benefit from artificial intelligence (AI) than widely feared, challenging the consensus view that AI agents will disintermediate traditional booking platforms, according to a Morgan Stanley note.

The bank said that early "agentic AI" travel tools are not bypassing OTAs but instead redirecting users to their apps and websites to complete transactions. Rather than acting as merchants of record themselves, major platforms appear reluctant to take on payment risk, customer service, refunds and regulatory obligations, leaving

OTAs at the centre of the transaction flow.

This dynamic preserves what Morgan Stanley sees as a critical advantage: OTAs' ability to remain the

merchant of record while continuing to capture valuable consumer browsing and purchase data. That data, alongside access to (Cont. on page - 2)

Visa extension: India advises foreign nationals to contact nearest FRRO

NEW DELHI: India has issued an advisory for the foreign nationals in the country to contact their nearest Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) in order to extend or regularise their stay due to a developing situation in West Asia.

"All foreign nationals in India, who have had to change their travel plans

due to the ongoing developments in the West Asia region and need assistance with extension of their visa or to regularise their stay, are requested to contact the nearest Foreigners Regional Registration Office. The FRRO concerned will help with necessary formalities." the government said in a new advisory.

Chaos at Mumbai airport

MUMBAI: The city witnessed a major travel disruption on Monday as hundreds of passengers were stranded at Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport after multiple airlines cancelled flights to

Gulf and Middle East destinations amid the escalating conflict in the region.

With airspace restrictions and government advisories in place, airlines suspended or curtailed operations on key international routes, leaving travellers facing long delays, uncertainty and financial stress. Several passengers reported waiting at the airport for hours without clarity on rescheduled departures.

With the situation remaining volatile, airlines (Cont. on page - 2)

HOLIDAY NOTICE

Tuesday, March 3rd, being Holi, our offices will remain closed on that day.



West Asia tensions send shockwaves to India's economy, expatriate community

NEW DELHI: Iran's escalation of war in the Gulf region has triggered immediate and far-reaching consequences for India, exposing the country's economic and human vulnerabilities to instability in West Asia. With more than eight million Indians living and working across Gulf countries, New Delhi is closely monitoring a fast-evolving crisis that threatens lives, trade routes and energy security.

Air travel has been among the first casualties.



Iran struck Palau-flagged oil tanker Skylight in the Strait of Hormuz forcing evacuation of 20 crew, including 15 Indians.

Major carriers including Air India and IndiGo have suspended or rerouted several flights after at least eight countries in the region

closed their airspace. The disruptions have stranded passengers, increased operational costs for airlines and raised concerns over

the safety of Indian nationals in conflict-adjacent zones.

The economic fallout could be even more severe. Crude oil prices are rising sharply amid fears of prolonged instability, directly impacting India, which imports over 80pc of its oil requirements. The situation has worsened after the Houthis reportedly shut down the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a vital maritime chokepoint linking the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean. Any sustained disruption here threatens global shipping, increases freight costs, and risks inflating India's already heavy import bill.

Higher oil prices could soon translate into increased fuel costs at home, adding pressure on inflation and household budgets.

For policymakers, the crisis underscores India's strategic dependence on West Asia - for energy, remittances and employment - and the urgent need for contingency planning.

As diplomatic efforts intensify globally to prevent a wider conflict, India faces a delicate balancing act: safeguarding its citizens abroad, stabilising energy supplies and insulating its economy from geopolitical shocks emanating far beyond its borders.

Amritsar-Kuala Lumpur AirAsia daily flights from March 28

NEW DELHI: In a major boost to international connectivity from Punjab, Malaysia-based carrier AirAsia will increase its Amritsar-Kuala Lumpur service frequency from four weekly flights to daily operations effective March 28, under the Summer Schedule.

FlyAmritsar Initiative convener Yogesh Kamra said the move would ensure shorter layovers, smoother transit options and better alignment with



international departures from Kuala Lumpur by eliminating the need to plan travel around a limited number of operating days.

