



# IAAI Newsletter

April 2014, 2nd Fortnight Issue

## DGCA allows use of Mobile Phones on flights on Non-transmitting mode



The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has lifted the ban on the use of personal electronic devices like cell phones at all times during a flight, provided they are used in a non-transmitting or "Airplane" mode. The regulator has amended the *Civil Aviation Requirements* or CAR to bring it in line with regulations of the US' Federal



Aviation Administration and European Union Aviation Safety Agency.

The amended CAR also directs all operators for reporting any suspected or confirmed PED interference or smoke or fire caused by PEDs to the DGCA. The regulator added that the decision was taken after airlines raised the demand for letting passengers use cell phones and other devices during all phases of a flight in the flight/airplane mode. By allowing the use of cell phones, tablets and other such electronic devices on airplane/flight mode, passengers would now be able to play games, listen to music, watch videos or type out mails on their devices in the flight.

Prior to the change, the regulations clearly barred the use of cell phones during all phases of a flight. Passengers were only allowed to switch the phones on after the plane had landed and taxied off the active runway. It was only in October 2013, when the FAA issued a similar order allowing the passengers to use cell phones and other PEDs in Non-transmitting mode during all times in a flight.

British Airways allowed the same in December last year. There are some airlines which have gone a step further and allowed the full use of cell phones in flight. In 2008, Emirates, one of the world's largest carriers, allowed passengers to make calls using their cell phone mid-flight after it installed equipment providing network connectivity in its flight. A year later, European low-cost carrier Ryanair offered a similar service.

## Indian Railways plans to operate Semi-high-speed Trains running at 130 kmph on select routes in a year



20 minutes.

The Indian Railways plans to roll out semi-high-speed trains in the next one year that will run at an average speed of 130 km per hour (kmph), much faster than that clocked by the Rajdhani and Shatabdi expresses, two of the fastest trains in the country at present. Once this happens, the travel time on the 266-km Delhi-Chandigarh route should be less than two hours. Currently, Shatabdi trains cover the same route in three hours and

To start with, these trains are expected to become operational on three routes — Delhi-Chandigarh, Delhi-Lucknow and Delhi-Bhopal — by the end of this year or early next year at an estimated economical cost of Rs 2.5 crore per km. The Railways plans to run one or two trains per day on these routes with a premium fare structure. The existing rolling stock and infrastructure will be used for these trains and only the system will be modified.

The second phase of these trains will be introduced in Southern and Eastern regions, including Ernakulam-Thiruvananthapuram, Hyderabad-Chennai and Howrah-Haldia. The network of high-speed trains has been present in many parts of the world, including Europe and Japan, for long. In recent decades, similar networks have been built in China and Korea.

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- National Carrier Air India has put its three remaining Boeing B777-200 LR airplanes for sale, about four months after selling five of these planes to Abu Dhabi based Etihad Airways.
- Air India Ltd. has launched a scheme where a domestic Economy passenger can upgrade to Executive Class after paying Rs 5,000 or Rs 7,000 over and above the original ticket price. The upgrade scheme, open to domestic passengers holding tickets in Economy Class including the cheap advance purchase fares, would be available only at the airport before check-in, subject to Executive Class seat availability and on first-come, first-serve basis.



## Global Tourism gearing up to meet huge Chinese Tourist potential

Nearly one in ten international tourists worldwide is now Chinese, of which around half is for leisure. The dizzying pace of growth is expected to continue. Only around 5% of China's population now own Passports, and most of those who travel go to Hong Kong or Macau. But increased affluence, a trend towards longer holidays, fewer visa conditions and growing numbers of repeat travellers mean that every year more will take foreign trips, and more will venture farther.

By 2020 the number of foreign trips made from China will double it is predicted. Shops, hotels and other tourist businesses are scrambling to profit from the new arrivals. Amsterdam Airport, which has direct flights to seven Chinese cities, hands out presents in the arrivals hall around Chinese New Year and has a free translation app to point Chinese travellers to its luxury shops, all of which accept Chinese currency and Union Pay (China's main credit card). America has started to interview Chinese visa-applicants online and allows them to pick up their visas at any of 900 bank branches, rather than the American embassy.

The next step is to tailor language, products and services to the Chinese market. Printemps, a shop in Paris, has a dedicated entrance for Chinese tour groups; Harrods in London has 100 Union Pay terminals scattered throughout the store. Both are recruiting Mandarin-speaking staff and have Chinese-language websites and maps. Hotels increase their appeal by offering Chinese television channels, menus with pictures, and congee (Chinese porridge) for breakfast.



