

Push for reopening HAL airport for local flights

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All set: A view of HAL Airport in Bengaluru.

Short-haul flights within Karnataka would facilitate tourism in the State

For those who fancied flying to Mysuru from Bengaluru, but gave up on the idea because they had to spend nearly as much time getting to the airport in Bengaluru, there could be good news. In yet another attempt at restarting commercial operations at the HAL airport, the Karnataka government has sought the Centre's nod to allow short-haul flights within Karnataka from here to facilitate tourism in the State. Priyank Kharge, Tourism Minister, placed the proposal before the Central Aviation Ministry recently, to give a push to regional connectivity for tourism. There have been no commercial operations at the HAL airport since 2008, and the 700 acre facility is now primarily used for landing VVIP, VIP and chartered flights, and for flight testing. "At present, it is not feasible for people to fly from the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) to, say, Mysuru because they can reach the destination by road within three hours and will take a lot of time to get to the KIA," Mr. Kharge said. However, an agreement between the Bangalore International Airport Ltd. (BIAL) and the Civil Aviation Ministry prevents the functioning of a civil airport within a 150 km radius of KIA, a fact the State shifted to the HAL airport. That is why we are asking for the Centre to at least allow

flights operating within Karnataka from HAL Airport,” said Mr. Kharge.

Airport ready

Meanwhile, officials at HAL said the airport was ready to commence operations anytime. HAL too has, only recently, appealed to the Civil Aviation Ministry to include the airport under the regional connectivity plan. “The HAL airport has the same capacity as any normal airport, an official said.