The flight departs Kuala Lumpur daily at 6.10 pm local time, arriving in Amritsar at 9.45 pm Indi-

an time. The return flight departs Amritsar at 10.30 pm IST and reaches Kuala Lumpur at 6.50 am Ma-
(Cont. on page - 6)

Online travel agencies may emerge as AI winners...

(Cont. from page - 1) vast accommodation inventory, could make OTAs indispensable partners rather than casualties of AI disruption.

The note highlights Booking.com's accelerating direct app traffic as evidence of ongoing consumer engagement. Monthly active users on the app have grown at an increasing pace in recent quarters, rising eight per cent, nine per cent, 11pc and 12pc year-on-year over the last four quarters. Morgan Stanley views this direct channel growth as particularly attractive given its higher-margin profile.

While some investors have speculated that AI

could benefit hotel brands by weakening OTAs, Morgan Stanley suggests that view may be misplaced. Instead, the firm sees the current industry structure, akin to paid search, as more resilient than expected, with critical data flows and purchase paths largely intact for now.

Using powerful AI to generate exciting stock ideas, it looks beyond popularity to assess fundamentals, momentum, and valuation. The AI has no bias—it simply identifies which stocks offer the best risk-reward based on current data with notable past winners that include Super Micro Computer (+185pc) and ApLovin (+157pc).

Chaos at Mumbai airport

(Cont. from page - 1) and authorities continue to monitor developments closely, while passengers at Mumbai airport brace for prolonged delays and further cancellations.

"I am from Gaya, Bihar. I have been waiting here since 1 pm yesterday. IndiGo kept telling us to wait. It has been more than 24 hours now, and we still don't know when we will leave. We have to go to Kuwait," a stranded passenger said.

Volatile situation

According to reports quoting airport sources, departures were affected across several airlines, including Air India, IndiGo, Etihad Airways, Akasa Air, Emirates and Qatar Airways. Gulf and MidEast sectors were the worst hit.

Those stranded included migrant workers travelling to Gulf countries for employment, foreign tour-

ists returning home, NRIs heading back to their families and business travellers stuck mid-itinerary.

Air India announced that all its flights to and through the MidEast have been suspended until further notice. IndiGo said more than 200 flights have been cancelled till March 3, adding that passengers should check its website for a dynamic and

updated cancellation list.

The flight disruptions come as the MiddleEast conflict entered its third day on Monday. Fresh explosions were reported in Tehran with Israel stating that its strikes targeted the heart of the Iranian capital. Iran retaliated by launching missiles and drones towards Israel, US military installations in the Gulf region.

Indian airlines suspend MidEast operations amid conflict

(Cont. from page - 1) ate flights from Indian cities including Delhi, Mumbai, Tiruchirappalli, Kochi, Kannur, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Jaipur, Mangaluru, Kozhikode and Varanasi to key cities in the Gulf. We operate to Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, Bahrain, Kuwait, Muscat, Damam, Riyadh, Jeddah, Salalah, Al-Ayin and Doha."

In an official statement, Air India Express said, "In view of the developing situation in parts of the Gulf Region, Air India Express has suspended all west-bound international flights. The safety and security of our guests and crew remain our highest priority. We continue to closely monitor the evolving situation and will proactively review and adjust our operations as necessary."

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Euro	106.09	108.38
Japanese Yen	57.9	58.84
Swiss Franc (CHF)	117.03	119.66
Canadian Dollar	66.21	67.73
Australian Dollar	63.87	65.28
Norwegian Krone	9.4	9.69
Swedish Krona	9.83	10.11
New Zealand Dollar	53.69	54.91
Hong Kong Dollar	11.47	11.82
Kuwaiti Dinar	287.2745	298.6
Singapore Dollar	71.13	72.73
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Centre prepared to bring back Indians stranded in West Asia: Pralhad Joshi

NEW DELHI: The Centre is fully prepared to bring back Indians stranded in the Gulf region and is in touch with Indian missions abroad to ensure their safety, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has said.

In a statement, Joshi said discussions have been held with senior officials of the concerned embassies to facilitate the safe return of those affected by the war situation. "Whenever Kannadigas and other Indians face distress anywhere in the world, the Central government has ensured their safe return. Earlier, we brought back those stranded in Ukraine. Wherever Indians are, their safety remains our first priority," he said.

