



Raf Jah visited the Indian sub-continent to look at the history of aviation in the city of Hyderabad, served by Rajiv Gandhi International Airport.

Commercial aviation in India had a rocky start. After the end of World War Two, flying returned to the sub-continent with a number of private airlines being established. Three years after independence from the UK, the Indian Government created the Air Transport Inquiry Committee to look at the country's future air transport requirements. On its recommendations Parliament passed the Air Corporations

Act in March 1953, which resulted in the nationalisation of all the nation's private carriers and airports. This resulted in the creation of Indian Airlines and Air India. Bureaucracy, inaction and underfunding then prevailed. It would be another 40 years before legislation of the aviation industry was finally amended, and in 1993 a handful of private airlines stepped up to the challenge of operating in the 'world's most famous bureaucracy'. Companies came and went – the

The check-in hall at Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport features high ceilings and an abundance of natural light. (GMR Group)

An airside view of the full length of the airport's terminal, while in the foreground an IndiGo Airbus A320-232 departs on another rotation. (GMR Group)

successful ones growing exponentially. However, airport development continued to lag behind and many buildings fell into disrepair. Eventually, the government was forced to rethink its policies and started modernising airport infrastructure across the country. However, there were no terminal expansion programmes and very soon congestion became a major problem and by the late 1990s the country's airports were at bursting point.

Early Days

Hyderabad's civil aviation scene predated the formation of the Union of India. It had been an independent state which had successfully resisted integration into the British Raj. Unlike many other Maharajahs its ruler, or Nizam, was a benevolent man who placed social development much higher than maintaining a large army. Hospitals, schools, and universities were all constructed under his guidance. He also considered civil aviation and ordered and paid for the construction of an aerodrome near the village of Begumpet

as well as overseeing the creation of the state's own airline, Deccan Airways. Fortunately, the Nizam had the forethought to build a long runway and personally bought additional surrounding land for future expansion. In 1948, Indian troops entered Hyderabad and for the first time in 350 years the city was once again ruled from the capital, Delhi. As the city of Hyderabad grew in size and prosperity so the airport at Begumpet became busier. During the 1990s, problems started to appear. The post-1948 government had sold off all the land earmarked



Below • Chief Executive Officer of GHIAL, Vikram Jaisinghani explained to *Airliner World* his view of the facility's future development.

Above left • Friends and families wait for passengers in the arrivals hall. (GMR Group)

Above right • Rajiv Gandhi International Airport is decades ahead of its peers and a fine example of what can be achieved, given the right support and financial commitment. (GMR Group)

Both Jet Airways and the national carrier Air India fly extensively to and from the facility. (Airteamimages.com/HAMFive)

for expansion resulting in Begumpet Airport becoming surrounded by the city. Something had to give.

Ambitious Plans at Shamsabad

In 2005, after an extensive tender programme, work started on a greenfield site at Shamsabad, 14 miles (22.5km) south of the city. The bid had been won by the Bangalore-based GMR Group, one of the country's fastest-growing infrastructure enterprises, with interests

"HYDERABAD'S CIVIL AVIATION SCENE PREDATED THE FORMATION OF THE UNION OF INDIA."

in airports, energy, highways and urban infrastructure sectors. To help manage the construction of the new facility, GMR formed GMR Hyderabad International Airport Limited (GHIAL). The subsidiary signed a technical co-operation agreement with Malaysia Airports Berhad in exchange for a shareholding in GHIAL, while the state government of Andhra Pradesh – the country's fourth-largest state by area with a population of more than 84 million people – and the Airports Authority of India both became involved in the project, each taking 13% stakes in GHIAL. >>

Building a First-Class Facility in India

AIRPORT STATISTICS	
ICAO Code:	VOHS
IATA Code:	HYD
Location:	17° 14' 24" N 78° 25' 41" E
Elevation:	2,024 (617m)
Runways:	09R/27L – 13,976ft (4,260m) 09L/27R – 12,467ft (3,800m)
Website:	www.hyderabad.aero





Hyderabad Airport achieved second place in this year's Airports Council International survey (the 5 to 15 million passenger category). (All images author unless stated)

Now the facility is complete, GHIAL has ambitious plans to extend it by building what it calls an 'aerotropolis' on land adjoining the airport.

The airport is India's first greenfield facility to be operated under a public-private partnership.

The biggest challenge facing GHIAL now is to encourage new airlines to launch services from the airport.

The plan was very ambitious. Not only did it include the construction of an airport, but also the building of an aerotropolis on a 13,344 acre (5,400ha) site, which GHIAL envisioned would make Hyderabad an important passenger and cargo hub for the whole of central India. The new facility opened at 00.01 on March 23, 2008 following the closure of the old Begumpet Airport, which had handled its final flight a few minutes earlier. The airport was named Rajiv Gandhi International – after the former prime minister of India assassinated on May 21, 1991.

It featured a terminal building (designed by Hong Kong architects Winston Shu and Gumund Stokke) capable of handling 15 million passengers per year and a 13,976ft (4,260m) single runway, 09R/27L, plus associated



infrastructure and service provision.

The facility was the nation's first greenfield airport to be operated under a public-private partnership and GHIAL managed to complete all the construction work and commissioning work five months ahead of schedule. Further improvements since include the addition of a second, parallel runway, 09L/27R, which was opened on February 9, 2012. It is 12,467ft (3,800m) in length and capable of handling aircraft up to the size of an A340 or a Boeing 747.

