



HOME / NEWS / INDIA

Government mulls unified airport security akin to Transportation Security Administration in U.S.

Deliberations ongoing to form one agency for aviation security, customs and immigration after PM gives his nod to the concept; part of a larger plan for a unified agency for land, air and sea transportation like in the U.S.

April 28, 2023 09:10 pm | Updated April 29, 2023 02:00 am IST - NEW DELHI

JAGRITI CHANDRA, VIJAITA SINGH

COMMENTS

SHARE

READ LATER



A Transportation Security Administration officer works at Dallas Love Field Airport. File | Photo Credit: AP



— WHICH WILL ALSO COMBINE IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS.

The concept has received a green flag from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At the annual Director General of Police conference on January 20 and 21, he instructed that a proposal be finalised, multiple officials confirmed to *The Hindu*. At the conference, a presentation on transport security included deliberations on various measures for civil aviation security. Discussions were also held about expanding the scope of an Indian TSA-like force to include security for sea and land ports, as well as roads and highways.

‘Seamless security’

In his address at the 37th Raising Day of the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) on Thursday, Civil Aviation Secretary Rajiv Bansal said that the participants at the two-day conference must deliberate over “the move to a TSA-based concept across all 148 airports, which will grow to 220 airports in the next three to four years. We should have a seamless security system.”

While the Central Industrial Security Force is deployed at 66 out of the current 148 airports to carry out security functions, State police oversee security at the remaining airports.

Growing system

“In a fast growing aviation market, we need a robust system. But today, coordination with a multitude of agencies becomes difficult. What is envisaged is not only a unified security agency for aviation but also shipping, metro, road, rail and land and sea ports,” said a senior official aware of the discussions between the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Civil Aviation. If the proposal is finalised, it will entail legislative changes.

The TSA was formed in the aftermath of the 9/11 attack in the U.S. to oversee security for all modes of transportation, such as air travel, passenger rail and intercity bus travel. In India, the proposal comes at a time when the country is pegged to be the third largest aviation market in the world by 2024, and is already the third largest domestic aviation market after the U.S. and China. It is also the world’s fastest growing market at 9%, though it accounts for only 2% of the global passenger traffic — a statistic which is often cited to



airlines have more than 1,000 aircraft on order.

Integrating functions

One of the officials quoted above said that the move would also help in integrating policy, regulations and implementation by bringing them under one body. Today, for instance, if the BCAS frames regulations for aviation, the implementation body is either the CISF or the airports. The official rued that airports, which have to procure security infrastructure, have often cited financial constraints and delayed upgradation. The proposal for a unified agency means it will also be tasked to buy security infrastructure such as x-ray machines and full body scanners.

While the exact contours of the proposal are yet to be finalised, an official explained that the move could result in a merger of the CISF with the BCAS. One official also said, “The Bureau of Immigration, which works under the Intelligence Bureau of the Union Home Ministry is responsible for immigration checks at airports, sea ports and land borders. But once the TSA is a reality, the immigration functions will also fall under it. All stakeholders should be on a common platform,” said the official.

Today, the Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, which is the security watchdog for civil aviation, falls under the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The Central Industrial Security Force, which guards the airports, falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs, as does the Bureau of Immigration. The Customs department falls under the Finance Ministry.



Get Curated Updates

Sign up for our free newsletters to get in-depth analyses, previews for the day ahead, thoughtful roundups and more.

EXPLORE OUR NEWSLETTERS