Aviation policy

- There are currently 148 airports in the country and it is the third largest domestic market in the world in terms of seat capacity
- While India's airlines cumulatively suffered huge losses (₹15,000 crores) in the financial year 2020-2021 owing to the pandemic, losses are not a post-COVID phenomenon.
- In 2019--20, Indigo was the only airline to make a profit, while all other players posted losses led by then state-run Air India at ₹4,600 crores (Chart 1).
- Aviation policy is broad-based in India and is dealt with by the Ministry of Civil Aviation under the legal framework of the Aircraft Act 1934, and Aircraft Rules 1937.
- The DGCA is the statutory regulatory authority that comes in for issues related to safety, licensing, airworthiness, and so on.
- While the Mother Act and Rules have seen frequent modifications, aviation experts argue that India has not kept pace with modern technology in aerospace and increasing costs to the industry which ultimately affects passenger growth.
- While the Indian aviation sector initially saw a boom in the 1990s after opening up as a result of liberalization reforms and the breaking of the monopoly created by Indian Airlines and Air India, by the early 2000s, only two major airlines that were given licenses (Jet Airways and Sahara) survived.
- Low-cost carriers then entered the market around 2003 with diversification and lower fares being expected to promote the industry's growth.
- Heavily- taxed ATF contributes to the single biggest expenses of carriers, amounting to anywhere between 40-50% of operational expenses.
- Some Indian States impose provincial taxes of as much as 30% on jet fuel.
- This also makes shorter flight routes unsustainable for smaller airlines while big carriers like Indigo offer ultra-cheap fares on routes flown by rivals.
- National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) in 2016, which removed the five-year domestic experience rule but kept in place the 20 aircraft fleet requirement mandating domestic airlines to have at least 20 aircraft (or 20% of its entire fleet size whichever is higher) for domestic operations.

- While newer entrants to the industry, like Vistara and AirAsia India, lobbied the government to remove the 5/20 rule, legacy carriers who had to meet the earlier requirements to go international opposed the change as being bad for competition.
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- Most Indian airlines do not own entire fleets as their financials do not allow them to shell out huge one-time payments to buy planes but lease them from companies based out of India instead
- About 80% of India's total commercial fleet is leased.
- Airlines also have to bear costs in terms of airport fees for the use of airport facilities including aircraft landing, freight and other charges related to the use of airport infrastructure such as runways and passenger terminals.
- There are also high costs associated with the training of airline crew.
- Besides, the crunch in pilots is also reflective of the inadequate number of Flight Training Organisations.
- As for Go First, which filed for bankruptcy at the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) last week, 28 of its 54 aircraft are grounded.
- This, it says is due to "the serial failure of Pratt & Whitney's engines, while it continued to incur 100% of its operational costs".
- The airline said that 50% of its fleet had to be grounded by December 2022, leading to a loss of over ₹10,000 crore for the airline.

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Space Policy

- While ISRO's budget is approximately $1.6 billion, India's space economy is over $9.6 billion. Broadband, OTT, and 5G promise a double-digit annual growth in satellite based services.
- It is estimated that with an enabling environment, the Indian space industry could grow to $60 billion by 2030, directly creating more than two lakh jobs.
- Yet, it is the enabling policy environment that has proved elusive.
- The first satellite communication policy was introduced in 1997, with guidelines for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the satellite

industry that were further liberalized but never generated much enthusiasm.

