

31 DECEMBER 2024 | TUESDAY | SRI VIJAYA PURAM | WWW.NICOBARTIMES.COM

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## HRS Warns of Challenges for Stretcher Patients as Air India Transfers Operations on Sri Vijaya Puram - Chennai Route to Air India Express



Tarun Karthick

Sri Vijaya Puram,

31 December 2024

Hindu Rashtra Shakti (HRS) has raised serious concerns about the transportation of stretcher patients following the recent changes in the Sri Vijaya Puram to Chennai flight service operated by Air India. In a press conference held on 30th December 2024, the organization warned the Government, local administration, and the public about the challenges that Islanders, particularly those requiring stretcher transport, may face in light of Air India's decision to transfer its operations to Air India Express on Sri Vijaya Puram - Chennai Route.

In a significant restructuring move, Air India Group announced on 1st October 2024 that it had completed the operational integration and legal merger of its low-cost carriers, Air India Express Ltd and AIX Connect Pvt Ltd (formerly AirAsia India), into a larger low-cost carrier network. This decision later resulted in Air India ceasing its operations on the Sri Vijaya Puram - Chennai route, a vital lifeline for many Islanders who rely on air travel for essential medical care. As a result, Air India Express now handles this crucial route, with significant implications for passengers requiring stretcher transport.

Mr. Anshuman Roy, State Youth President of Hindu Rashtra Shakti, shared grave concerns about the changes, specifically regarding the transportation of stretcher patients from Sri Vijaya Puram to Chennai. Under Air India's previous system, the fixed cost for transporting a stretcher patient was Rs. 2,42,000. While this price was admittedly high, Mr. Roy explained that it provided Islanders with the assurance of a fixed rate,

which was critical for families facing medical emergencies.

Moreover, Air India also had a manual booking process for stretcher patients in addition to the online process, where the airline staff at the local airport would personally assist families in arranging transportation. According to Mr. Roy, this local process was both quick and empathetic. The staff, understanding the urgency of the situation, ensured that the necessary arrangements were made swiftly, often within hours, so patients could be transported by the next available flight to Chennai for further medical treatment.

With Air India Express now managing the route, Mr. Roy outlined several issues that are likely to burden families in need of stretcher transport. Firstly, the cost of transporting a stretcher patient is no longer fixed. Instead, it is subject to fluctuation based on the prevailing price of nine seats on the flight, in addition to other charges. Mr. Roy warned that the new pricing structure could result in costs exceeding the previous Rs. 2,42,000, making it unaffordable for many families, especially in emergency situations.

Furthermore, he highlighted the major change in the booking process. Unlike Air India's manual system, Air India Express requires families to book stretcher transport through an online process, with communication occurring via call centres and email. This online process necessitates a minimum lead time of 72 hours before the flight, which may not be feasible in emergency situations where time is of the essence. Mr. Roy expressed concern that in urgent medical cases, the lack of local support to facilitate the booking process could lead to delays, leaving patients without necessary transportation for critical care in Chennai.

In light of these challenges, Mr. Roy made an urgent appeal to the Central Government, A&N Administration and local leaders to address the situation. He called for the establishment of a system that allows local booking for stretcher patient transportation at Sri Vijaya Puram, ensuring that this service is available with all airlines operating on the route, including Air India Express. Additionally, he emphasised the need for a capped cost for stretcher transport to prevent exorbitant prices from becoming a barrier to medical care.

Hindu Rashtra Shakti leader also stressed the critical importance of these steps, given that advanced healthcare facilities are limited in the Islands. Many Islanders rely on transportation to Chennai for surgeries, specialised treatments, and other medical care not available locally. Without a reliable and affordable system for transporting stretcher patients, these Islanders may face unnecessary hardship during health crises.

The transportation of stretcher patients from Sri Vijaya Puram to Chennai is a vital service for the Islanders, and the recent changes in the flight operations have raised alarms about accessibility, affordability, and efficiency. As the situation stands, there is a pressing need for the Central Government, the local administration, and airlines to come together and implement a system that ensures affordable, accessible, and timely transportation for patients in need of emergency care.

