

IGI runway works set to be halted as delays fail to abate

Neha LM Tripathi

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The civil aviation ministry is likely to direct the Delhi airport to pause the ongoing work on one of its runways that has been blamed as a key factor behind massive flight delays and operational disruptions over the past two weeks, officials familiar with the development said.

An advisory committee meeting called on Friday discussed the scheduling chaos and there was consensus on a pause. "The advisory committee had a meeting on Friday, and it has been decided that the runway work at Delhi airport should be temporarily suspended," one of the officials told HT.

The director general of civil aviation and the ministry of civil aviation are likely to sign off on the halt soon, following which a formal direction will be issued.

The suspension is likely to come into effect within "the next 10-12 days and may resume after the peak summer travel

Since the rollback, only government establishments have been permitted to sell liquor in Delhi. The current network of approximately 700 shops is operated by four Delhi government corporations: Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC), Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC), Delhi Consumer's Cooperative Wholesale Store (DCCWS), and Delhi State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited (DSCSC).

Vinod Giri, director general of the Brewers Association of India, which represents major beer manufacturers, described Delhi's current policy as obsolete.

"Delhi's current policy is outdated. It was created when the socioeconomic context of the Capital was drastically different. A lot has changed since then," Giri said. "The number of retail outlets is too low, shop quality is poor, and a drinking age of 25 is archaic. The current licensing and retailing environment is incompatible with any modern city, especially a national capital."

Giri added that the lower age bar in Noida and Gurugram means lost sales for establishments in Delhi. "During the consultations that the government will hold with industry stakeholders, we will put up this issue and request the government to make the drinking age in Delhi competitive with neighbouring cities," he said.

Delhi chief minister Rekha Gupta, whose Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the February 2025 assembly elections, confirmed that her government is developing a new framework.

"We're just a month into government, so it's too early to share specifics. But yes, the excise policy, along with industrial and warehousing policies, is being worked on," she told Hindustan Times in a recent interview.

The Delhi government has projected ₹7,000 crore in revenue from liquor sales in its 2025-26 budget. According to official data reviewed by HT, revenue rose to approximately ₹7,766 crore in 2024-25 from ₹6,762 crore three years earlier—an increase of over 15%.

DELHI AIRPORT

A senior ministry official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the closure of Runway 28/10 had significantly impacted operations. "The airport is seeing delays of at least an hour. This is because Runway 28/10, which is shut for upgradation, is very crucial for the smooth functioning of air-



Despite being informed well in advance about the runway closure, airlines did not reduce their flight operations. HT PHOTO

port operations," the official said. season, in the third week of June, which in aviation is considered a lean period," the second official said, adding that "an official order on the same is yet to be issued."

The committee overseeing the decision comprises various stakeholders, including the airport operator Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), the Airports Authority of India (AAI), the Directorate General

of Civil Aviation (DGCA), and airline representatives.

Delhi airport shut runway 28/10 from April 8 — a move it had announced in February — to facilitate an upgrade of the Instrument Landing System (ILS) to CAT III B standards—an enhancement aimed at enabling operations in low-visibility conditions, which are common during Delhi's fog-laden winters.

continued on →10

monitored live".

A fourth person, a former airport official, when asked if the timing of the runway closure could have been better, said the idea is often to complete such work before monsoon. "The period of March sees no visibility issue and is also considered a lean period, considering Indian travellers typically fly as per school and college vacation period. Having said that, May and June months often see disturbance in weather, and this is not new for an aviation professional. The planning authorities therefore should have planned it better."

To be sure, the upgrade work in all is expected to take four to five months.

Another former AAI official suggested that the authorities could have planned installation of ILS at runway 28/10 individually rather than on both sides. "ILS installations take time and also need DGCA approvals. However, the situation is a result of failure from not one but all the stakeholders," he said.

The issue also caught the attention of the parliamentary standing committee on transport, tourism and culture on Thursday. HT reported on Friday that the discussions during the parliamentary meeting found a ripple effect across India's aviation network.

In Friday's advisory committee meeting, officials also discussed the possibility of completing the expansion of the runway lighting system sooner so that runway 10 could be made available for operations. "The runway lighting system is being extended from 650m to 900m. There were suggestions that if DIAL could complete this work sooner, then runway 10 could be made available for operations. However, this expansion work too would need a couple of months," an official added.

Experts concurred with this assessment.

"The airport operator, as per the Standard Operating Procedure, discusses their plan with all its stakeholders. The airlines should have trimmed their flight operations for the period to avoid the disruptions," said Mohan Ranganathan, an aviation safety expert.