Challenges and Achievements

The CEO of GHIAL, Vikram Jaisinghani, took time out of his busy schedule to explain to *Airliner World* how he sees the facility's future development. Asked what he thought GHIAL had achieved in Hyderabad, he said: "Our greatest success

has been to become the best airport for our size in India, and we're well on our way to being the best in the world. We recently achieved second place in the Airports Council International (ACI) survey in the category of 5 to 15 million passenger capacity airports." One aspect that GHIAL has been focussing on recently is connectivity, why is this so important? What makes any airport successful is its connectivity both on the ground and in the air. We are unique in that we serve 20 tier-two cities in India," Mr Jaisinghani said. By this he means that the country's major cities comprise metro cities – such as Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, New Delhi, Kolkata and Bangalore – and other 'smaller, tier-two' cities with a population of less than four million people.

In the early 1990s there was a

Jet Airways and its low-cost subsidiary JetKonnect are frequent visitors to Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport. (Airteamimages.com/ Andrew Hunt)

SpiceJet was the first airline to commit to the new airport and has since established a busy hub here. (Airteamimages.com/ Trevor Mulkerrins)

Bottom • A second parallel runway was commissioned on February 9, 2012, and is capable of handling aircraft up to the size of an Airbus A340 or Boeing 747. (GMR Group)

AIRLINES OPERATING INTO RAJIV GHANDI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT	
Domestic Airlines	
Air India	
IndiGo	
Jet Airways	
JetKonnect	
SpiceJet	
International Airlines	
Air Arabia	
British Airways	
Cathay Pacific Airways	
Emirates Airline	
Ethiad Airways	
flydubai	
Malaysia Airlines	
Oman Air	
Qatar Airways	
Saudia	
SilkAir	
Thai Airways International	
Cargo	
Blue Dart Aviation	
Cathay Pacific Cargo	
Lufthansa Cargo	
Singapore Airlines Cargo	
Thai Cargo	



significant shift in travel options: boarding a ship had become more expensive than flying, and both Air India and Indian Airlines began flying increasing numbers of people to destinations throughout the Middle East. But what really changed the game was the emergence of Gulf Air and Emirates Airline which introduced widebody aircraft into India's regional airports, carrying huge numbers of migrant workers on their scheduled full-service flights. Even with Emirates and Indian Airlines operating Gulf services from the old Begumpet facility, the seat capacity was not enough. India is still a very complicated country, and the author asked Jaisinghani what challenges face the airport in the future. "The greatest challenge facing GHIAL is encouraging new airlines to launch services to and

from here. The problem is that each carrier landing in India has to be authorised by the government, and in each case a bilateral civil aviation treaty is required. This is often a complicated two-way negotiation that requires give-and-take on behalf of both parties. This issue is clearly one that Hyderabad Airport cannot solve independently." Today, both Jet Airways and Air India fly extensively to and from the facility, but only SpiceJet uses it as a hub. GHIAL management needs to find more carriers willing to base aircraft here as well as introducing more international flights. Currently, British Airways, which flies six weekly rotations to London/Heathrow, is the airport's only link to Europe, although these services are also complimented by Gulf carriers including Etihad Airways, Emirates and Qatar

Airways which operate connecting flights through their home hubs. Cathay Pacific, Thai Airways International and Silk Air are its only links to Asia. Jaisinghani stated emphatically: "We cannot allow Dubai to be the hub of Hyderabad."

The airport's management team is also proud of its cargo handling capacity. Blue Dart Aviation, a domestic cargo carrier, operates 20 flights a week from here, but the facility has more capacity and greater ambitions. "We want Hyderabad to become the regional cargo hub for the whole of India. But, again, we need more players," said Jaisinghani. "And I'm very confident it will happen."

"Hyderabad is also unique in that we have the GMR Group's maintenance repair and overhaul (MRO) facility based here," he added. "It's a joint venture company with Malaysia Airlines, and is the first independent MRO operating in India. Now, we have three hangers already built and in operation and very soon we'll be in a position that no Indian aircraft will have to fly overseas for maintenance.

The Future

The GMR Group has done the unthinkable: it has managed to overcome all the hurdles it faced to create the first greenfield airport in India's modern era. In addition, it has come second in the prestigious ACI Survey. When asked who the visionary behind the project was, Jaisinghani replied: "It is the personal vision of Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao, a mechanical engineer, founder and chairman of the GMR Group." It has been some 60 years in coming, but finally India has a world-class aviation facility and Hyderabad will show the way forward for the other crowded, urban-locked aerodromes across the country. Hyderabad Airport is decades ahead of its peers, and is a fine example of what can be achieved given the right support and financial commitment. **AW**

"IT HAS BEEN SOME 60 YEARS IN COMING, BUT FINALLY INDIA HAS A WORLD-CLASS AVIATION FACILITY..."

HYDERABAD PASSENGER TRAFFIC			
Year	Domestic	International	Total
2011-2012	6,703,050	1,899,289	8,602,339
2010-2011	5,758,608	1,875,557	7,634,165
2009-2010	4,793,910	1,700,920	6,494,830
2008-2009	4,648,657	1,566,803	6,215,460
2007-2008	5,619,320	1,442,240	7,061,560
2006-2007	4,567,474	1,206,058	5,773,532
2005-2006	3,040,565	1,001,082	4,041,647
2004-2005	2,095,845	749,072	2,844,917
2003-2004	1,601,450	610,366	2,211,816
2002-2003	1,451,015	459,174	1,910,189

(April 1 to March 31) Source: GHIAL