

Kerala Aviation Summit 2025

Opening Session



Kerala possesses immense potential in the airline and air cargo sectors. With its strategic location, especially centered around Kochi, the state is well-positioned to become a logistics hub for both regional and global connectivity. This development is set to be a game-changer for the air cargo and e-commerce industries, driving significant economic growth.

- S Suhas, MD CIAL



Kerala's civil aviation sector is on an upward trajectory. The time is now to transform ideas into action, with the Sabarimala Greenfield Airport being a prime example. This project will not only facilitate pilgrimage and alleviate major traffic congestion but will also serve as a crucial expansion of the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport, significantly boosting the region's air connectivity.

- V P Nandakumar Chair, FICCI Kerala State Council



The Kerala Aviation Summit has officially begun in Kochi. During his opening remarks, Girish Nair emphasized that aviation in Kerala extends beyond just airports and airlines. He highlighted its broader impact on the state's economy, particularly its strong ties to tourism and trade.

- Girish Nair Partner Mobility and Logistics, Global Lead Airports, National Lead Aviation, KPMG

***Panel Discussion I: Integrating Drones & Un-Manned Vehicles into Airspace;
Policy, Technology and Safety perspective***



Our country is experiencing a rapid transformation in the drone sector, a field that demands both robust policy and drastic technological advancements to reach its full potential. — **Ajit Koshy, Director Drones, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Ministry of Civil Aviation, Govt. of India**



The use of drones, or Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), is rapidly transforming various sectors, offering significant advantages in efficiency, safety, and data collection. Their applications range from commercial and industrial uses to defense and security. — **R Ponni IPS, Deputy Inspector General of Police (CISF)**



Drones are proving to be invaluable tools across various sectors, particularly for surveillance, disaster management, agriculture, and e-commerce. The 1934 Aircraft Act was recently replaced by The Bharathiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam in 2024, aiming to update aviation regulations to global standards, streamline processes, and promote the 'Make in India' initiative. — **K Karthick IPS, Deputy General of Police (Vigilance and Anti-corruption Bureau)**



The future is drone technology. — **Ezhilan Nanmaran, Head- Product & Strategic Partnerships, Ideaforge Technology Ltd**



Kerala has a high possibility for drones. This state can become a Powerhouse in Drone Technology. — **A Ajoy, Assi. Vice President, Zuppa Geo Navigation Technology**



Drones will help in Urban Planning and Project Monitoring. After Operation Sindhoor, the scope for drone-based search and rescue has come to the limelight. Drones will definitely support the ecosystem. — **G. Levin**



The future belongs to drones. The Air Force is in a stage of evolution, using future technologies, and intelligent and innovative departments for national security. The Ukraine war witnessed the massive usage of drones. — **Capt. Sunil Raj, Deputy Command, Logistics Management Officer**

Panel Discussion II: Future of Short- Haul Aviation: Integrating Helicopters, Seaplanes, eVtol and urban mobility into India's Transport Network



Infrastructure must be improved for helicopter operations. Kerala has a good opportunity for helicopter operations, and seaplanes can also assist with water body operations. Helicopters require dedicated helipads on runways to adhere to standard operating procedures. — **GP. Capt. Dr. KNG Nair, CMD, Thumby Aviation**



For seaplane operations, infrastructure must be improved. The feasibility study and demonstration were a success. — **Syed Karmam Husain, India RSO Representative, De Havilland Aircraft of Canada Ltd.**



Hybrid air taxis are the future of e-mobility, offering more accessible, cheaper to operate, and sustainable transportation. We are working on ecosystem development, and Kerala has immense potential for last-mile connectivity. We are looking for an operational hub at Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL). Air taxis are also excellent for pilgrimage and tourism connectivity. — **Payal Satish, VP-Strategy & Business Development, Sarla Aviation Pvt. Ltd.**



Air taxis will improve last-mile connectivity, and CIAL has great potential. Helicopter activities haven't been significant in India, but there have been positive changes in the last three years. — **Sunil Narayan, CMD, Chipsan**

***Panel Discussion III: Future of Air Travel: Achieving contactless,
Paperless and Hassle – Free Passenger Experiences***



Every day, new technologies are emerging. India is the second-largest country in digitalization, and we must prepare for the digital future of air travel. Digitalization and e-passports will significantly benefit passengers.

— **Aruna Sundararajan IAS, Former Secretary, Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeiTY)**



The AI chatbot is also being used successfully for passport services. Passport Seva Kendras are offering hassle-free services.

- **Anitha Nandhini R, IFS Regional Passport office**



Unmanned aerial vehicles pose a threat. Integrating data and technology is the need of the hour. COVID-19 enhanced the increase in digital literacy. Digitalizing the existing process will help passengers. E-passports will provide a paperless, contactless, and hassle-free passenger experience.

