AN INTERVIEW

with

Mr. Hari K. Marar

Managing Director and CEO, Bangalore International Airport Ltd.

Q 2017 has been a phenomenal year for BIAL. How has this been achieved?

2017 was an incredible year. The Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (BLR Airport) welcomed a record 25.04 million passengers, registered a growth of 4.3% in air traffic movements and handled 339,461 metric tonnes of cargo. In 2017, our Airport was rated as the fastest growing airport globally – by Flight Global. This is truly a reflection of Bengaluru's growing economic might. Owing to the development of Bengaluru as hub of new businesses in India and its ore-eminent stature as the tech capital of the country and the growing affluence of its youthful cosmopolitan population, there has been a significant increase in demand for air travel, resulting in soaring traffic figures.

In addition, two prestigious industry awards stand testimony to the BLR Airport's focus on excellence and customer satisfaction – Skytrax named the BLR Airport the best Regional Airport in India and Central Asia for 2017 and ASQ Rankings named the Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru the Second Best Airport in the World in 15 to 25 million passengers per year category.

Q A recent BIAL tie-up aims at digitizing the travel retail sphere. Tell us more about the 'Click and Collect' services, being planned at the BLR Airport.

At BIAL, we constantly work towards enhancing the passenger experience. In order to facilitate a seamless online/offline commerce experience for our passengers, BIAL has collaborated with Ace Turtle, an Omni-channel platform company, for travelers to buy online or in the air and pick-up, ship or deliver to the destination of their choice. With this, passengers will be able to avail 'Click and Collect' services, whereby they can pre-book food via the BLR Airport app or website and collect the order at the restaurants/ food outlets at the Airport. These initiatives will play a critical role in shaping customer experience through interactive digital solutions. This partnership will go a long way in delivering seamless retail experience for brands and create greater value for our passengers.

Q The Bengaluru airport witnessed record passenger traffic of 25 million in 2017. How many times more you expect the passenger traffic to rise by 2030? Will BIAL be in a position to take it on?

Air travel to and from Bengaluru is growing at an incredible pace – we have witnessed an average year-on-year passenger growth of about 13 percent since the BLR Airport opened in May 2008. This kind of growth requires continuous improvement as well enhancement of physical infrastructure to ensure that the passenger expectation is met. Yes, constrained infrastructure is a challenge, but we are working on a

combination of enhancements to existing physical infrastructure as well as various technology initiatives to ensure that passengers are offered a seamless airport experience.

The runway was upgraded with the laying of two Rapid Exit Taxiways (RETs) in August 2017. As a result, runway capacity has increased from 34 to 38 ATMs per hour and will progressively increase to 44 ATMs per hour.

BIAL is in the process of implementing several digital initiatives such as Aadhaar-enabled entry, Self-bag Drop and Smart Security Lane with Automatic Tray Return facilities. All this will enhance capability until T2 is ready for operations.

With 4,000 acres of allocated land, there is ample scope to further expand the infrastructure to meet the growing demand till 2030 and beyond. As part of the expansion plan, BIAL has initiated the construction of Terminal 2 – phase 1 of which is scheduled for completion by the middle of 2021; work on the second runway has begun and is expected to be ready in September 2019. Until we commence operations at the new terminal, BIAL will continue to introduce digital and technology initiatives to create easy access to and from the existing terminal. The combined capacity of T1 and T2 – once completely operational – will be approximately 65 MPA.

Q **There is a lot of curiosity about an upcoming BIAL's project of using the Aadhar identification and eliminating the need for paper and security checks. Tell us about this digital transformation.**

Implementing digital technologies like Aadhar-based identification will improve customer experience and enhance operational efficiencies. Once implemented, the BLR Airport will be the first airport in India to implement Aadhaar and biometric-enabled entry. This facility provides seamless access and will reduce waiting time across all the checkpoints – all with minimal human intervention. The verification process can be completed under 5 seconds at every checkpoint – right up to the boarding gate – completing the screening process in 10 minutes or less as against the average time of 25 minutes under normal entry procedures. All this, with no compromise of the security and safety protocols.

However, for those who do not possess an Aadhaar card, entry with the use of a government-approved identity card will continue to exist.

