

Air India eyeing metro station to publicise brand Maharaja

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With operational profits in its logbook, national carrier Air India, which has lost its passenger business to private airlines, is now eyeing the metros to publicise Brand Maharaja. On the lines of other corporate houses, the national carrier too is eyeing the Metro Stations in the national Capital. It plans to utilize the DMRC's renaming scheme and rechristen a particular metro station with the name Air India.

Not only this, it has also asked its over 20,000 employees across the country and abroad to promote Air India by putting Screen Shades advertising the national carrier in their vehicles while driving.

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A senior AI official said that talks are at an advance stage and very soon name of few metro stations will be metamorphosed with Air India. "We have asked some of the important stations including those on Airport Express Line," said the official but regretted sharing the names.

However sources in the Delhi Metro said that AI was primarily asking for the Central Secretariat Metro Station which DMRC has declined but Dhaula Kuan metro station may be renamed in the public air carrier name. "We had offered Noida Metro Station but AI is not keen so talks are going on to

zero in on some significant stations," sources said.

While private airliner Indigo and AI's competitor is already using some of the metro station, trains and station premises by its name, a couple of banks and other corporate houses like J K Tyres has metamorphosed one of Delhi's iconic and busiest intersections ITO calling it as JK Tyre ITO. ITO is only the second Metro station to be branded, after the Shivaji Stadium. JK Tyre had earlier adopted national Capital's Hazrat Nizamuddin railway station 20 years ago and named it JK Tyre Nizamuddin. The Gurudronacharya Metro

Station has been named with Indigo.

Starting in 2014, Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) has been renaming stations which earn it good revenues. This is done through bidding and the pattern is quite prevalent across the world. In Delhi, those who win the bids not only get semi-naming rights for the stations but are also provided advertisement space at the station premises. Other branding activities are also allowed inside the station, including the right to choose a colour scheme to promote the brand.

An Air India spokesperson

said that already 10,000 screen shades carrying the advertisement of the proposed Delhi-San Francisco and Delhi - Madrid direct flights beginning next month have been provided to the employees and most of them have started using on their vehicles- both private and those provided by the AI.

The national carrier has for the first time in a decade reported an operating profit of ₹105 crore in the last financial year though currently the AI is surviving on a ₹30,231 crore bailout package shared by the UPA Government. Before senior railway officer

Ashwani Lohani was appointed the CMD of Air India by Modi government last September, the national carrier had an operating loss of Rs 2,636 crore in 2014-15 fiscal.

"AI has over 20,000 employees of all categories including the officers. The idea is to publicise brand Air India without any cost. Such exercise will give constant and greater visibility to the people and travelers. With the Maharaja on its way to rejuvenation, new offers and destinations could be easily advertised through this medium. Time to time we will change the screen shades and even develop stickers to paste on body of the vehicles used by AI staff,"