Hindu Rashtra Shakti has called for immediate intervention, urging all concerned authorities to address these issues and prevent the healthcare and transportation crisis that looms for stretcher patients on the Sri Vijaya Puram - Chennai route.

## First Case of Gold Smuggling Detected at Veer Savarkar International Airport After Initiation of International Flight Operation



Rohit Kumar

Sri Vijaya Puram,  
31 December 2024

had allegedly smuggled into Sri Vijaya Puram from Kuala Lumpur, intending to carry it to Chennai.

In the first reported case of gold smuggling at Veer Savarkar International Airport since the initiation of international flight operations, a resident of Tamil Nadu was apprehended by Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) officers during a random baggage check.

The suspect, Mohd Zunaith Rasool, a resident of Madurai, travelled from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to Sri Vijaya Puram aboard the Air Asia flight on Saturday (28 December 2024). His final destination was Chennai, he had a booking on SpiceJet flight scheduled for the same evening from Sri Vijaya Puram to Chennai.

CISF selected Rasool for a random baggage scan upon his entry into the airport for his onward flight to Chennai. During the inspection, officers discovered a suspicious item concealed in his bag. Upon further examination, they found 203 grams of gold that Rasool

Rasool was immediately handed over to customs officials for further investigation. Air Asia had launched its international service between Kuala Lumpur and Sri Vijaya Puram on 16 November 2024, and this incident marks the first instance of gold smuggling detected at the airport since the commencement of these international flight operation.

Sources revealed that customs officials have registered a case against Rasool, and a sample of the seized material has been sent to a Kolkata laboratory for confirmation. Rasool was later released on bail the same day.

With the commencement of international flight connections to Sri Vijaya Puram, authorities are now bracing for a potential rise in the smuggling of valuable goods into Sri Vijaya Puram and onward smuggling from Sri Vijaya Puram to mainland cities.

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# Andaman Commemorates Netaji's 1943 First Tricolour Hoisting on Indian Soil at Port Blair



**Tarun Karthick**

**Sri Vijaya Puram,**

**31 December 2024**

A solemn function was organised at the Andaman Club on December 30, 2024, to commemorate the historic first Tricolour Hoisting

on Indian soil by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on December 30, 1943, at Port Blair (now Sri Vijaya Puram). This significant moment marked the declaration of administration of Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the first Indian Territory freed from British rule. (FANS),

In light of the ongoing national mourning following the passing of Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, the ceremony was conducted with reverence and simplicity. Deputy Commissioner of South Andaman, Mr. Arjun Sharma, IAS, led the event by offering floral tributes to honor this significant occasion. Senior members of administration and officials, members of the Freedom Fighters and National Service and the