Q **The much awaited heli-taxi service is now operational at the BLR airport. What other key innovations that are in the pipeline?**

We believe that airports must be multimodal transport hubs to ensure seamless movement of passengers and goods. When the BLR Airport commenced operations in 2008, we worked with the Government of Karnataka (GoK) to create BMTC's Vayu Vajra service that provides bus transport facilities to and from Bengaluru City for the convenience of the travelling public. In order to connect regional towns, we tied-up with KSRTC to launch Flybus – directly from the BLR Airport to Mysuru, Madikeri, Mangalore, Kundapur, Coimbatore and Salem. BLR Airport was also the first in India to introduce taxi aggregators like Ola and Uber at the Airport in a professional manner. We have submitted a proposal to the GoK to extend the commuter railway service from Yeshwantpur to Kempegowda International Airport and plans are afoot to provide metro rail connectivity. The HeliTaxii is just one of our endeavours to increase the number of options for flyers to connect to their end destination, in the most convenient manner possible.

On the cargo front, BIAL, in collaboration with our cargo partners Menzies Aviation Bobba Bangalore (MABB) and Air India SATS Airport Services (AISATS), expanded the bonded trucking service operations from Coimbatore and Trichy to BLR Airport. With this, our customers are guaranteed that their consignments will be transported in an efficient and effective manner.

Q **A new trendsetting terminal is expected to be operational by 2021. What are the new key features; that we can expect?**

It will be a garden terminal — to blend with the ethos of the Bangalore as a Garden City. The interiors will reflect the art, tradition and culture of Karnataka and Bengaluru. The design aesthetics are clearly based on sustainability. At BIAL, We are committed to minimise the impact we have on the environment, while simultaneously making a positive impact on operational efficiency, economic viability, and social responsibility. We aim to introduce more digitally advanced, innovative services and products at the BLR Airport to ensure that airline partners have the advantage of future forward technologies, creating a seamless operating environment.

Q **A project of this magnitude has significant societal and environmental implications. How does BIAL ensure sustainability in design and operations?**

Being responsible in our actions and ensuring sustainability of the project as we grow and expanded is right at the heart of our mission and we consider ourselves as leaders in this area. Operations at BLR Airport are conducted in an environmentally responsible manner by minimising pollution, reducing the consumption of precious resources, reducing and managing waste and promoting the use of sustainable material.

In an attempt to reduce the carbon emission, we have installed solar power plants with a capacity of 3.6 megawatts. This will reduce carbon emission by 3125 tonnes per annum (3075 tonnes of carbon dioxide emission per annum at the airside and 550 tonnes at the car park area). Over the next few months, another 30 megawatts of solar farms will be commissioned, making it the largest amongst airports in india. Installing a state-of-the-art Solid Waste Management is just one of our initiatives in this area. Once operational in 2019, the solid waste management plant at BLR Airport will be the first in Asia to have an in-house, sustainable and integrated waste management facility. Energy generated from this process has the potential to power 5,000 households/ year and produce 1.5 million Kgs of compost annually. Our aim is to ensure that our Airport environment works towards the highest adherence of sustainability. We are the first airport to use bio diesel for all our airside operations.

The other key initiatives include use of battery-operated vehicles; implementation of rainwater harvesting and ground recharge; water conservation; elimination of paper cups and plastic bags; and scientific processing and recycling of solid waste.

We are also an active contributor to the development of the communities in the areas surrounding the Airport. While BIAL works on areas such as the redevelopment of government schools, upgradation of hospitals and the empowerment of women, one of our key focus areas is watershed management and the preservation and restoration of lakes surrounding the Airport.

Q **What are the key aviation reforms that you would like to see in the coming decade?**

The need of the hour is to rationalise taxes on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) as it can stimulate air travel. ATF prices in the Country are currently higher than that of Singapore, Hong Kong, and Dubai, resulting in increased expenditure for airlines as well as the airport operators.

Simplification of the economic regulatory framework related to airport infrastructure will facilitate more private investment in airports. Further, the formation of a single regulatory authority – instead multiple agencies regulating safety, Security, economic affairs separately – would give a fillip to airport and airline operators by simplifying the way to do business.

There is also a need for a policy that supports the establishment and successful running of MROs.

Finally, steps should be take to make the provision of Air Navigation Services by an independent autonomous entity. It would improve the efficiency of prodding these devices and also vastly improve the overall capacity available for the growth of civilian air traffic.

Mr. Hari K. Marar

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Hari Marar is Managing Director & CEO at Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL). Mr. Marar was part of the core leadership team that successfully licensed and operationalized a Greenfield Airport project at Bangalore. In this role, he defined the Operational concept of the Greenfield airport and introduced & implemented several modern, state of the art airport management systems, for the first time in India. He also conceived and built up an Airport Operations organization so as to ensure complete operational readiness. In a short span of period of over 7 years, the airport has won over 30 awards in the field of Operations Excellence, Environment Management and Information and Communication Technology. Prior to joining BIAL, Mr. Marar spent 13 years with the service industries that include hospitality and airlines.