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- Qatar Airways will launch its first Airbus A380 on 17 June 2014 on Doha to London Heathrow Airport route.
- Arik Air Nigeria plans direct flights to India. With over 120 daily flights, 26 aircrafts & over 2000 employees, Arik Air qualifies as a serious player for any Indian airline partner with for flight connectivity.

## Foreign Tourists attracted by Election Tourism in Varanasi

Foreigners keen on experiencing a slice of Indian Elections are being treated to guided tours of holy city of Varanasi & many of them have taken this opportunity to create awareness among voters urging up them to exercise their franchise.

As political decibels rise, Varanasi is turning into a tourist magnet. These tours are a part of 'Heart of India', designed by a US-based operator which takes them to different parts of the country before ending in Varanasi. As the city has riveted the attention of the entire country, it was only fitting to show the tourists the heart of Indian democracy too.



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## Flood-proof Bombardier trains to run from July

New stainless steel train rakes, manufactured by Bombardier are to be introduced in Mumbai suburban section in a couple of months time. These rakes are capable of running even if there is eight inches of water above the rail. Unlike existing rakes that have to be stopped if there is 100 mm water above rail, the new rakes can run up to a maximum of 208 mm of water above rail level.



- SpiceJet is to increase frequency on Delhi—Hyderabad route by introducing a New flight from May 8. Introductory fares on this new flight start from Rs.3,999/- (including taxes) for one way.
- India will set up seven more visa processing centers across Malaysia after a new ruling that requires visa applicants to be presented physically. The new visa centers will be located in Ipoh, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan, Malacca, Klang, Kota Kinabalu & Kuching.

## Common PF Number by October 2014

The Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) plans to provide a universal account number to its subscribers from October 2014. This will help millions of subscribers deal with the problem of multiple accounts & fund transfer from one account to another during every job change. At present, a subscriber gets a new number with every new job. In its action plan for 2014-15, a Universal Account Number will be allotted to the present active members by 15 October 2014. Thereafter coverage of other members will be taken up. The internal deadline is June 2014. The EPFO had earlier introduced a portal to facilitate transfer of funds from one account to another. The delays involved in transferring funds gives rise to a lot of customer dissatisfaction.

The EPFO also plans to make all payments to its beneficiaries through the electronic mode. This will reduce paper work & improve efficiency. At present, 93% benefits are paid electronically.



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## Railway launches app to track Train schedules

Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS), the information and technology arm of railways, has launched a new mobile application which can be used for various enquiries including train timings. CRIS has enhanced the train enquiry system by developing the mobile app and a desktop application on Windows 8 platform for train enquiries with support from Microsoft.

National Train Enquiry System (NTES) is railways' back-end system which provides information to the public about train schedules on a near real-time basis through various interfaces like nationwide unique rail enquiry number 139, website ([www.trainenquiry.com](http://www.trainenquiry.com)), mobile interfaces, touch screens, enquiry counters and display boards at stations. Among the many features of the new mobile app is the 'spot your train' feature which offers information such as its current position, expected time of arrival and departure at a particular station. The 'Train Schedule' feature provides complete schedule of a train with all stoppages en route and its scheduled arrival/departure at the station, distance and day count. In 'Trains Between Stations' query, one can find out the list of all types of trains available between any two stations on railway network. The mobile App also has 'Cancelled Trains' option which displays all trains marked as cancelled. It displays trains which are cancelled through the entire route as well as trains which are cancelled on partial route.





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## Helping tackle Travel disruption

Abacus, the leading travel solutions provider in Asia-Pacific, has recently launched Abacus TripAlert, a new digital service designed to give travel management companies actionable insights in order to move travellers out of danger, should an incident arise that threatens their safety.

Aligning early warning data on natural disasters, health pandemics or terrorist attacks with bookings captured on Abacus systems, Abacus TripAlert instantly locates affected travellers, presenting their agents with the opportunity to react; changing flight, hotel, car rental or other reservations, before options narrow.

The service monitors all the participating agencies' PNRs for the two days ahead of departure & in-trip, sending subscribers electronic event summaries & an 'Impact Travellers List' to share with their corporate accounts or to contact directly.

