



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN TIMES

PATNA

12 MARCH 2026

AAI floats tender to upgrade operations at Birpur airport

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PATNA: The Airports Authority of India (AAI) on Wednesday invited tenders for upgrading and developing the existing airport at Birpur to enable operations of small aircraft under the regional connectivity scheme initiative.

The project aims to make the airport operational for "Code-2B" type aircraft — small 19-seater planes with a wingspan of 15 metres to less than 24 metres, typically used for short-haul regional flights for tourism and disaster and mitigation purposes.

They can also be used by flight training organisations, said Nilesh Ramchandra Deore, special secretary in Bihar's civil aviation department.

"The ₹36.38-crore project will be executed in an engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) mode. It includes construction of a pre-fabricated

steel structure terminal building, a pre-engineered air traffic control (ATC) tower, a pre-engineered fire station and other associated airport infrastructure," said Deore.

"The tender document specifies a project completion period of 450 days," he added.

The development is part of the Centre's regional connectivity initiative, UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik), aimed at improving air connectivity to smaller towns. The project is being implemented by AAI in partnership with the government of Bihar.

The Bihar cabinet last year approved pre-feasibility studies for six small airports in the state, including Birpur. These studies assessed land availability, runway length and infrastructure requirements.

Based on the findings, the state government in June 2025 signed a memorandum of understanding with AAI to develop four regional airports,

including Birpur, Valmikinagar, Muzaffarpur and Saharsa.

Prior to Birpur, the AAI had floated tenders for the construction of terminal building and runway at Muzaffarpur airport and terminal building at Valmikinagar airport. Tender for Saharsa airport is expected this month, said officials.

The airports at Madhubani and Munger were taken off the list as the land acquisition cost there was around ₹400 crore each, and a large number of settlements had also come up in the area which was earmarked for acquisition, said people familiar with the development.

"The Centre, under the UDAN scheme has earmarked around ₹75-80 crore each for the upgradation and development of the four proposed airports. Additionally, the Bihar government has also approved acquisition of around 88.83 acres of land for the Birpur airport project at an estimated cost of ₹45 crore," said Deore.



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FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

11 MARCH 2026

NMIAL joins Airport 360 Expo

Media Fusion has announced Navi Mumbai International Airport Limited (NMIAL) as the Premium Airport Partner for Airport 360 Expo 2026, reinforcing collaboration across India's rapidly evolving aviation ecosystem.



भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण
AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

Corporate Communications Directorate

RAJASTHAN PATRIKA

JAIPUR

12 MARCH 2026

■ जोधपुर एयरपोर्ट 1 महीने के लिए बंद

जोधपुर @ पत्रिका . भारतीय वायुसेना की ओर से जारी नोटम (नोटिस टू एयरमैन) के बाद जोधपुर एयरपोर्ट लगभग एक महीने के लिए सिविल उड़ानों के लिए बंद रहेगा। 29 मार्च से 27 अप्रैल तक एयरपोर्ट पर रनवे रिपेयरिंग का कार्य चलेगा, जिसके चलते इस अवधि में सभी सिविल उड़ानों का संचालन पूरी तरह रोक दिया जाएगा। नोटम जारी होने के बाद इंडिगो, एयर इंडिया और एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस ने 28 मार्च के बाद की उड़ानों की बुकिंग बंद कर दी है।

नोएडा इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट को एयरोड्रम लाइसेंस

संचालन की दिशा में बड़ा कदम

स्वतंत्र भारत लखनऊ। मुख्यमंत्री योगी आदित्यनाथ से मंगलवार को नोएडा इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट के प्रतिनिधिमंडल ने मुलाकात कर भारत सरकार की ओर से जारी एयरोड्रम लाइसेंस प्रस्तुत किया। इसके साथ ही जेवर स्थित नोएडा इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट के संचालन की दिशा में एक महत्वपूर्ण चरण पूरा हो गया है। लाइसेंस मिलने के बाद अब एयरपोर्ट के उद्घाटन और वाणिज्यिक उड़ानों की शुरुआत की प्रक्रिया आगे बढ़ेगी। एयरपोर्ट के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी क्रिस्टोफ श्नेलमैन समेत वरिष्ठ अधिकारियों के प्रतिनिधिमंडल ने इस मुलाकात के दौरान मुख्यमंत्री को परियोजना की प्रगति और आगामी चरणों की जानकारी भी दी। अधिकारियों के अनुसार एयरोड्रम लाइसेंस मिलने के बाद अब नियामकीय स्वीकृतियों की अंतिम प्रक्रिया जारी है। एयरपोर्ट का



एयरोड्रम सिक्योरिटी प्रोग्राम इस समय नागरिक उड्डयन सुरक्षा ब्यूरो के पास समीक्षा के लिए लंबित है। सुरक्षा से जुड़ी यह मंजूरी मिलते ही एयरपोर्ट प्रबंधन सभी संबंधित एजेंसियों के साथ समन्वय कर औपचारिक उद्घाटन और वाणिज्यिक संचालन की तिथि तय

करेगा। गौतमबुद्ध नगर के जेवर में विकसित हो रहा नोएडा इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट राष्ट्रीय राजधानी क्षेत्र और पश्चिमी उत्तर प्रदेश को देश और दुनिया के प्रमुख शहरों से जोड़ने वाला एक महत्वपूर्ण ग्रीनफील्ड हवाई अड्डा है। इस एयरपोर्ट को विश्वस्तरीय सुविधाओं के