Joshi said information



has been received about measures for their protection. Reassuring anxious families, the minister said there was no need to panic and that the government is committed to bringing back all Indians safely.

Modelled on the Iranian Shahed-136, it is a one-way attack drone, designed to fly toward a target and detonate on impact.

Abu Dhabi Tourism to bear cost of extended stay by expats

ABU DHABI: The Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi (DCT Abu Dhabi) with a mandate to develop the tourism industry in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, is offering to foot the hotel bills of stranded people due to the war. They can also extend their stay until they are

able to depart.

For further inquiries contact: The Business Continuity Team at the following number: 026576283

Nation Towers Corniche, Building 8, PO Box 94000, Abu Dhabi 971 2444 0444 info@dctabudhabi.ae

Domestic air traffic surges by 4.36pc

MUMBAI: India's domestic aviation sector witnessed a sharp correction in Jan 2026, as market leader IndiGo clawed back its lost territory, while the Air India Group saw its share retreat following a temporary spike. According to the latest data released by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), overall domestic air traffic grew by 4.36 pc.

After a tumultuous Dec 2025, where massive operational disruptions caused IndiGo's market share to plummet to 59.6pc, the budget carrier has staged a significant comeback. In Jan 2026, IndiGo regained its footing to capture 63.6pc of the domestic market, effectively returning to its pre-crisis levels.

The airline's recovery is attributed to a stabilisation of pilot schedules and the successful induction of new Airbus A321XLR aircraft, which bolstered its narrow-body capacity.

On the other hand, the Air India saw its market share contract to 26.5pc in January. This represents a nearly three per cent drop from the 29.6 pc share it held in Dec 2025. Industry analysts suggest that Air India's Dec peak was a windfall gain resulting from passengers migrating away from IndiGo during its operational crisis. As IndiGo restored its full schedule in Jan, the competitive landscape normalised, pulling the Tata-owned group back toward its long-term average.



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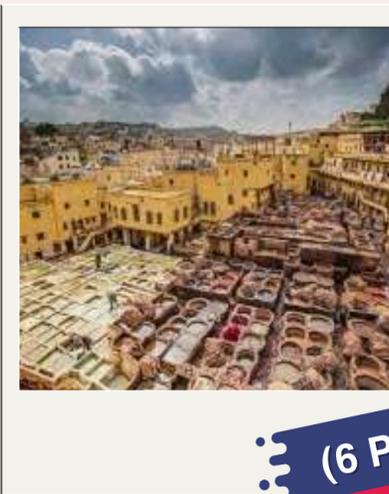
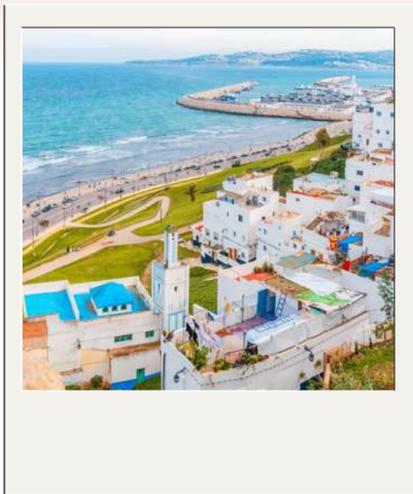
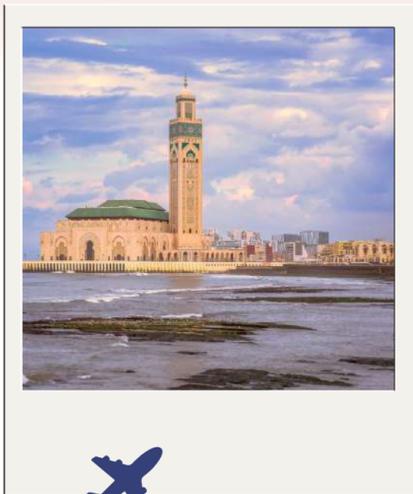
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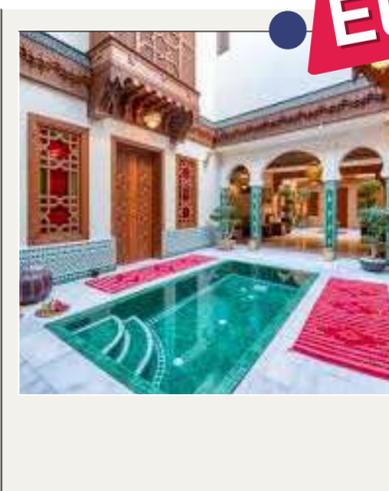
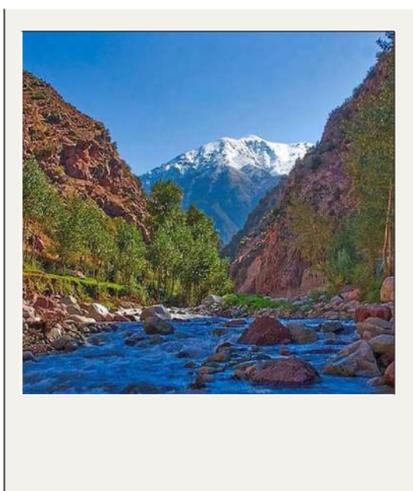
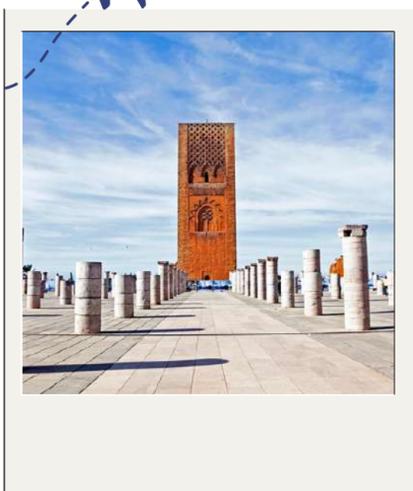