He added, "The runway closure was planned for four to five months, which is a lot of time. The situation would have been doable if the DGCA, as the regulator authority, when discussions of the runway were in process, had revisited the summer schedule and probably come up with a revised one."

None of the airlines responded to requests for a comment on any scheduling tweaks. One of the airline's representatives said no changes had been made to schedules but "operations were being

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THE WEEK THAT WAS

ANSWERS

1. Harvard
2. Catherine
3. Norway
4. Hermès
5. Cow dung
6. Stainless steel
7. Zendaya
8. The Smurfs
9. BluSmart
10. Gold

IGI Chaos: Closed Runway To Open After Delays & Mayhem

Decision Prompted As Unseasonal Winds Play Havoc With Schedule

Saurabh.Sinha@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Massive flight delays at Indira Gandhi International Airport caused by a combination of the planned closure of the work-horse runway (10/28) from April 8 and unseasonal weather conditions have forced the airport authorities to rethink the closure. Delhi International Airport Ltd (DIAL), the airport operator, will make runway 10/28 available for flight movement in about a fortnight.

With one runway closed, passengers have been facing delays whenever easterly winds blow — happening regularly so far this month — during which aircraft only land from Dwarka side and take off towards Vasant Vihar side. Delayed landing at IGI has a cascading effect on flights, and therefore airline schedules across their domestic and international network.

Runway 10/28 was closed to upgrade the instrument landing system (ILS). This work could now resume once the peak summer travel season ends around mid-June for 2-3 months. While the closure was planned taking into account all factors to minimise inconvenience to flyers, unseasonal easterlies have resulted in big delays.

On Friday, the aviation ministry met AAI, air traffic control, DIAL, airline representatives and other stakeholders. “When Indian carriers were told about their 100 daily arrivals in IGI cumulatively breaching the 32-an-hour capacity because of which over 70% of the flights need to be shifted and some



Runway 10/28 was closed to upgrade the instrument landing system (ILS)

cancelled, they protested saying they stood to lose close to Rs 1,000 crore doing so,” said a source.

It was then decided that DIAL should make runway 10/28 available at the earliest so that all four runways are available for use during the remainder of this peak summer travel season. “Even without ILS, non-precision approach landings can take place. So in a fortnight, the closed runway will be made available for non-precision approaches. That will increase IGI’s arrival capacity,” said an airport insider.

Last Dec, DIAL had sought the aviation ministry’s approval to close runway 10/28 from April 1 to ensure completion before foggy winter. IGI had seen serious delays and diver-

sions in the winter of 2023-24 when the runway did not then have CAT III ILS on the Vasant Vihar side end and so couldn’t handle landings in dense fog. The opposite (Dwarka side) end is supposed to get CAT IIIB ILS in the now-deferred upgrade.

Airports Authority of India reviewed the impact of closing the runway and saw that when easterlies blow, departures could take place from two runways (29 and 11L) but arrivals only on one (11R). When westerlies blow — which is usually the case this time of the year except 2025 so far — runway 27 can be used to handle both arrivals and departures and runway 29L and 29R used, respectively, for arrivals and departures. So depending on whether it’s peak arrival

or departure time, two runways can be allotted for either accordingly.

“Without runway 10/28, IGI can handle a maximum of upto 32 arrivals when easterlies blow and upto 42 when westerlies blow,” explained an airport insider. “The domestic summer schedule of airlines was finalised based on easterlies blowing only from May 15 and they cutting/rescheduling flights from then only.”

While DIAL shut down runway 10/28 from April 8, easterlies have been blowing right from the start of the month, much ahead of the expected mid-May timeline. In fact, on April 11, there was a strong thunderstorm with easterly winds reaching 74kmph. That day, air traffic control reiterated that IGI could handle only 32 arrivals when easterlies blew and 42 when westerlies did. April 11-12 alone saw over 400 flights being impacted.

“The early advent of easterlies has meant that almost 100 daily domestic arrivals of scheduled airlines at IGI happen in the hours where arrivals cross the maximum 32-arrivals-an-hour mark,” said a source. Airlines were, therefore, asked to cut flights due to “excessive ground and airborne delays”.

Runway 10/28 may now close around mid-June for the ILS upgrade. By then, hopefully airlines would have cut or rescheduled flights to meet the cap of upto 32 or 42 hourly arrivals and prevent delays. And if the 10/28 upgrade doesn’t finish in time, even winter flights could prove exasperating for passengers just like this summer of discontent.