— **Anurag Garg, Strategy Director- India, Thales**



The broader the horizon, the more scope there is for developing technology. State governments should focus on how to supplement the Government of India's policy. Fifty more airports are going to be developed. More and more players should be attracted.

— **Manish Sinha, CEO, Amaze Aviation**



Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) is number one for so many innovations. DigiYatra has revolutionized the passenger experience, and passenger security is also taken care of. Four thousand AI-enabled cameras have been installed. Our concept is that CIAL will lead Indian aviation.

— **G Manu, Airport Director, CIAL**



Air Asia has already introduced many technologies to help passengers for ease of travel. Fast Pass was introduced for expedited immigration and boarding.

— **Suresh Nair, General Manager, South Asia, Air Asia**

Panel Discussion IV: Regulatory Compliant Business Strategies: Enhancing Airport Profitability through diversified Revenue Models



Airports function as growth agents and must generate revenue from non-aeronautical activities. Approximately 30 to 40% of their revenue comes from non-aeronautical operations, with Cochin International Airport (CIAL) serving as a classic example of an airport that has effectively utilized these opportunities.

— **Ashok Kumar G, IAS (Retd), Independent Director, Kannur International Airport Ltd, Former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA), and CVO, Airports Authority of India (AAI).**



Prioritizing Passenger Needs Planning for non-aeronautical revenue is critical. Every passenger's needs should be taken care of to ensure they get what they want. For example, Bengaluru Airport introduced a dedicated taxi service to ensure safe travel, particularly for female passengers.

— **Bhaskar Rao, Chief Financial Officer, Bengaluru International Airport Ltd.**



Aviation and the Economy India currently has 34 major airports. Aviation's impact on the country's overall economy is notable, as it is at the heart of all changes. Non-aeronautical revenue creates a win-win situation for everyone, and aeronautical operations do not restrict any such revenue.

— **Suyash Narain, Secretary, Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA).**



Increasing Aeronautical Revenue To increase aeronautical revenue, we need to increase the frequency of aircraft. Decision-making in public-private partnership (PPP) airports is quick. From an airport operator's perspective, more cash flow is needed.

— **D Devaraj, Former Member, AERA.**



The Symbiosis of Air Traffic and Ecosystem Air traffic and the broader ecosystem should go hand in hand. We must cultivate an inclusive ecosystem.
— **Harsh Gulati, Vice President - Regulatory and Business Planning, GMR Airport Ltd.**



Expanding to Meet Demand The goal is to reach 12 million passengers in the coming years, up from the current 4.5 million. The Vizhinjam Port is a milestone for us, as it will create synergies between seaports and airports in a short time. Kerala has a bright future, but we need to look beyond the Gulf countries.
— **Rahul Bhatkoti, Chief Airport Officer, Trivandrum International Airport Ltd, Adani Group.**



The Foundation of Airport Revenue A study should be conducted to determine runway capacity and maximize runway movements. Aeronautical revenue is the foundation for your non-aeronautical revenue.

— **Manish Sinha, CEO, Amaze Aviation.**

Panel Discussion V: MRO Ecosystem Development; Role of Airport Operators in Driving Aviation Self Reliance



The present situation cannot be changed overnight. Our reliance on foreign countries for Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) services incurs high costs. Given the fast-changing geopolitical scenario, developing a robust domestic MRO system is the need of the hour.

— **Air Marshal Vibhas Pande PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Director, Shri Shambhavi AvTech Consultancy (SSACL); Former Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Maintenance Command, Indian Air Force (IAF).**



We have the capabilities and facilities, and they are already approved by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). We should make greater use of these domestic facilities.

— **R.S. Thakur, ED, Air India Engineering Service Ltd (AIESL).**



It's a concern that an existing player cannot be converted into a Special Economic Zone (SEZ). Importing components takes a significant amount of time. Something should be done for existing domestic players so they can also be utilized. If Singapore can become an MRO hub, why can't Kerala?

— **Santhosh J. Poovattol, MD, Kannur International Aviation Services Ltd (CIASL).**



We should aim to attract at least 20% of foreign airlines. Airport operators must create the right aviation ecosystem by developing the best policies. Even small countries with limited fleets are doing a great job in the MRO business. Every airport in India has the potential to be a game-changer. We currently face a significant shortage of skilled workers, but tomorrow, the world will come to India to use our MRO services.

— **Dinesh Kumar C, MD, Kannur International Airport Ltd.**



Dynamism is needed to establish MRO in India. The bureaucracy should act as a catalyst. The Government of India should introduce policies that support the MRO business, and skill development programs are also essential. Many proposals are currently on the table.

— **Gaurav Sahni, EVP - Brand & Communications, Air Works.**

***Panel Discussion VI: Environmental Stewardship in Aviation: Green Initiatives
Transforming Airport Ecosystem***



The use of solar energy with storage is a global challenge. Injecting large amounts of solar energy into the grid can create problems, but Kerala has a positive outlook with its favorable hydrogen policy

— **K.R. Jyothilal IAS, Additional Chief Secretary, Government of India.**



All airports are being advised to adopt green energy.