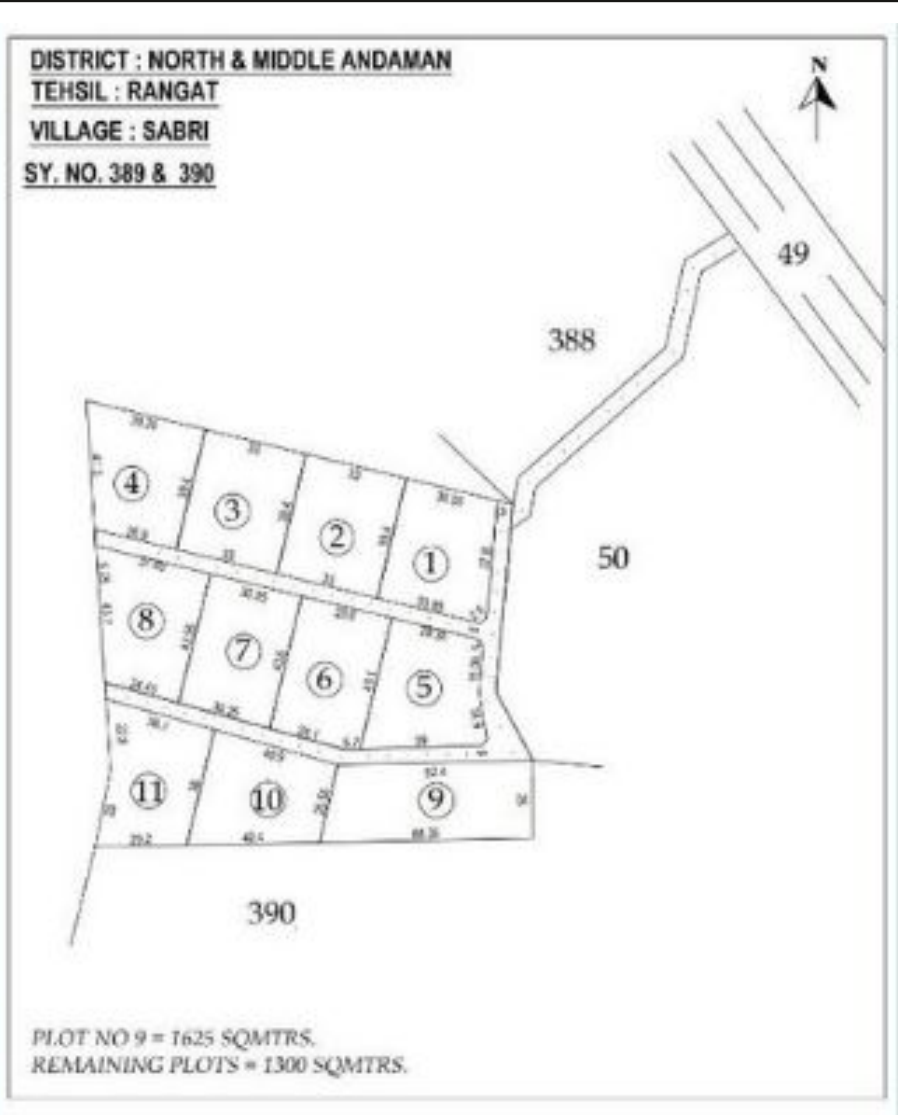
general public Andaman and Nicobar Islands in paying respects. India's freedom struggle. During his visit in December 1943, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose declared the Islands as the first liberated territory and raised the tricolour, a monumental step in India's journey to independence. This annual commemoration was observed in memory of those patriotism and who gave their lives collective pride, for the nation. serving as a tribute to the enduring values of freedom and unity that define the nation. The ceremony also emphasised the vital role of the

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# South Andaman Revenue Officials Receive Specialised Training in Marine Pollution Response



officials valuable exposure to real-time emergency management techniques. Simulated scenarios provided an opportunity for participants to engage with pollution control logistics, underscoring the importance of swift, coordinated action to minimise environmental damage during such incidents.

The day concluded with a detailed briefing on oil spill prevention and preparedness. Experts shared advanced techniques and demonstrated state-of-the-art equipment for oil spill containment and recovery. The session emphasised the critical need for efficient response strategies in marine pollution emergencies.

This collaborative effort, spearheaded by the District Administration, South Andaman, and the Indian Coast Guard, highlights a shared commitment to safeguarding the region's marine environment. For the Revenue officials, the exercise proved to be a pivotal learning experience, reinforcing their role as first responders and enhancing their readiness for future environmental emergencies.

The initiative not only improves operational preparedness but also strengthens inter-agency collaboration and fosters a sense of collective responsibility to protect the ecological integrity of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands' marine ecosystems. Through such efforts, the islands remain better equipped to face environmental challenges effectively.

Tarun Karthick

Sri Vijaya Puram,  
31 December 2024

In a bid to enhance preparedness and coordination for managing marine pollution, the Revenue Officials of South Andaman

underwent specialised training during a one-day Regional Level Pollution Response Exercise organised by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). The exercise, held near the Science Centre and Jetty area, focused on the vital role that Revenue officials play in responding to marine pollution

incidents.

The event combined both practical demonstrations and theoretical training, providing a comprehensive learning experience for participants. A key feature of the exercise was a hands-on training session aboard the Indian Coast

Guard Ship (ICGS) Vijit, where officials were equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to handle oil spills and mitigate their environmental impact effectively.