भारतीय विमानपत्तन प्राधिकरण
AIRPORTS AUTHORITY OF INDIA

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ASIAN AGE

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

Mumbai airport to remain shut for 6 hrs May 8

Mumbai, April 19: Flight operations at the city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport will remain shut for six hours on May 8, due to runway maintenance work ahead of the onset of the monsoon season, the private airport operator MIAL said on Saturday.

The Mumbai International Airport Ltd also said that the mandatory Notice to Airmen was issued six months in advance to notify all stakeholders, enabling airlines to adjust their flight schedules well ahead of time. — PTI



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20 APRIL 2025

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The Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) also said that the mandatory NOTAM (Notice to Airmen) was issued six months in advance to notify all stakeholders, enabling airlines to adjust their flight schedules well ahead of time and plan accordingly.

The scheduled pre-monsoon maintenance work on both the runways- 09/27 and 14/32- will be undertaken between 11 am-17 pm, MIAL said. During this period both the primary runway (09/27) and secondary runway (14/32) will be temporarily non-operational, it said.

This annual pre-monsoon maintenance is crucial for preserving the health and longevity of the airport air-side infrastructure, it added. Specialists will inspect runway surfaces for wear and tear, addressing preventive measures for waterlogging to ensure safe landing and take-offs during the monsoon season, MIAL said.

— PTI



Corporate Communications Directorate

DAILY GUARDIAN

DELHI

19 APRIL 2025

Delhi Airport issues advisory for potential flight delays

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi International Airport issued a passenger advisory on Friday, citing potential flight delays due to shifting wind patterns in the airport's vicinity.

The advisory, issued at 0926 hrs today, states that air traffic flow management measures for flight arrivals will be implemented from 1230 IST to 1630 IST to ensure safe operations, in line with international and regulatory protocols.

According to the advisory, Air Traffic Control (ATC) authorities will prioritise passenger safety during this

period. While flight arrivals may be affected, all other operations across the airport's terminals and three runways will continue normally.

Passengers are advised to contact their respective airlines for the most up-to-date information on flight schedules.

The airport authorities expressed regret for any inconvenience caused and thanked passengers for their understanding.

The passenger advisory issued by Delhi Airport on X, reads, "Due to shifting wind pattern in the vicinity of the airport, certain airline operations may experience delays.



Corporate Communications Directorate

RS DANIK JAGRAN

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

आठ मई को छह घंटे के लिए बंद रहेगा मुंबई एयरपोर्ट

मुंबई: मानसून की शुरुआत से पहले रनवे के मेंटेनेंस कार्य के कारण मुंबई के छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाईअड्डे पर उड़ान परिचालन आठ मई को छह घंटे के लिए बंद रहेगा। मुंबई अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाईअड्डा लिमिटेड ने शनिवार को कहा कि दोनों रनवे - 09/27 और 14/32 - पर मेंटेनेंस कार्य सुबह 11 बजे से शाम पांच बजे के बीच होगा। इस अवधि के दौरान दोनों रनवे अस्थायी रूप से बंद रहेंगे।

(पेट)



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HINDUSTAN TIMES

DELHI

19 APRIL 2025



■ Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the new terminal building of Maharaja Agrasen Airport, Hisar, Haryana, a project worth over Rs 486 crore on April 14. He also flagged off the inaugural Hisar-Ayodhya flight, and announced that flights to other cities will commence soon.



Corporate Communications Directorate

LOKH SATYA

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

मुंबई एयरपोर्ट 9 मई को छह घंटे के लिए बंद रहेगा

नई दिल्ली, एजेंसी । देश की आर्थिक राजधानी मुंबई का छत्रपति शिवाजी महाराज अंतरराष्ट्रीय हवाई अड्डा (सीएसएमआईए) 9 मई को सुबह 11 बजे से शाम 5 बजे तक छह घंटे के लिए बंद रहेगा। इस दौरान मानसून से पहले दो रनवे बंद करके रखरखाव के लिए मरम्मत कार्य किया जाएगा। एयरपोर्ट परिचालक मुंबई इंटरनेशनल एयरपोर्ट लिमिटेड (एमआईएएल) ने शनिवार को एक बयान में बताया कि मानसून की शुरुआत से पहले हवाई पट्टी के रखरखाव के कारण यह फैसला लिया गया है। नियोजित शटडाउन सुबह 11 बजे से शाम 5 बजे के बीच होगा, जिस दौरान दो रनवे-09/27 और 14/32 से परिचालन नहीं होगा। एमआईएएल ने कहा कि यह कार्य हर साल मानसून शुरू होने से पहले हवाई अड्डे के रनवे को अच्छी स्थिति में रखने के लिए किया जाता है। इससे जलभराव जैसी समस्याओं को रोकने में मदद मिलती है, ताकि बारिश के मौसम में उड़ानें सुरक्षित रूप से उतर सकें और उड़ान भर सकें। विशेषज्ञ टीमों रनवे की सतहों पर किसी तरह के नुकसान या टूट-फूट की जांच करेगी और जरूरी मरम्मत करेगी।