साथ विकसित किया जा रहा है, जहां स्विस् दक्षता और भारतीय आतिथ्य का समन्वय देखने को मिलेगा। एयरपोर्ट के मुख्य कार्यकारी अधिकारी क्रिस्टोफ श्नेलमैन हैं। एयरपोर्ट का विकास चार चरणों में किया जा रहा है। पहले चरण में एक रनवे और एक यात्री टर्मिनल भवन बनाया गया है, जिसकी क्षमता प्रतिवर्ष लगभग 1 करोड़ 20 लाख यात्रियों की होगी। दूसरे चरण में क्षमता बढ़ाकर 3 करोड़ यात्रियों तक पहुंचाई जाएगी। तीसरे और चौथे चरण में विस्तार के बाद कुल क्षमता 7 करोड़ यात्रियों तक पहुंचाने का लक्ष्य रखा गया है। पहले चरण में टर्मिनल भवन का क्षेत्रफल लगभग 1.38 लाख वर्गमीटर है, जिसमें 48 चेक-इन काउंटर, 9 सुरक्षा जांच लेन और 9 इमिग्रेशन काउंटर बनाए गए हैं। यात्रियों की सुविधा के लिए घरेलू

और अंतरराष्ट्रीय लाउंज भी विकसित किए जा रहे हैं। इसके अलावा यहां 10 एयरोब्रिज और 28 विमान पार्किंग स्टैंड की व्यवस्था की गई है। रनवे पर प्रति घंटे लगभग 30 उड़ानों के संचालन की क्षमता विकसित की गई है। एयरपोर्ट परिसर में आधुनिक कार्गो और लॉजिस्टिक्स हब भी तैयार किया जा रहा है। प्रारंभिक चरण में इसकी क्षमता लगभग 2.5 लाख टन कार्गो प्रतिवर्ष होगी, जिसे आगे चलकर 15 लाख टन तक बढ़ाया जाएगा। तकनीकी दृष्टि से भी यह एयरपोर्ट अत्याधुनिक सुविधाओं से लैस होगा। यहां डिजिटाया आधारित बायोमेट्रिक प्रणाली, सेल्फ बैगेज ड्रॉप और डिजिटल यात्री प्रोसेसिंग सिस्टम जैसी व्यवस्थाएं लागू की जा रही हैं, ताकि यात्रियों को तेज और सहज यात्रा का अनुभव मिल सके।



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SWATANTRA BHARAT

LUCKNOW

11 MARCH 2026

एयरपोर्ट पर बैग से कारतूस बरामद

स्वतंत्र भारत ब्यूरो लखनऊ। लखनऊ के चौधरी चरण सिंह एयरपोर्ट पर मंगलवार को एक यात्री के बैग से कारतूस बरामद हुआ। सीआईएसएफ ने यात्री को हिरासत में ले लिया और पूछताछ के बाद सरोजनी नगर पुलिस को सौंप दिया। पीलीभीत निवासी दीपांकर जायसवाल इंडिगो की उड़ान (6ई 6521) से भुवनेश्वर जा रहे थे। यह उड़ान सुबह 9:20 बजे लखनऊ से रायपुर होते हुए भुवनेश्वर जाती है। लखनऊ एयरपोर्ट पर बोर्डिंग के लिए सुरक्षा जांच के दौरान दीपांकर के बैग में 315 बोर का एक कारतूस मिला। इस पर सीआईएसएफ ने दीपांकर से पूछताछ की और शस्त्र लाइसेंस मांगा, लेकिन वह मौके पर लाइसेंस नहीं दिखा सके। सीआईएसएफ ने दीपांकर को सरोजनी नगर पुलिस के हवाले कर दिया। पुलिस ने बरामद कारतूस को कब्जे में ले लिया है। यात्री दीपांकर से आगे की पूछताछ कर रही है।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TELEGRAPH

KOLKATA

11 MARCH 2026

Airport nod

■ **NEW DELHI:** The cabinet on Tuesday approved the proposal to declare Madurai airport as an international airport. Ashwini Vaishnaw, the information and broadcasting minister, said the policy decision will help bring air connectivity from various parts of the world to the temple city. [PTI](#)

‘Busiest’ airport empty, ‘like never before’

SANJAY MANDAL

Calcutta: Deserted stretches, boarding gates closed, few passengers, but a large number of airport staff offering assistance — a Calcuttan who works in Europe described the scene at Dubai International Airport to Metro. The man, who frequently flies via Dubai, was stranded at the airport from the afternoon of March 8 to early morning on March 10, due to technical issues with his documents.

Dubai airport is one of the busiest I’ve ever seen. Any time of the day or night, there are thousands of fliers, long queues at counters and boarding gates, crowded shops, lounges and food courts. My usual stopover lasts a few hours at most.

But this time I spent nearly two days there, and I have never seen it so deserted. Most boarding gates were closed, and only a few check-in counters were operating. The number of flights had clearly reduced. I missed the usual hustle and bustle. Most stores in the terminal were open, though few had any customers.

While fliers were few, airport staff were present in large numbers, assisting travellers at every point. Dubai airport has always been hospitable,



A deserted portion of Dubai airport on Sunday

but this time, because of travel disruptions, the staff went out of their way to help.

A staff member approached me while I was walking to the lounge. “Sir, do you need any assistance regarding direction or flight details?” she asked. I walked across the terminal to get food throughout my stay, and each time, someone was there to guide me. When I asked about the KFC counter, a woman told me it would be a 20-minute walk to another zone. I was surprised by the precision.

There was no panic among the staff or fliers. Everyone was calm; no one was discussing the drone attacks. The extra help from the staff gave fliers a sense of assurance.

The only time I sensed the war was when an airport official on March 8 politely urged me to leave at the earliest. “Given the 50-50 situation, we are trying to send people to their own countries... as quickly as possible. However, nothing has happened here,” she told me.



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THE ASIAN AGE

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

India keeps eye on Gulf flights, airfares

Govt Airlines adjusting ops to ensure passenger safety amid tensions

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 12

The ministry of civil aviation (MoCA) on Thursday said it is closely monitoring the evolving situation in the West Asia region and its impact on air travel between India and other countries in the region.