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GULF FAQs

Woman compensated Dh3 lakh after falling victim to online fraud scheme

Can you please explain the recent fraud case in which a man was ordered to pay Dh3 lakh?

Al Ain court has ordered a man to pay Dh3 lakh to a woman after he was found to have taken part in an elaborate online fraud scheme in which scammers impersonated a consumer protection official to gain access to her bank accounts.

The Al Ain Civil, Commercial and Administrative Claims Court ruled that the defendant must repay Dh2.7 lakh, the amount fraudulently withdrawn from the victim's accounts, as well as Dh30,000 in compensation for the material and moral damages she suffered as a result of the crime.

Court records show that the defendant acted in collusion with an unidentified

accomplice who contacted the victim and falsely claimed to be an employee of a consumer protection authority.

The impostor convinced the woman that he was following up on a complaint she had submitted and warned her that her bank accounts needed to be "secured" to prevent further losses. Trusting the caller, the woman shared sensitive banking details, which enabled the fraudsters to withdraw large sums of money from her accounts, apply for loans in her name, and transfer the proceeds without her knowledge. In her civil lawsuit, the woman demanded Dh27 lakh

as restitution for the stolen funds and sought additional compensation for the emotional distress and

reputational harm she endured, along with legal fees and court costs.

The court noted that the defendant had already been convicted in a related criminal case, which established that he had participated with another unknown individual in

The criminal conviction, the court said, conclusively proved fault and established a direct link between the defendant's actions and the damages suffered by the victim. Based on the evidence, the court ruled in the woman's favour, ordering full repayment

VERIFY CALLS: Authorities in the UAE have repeatedly warned the public against impersonation scams, particularly those involving individuals claiming to represent consumer protection bodies, banks, or government entities.



Officials stress that no authority will ever ask customers to share banking details, one-time passwords or login credentials over the phone or through messaging applications. Residents are urged to verify all calls, avoid responding to unsolicited requests for personal information and report suspected fraud immediately to the police and relevant

authorities, as such scams continue to cause significant financial losses across the country.

seizing the victim's money through information technology and fraudulent methods.

of the stolen amount and awarding additional compensation, bringing the total sum to Dh3 lakh.