Corporate Communications Directorate

MILLANIUM POST

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

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MUMBAI: Flight operations at the city's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport (CSMIA) will remain shut for six hours on May 8, due to runway maintenance work ahead of the onset of the monsoon season, the private airport operator MIAL said on Saturday.

The Mumbai International Airport Ltd (MIAL) also said that the mandatory Notice to Airmen was issued six months in advance to notify all stakeholders, enabling airlines to adjust their schedules well ahead of time and plan accordingly.

The scheduled pre-monsoon maintenance work on both the runways- 09/27 and 14/32-- will be undertaken between 11 am-17 pm, MIAL said.

Passenger facilities get updated at Andal airport

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DURGAPUR, 18 APRIL

Almost a decade after its inauguration, India's first privately-run airport Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport has launched a slew of passenger amenities including a full-fledged lounge of about 1,500 square feet and a dedicated help desk for Apollo Group of Hospitals inside the security hold area of the airport. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee inaugurated the airport at Andal, West Burdwan district in 2015.

Kailash Mondal, the director of Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport, told The Statesman that a confectionery major has built a furnished lounge with outlet for rest and refreshment of the passengers.

"We also launched a dedicated help desk for Apollo Group of Hospitals, Chennai. This help desk will offer patient appointment bookings, free pickups from Chennai Airport to Apollo Hospital, free registrations, 30 per cent discount on health checkups, and other health care related assistance," Kailash Mondal added.

There is tremendous rush for the flights to and from Chennai operating from Kazi Nazrul Islam airport for patient parties from South Bengal and western part of Jhark-



hand.

Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dreamt of converting the domestic airport to an international airport with flights to and from South East Asian tourist destinations. Prodded by the CM, West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation increased its stake in the shareholding of Bengal Aerotropolis Projects Limited (BAPL), the private promoter of this airport. Globally famous Changi Airports of Singapore happens to be one of the stakeholders of BAPL. Presently flights operate to Mumbai, New Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bhubaneswar, Bagdogra and

Guwahati from Durgapur-Andal.

"Already the state has submitted a proposal to upgrade the Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport, which is of 4C category with night landing facilities, having a capacity to handle 4 lakh passengers annually, to an international airport to the union civil aviation ministry. The airport can be expanded and there will be a need to set up immigration counters and customs zones for international flights," said Mondal.

"It's been a total game changer for both business travelers, tourists as well as for patient parties seeking

better health care for their ailing relatives in hospitals dotting across South India. We from the business and sports community are thankful for the connectivity through the airport to all the major cities of the country. With Kolkata's leading heritage brand Flurrys opening their lounge recently in the airport is an added feather in the cap of KNI airport, and the flyers will have an enhanced array of options," said VK Dhall, vice-president of National Rifle Association of India and president of West Bengal Rifle Association.

"Congratulations to BAPL

for the success of the Durgapur airport and the aerotropolis. In spite of some teething problems and pandemic, today we are proud to have an airport of this magnitude in our district. We are in regular touch with the civil aviation ministry to upgrade this to an international cargo hub. With the introduction of a host of new passenger friendly facilities, Andal Airport, which is already having a pan-Indian traffic through a network of seamless inter-connecting flights, has been instrumental in accelerating growth in the Chotonagpur area, also known as Ruhr of India following the dream envisioned by our Chief Minister," said Jagdish Bagri, secretary general of South Bengal Federation of Commerce and Industries.

"I hope that the KNI Airport will add more new passenger facilities and also introduce more routes in the coming days which will further pave the way of business development of South Bengal with world class connectivity. I was really happy while travelling in that maiden flight from Kolkata to Andal along with the host of Tollywood celebrities and state cabinet ministers in 2015," said Sandip Bhalotia, vice-president, Raniganj Citizen's Forum.