It added that airlines are undertaking necessary operational adjustments in view of the prevailing conditions to ensure passenger safety and the orderly conduct of flight operations.

Airfares are also being closely monitored to ensure that ticket prices remain reasonable and that there is no undue surge during this period.

Meanwhile, flight operations by Indian carriers to and from Riyadh resumed from Thursday.

On the first day of resumption, three services were operated — two to Mumbai by Air India and IndiGo, and one to Calcutt by Air India Express — restoring important air

► **AIRFARES ARE** also being closely monitored to ensure that ticket prices remain reasonable and that there is no undue surge during this period

connectivity between India and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia.

Officials said between February 28 and March 11, a total of 1,50,457 air passengers travelled from the Gulf countries to India.

Further, Indian carriers scheduled several inbound flights on Thursday from various cities in West Asia, including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fujairah, Jeddah, Muscat, Ras Al Khaimah, Riyadh, and Sharjah, subject to operational feasibility and prevailing conditions.

Air India (AI) said AI and Air India Express announced operating a total of 58 scheduled and non-scheduled flights to and from West Asia on Thursday, along with one non-scheduled round

flight each to Riyadh from Mumbai and Kozhikode, respectively.

The two carriers also operated their respective scheduled services to and from Jeddah and Muscat, with a total of 10 flights to and from Jeddah and 8 scheduled flights to and from Muscat operated by Air India Express.

Additionally, Air India operated one round-trip from Delhi and two round-trips from Mumbai to Jeddah, while Air India Express operated one round-trip each from Bengaluru and Kozhikode to Jeddah.

In addition to the scheduled services, the group announced 40 non-scheduled flights to and from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, subject to the availability of slots and other prevailing conditions at the departure stations at the time.

These flights are being operated with the requisite permissions from the relevant Indian and local

regulatory authorities.

In a travel advisory, IndiGo said it is coordinating closely with the relevant authorities to progressively restore its flight operations across the Middle East.

On Thursday, IndiGo announced plans to operate flights to nine destinations across the Middle East, along with select routes to Europe.

"The ministry is maintaining close coordination with airlines and other concerned stakeholders to facilitate smooth passenger movement. Airfares are also being closely monitored to ensure that ticket prices remain reasonable and that there is no undue surge during this period. Passengers are advised to remain in contact with their respective airlines for the latest updates regarding flight schedules and travel arrangements. The ministry will continue to review the situation and provide further updates as necessary," the MoCA said.



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DESHBANDHU

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

बारामती प्लेन क्रैश: रोहित पवार ने राहुल गांधी से की मुलाकात, निष्पक्ष जांच की मांग की

नई दिल्ली। लोकसभा में नेता प्रतिपक्ष राहुल गांधी ने गुरुवार को एनसीपी (एसपी) विधायक रोहित पवार से मुलाकात की। इस दौरान बारामती विमान हादसे की जांच पर गंभीर चिंता जताई। राहुल गांधी ने एनसीपी (एसपी) विधायक रोहित पवार से मुलाकात की तस्वीर सोशल मीडिया प्लेटफॉर्म एक्स पर पोस्ट करते हुए बताया कि रोहित पवार उनसे मिले और दिवंगत महाराष्ट्र के पूर्व उपमुख्यमंत्री अजीत पवार सहित अन्य की मौत वाले इस हादसे पर एक पत्र सौंपा। राहुल गांधी ने कहा, 'रोहित पवार आज मुझसे मिले और बारामती एयरक्राफ्ट क्रैश की जांच को लेकर गंभीर चिंता जताते हुए एक पत्र दिया, जिसमें अजीत पवार और दूसरों की जान चली गई थी। ऐसा लगता है कि कानून के बेसिक सिद्धांतों का पालन नहीं किया गया है, और मामले की गंभीरता के बावजूद कोई एफआईआर दर्ज नहीं की गई है। इस घटना की निष्पक्ष, ट्रांसपेरेंट और बिना किसी भेदभाव के जांच होनी चाहिए।'



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAINIK JAGRAN

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

डीजीसीए से लंबी उड़ानों के लिए नियमों में ढील की मांग की

नई दिल्ली, आइएआएस : पश्चिम एशिया में बढ़ते भू-राजनीतिक तनाव के बीच एअर इंडिया ने विमानन नियामक डीजीसीए से फ्लाइट ड्यूटी टाइम लिमिटेशन नियमों में अस्थायी ढील देने की मांग की है। गुरुवार को एक रिपोर्ट में यह जानकारी सामने आई। मीडिया रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, टाटा ग्रुप के स्वामित्व वाली एयर इंडिया ने डीजीसीए से अनुरोध किया है कि कुछ लंबी दूरी की उड़ानों को तीन पायलट की बजाय दो पायलट के साथ संचालित करने की अनुमति दी जाए। इसके साथ ही अधिकतम उड़ान समय की सीमा बढ़ाने की भी मांग की गई है।



Corporate Communications Directorate

RS DAINIK JAGRAN

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

एअर इंडिया ने डीजीसीए से लंबी उड़ानों के लिए नियमों में ढील की मांग की

नई दिल्ली, आइएनएस : पश्चिम एशिया में बढ़ते भू-राजनीतिक तनाव के बीच एअर इंडिया ने विमानन नियामक डीजीसीए से फ्लाइट ड्यूटी टाइम लिमिटेशन (एफडीटीएल) नियमों में अस्थायी ढील देने की मांग की है। गुरुवार को एक रिपोर्ट में यह जानकारी सामने आई। मीडिया रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, टाटा ग्रुप के स्वामित्व वाली एयर इंडिया ने डीजीसीए से अनुरोध किया है कि कुछ लंबी दूरी की उड़ानों को तीन पायलट की बजाय दो पायलट के साथ संचालित करने की अनुमति दी जाए।

