

L-G VK Saxena reviews operationalisation of commercial flights from Thoise and Kargil Airport

L-G pushes for early commencement of infrastructure works

Leh, August 21: In a significant push to expansion of air connectivity in Ladakh, Lieutenant Governor, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, yesterday chaired a meeting with officials from Ministry of Defence, Indian Air Force, Airports Authority of India and UT Ladakh Administration, at Ladakh Bhavan in New Delhi, to review the preparedness for commercial civil flight operations from Thoise Airport in Nubra Valley and Kargil Airport.

The meeting focused on resolving infrastructure, regulatory and operational issues to enable early commencement of civilian flights from the strategically and socio-economically important airports, which will significantly boost regional connectivity in the Border areas.

During the meeting, the LG emphasised the time-bound operationalisation of the two airports. The flight operations at Thoise and Kargil, apart from fulfilling Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's vision of enhanced regional connectivity and inclusive development of Ladakh, would also unlock the immense tourism potential in border areas like Kargil, Drass, Turtuk, and Siachen Base Camp.

The key outcomes of the meeting included the following:

Thoise Airport:

- Indian Air Force approved allotment of 5 acres of land for construction of a new civil terminal in Nubra.
- Runway recarpeting is underway for a November completion deadline.
- Targeting commencement of civil operations by December 2026, from an old Chartered flight terminal at Thoise Airport, after refurbishing it.

Kargil Airport:

- It was decided to conduct a joint inspection with the Indian Air Force, Airport Authority of India and Ministry of Civil Aviation on September 1, in the presence of LG to assess civil operation readiness.

For commencing commercial flights from the existing Chartered Terminal at Thoise, L-G, Shri Saxena asked the Airports Authority of India to submit the requisite infrastructure requirements to the UT Administration, based on which the Public Works Department will take up the necessary refurbishment works.

Commercial flight operations are expected to provide greater accessibility to residents of Nubra and facilitate travel for visitors to destinations including Turtuk, Siachen and other parts of the valley, while supporting tourism and local economic activity. Shri Saxena urged all concerned agencies to undertake coordinated and time-bound action to complete the requisite infrastructure, regulatory and operational formalities at the earliest.

At the Kargil airport, the survey will assess the existing infrastructure, technical requirements and other aspects necessary for determining the future course of action for civilian flight operations. Civilian air connectivity to Kargil has been a long-standing priority, particularly in view of the region's difficult terrain and prolonged winters.

The meeting was attended by the Chief Secretary, UT Ladakh, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Air Marshal George Thomas, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Air Command, Indian Air Force; Executive Director, Airports Authority of India, and other senior officials of the concerned agencies.