Court says bank can't alter key terms without clear consent in UAE credit card case

The Abu Dhabi Global Market (ADGM) Courts have dismissed a credit card recovery claim, ruling that banks cannot impose court jurisdiction through implied consent or unilateral amendments to terms and conditions.

The decision came before the Small Claims Division, where Justice James Walker McNeill KC found that ADGM lacked jurisdiction to hear the dispute due to the absence of a clear written agreement between the parties.

A claim was filed on July 24, 2025, seeking recovery of alleged credit card dues from customer Fahrudeen Karim Abubacker Syed Mohamed. The claimant argued that ADGM Courts

had jurisdiction based on amended terms and conditions referenced in electronic monthly statements. However, the original credit card agreement dated back to 2004 — years before ADGM was established — and the claimant was unable to produce a signed copy of that agreement, stating it had been destroyed in a fire.

Instead, the claim relied on implied consent, arguing that the customer had accepted amended terms, including a jurisdiction clause, by continuing to use the card. The defendant was represented by Ayesha Al Dhaheri Advocates and Legal Consultants, who challenged the court's jurisdiction on the

grounds that:

*No written jurisdiction agreement existed;

*The card was issued in 2004, prior to ADGM's creation;

*All related transactions occurred in Dubai;

*No amended agreement had ever been signed.

The court agreed, holding that routine references to "Terms and Conditions apply" in electronic statements were insufficient to introduce a significant contractual change such as court jurisdiction. It stressed that ADGM, as a special jurisdiction, requires explicit and informed written consent under Article 13(8) of its Founding Law.

CENTRAL BANK REGULATIONS CITED: The ruling also referred to UAE Central Bank Consumer Protection Regulations (Circular No. 8/2020), which require licensed financial institutions to provide effective disclosure at all stages of the consumer relationship and ensure customers are informed in advance of any permissible changes to contractual terms. The judge underlined that jurisdiction cannot be created through silence, implication or unilateral amendments embedded in routine banking communications.

COSTS AWARDED AGAINST CLAIMANT: After granting the defendant's jurisdiction appli-

cation, the court ordered the claimant to pay legal costs. While more than Dh27,000 was claimed, the court reduced the amount on summary assessment and ordered payment of Dh9,400.15 (About \$2,559). Legal representatives for the defendant described the ruling as an important affirmation that financial institutions must obtain clear, express agreement before attempting to shift jurisdiction through amended terms.

The judgment is seen as reinforcing consumer protection safeguards and setting clearer limits on how contractual terms can be altered in digital banking relationships.

Anxiety grips families of Keralites in West Asia

KOCHI: Anxiety and fear have gripped the families of Keralites working in the West Asian countries following the rapidly escalating hostility between US-Israel combine and Iran which culminated in aerial strikes in the UAE and Bahrain. An estimated two million Keralites are working in West Asian countries and their remittances have been the backbone of the state's economy for decades.

Keralites in the Gulf region say they have been receiving frantic calls from relatives after the countries shut down their air spaces and airline operators cancelled flights to the region. However, leaders of Malayali organisations said there was no need to panic and Iran was targeting only the air bases of

the US in the region.

"The UAE authorities have issued an alert cautioning citizens about a potential missile threat. The advisory tells people to seek immediate shelter in the closest secure building and to keep away from windows, doors and open spaces," said Dileep Lal a native of Kollam who lives in Sharjah.

"The UAE Ministry of De-

fence has said that it has successfully intercepted a number of Iranian missiles targeting the country. The authorities have confirmed missile debris in a residential area where the death of a civilian has been reported. The missile attack has resulted in some damage to infrastructure. We are safe here," he added. A Keralite in Abu Dhabi said there was an attack

in Abu Dhabi and the authorities have issued an alert. All shops and offices have been closed and residents have been told to ensure their safety.

Meanwhile, Keralites in Bahrain said there have been multiple strikes in the country, but the Iran forces were targeting US airbase in the region. A commercial building at Juffair has collapsed

SC refuses to stay Rs144.51 cr deposit order against SpiceJet

NEW DELHI: In a setback to SpiceJet, the Supreme Court has refused to stay a Delhi High Court order directing the airline and its promoter Ajay Singh to deposit Rs 144.51 crore. The court also imposed a Rs 1 lakh cost on the airline for prolonging the litigation. The bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe said there had been "tons and tons of litigation" and warned that costs could be raised to Rs 2 lakh if delays continued.