एअर इंडिया ने उड़ान के अनुमत समय में 1 घंटा 3 मिनट की बढ़ोतरी की मांग की है। इससे अधिकतम उड़ान समय 10 घंटे से बढ़कर करीब 11 से 11.5 घंटे हो जाएगा। इसके अलावा एयरलाइन ने अधिकतम फ्लाइट ड्यूटी पीरियड को भी बढ़ाने का अनुरोध किया

लंबी दूरी की उड़ानों को दो पायलट के साथ संचालित करने की मांगी अनुमति इसके साथ ही अधिकतम उड़ान समय की सीमा बढ़ाने की भी मांग की गई

है। इसके तहत ड्यूटी समय 13 घंटे से बढ़ाकर 14 घंटे 45 मिनट करने की मांग की गई है, यानी करीब 1 घंटा 45 मिनट की अतिरिक्त अवधि।

क्षेत्र के कई हिस्सों में हवाई क्षेत्र प्रतिबंधित होने और पाकिस्तान का एयरस्पेस भारतीय एयरलाइंस के लिए बंद रहने के कारण उड़ानों को लंबा रास्ता लेना पड़ रहा है। इन परिस्थितियों में एयरलाइंस को अरब सागर, मध्य एशिया और अफ्रीका के कुछ हिस्सों के ऊपर से होकर लंबा रास्ता अपनाना पड़ रहा है, जिससे उड़ान का समय काफी बढ़ गया है।



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

■ Air India Seeks Relief on Flight Duty Time



NEW DELHI Air India has approached the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for temporary relaxation in the new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms as the Iran war has forced airlines to take longer diversionary routes. The Tata Group-owned airline has requested the aviation regulator's permission to operate certain long-haul flights with a two-pilot crew instead of the standard three, along with an extension in maximum flying time. Air India's request comes as significant airspace disruptions in the Middle East due to the ongoing conflict prolong the flight times from India to Europe and North America. Air India's direct flights to the US are currently being forced to make refuelling halts at Rome or Vienna. Last year, DGCA introduced the FDTL rules to improve aviation safety by limiting pilot duty hours, increasing rest periods, and reducing night landings. —Our Bureau

RAHUL BHATIA, GROUP MD, INTERGLOBE ENTERPRISES & INTERIM CEO, INDIGO

Founder in the cockpit, again

CONFLICT-HIT AIR ROUTES, A BRUISING REGULATORY PENALTY AND RISING COMPETITION PUT INDIGO'S FOUNDER UNDER THE SHARPEST SCRUTINY YET

YARUQHULLAH KHAN

AFTER RETURNING TO India in the late 1980s, Rahul Bhatia joined Delhi Express, the modest travel agency founded by his father. Over the decades, he helped transform it from a small ticketing outfit into InterGlobe Enterprises — a sprawling global group spanning aviation, hospitality and travel services. The journey from booking airline tickets to helping run one of the world's fastest-growing carriers was not quite a straight flight path. Bhatia will now need that same patience and persistence as he takes the controls of IndiGo at a moment when external shocks and internal operational strains have converged to create one of the most turbulent phases in the airline's history.

This is the second time Bhatia has stepped into a hands-on role at IndiGo. In 2018, he briefly served as interim CEO following the exit of long-time president Aditya Ghosh and before Greg Taylor was due to take over. He now returns to lead a far larger airline — IndiGo operates more than 2,700 flights a day to around 140 destinations and commands roughly 65% of India's domestic aviation market — while facing far greater regulatory scrutiny & public expectations.

This chapter is also different in another respect: it is the first time the 66-year-old will be steering the airline without a seasoned airline operator alongside him. For most of IndiGo's rapid ascent, Bhatia relied on a succession of professional leaders — from Bruce Ashby to Aditya Ghosh and, more recently, Pieter Elbers — while he exercised strategic oversight as promoter and head of InterGlobe Enterprises, the airline's parent.

With no operator of Rakesh Gangwal's airline experience

within the company anymore, analysts see both reassurance and risk. Founder oversight may steady investor nerves in the near term — IndiGo's shares even rose about 3% after Elbers' exit — but it also heightens "key-man risk" and raises questions about leadership depth and succession planning.

In a note to IndiGo employees this week, Bhatia said he was stepping into the expanded role "with a deep sense of responsibility... to every employee who powers this airline", adding candidly that "what happened last December should never have taken place". Those who have worked closely with him describe a leader who prefers quiet authority over flamboyance. Numbers-driven and measured, Bhatia is known to delegate rather than micro-manage. "Bhatia prefers to empower managers and then back them," a senior IndiGo executive told FE. "He listens more than he speaks and pushes a culture of punctuality, simplicity and respect."

The months ahead will test that quiet resolve. Bhatia must steady the airline as it grapples with the fallout from a record regulatory penalty and the economic ripple effects of a deepening West Asia conflict.

The regional turmoil has disrupted key air corridors, forcing IndiGo to reroute several international flights. With airspace across parts of Iran and West

Asia intermittently shut, the airline has cancelled or suspended hundreds of flights to the region

and some long-haul destinations. Analysts estimate that as much as 20% of IndiGo's capacity could be affected, warning that a month-long disruption may shave roughly 10% off its January–March quarter profit before tax. Longer flight paths mean higher fuel burn, while cancellations leave fixed costs unabsorbed. At the same time, the possibility of weaker travel demand adds to investor anxiety over rising costs — forcing Bhatia to make swift decisions on redeploying capacity.

Closer home, IndiGo is still dealing with the

fallout of the December 2025 scheduling crisis. The airline had failed to adequately adjust rosters to comply with new Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms, triggering more than 4,500 flight cancellations. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) imposed a record ₹22.2 crore penalty for what it termed "over-optimisation of operations" and required a ₹50 crore bank guarantee to ensure systemic reforms.