The exercise also showcased the deployment of specialised pollution response equipment, offering



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# Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Shantanu Thakur Meets Lt. Governor of A&N Islands



Joshi apprised the Hon'ble Minister on the status of key projects in the shipping and ports sectors, which are expected to significantly boost the region's maritime capabilities.



Among the projects discussed were the International Container Transshipment Terminal at Great Nicobar Island, the Deep Water Port at Atlanta Bay, and the Dry Cargo Transshipment Terminal at Port Meadows. The development of these projects is aimed at enhancing the connectivity of the islands and positioning them as a key player in regional maritime trade.

A particular emphasis was placed on the vision to transform the Andaman and Nicobar Islands into a Regional Ship Construction and Repair Hub within the Indo-Pacific, a move that could significantly strengthen the islands' strategic importance in the region.

**Tarun Karthick** Hon'ble Minister of State for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and Nicobar Islands, and Mr. Shantanu Thakur, met with Vice Chairman of the Islands Development Agency, at Raj Niwas, Sri Puram. The meeting focused on the progress of several major infrastructure and strategic projects of A&N Administration steered through the Islands Development Agency. Admiral

**Sri Vijaya Puram,**  
**31 December 2024**

On December 30, 2024, the the Hon'ble Lieutenant Vijaya Puram.



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# District TB Officer Reviews NTEP Implementation and Leads Awareness Program at PHC Kadamtala



As part of the visit, an awareness-cum-sensitization program on tuberculosis was organized in the PHC Kadamtala Conference Hall. The session aimed to educate health officials and the general public about the disease. Dr. Palit conducted a refresher training session covering key topics, including TB symptoms, transmission, prevention strategies, and government initiatives such as the Nikshay Poshan Yojana and the role of Nishay Mitras in supporting patients.

The event saw active participation, with 54 attendees benefiting from the session. The program concluded with an interactive doubt-clearing segment where Dr. Palit addressed questions about TB management and preventive measures, dispelling misconceptions and providing accurate information.

**Tarun Karthick**  
**Sri Vijaya Puram,**  
**31 December 2024**

District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO), along with his team, visited the Primary Health Centre (PHC) Kadamtala to oversee the implementation of the National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP). During the inspection, Dr.

The visit aimed to monitor progress, inspect facilities, and strengthen efforts to combat tuberculosis in the region.

Palit reviewed the laboratory facilities and held discussions with the Medical Officer in Charge (MO i/c) about increasing sputum referrals for presumptive TB examinations.

Following the program, the DTO visited the designated Microscopy Center at PHC Baratang to review its operations and ensure the quality and reliability of TB diagnostics.



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# CPI (M) State Conference Elects 19-Member Committee, Re-elects D. Ayyappan as State Secretary



Nicobar Islands at the 24th Party Congress, set to take place in Madurai, Tamil Nadu from 2nd to 6th April 2025.

A law graduate from Delhi University, D. Ayyappan has a long history of involvement in both government and union activities. He served as the General Secretary of the Non-Gazetted Government Officers' Association for 12 years until 2015, and also led the Andaman & Nicobar Gazetted Officers' Association. Ayyappan, who voluntarily retired from government service, is an MA (Political Science) University topper from JNRM, Sri Vijaya Puram, and currently serves as the Chairman of the JNRM Alumni Association. He is also the Vice President of the CITU Andaman & Nicobar State Committee.

Tarun Karthick

Sri Vijaya Puram,  
31 December 2024

The Delegate Session of the

Andaman & Nicobar State Conference of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) held on 29th December at the Atul Smriti Samiti Hall (Bengali Club) in

Sri Vijaya Puram, concluded with the election of a new 19-member State Organising Committee. D. Ayyappan was re-elected as the State Secretary.

In addition, an 8-member State Secretariat was also elected during the Conference. Ayyappan was further elected as a delegate to represent the Andaman &

Ayyappan was the CPI (M) candidate in the Lok Sabha elections held in April 2024 for the Andaman & Nicobar Parliamentary Constituency.