- Today, more than half the transponders beaming TV signals into Indian homes are hosted on foreign satellites, resulting in an annual outflow of over half a billion dollars.
- The changing geopolitical environment in West Asia in which rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran are warming up to each other has also helped the Arab rapprochement with Syria. As a token gesture, Syria has agreed to take back 1,000 refugees from Jordan and cooperate with neighbors to crack down on drug smuggling.
- But this is only the beginning. Mr. Assad might have won the civil war, but the wounds of the war, in which his regime used brutal methods to crush the opposition, are still festering.
- Indian Space Policy 2023
- The 'Vision' is to "enable, encourage and develop a flourishing commercial presence in space" which suggests an acceptance that the private sector is a critical stakeholder in the entire value chain of the space economy.
- It makes five key points.
- It defines its role in India's "socio-economic development and security, protection of environment and lives, pursuing peaceful exploration of outer space, stimulation of public awareness and scientific quest",
- First, this is the only reference to 'security' in the document, making it clear that the focus is on civilian and peaceful applications. Considering that space-based intelligence, reconnaissance, surveillance, communication, positioning, and navigation capabilities are increasingly seen as mission critical by the defence services.
- That India conducted a successful A-SAT (anti-satellite) direct ascent test in March 2019, and, in the same year, set up the Defence Space Agency and the Defence Space Research Organisation, it is reasonable to infer that a defence-oriented space security policy document will be a separate document.
- Second, the policy lays out a strategy and then spells out the roles of the Department of Space, ISRO, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe) set up in 2020, and the News space India Limited (NSIL), a public sector unit set up in 2019 under the

Department of Space as the commercial arm of ISRO to replace the now defunct Antrix.

- Third, it states that ISRO will "transition out of the existing practice of being present in the manufacturing of operational space systems. Hereafter, mature systems shall be transferred to industries for commercial exploitation.
- ISRO shall focus on R&D in advanced technology, proving newer systems and realisation of space objects for meeting national prerogatives".
- Another of ISRO's tasks in the new policy is to "share technologies, products, processes and best practices with NGEs (non-government entities) and/or Government companies"
- Fourth, the NGEs (this includes the private sector) are "allowed to undertake end-to-end activities in the space sector through establishment and operation of space objects, ground-based assets, and related services, such as communication, remote sensing, navigation, etc.".
- Satellites could be self-owned, procured, or leased; communication services could be over India or outside; and remote sensing data could be disseminated in India or abroad. NGEs can design and operate launch vehicles for space transportation and establish their own infrastructure.
- Finally, IN-SPACe is expected to create a "stable and predictable regulatory framework" that will ensure a level playing field for the NGEs.
- It will act as a promoter by setting up industry clusters and as the regulator, issue guidelines on liability issues

Critical analysis

- The policy sets out an ambitious role for IN-SPACe but provides no time frame for the necessary steps ahead. Neither is there an indicative timeline for ISRO's transitioning out of its current practices nor is there a schedule for IN-SPACe to create the regulatory framework.
- The policy framework envisaged will need clear rules and regulations pertaining to FDI and licensing, government procurement to sustain the new space start-ups, liability in case of violations and an appellate framework for dispute settlement.

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Arth Ganga

- Arth Ganga is a sustainable viable economic model conceptualized under the "Namami-Gange" program to integrate people in the basin with Ganga Rejuvenation.
- A number of initiatives have been taken by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under this Arth-Ganga concept, in coordination with many Ministries/ Departments of Central and state governments and even NGOs.
- There are six key verticals of intervention in the model, namely:
- Promotion of Zero Budget Natural Farming (ZBNF), which includes promotion of Natural Farming in the Ganga Basin.
- Monetization and reuse of treated wastewater and sludge. It refers to reuse of treated wastewater by ULBs for the generation of revenue and conversion of sludge into usable products such as manure, pavers and bricks for revenue generation as well as safe disposal of sludge.
- Development of Livelihood generation opportunities through activities like 'Ghats Main Haat' for the sale of local products of Ganga cities/towns along riverbanks; self-sustaining of Ghats and capacity building trainings of Ganga Praharis etc. Jalaj units for income generation activities for Ganga Praharis have been set up in many locations.
- Encouragement of Public Participation through organizing regular events such as Ganga Aartis, cleanliness drives, Ganga Guide Trainings, Yoga on Ghat, Ghat Pe Haat, etc. in coordination with District Ganga Committees.
- Promotion of Cultural heritage and tourism by the development of small local tourism and cultural circuits; introduction of boat tourism through community jetties; promotion of yoga and wellness, medical tourism, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, enhancement of cultural connection with the river through Aartis & Ganga trails;
- Institution Building through setting up of decentralized monitoring and governance units like District Ganga Committees (DGCs); enhancement of the capacities of DGCs and other local administration institutions for

better water governance and sustenance of the projects, post asset handover.

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