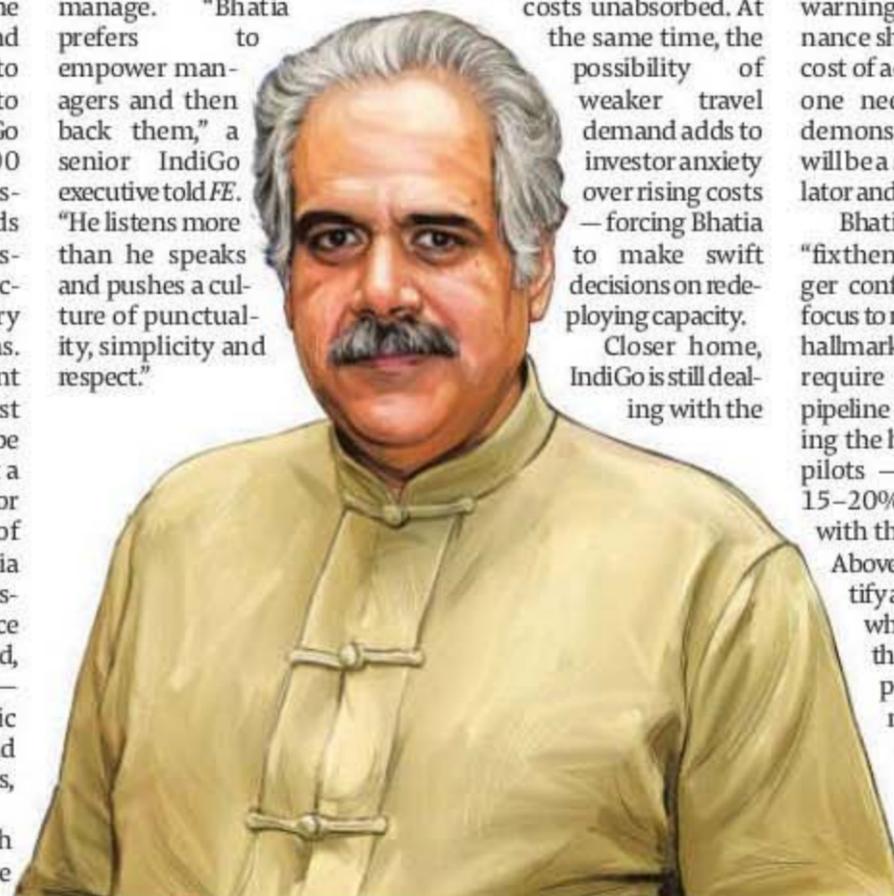
At the height of the crisis, proxy advisory firm Institutional Investor Advisory Services (IIAS) criticised the airline's board, saying it had "failed not only in managing the crisis but also in taking responsibility for a problem largely of its own making". The firm pointed to delayed & anonymous communication with passengers and a failure to anticipate the FDTL changes despite ample notice.

IIAS argued the episode exposed a deeper cultural issue, warning that scale and dominance should not come at the cost of accountability. "Someone needs to step up and demonstrate leadership — it will be a shame if it is the regulator and not the board," it said.

Bhatia has since pledged to "fix the mess" & restore passenger confidence by returning focus to reliability and IndiGo's hallmark punctuality. That will require rebuilding the pilot pipeline — including accelerating the hiring of about 1,100 pilots — and maintaining a 15–20% crew buffer to comply with the stricter FDTL rules.

Above all, Bhatia must identify a permanent successor who can carry IndiGo through its next phase — preserving its dominance in Indian skies even as competition intensifies from a resurgent Air India and the fast-growing Akasa Air.

NEWS POINT





Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

11 MARCH 2026

Air India, Air India Express to levy fuel surcharge on tickets

PTI

NEW DELHI

Air India and Air India Express will start levying a fuel surcharge of ₹399 on each domestic flight ticket from March 12 and also increase the charge for international bookings due to a steep rise in jet fuel prices amid the Middle East conflict.

The new fuel surcharges will be implemented in a phased manner. In the first phase, a fuel surcharge of ₹399 per domestic flight ticket will be imposed from March 12, and the same will also apply to SAARC flights, a statement

said on Tuesday.

For West Asia flights, the fuel surcharge will be \$10, while it will be increased by \$30 to \$90 for Africa flights and by \$20 to \$60 for Southeast Asia services. All these changes will take effect from March 12, including for flights to and from Singapore. Currently, there is no fuel surcharge for Singapore services. "Air India group today announced a phased expansion of a fuel surcharge on its domestic and international routes, necessitated by the steep rise in jet fuel prices arising from the geopolitical situation in the Gulf region," the statement said.



Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

12 MARCH 2026



Close shave in Phuket

An Air India Express Boeing 737 MAX carrying 138 people made a hard landing at Phuket airport in Thailand on Wednesday, causing its two nose wheels to detach. No injuries were reported. **SEE NATION**



Corporate Communications Directorate

FREE PRESS JOURNAL

MUMBAI

12 MARCH 2026

CCI rejects plea vs InterGlobe Aviation, Air India on high cancellation fee

Informist

NEW DELHI

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) on Wednesday rejected a plea alleging that InterGlobe Aviation Ltd, parent of the country's largest airline IndiGo, and Air India Ltd charged "extortionate amounts" in the name of airline ticket cancellation fees.

C o m p l a i n a n t
Kannadiputhur Sundararaman Suresh's allegation of abuse of dominance does not warrant further examination as the airlines have in place a system for ticket refunds and passengers can opt for fare categories that



provide substantial refundable amounts, the competition regulator said.

A passenger has options to select fares that offer maximum or full refunds depending on the airline, type of airfare selected and timing of ticket cancellation, among other factors, the antitrust regulator said. The refund and cancellation terms are disclosed to passengers in advance and are applied equally to all consumers, not in

a discriminatory, unfair or exclusionary manner, it added.

