

# India extends ban on scheduled international flights till 31 August

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**NEW DELHI :** The Indian government has extended the ban on international commercial flights till 31 August, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) said in a circular on Friday. The ban on scheduled overseas flights was to end on 31 July after a 16-month gap.

Dedicated cargo flights, flights under the bilateral air bubble pacts with select countries will continue to operate, the civil aviation watchdog said.

A bilateral air bubble is a mechanism to resume flights between India and other nations with preconditions during the pandemic.

India currently has bilateral air bubble agreements with about 28 countries, including Afghanistan, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Canada, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Kuwait, the Maldives, Nepal, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Qatar, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, Ukraine, the UAE, the UK, Uzbekistan and the US.

However, several countries, including Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Kuwait, New Zealand, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Singapore and UAE, had in April banned travel to and from India due to the rising number of infections as a result of the second wave of covid-19 in the country. Some of these countries have since then lifted such travel restrictions to and from India.

The number of active covid-19 infections has dropped sharply since the March-May period, which has resulted in a gradual increase in domestic traffic.

Aviation consultancy firm Capa India expects about 80 million domestic air passengers and 16 million international air passengers during FY22, up from 53 million domestic passengers and 10 million international passengers during FY21.

However, this is much lower than the figures during the year-ago period, when Indian domestic air passengers stood at 138 million during FY20, while international passengers stood at 67 million during the same period.