India, EU to team up for drone regulation, air traffic monitoring

ANEESH PHADNIS
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India and the European Union (EU) will share data on flights and develop regulatory standards for drones and urban air mobility, they said on Thursday.

The two sides, at the EU-India aviation summit, signed letters of intent for enhanced cooperation. The development comes amid investments and collaboration between two sides in aviation. Air India's massive aircraft order and the launch of new flights between India and Europe have boosted ties.

The Airports Authority of India and Eurocontrol will work closely to manage increasing air traffic. A final agreement between the two sides will enable exchange of data on flight plans and profiles and improve airspace management. India's Directorate General of Civil Aviation and the European Aviation Safety Agency will work together to develop standards for drones and urban air mobility solutions such as electric-vertical take off and landing aircraft (eVTOL).

"We have a comprehensive policy and regulatory framework to ensure that drones and drone operations are safe, secure and green. We also have a U-space Regulation, which we updated recently, to ensure that drones are integrated safely within air space management. And earlier this year, we adopted the Drones Strategy 2.0, which proposes concrete actions to support the deployment of a drone ecosystem by 2030," said Adina-Ioana Vălean, EU's commissioner for transport, in an email response.

"I understand that India is also very advanced with drones, so there are plenty of opportunities to work closer together on regulatory and technical issues," she said.

"Connectivity and innovation are two themes that we share with the European Union. We have shared ambitions and aligned objectives. I do believe there are several opportunities for win-win solutions between India and the EU in areas of air traffic management, infrastructure growth and host of innovation areas such as drones, eVTOL devices and hydrogen-powered vehicles," said Rajiv Bansal, India's civil aviation secretary.

Airports seek easier rules for Indo-Europe trade boost

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Airport operators have called for simplified regulations on immigration, security and visa to encourage trade and tourism between India and the European Union (EU).

They made the request at the EU–India aviation summit in New Delhi on Thursday. More than 6.9 million people travelled between India and Europe (including the UK) in 2022.

The Airports Council International, which represents airports in the Asia Pacific and Europe, called for greater cooperation in safety, security, consumer protection and visa issuance. The airports called for creating a roadmap towards a "one-stop security regime" between the EU and India.