The regulator said the complainant's remedy for an alleged breach of the Indian Contract Act, 1872, does not lie before the Competition Commission of India. Dissatisfaction with a contractual term or a desire for more favourable terms and conditions does not constitute a violation of the Competition Act, 2002, the commission said.

It noted that the complainant had also made a passing reference to the cancellation of several thousand flights by InterGlobe Aviation in December 2025.



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

इंडिगो के पास प्रति विमान पायलट कम

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी। घरेलू एयरलाइनों की तुलना में इंडिगो के पास प्रति विमान पायलटों का अनुपात दूसरी एयरलाइंस के मुकाबले सबसे कम 7.6 है।

नागरिक उड्डयन राज्य मंत्री मुरलीधर मोहोले ने लोकसभा में एक प्रश्न के उत्तर में गुरुवार को यह जानकारी दी है। आंकड़ों के अनुसार, प्रति विमान सबसे अधिक पायलट (9.4) स्पाइसजेट के पास है। अकासा एयर के पास 9.33 पायलट प्रति विमान हैं। एयर इंडिया के पास 9.1 तथा एयर इंडिया एक्सप्रेस के पास 8.8 पायलट प्रति एयरक्राफ्ट हैं।



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN TIMES

MUMBAI

12 MARCH 2026

AIRLINES SEEK FDTL RULE RELIEF SAYING LONGER ROUTES BREACH FLIGHT LIMITS

Dipali Banka

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MUMBAI: IndiGo and Air India Group have sought a temporary exemption from pilot duty hour requirements from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) after the West Asia conflict lengthened some international routes, pushing flight times beyond limits that normally require an additional pilot, according to a government official familiar with the matter.

Under India's Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules, if a single-sector flight exceeds 10 hours of flight time—the maximum permitted duration for a two-pilot crew—airlines are required to deploy an additional pilot. This means operating the flight with an augmented crew consisting of a captain and two first officers.

The aviation safety regulator is conducting a safety assessment and could possibly agree to grant such exemptions, according to the official quoted above. *Mint* could not independently ascertain whether the exemption will be granted. An email sent to DGCA went unanswered.

The longer routings have already pushed several flights beyond the 10-hour limit. An Air India flight from Delhi to London, which earlier remained within the threshold, now takes between 10 hours 45 minutes and 11 hours 5 minutes, requiring the airline to deploy an additional pilot. Before the West Asia crisis and the closure of Pakistani airspace, such flights typically took 8.5-9 hours.

The request for relief also comes at a time when India's aviation sector is already struggling to hire enough pilots. New FDTL rules introduced last year require airlines to increase pilot numbers, including a restriction that allows pilots to operate flights landing between midnight and 6 a.m. only twice a week.

Airlines had already deployed buffer pilots after the closure of Pakistani airspace.



Corporate Communications Directorate

LOKSATYA

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

एअर इंडिया ने लंबी उड़ानों के लिए नियमों में मांगी ढील

कोलकाता, लोकसत्य। पश्चिम एशिया में बढ़ते भू-राजनीतिक तनाव के बीच एअर इंडिया ने विमानन नियामक डीजीसीए से फ्लाइट ड्यूटी टाइम लिमिटेशन (एफडीटीएल) नियमों में अस्थायी ढील देने की मांग की है। गुरुवार को एक रिपोर्ट में यह जानकारी सामने आई। रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, टाटा ग्रुप के स्वामित्व वाली एयर इंडिया ने डीजीसीए से अनुरोध किया है कि कुछ लंबी दूरी की उड़ानों को तीन पायलट की बजाय दो पायलट के साथ संचालित करने की अनुमति दी जाए। इसके साथ ही अधिकतम उड़ान समय की सीमा बढ़ाने की भी मांग की गई है। सूत्रों के अनुसार, एअर इंडिया ने उड़ान के अनुमत समय में 1 घंटा 3 मिनट की बढ़ोतरी की मांग की है।

Investors shrug off IndiGo CEO exit as founder steps in

Key near-term risks include rising crude oil prices and possible churn in senior leadership

Abhishek Law & Dipal Banka
NEW DELHI/MUMBAI

There were concerns that investors may turn bearish on IndiGo when India's largest airline by market share informed stock exchanges on the evening of 10 March that its chief executive, Pieter Elbers, would step down with immediate effect.

However, on the morning of 11 March, the airline's shares opened about 1% higher and hit an intraday high of ₹4,466 during mid-day trading, mirroring a broader market rebound. The stock eventually closed 0.7% lower but still outperformed the Sensex, which ended the day down 1.7%.

Behind the renewed investor faith lies the return of founder and managing director Rahul Bhatia as interim chief executive.

Bhatia, who co-founded the airline with his friend, Rakesh Gangwal, in 2006, minced no words in his first email to the staff on Tuesday evening. "What happened last December should



IndiGo shares opened 1% higher on 11 March, touched ₹4,466 intraday, and led the Sensex despite closing 0.7% lower. MINT

never have taken place...Our customers didn't deserve it, and nor did all of you, especially the frontline employees who bore most of the brunt for no fault of theirs," wrote Bhatia, signing off the email with "Main Hoon Na" (I am here) —a reference to the 2004 Shah Rukh Khan hit.

Analysts and aviation consultants seem to be taking a cue from Bhatia's assurance stating that they don't expect much change in its strategic approach. However, there could be risks to the airline's profitability in the coming months due to soaring crude prices and potential churn in the senior leadership.

"Overall, we don't believe there will likely be any change of strategy here," said Karan Khanna, lead analyst for hotels, real estate, and aviation at finan-

cial services firm Ambit Capital.

"IndiGo has a history of founder-led oversight complemented by professional CEOs. Prior transitions—from Bruce Ashby to Aditya Ghosh, Ronojoy Dutta—have been largely smooth, with

cost or market share leadership, reflecting strong institutional depth.