— **Dr. Harikumar, Director, Energy Management Centre (EMC), Government of Kerala.**



Every airport should incorporate green infrastructure. Energy efficiency and conservation are essential, and renewable energy should be widely used. I commend Cochin International Airport (CIAL) for its efforts in this area.

— **Dr. M. Muthukrishnan, Airport Sector Head, EHS & Sustainability, GMR Group.**



A vision for sustainability is a collaborative journey. Resource efficiency and real-time monitoring governance are also crucial.

— **Sridhar L, AVP-Head Environmental, Social & Governance, Bengaluru International Airport Ltd.**



The main challenge in solar installation was the regulatory framework. While that has now been resolved, regulations change every three years, and these new rules apply to existing customers. This constant change is the main hindrance for us.

— **Mini Joseph, CFO, CIAL Infrastructures Ltd.**



We must bring in new technologies for sustainability.

— **Jehan Sabhavala, General Manager - Airports, Millenium Aero Dynamics Pvt. Ltd.**

Day 2 - Panel Discussion I: Positioning Kerala as a Global Destination Integrating Tourism and Aviation for Sustainable Growth



"Aviation plays a critical role in promoting tourism. Ten percent of our GDP comes from tourism. Kerala's backwaters, houseboats, villages, and responsible tourism have acclaimed Kerala Tourism. Communal harmony is also an important factor."

- Biju K IAS, Secretary, Tourism Department, Government of Kerala



"CIAL provides robust air connectivity. CIAL is driving trade, investment, and tourism. A dedicated cargo hub is a boon to Kochi. Kochi has unique geographical advantages. A new MRO coming to CIAL will also encourage aviation investment. The Metro link project is in the pipeline to extend metro connectivity from the city to the airport. The seaport-airport road is also being developed."

-Priyanka G IAS, District Collector, Ernakulam



"The most important thing is to take steps for tourism development. Investors need yield-return projects. The PPP model is the best for Kerala. Kerala needs to dream of increasing hotel keys. Kochi should become a transit hub. The domestic tourism market is exponentially increasing. A PPP company can enhance the thought process."

- Adeeb Ahammed, Founder & MD, Twenty 14 Holdings & Lulu Financial Holdings



"We are able to promote Kerala as a destination. Tourists from Japan, Korea, and Europe are coming to Kerala. We have to work with Kerala Tourism to position Kerala as a destination. With aviation, a lot of other infrastructure like hotels and taxis automatically comes up."

- Suresh Nair, GM India & Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, Air Asia



"Medical tourism goes year-round. Hospitals and insurance companies and their support systems attract patients from other countries. Simplifying medical visa norms would promote medical tourism."

- Deepak Krishnappa, Uro Oncologist, Robotic Surgeon, MVT Specialist



"After the Biennale started, the number of homestays in Kochi grew from 60 to 400. People from 100 countries visited the Kochi Biennale. CIAL plays an important role in sustainability."

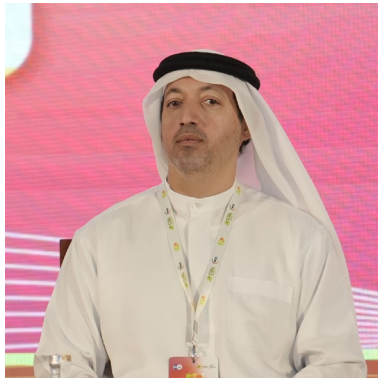
-Bose Krishnamachari, Co-founder of the Kochi-Muziris Biennale

***Day 2 - Panel Discussion II: Transforming Air Cargo Logistics, Innovation,
Infrastructure and future Opportunities***



"South India **contributes** one-third of **India's** air cargo logistics. Air cargo is all about speed, reliability, and efficiency, especially when it comes to achieving time-bound deliveries."

Dhaval Raut, Director - Mobility & Logistics, KPMG India



"Investors, customers, and supply chains are all taken care of at Sharjah Airport International Free Zone. **'Reduce risks'** is our motto. A long-term view is needed for air cargo."

H E Saud Salim Al Mazrouei, Director General, Sharjah Airport International Free Zone Authority, Govt of Sharjah, UAE



"Risk management is the **brain behind the entire system**. Any instructions driven by the RMS cannot be overruled by any officer."

Varun Rangaswamy IRS, Additional Commissioner of Customs, Govt. of India



"The cargo and logistics sector is a **force multiplier**. South India is a **hub of manufacturing**."

Dinesh Kumar Krishnan, Chairman, Air Cargo Agents Association of India, Southern Region



"We need to establish an ecosystem for air cargo. Challenges primarily are on a **commodity-by-commodity basis**; it is not general."

J Krishnan, Partner, S Natesa Iyer Logistics LLP