This means SpiceJet must deposit Rs 144.51 crore within six weeks, as earlier ordered.

The High Court said Supreme Court orders must be followed and cannot be kept pending. It referred to Article 144 of the Constitution, which requires all au-

thorities to act in support of Supreme Court orders.

The court had rejected SpiceJet's argument that payment should wait until final decisions on the arbitral award. The dispute began in Jan 2015. Kalanithi Maran and KAL Airways transferred their 58.46pc take in SpiceJet to Ajay Singh when the airline was facing financial trouble.

As part of the deal, about Rs 679 crore was infused into the airline through convertible warrants and preference shares. Maran later claimed these instruments were not issued and sought a refund. In July 2018, an arbitration tribunal directed SpiceJet to refund Rs 579 crore plus interest, though it rejected Maran's larger damages claim of Rs 1,323 crore.

Since then, both sides have filed multiple petitions and appeals, leading to a long legal battle.

Air India eyes premium push with global network expansion

NEW DELHI: With "structural tailwinds", Air India will expand its international operations, optimise networks as well as tap premiumisation-led growth in the 2026-27 financial year, a senior airline executive said.

Describing FY27 as a "conversion year", Air India Chief Commercial Officer Nipun Aggarwal said the airline would have a credible product foundation to compete for premium share across key markets.

Tata Group-owned Air India is in the midst of an ambitious turnaround journey as part of which it is upgrading fleet, adding new aircraft and improving services. Emphasising that product alone will not

The case remains a major financial burden for SpiceJet, which has faced liquidity issues, ground-

ed aircraft and insolvency petitions from some lessors and creditors in recent years.



determine FY27 for Air India, Aggarwal opined the differentiating factors will be reliability of the schedule, on-time performance and the way it handles disruptions. FY27 is not

about recovery and it is about acceleration, he said and added that the year would be about returning to the growth trajectory that has defined Air India since privatisation.

Riyadh airport completes major terminal reallocation

(Cont. from page - 2)

Terminals 1 and 2 were flights, improved passenger experience and boosted operational readiness in line with the rapid growth in traveller numbers and the phased expansion targets of the capital's airport.

The reallocation was implemented under a comprehensive operational plan prepared in co-ordination with all airport partners and stakeholders. Airlines were redistributed across terminals to optimise infrastructure use, reduce transfer times between domestic and international terminals for national carriers and shorten waiting times, particularly for transit passengers. Under the new distribution,

Terminals 1 and 2 were designated for international flights of national carriers, while Terminals 3 and 4 were allocated for domestic flights of national carriers. Terminal-5 was assigned to international flights of foreign carriers. The restructuring improved passenger flow management, enhanced operational efficiency and increased terminal capacity. Riyadh Airports CEO Ayman Abu Abah said the success of the transition reflects the stability of flight operations and high schedule adherence, crediting the achievement to the support of the ministry of transport and logistics services.

Amritsar-Kuala Lumpur AirAsia daily flights from March 28

(Cont. from page - 2)

In addition, onward connections are available to key Asian destinations, such as Bangkok, Hanoi, Langkawi, Singapore, Krabi, Penang, Hong Kong, Manila, Bali, Phuket, Ho Chi Minh City, Jakarta and Macau.

Alongside AirAsia, Malaysia Airlines continues to operate daily flights to Kuala Lumpur, while Scoot operates wide-body Boeing 787 Dreamliner services five days weekly to Singapore and Thai Lion Air flies four days weekly

to Bangkok Don Mueang Airport. Together, these carriers offer nearly 4,800 seats each way per week to their respective hubs.

With this robust network of full-service and low-cost carriers, the Initiative leaders urged the Punjabi diaspora to bypass long, strenuous travel to Delhi. By choosing Amritsar as their preferred gateway, travellers will help sustain these routes and encourage more airlines to launch direct international services in the future.