"Passenger trust needs to be rebuilt. Bhatia stepping in will reassure passengers that they will be a priority again. It is also about rebuilding employee con-

4,500 flight cancellations as it struggled to streamline a new pilot rostering system. At least one proxy advisory firm, Institutional Investor Advisory Services India Ltd (IIAS), had faulted Bhatia for not leading from the front and addressing the challenges in December.

"Bhatia's return is about ensuring operational continuity and signalling to investors that organic growth will continue. The immediate focus will be on how IndiGo stabilizes operations and maintains growth momentum while the board searches for a new CEO," said Mark D. Martin, CEO of Gurugram-based Martin Consulting.

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For an extended version of this story, go to livemint.com.

BACK AT THE HELM

BHATIA reassured IndiGo employees and apologized for the operational lapses in December

FOUNDER'S return is expected to help rebuild the trust of both employees and passengers

PAST management shifts were smooth with the promoters maintaining strategic control of the airline

INDIGO'S strategy unlikely to change despite leadership transition, say aviation experts

promoters maintaining strategic control," wrote Prateek Kumar, analyst at Jefferies, in his 10 March report.

Kumar also wrote, importantly, that past management changes have not disrupted IndiGo's operating model,

fidence and telling the workforce that he remains in charge," said Balraj Bhullar, an independent aviation expert.

Bhullar's comments underscore how IndiGo bungled up its operations in the first week of December, with about



Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLENNIUM POST

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

FLIGHTS GRADUALLY RESUME

Civil Aviation ministry 'closely monitoring' situation in West Asia

OUR CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Civil Aviation is closely monitoring the situation in West Asia and its impact on flights operating between India and several countries in the region, officials said on Thursday.

In view of the prevailing developments, Indian airlines have begun taking steps to gradually resume services to and from key destinations in West Asia. According to officials, flight services between India and Riyadh resumed on March 12.

On the first day of the resumption of services from Riyadh to India, three flights were scheduled to operate to Mumbai by Air India and IndiGo. In addition, Air India Express operated a flight from Riyadh to Kozhikode.

Official sources said that between February 28 and March 11, a total of 1,50,457 passengers travelled from Gulf countries to India amid



Flight services between India and Riyadh resumed on March 12

the evolving situation in the region.

For March 12, Indian carriers have scheduled 57 flights from several West Asian destinations, including Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Fujairah, Jeddah, Muscat, Ras Al Khaimah, Riyadh and Sharjah. However, officials said the operation of these flights will depend on operational feasibility and prevailing conditions.

The ministry said it is

maintaining close coordination with airlines to ensure smooth passenger movement and minimise disruptions to travel plans. Authorities are also keeping a close watch on airfares to ensure that ticket prices remain reasonable for travellers.

Passengers have been advised to stay in touch with their respective airlines for the latest updates regarding flight schedules and travel arrangements.

Officials said the government is continuously reviewing the situation and will issue further updates as necessary to ensure safe and efficient air travel between India and the West Asian region.



Corporate Communications Directorate

THE MORNING STANDARD

DELHI

13 MARCH 2026

Air space restriction, AI seeks DGCA approval to extend pilot flying hours

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

WITH the West Asia crisis forcing all planes from India to take a circuitous route to avoid Iranian airspace, the Air India has recently requested the DGCA to provide it a temporary exemption for its international pilots from the Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules, according to sources.

Notably, IndiGo underwent a major operational crisis in December last year after it could not meet the revised FDTL rules. Operations were crippled for nine days and the impact continued throughout the month. The DGCA finally ended up giving it an exemption from the rules for the airline to get its act together.

"We have asked for exemption only until the West Asia crisis subsides. Due to the clo-

First batch of students to India on way to Armenia

Indian students stuck in Iran received messages from FlyDubai airline on Thursday, confirming that their flights would take off from Armenia to Dubai this week. Three bus loads of students accompanied by Indian Embassy officials later left for Armenia from Qom and Urmia cities. They would leave for Dubai from Yerevan airport and take the flight to Mumbai (March 14) or to Delhi (March 15).

sure of the Pakistani airspace since last year and now the Iranian airspace, our flights to Paris, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Vienna and Copenhagen are forced to take a circuitous route. They fly via Oman, south of Saudi Arabia and then Egypt before heading to these European destinations. The flying time to each of these cities has shot up by a few hours," a source said.

Another source said there is only a limited pool of available pilots. "Ever since the West

Asia crisis erupted, Air India has earmarked three pilots instead of two for every London flight. A similar standard needs to be adhered to for all our international flights which used to go via West Asian airspace. Hence, we need some kind of exemption," the source said.

The new FDTL rules mandate weekly rest periods of 48 hours to pilots from the 36 hours of rest in the past. DGCA did not respond to calls and text messages on the AI's request.





Corporate Communications Directorate

THE TELEGRAPH

KOLKATA

11 MARCH 2026

New Delhi: Airfares are set to rise with Air India and Air India Express deciding to levy a fuel surcharge of ₹399 on each domestic flight ticket from March 12 and also hike the charge for international bookings due to a steep rise in jet fuel prices amid the West Asia conflict.

The new fuel surcharges will be implemented in a phased manner.

Regretting the need for fuel surcharges, Air India on Tuesday said that without such surcharges, "it is likely that some flights would be unable to cover operating costs and would have to be cancelled".

In the first phase, a fuel surcharge of ₹399 per domestic flight ticket would be imposed from March 12, and the same will also be applicable

Air India to levy fuel surcharge



₹399 per domestic flight ticket in a phased manner

for SAARC flights, a statement said on Tuesday.

For West Asia flights, the fuel surcharge will be \$10 and

hiked by \$30 to \$90 for Africa flights and by \$20 to \$60 for Southeast Asia services.

All these changes will be effective from March 12, including for flights to and from Singapore. Currently, there is no fuel surcharge for Singapore services.

In the second phase, Air India will increase the fuel surcharge by \$25 to \$50 for flights to Europe, North America and Australia starting from March 18.