- Kuoni India's education division Kuoni Academy has been acquired by Usmart Education Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Mercury Travels Ltd. This strategic alliance gives Usmart the exclusive licensed use of the Kuoni Academy brand name for India, South & South East Asia for an initial period of five years along with the transfer of academy's employees & business assets.
- Eco Hotels UK Plc plans to set up 100 eco-friendly hotels in India in the next eight years. The Eco Hotels UK has developed the world's first carbon-neutral hotel brand. The Eco and Ecolodge will represent premium-value budget pricing across all properties. The properties will have solar rooftop and wind turbines to generate green energy and the buildings will have high LEEDs rating as it is built on modular technology, thereby significantly reducing the carbon footprint.
- The Egyptian Tourism Office in Mumbai has announced that the fee for tourist visa to Egypt will be revised to USD 25, with effect from May 1, 2014.
- Muthoot Leisure & Hospitality Services (MLHS), the hospitality division of the nationally renowned Muthoot Group, has announced the acquisition of Costa Rica's award winning, high-end property Xandari Resort & Spa. This is the first acquisition of hospitality property in Central America by an Indian hospitality company.

## French Embassy introduces measures for further easing visa issuance for Indians

In order to further promote France as a top destination, given that the peak tourist season has begun, the Embassy of France has decided to ease visa issuance for Indians. The Embassy has framed a few measures to make it easier for Indians to avail of a French visa.

According to the new measures, travel agencies can now submit files for individual travellers directly at the France Visa Application Center without prior appointment. For groups of more than ten applicants, travel agencies are requested to contact VFS Global well in advance before the scheduled departure date so VFS can appropriately guide them regarding the required documentation and the submission of the files for the group.

If the files are submitted several weeks before the scheduled departure of the applicants, the French Consulate can permit a free of charge return of the passport (pass-back), upon specific emergency request from an applicant, while the study of the file is still in process.

For hotel bookings, the Consulate requires from tour operators/travel agencies/travel service providers a document bearing the names, addresses and contact details of the hotels planned for the travel. French consular services in India will try to quicken the issuance of visa, subject to earliest submission of applications. Scholar groups' applications (from 6 to 18 years of age) will now be exempted of visa fees. Furthermore, French Government has decided to open more visa application centres, in collaboration with VFS Global, throughout India.

In July last year, the Embassy had suspended biometrics for all visa applications for independent travellers. Ever since, applicants are not required to personally come to the French Consulate, unless specifically called for an interview.

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## Lighter Moments

A military cargo plane, flying over a populated area, suddenly loses power and starts to nose down. The pilot tries to pull up, but with all their cargo, the plane is too heavy. So he yells to the soldiers in back to throw things out to make the plane lighter.

They throw out a pistol. "Throw out more!" shouts the pilot. So they throw out a rifle. "More!" he cries again.

They heave out a missile, and the pilot regains control. He pulls out of the dive and lands safely at an airport.

They get into a jeep and drive off. Pretty soon they meet a boy on the side of the road who's crying. They ask him why he's crying and he says "A pistol hit me on the head!"

They drive more and meet another boy who's crying even harder. Again they ask why and the boy says, "A rifle hit me on the head!" They apologize and keep driving.

They meet a boy on the sidewalk who's laughing hysterically. They ask him, "Kid, what's so funny?" The boy replies, "I sneezed and a house blew up!"

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### *Thought for the Fortnight*

A politician is one who shakes your hands before the elections, & your confidence afterwards.



## *IAAI Director Board*

1. Mr Biji Eapen, National President : Speedwings Travel & Cargo Pvt. Ltd., Kochi.
2. Mr V L Jekannathan, National Gen. Secretary : All India Travel Agency (Madurai) Pvt. Ltd., Chennai.
3. Mr Salvadore Saldanha, National Treasurer : S V Airlinks Pvt Ltd., Mumbai.
4. Ms Surinder Kumar, Director—NR : Travelmate India Pvt Ltd., New Delhi.
5. Mr Rajendra Churiwala, Director—ER : Survottam Travels (P) Ltd., Kolkata.
6. Mr T K Gopakumar, Director—SR : Magellan Travel Services (P) Ltd., Chennai.
7. Mr Naresh Rajkotia, Director—WR : Madhuram Travels & Tours, Mumbai.

**We welcome your suggestions to improve this newsletter.**

**The same may be forwarded to [iaai.pune@iaai.in](mailto:iaai.pune@iaai.in)**