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13th Shaheed Swaraj Dweep Samooch Naman Yatra Commemorates Historic Hoisting of Tricolour by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose in 1943



Rohit Kumar  
Sri Vijaya Puram,  
31 December 2024  
The 13th Shaheed Swaraj Dweep Samooch Naman Yatra, organized by the Shaheed Swaraj Foundation, took place from December 27th to 30th, 2024, at Sri Vijaya Puram, to commemorate the

historic first-ever hoisting of the Indian Tricolour on Indian soil by Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose on December 30, 1943. The event brought together around sixty nationalists from various states across India, alongside local islanders, to honour India's freedom struggle.  
The Yatra began on December 27th with

a seminar at the Chinmaya Mission in Sri Vijaya Puram, where participants engaged in discussions on national security, patriotism, and India's freedom movement. The seminar served as an important platform to reflect on the need for unity and collective action in safeguarding the nation's heritage.  
The main event took place on

December 30th at the Andaman Club, where attendees gathered to pay tribute to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and all freedom fighters. This gathering highlighted the ideals of patriotism, sacrifice, and unity, leaving participants with a renewed sense of pride in India's history.  
Mr. Indresh Kumar, the Margdarshak of

the Rashtriya Suraksha Jagran Manch (Forum for Awareness of National Security), delivered a speech emphasising the profound significance of the historic day. He recalled how, on December 30, 1943, Netaji hoisted the Tricolour for the first time on Indian soil at the Gymkhana Ground, now known as Netaji Stadium, in Sri Vijaya Puram. This act marked the Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the first Indian territory liberated from colonial rule.

Netaji's role in the independence movement was further underscored by Mr. Kumar, who reminded the audience of his formation of a government in exile and his unwavering commitment to India's liberation. The event is seen as a major turning point in India's struggle for freedom.

The Yatra concluded with a commemorative function at Flag Point, where the national flag was hoisted in tribute to Netaji's unparalleled contribution to India's independence. The ceremony reaffirmed the importance of preserving Netaji's legacy and ensuring that his sacrifices continue to inspire future generations.

Mr. Girish Arora, President of the Shaheed Swaraj Foundation's Andaman & Nicobar Chapter, also spoke at the event, highlighting the Foundation's ongoing efforts to organise initiatives that promote national awareness and honour the sacrifices of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose and other heroes of the freedom movement.

The 13th Shaheed Swaraj Dweep Samooch Naman Yatra concluded with a strong message of patriotism, sacrifice, and unity, reinforcing the commitment of all participants to uphold the values that defined India's independence.

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Padma Shri Awardee Naresh Chander Lal Promotes Cleanliness and Sanitation at Government Boys Senior Secondary School



beyond the school boundaries, encouraging students to become active participants in spreading sanitation awareness in their neighbourhoods.

“Cleanliness is a habit that starts with you”, said Mr. Lal, urging the students to lead by example and inspire others to follow suit. He also spoke about the harmful effects of substances that negatively impact health, advising students to avoid them and focus on their physical fitness.

In his address, Mr. Lal also highlighted the importance of water conservation. He appealed to the students to be mindful of water usage and adopt practices that ensure its preservation.

The Vice Principal of the school, Mr. L. Suku Rajan, accompanied Mr. Lal during the visit. The visit served as an important reminder for the students to embrace cleanliness as a way of life, while also contributing to a cleaner, healthier environment for future generations.

Rohit Kumar                      Ambassador for Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mr. Naresh Chander Lal, visited the Government Boys Senior Secondary School, Middle Point, during the visit, Mr. Lal interacted with the students, emphasising the importance of cleanliness, both within the school and the community. Addressing the students, he urged them to adopt clean habits and take responsibility for maintaining a hygienic environment. He stressed that cleanliness should extend beyond the school boundaries, encouraging students to become active participants in spreading sanitation awareness in their neighbourhoods.

Sri Vijaya Puram, 31 December 2024

Padma Shri Awardee and Swachh Bharat Mission initiative to promote cleanliness

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