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Big Picture

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India's new longevity club is racing to stretch time. However, is not the real challenge learning to live well with the years we have?

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From runway to road: Missing links in airport connectivity

World-class terminals are only half the journey; inadequate public transport and expensive taxis make airport commutes a daily ordeal

ASRA MAHAJAN
BENGALURU CHINA

Kemppegowda International Airport (KIA), known for its striking architecture and set amid Devanahalli, was envisioned as Bengaluru's grand gateway to the world. Instead, for many passengers, the journey begins, or ends, in frustration long before they reach the terminal.

Located nearly 40 kilometres from the city centre, the airport's distance has turned ground travel into a daily ordeal. With limited public transport options, commuters are largely dependent on Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation's (BMTCL) Vayu Vajra buses or expensive cabs. While the Vayu Vajra is reliable, its frequency and coverage fall short for a city as vast as Bengaluru. Currently, the buses cater to an average of 13,000-14,000 passengers per month. For everyone else, hailing a taxi often means



A view of the airport metro line near Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru.

(PHOTO: PUNJAB)

bracing for steep fares, prolonged negotiations, or both. Bengaluru's struggle is not unique. Across India, major airports grapple with similar last-mile connectivity challenges.

Chennai International Airport, despite its proximity to the city, suffers from poor integration between metro, suburban rail and road transport, forcing

INSIGHT

passengers to rely heavily on cabs.

Hyderabad's Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, like Bengaluru's, is located far from the urban core, making costly taxi rides almost unavoidable for late-night or early-morning travellers. While a 30 km

ride from the airport is supposed to cost around Rs 700, taxi drivers at the airport often demand fares exceeding Rs 1,000.

As India's aviation sector grows, these airports highlight a persistent problem: world-class terminals paired with inadequate, and often exhausting, access for passengers. In Bengaluru, recent

changes in pick-up rules, meant to decongest the airport, have only added to the chaos — leaving passengers confused and taxi unions angry, and sparking repeated standstills at the terminal.

Under the revised system, app-based cabs are required to pick up passengers from designated zones away from the arrival gates. While the change has worked fairly well at Terminal 2 (T2), Terminal 1 (T1) has emerged as the problem area.

At T1, all commercial vehicles outside the airport's authorised network were required to pick up passengers from Parking Zones 3 and 4, adding 15 to 20 minutes to the walk from the arrivals gate.

While the Bangalore International Airport Limited (BIAL), the airport operating body, made efforts to launch feeder buses and buggies, lack of awareness about the sudden change left hundreds of passengers confused and frustrated.

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Governance crippled: India's IAS problem

Shortages and churn threaten the civil services' role in India's development

KANAKPRIYA BASU & SUBHO MAJUMDAR

India faces not one but two administrative crises, and their combined effect is far greater than the sum of their parts. As of January 2024, nearly 1,300 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) positions remain vacant out of an authorised strength of 8,877, a 39% shortfall that has persisted for over a decade. Even officers, who are in post, face chronic instability. Last year, 62 officers were transferred in a single month in Rajasthan. In Madhya Pradesh, around 325 transfers occurred over 20 months in 2024 and 2025, particularly in senior secretariat positions. The transfer carousel continues to spin into 2026. The year opened with sweeping bureaucratic reshuffles at both the central and state levels.

At the close of 2025, the Appointments Committee

cleared more than 40 senior IAS transfers across central ministries. Days later, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) transferred 49 AGMUT cadres (covering Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram, and union territories) officers, one of the most extensive reshuffles affecting Delhi, Puducherry, Goa and the North East.

State governments followed suit: Madhya Pradesh moved 20 IAS officers in January 18, Punjab transferred 20 IAS officers just last week, while late 2025 saw major reshuffles in Uttar Pradesh (46 officers), Rajasthan (48 officers), Bihar (36 officers), Gujarat (26 officers) and Haryana (20 officers).

There may be plausible reasons for such reshuffling. However, when combined with the constrained capacity

of the IAS cadre, frequent mass transfers create a vicious cycle that undermines our nation's development capacity. Vacancies compel remaining officers to shoulder multiple responsibilities, intensifying pressure for further transfers, whether to "reward" overburdened loyalists or to redistribute unmanageable workloads.

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