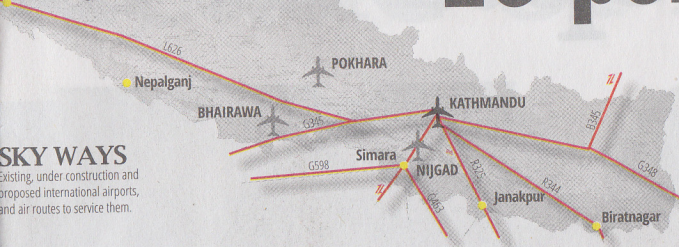


15 points for and against Nijgad Airport

Mahendranagar

SKY WAYS

Existing, under construction and proposed international airports, and air routes to service them.



FOR

1 Kathmandu airport is congested and saturated. It is now surrounded by the city and is not safe. Nepal urgently needs an alternative international airport.

2 Kathmandu is one-way-in, one-way-out for large jets. Planes have to circle for hours to land in Kathmandu, because poor visibility forces domestic flights to also line up for instrument approach. Nijgad would solve that problem and ease congestion.

3 Kathmandu airport is at 1,338m elevation. This forces load penalty on large jets, which cannot carry full passenger and fuel load at takeoff.

4 Steep terrain makes Kathmandu dangerous and unsuitable for the Instrument Landing System (ILS) approach. Nijgad is located in the plains 15-30km away from the Chure and Mahabharat ranges.

5 Nijgad lies along the proposed Himalaya 2 air route over Nepal, which will shorten flying distance between west and east Asia, and reduce congestion along north Indian air corridors. Having an airport on that route would improve safety.

6 Nijgad can be a prime 'hub' airport like Singapore, Dubai or Istanbul, which airlines can use for refuelling and stopovers. Nepal Airlines can pick up transit traffic, and thus prop up the country's tourism.

AGAINST

The existing Kathmandu airport is already handling 7.3 million passengers per year. It can accommodate 10 million if properly managed and with simple upgrades. A three-phase, \$240 million ADB-funded upgrade has been allowed to lapse to make Nijgad a *fait accompli*.

Extending existing taxiways to thresholds of RWY02 and 20 would streamline takeoffs and landings. Moving most short takeoff and landing (STOL) traffic to Ramechhap, or rehabilitating the old RWY34-16 for small planes, would reduce congestion and increase passenger capacity.

The proposed 300m extension of RWY02 would have solved that problem. Low fuel burn on new generation aircraft like the Boeing 787 and Airbus 350 would make long-haul flights possible.

Radar installations at Kathmandu and Bhattedanda have improved safety. Most international airlines flying into Kathmandu use the new RNAV approach, which is superior to ILS.

Himalaya 2 was first proposed in 2005, it is not yet operational. Even if it was, Nijgad would just be a waypoint on that air way. There are plenty of other airports within 15 minutes flying time in India for emergency landings.

The 'hub' model is now obsolete. International aviation has moved to the 'point-to-point' model because advances in technology allow longer-range planes. Besides, Nepal Airlines is not Emirates.

FOR

7 International experts looked at Simara, Janakpur and other sites for a new international airport, and selected Nijgad because of its proximity to Kathmandu, terrain, distance to the Indian border and other factors.

8 Nijgad's catchment area will include northern Bihar, and Indian nationals in that area will find it more convenient to take international flights from there.

9 Nijgad is located 30-40km from the Indian border, allowing planes to make approaches over Nepali territory.

10 The environment impact assessment (EIA) of Nijgad by the Department of Forests and Environment gave it a clean chit.

11 As a national pride project, Nijgad will transform Nepal's economy in the coming decades, acting as a catalyst for employment and downstream services.

12 It is not true that 2.5 million trees will be cut for the airport. In the first phase, only 195,000 big trees and 575,000 small ones will be felled. For every tree cut, 25 more will be planted.

13 Nijgad is the most suitable site for an alternative airport because fewer people will be displaced, reducing the cost of compensation.

14 You cannot have an omelet without breaking eggs. You cannot have development without lopping off a few trees.

15 Tree-hugging activists sabotaged Arun III for a few butterflies, and now they want to sabotage Nijgad for a few elephants which can always find another way.

AGAINST

Nijgad is 80km from Kathmandu city centre. Even with the new expressway, passengers will incur additional travel time. Passengers catching a 8PM flight from Nijgad will have to leave Kathmandu latest at 3PM because of traffic.

Maybe. But why would Indians want to go through Nepali customs and immigration?

Top of Descent (ToD) for planes flying at 36,000ft is 150km away from a destination. Nijgad would still require flights to coordinate with Indian air traffic control.

The EIA was a greenwash, and hurriedly copy-pasted from a hydropower project in Dolakha, according to a report in *Kantipur*.

Nijgad is not an airport project but a logging concession. A corrupt state that cannot even upgrade the Nagarkot road in 5 years has no right to take on a \$6.5-billion project.

Nijgad is the last remaining native hardwood forest in the eastern Tarai. It is on the migratory route of wild elephants and is a critical corridor for other wildlife. This forest is unique and irreplaceable.

A valuable nature sanctuary will be destroyed, this has a cost. Simara airport 10km away can be expanded to accommodate 2 east-west runways without much logging.

It is not necessary to clear 80sqkm of forest and prevent 22,500 tons of carbon from being sequestered every year. There are alternatives.

The main argument against Nijgad is not environmental, although protecting wild elephants is important. It is an economic argument against a white elephant.