Fuel surcharge for Europe flights will rise to \$125 from \$100, and for North America flights, the same will increase from \$150 to \$200.

According to the statement, the fuel surcharge for Australia flights will increase from \$150 to \$200.

IndiGo CEO steps down

AMIYA KUMAR
KUSHWAHA

New Delhi: IndiGo's chief executive Pieter Elbers has resigned, an abrupt departure following months of scrutiny over the carrier's failure to plan properly for pilot rest and duty rules that left tens of thousands of passengers stranded.

The airline has a roughly 65 per cent market share in India, the world's fastest-growing aviation market. It cancelled 4,500 flights in December in what was the biggest crisis in IndiGo's 20-year history. Regulators later reprimanded Elbers for "inadequate overall oversight of flight operations and crisis management".

Though IndiGo only released Elbers' resignation letter that cited "personal reasons" for the exit, the airline's co-founder Rahul Bhatia, who will be in charge in the interim, referred to the cancellations in an internal memo he sent on his new role.

"What happened last December should never have taken place," he said in the email, where he also thanked employees for working tirelessly during the December crisis.

Elbers, a former KLM Royal Dutch Airlines executive, had shared the stage with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi last year, basking in IndiGo's role as the host airline for an aviation event.

The airline industry veteran had faced intense pressure in the weeks following the mass cancellations in December, after IndiGo admitted to misjudging the number of



Pieter Elbers

pilots it would need after new duty and rest rules that came into effect on November 1.

In the aftermath, India's aviation regulator fined IndiGo ₹22 crore and reprimanded several senior executives.

Accused of creating artificial scarcity, IndiGo also faced criticism from the Competition Commission of India, which ordered an investigation into IndiGo's massive flight cancellations, finding prima facie evidence that the carrier's dominance hurt the aviation market.

In his resignation letter, Elbers said, "It has been both an honour and a privilege to serve as IndiGo's CEO these past years since September 2022."

IndiGo confirmed his resignation in a press release and said, "With immediate effect, Pieter Elbers will be stepping down as InterGlobe Aviation's CEO."

IndiGo's shares have fallen 13.5 per cent this year, due to the financial impact of the cancellations and more recently, disruptions arising from the conflict in West Asia that led to large portions of the airspace being shut, compounding impact from an airspace ban imposed by Pakistan.

Hyd-Phuket AI Express flight suffers hard landing; airport closed for hours

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi/Hyderabad: An Hyderabad-Phuket Air India Express Boeing 737 MAX plane, with 138 people on board, made a hard landing at Phuket airport on Wednesday morning. The aircraft reportedly bounced once after the hard touchdown and then, on the second contact with the runway, both the nose wheels got detached. It then got stuck on the runway, leading to the airport being closed for hours, for required checks of its sole airstrip.

No one on board was injured. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is in touch with Thailand aviation authorities. The aircraft is grounded there, and the airline will send its engi-

TOUCHDOWN TURMOIL

► **After a bounce on touchdown, both nose wheels of the plane detached** during the second contact with the runway

► Incident forces the closure of **Phuket's sole runway for several hours**, resulting in flight diversions

► **Operations resumed around 9pm (local time)** after the nose wheels were replaced and the aircraft was towed

neers to repair the same, sources said.

The flight with 132 passengers and six crew members had taken off from Hyderabad at 6.23 am and landed at 11.25 am (local time).

► **Continued on P3**

32-second video shot by flier shows plane losing balance, panic in cabin

► **From P1**

A video of the aircraft's descent, shot from inside by one of the passengers and shared on X, showed the plane suddenly losing balance due to the hard landing — spreading panic among fliers. Children can be heard shrieking in the 32-second shaky clip, while some other passengers were gasping in fear.

"I was filming our landing on Air India Express flight IX 938 from Hyderabad to Phuket when we hit the runway really hard. It was such a bad landing that you could actually smell something burning inside the plane. I think it's with the front wheel," the passenger wrote in the post. Responding to it, the airline



posted an apology regretting the incident.

At around 5 pm (IST) on Wednesday, flight tracking site, Flightradar24, posted on X: "Phuket International's sole runway remains closed almost seven hours after Air India Express flight IX938

suffered severe nose wheel damage after a hard landing. So far, 20 flights have been diverted to other airports. The runway is currently set to open in another 3.5 hours—at 14:00 UTC (21:00 local time)."

Around 5.30 pm, AI Express released a statement

saying: "The nose wheels have been installed on the aircraft involved in the incident at Phuket airport, allowing normal airport operations to resume. We apologise for the incident, which will be investigated in accordance with established procedures." Previously, an airline spokesperson confirmed the incident. "Our Hyderabad-Phuket flight on March 11 experienced an issue with the nose wheel at Phuket airport. The crew followed all protocols, and guests were deplaned. We thank our guests, Phuket airport authorities, and stakeholders for their cooperation," the official said. A senior DGCA official said, "On March 8, 2026, both nose wheels were replaced as routine maintenance".



Corporate Communications Directorate

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1.5 lakh flyers return from Gulf amid West Asia crisis

SHEKHAR SINGH
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

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More than 1.5 lakh passengers travelled from Gulf countries to India in less than two weeks, even as tensions in the West Asia region disrupted flight schedules and forced airlines to make operational changes.

Official data shows that 1,50,457 air passengers flew from Gulf destinations to India between February 28 and March 11, underscoring the steady flow of travellers despite the evolving situation.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation on Thursday said it was

closely monitoring developments in West Asia and their impact on air travel between India and the region.

Airlines were making operational adjustments to ensure passenger safety and maintain orderly flight operations, the ministry said.

In a key development, flight operations by Indian carriers to and from Riyadh resumed on Thursday after a temporary disruption. On the first day of resumption, three services were operated to Mumbai by Air India and IndiGo, while Air India Express operated one flight to Calicut.