Corporate Communications Directorate

TIMES OF INDIA

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

Congestion to bite air travellers for 15 days

Saurabh Sinha@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: Delhi-bound travellers must brace themselves for delays over the next fortnight if their flight is scheduled to take off in peak morning or evening departure times.

With its main runway closed, IGI Airport can handle a maximum of up to 32 arrivals an hour when easterlies are blowing here while the number of scheduled landings is much higher.

To prevent “extra” flights from taking off for Delhi, only to hover here due to congestion, report low fuel, divert to nearby alternate airports and then wait there to fly to

IGIA, the air traffic flow management (ATFM) system in place when easterlies are blowing here asks planes to remain on the ground in the origin cities only.

Delhi air traffic control’s ATFM unit asks them to delay their departure to Delhi by a couple of hours so that they arrive here when the situation is a little better.

Once a plane gets delayed on any one sector — which is happening a lot this month on Delhi flights — all other sectors it has to operate that day will consequentially be way behind schedule. With flights on time performance (OTP) taking a beating, airline punctuality across their network will conti-

nue to be hit unless they reschedule and cancel some flights to align with IGIA’s real capacity.

“The problem is with arrivals in the current situation. IGIA is getting way too many flights, much beyond what it can handle. When easterlies blow and arrival capacity is further reduced, we have two options — delay in air or on the ground. A delay on the ground is better on many counts like avoiding unnecessary fuel burn, carbon emissions and the stress and fatigue hovering/diversions causes to passengers and crew. So, we regularly tell Delhi-bound flights to remain at other airports and take off for IGIA an hour or two behind their scheduled departure,” a senior controller said.

The key word is “up to” 32 arrivals.

“Not all planes move at the same speed, some are fast, and some are slow... So, accordingly, we have kept the spacing between incoming aircraft. Also, runway 09/27 (closest to Dwarka) does not have rapid exit ways. Aircraft landing here need a separation of five nautical miles. On the other hand, runways with rapid exit ways can have back-to-back arriving aircraft 3.5 nm apart,” an ATC official said. Actual arrivals are closer to 27-28.

Pilots, controllers and airport staff recall the night of April 11-12 when Delhi was hit by a thunderstorm. “All schedules went haywire,” a pilot said.

With its four runways and three terminals, IGIA handles about 2 lakh passengers and 1,400 flights daily. Take one terminal or runway out, the result is chaos.

Corporate Communications Directorate

AMAR UJALA

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

इंडिगो उड़ान में एसी खराब होने से परेशान हुए यात्री



नई दिल्ली। दिल्ली से इंदौर जा रहे इंडिगो एयरलाइंस के विमान में शनिवार को यात्रियों को काफी परेशानी का सामना करना पड़ा। जमीन पर रहने के दौरान विमान का एयर-कंडीशनिंग सिस्टम ठीक से काम नहीं कर रहा था। हालांकि, विमान के उड़ान भरने के बाद स्थिति में सुधार हुआ। एक यात्री ने बताया कि सुबह विमान के टेकऑफ से पहले ही एसी सिस्टम ठीक से काम नहीं कर रहा था, जिससे यात्रियों को गर्मी सहनी पड़ी।

इंडिगो ने इस घटना पर खेद जताते हुए यात्रियों से माफी मांगी और भविष्य में ऐसी घटनाओं को रोकने का आश्वासन दिया। उसने एक बयान में कहा, हम ग्राहकों के सुविधाओं को प्राथमिकता देते हैं और ऐसी समस्याओं को रोकने के लिए सक्रिय कदम उठा रहे हैं। फ्लाइट ट्रेकिंग वेबसाइट फ्लाइटरेडार24 डॉट कॉम के मुताबिक, यह फ्लाइट एयरबस ए321 विमान से संचालित की गई थी। विमान में सवार यात्रियों की संख्या के बारे में जानकारी नहीं मिल सकी है। एजेसी

Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDUSTAN TIMES

MUMBAI

19 APRIL 2025

DGCA orders probe into AIX pilot's death

Neha LM Tripathi

letters@hindustantimes.com

NEW DELHI: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has ordered a detailed investigation into the death of an Air India Express pilot after a flight from Srinagar to Delhi on April 9, including a verification of his medical history, as well as examining if the guidelines for dealing with such emergencies need to be changed.

The investigation will be conducted under the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017, said the order issued on Thursday by DGCA director general Faiz Ahmed Kidwai. HT has seen a copy of the order.

On April 9, the 36-year-old first officer died during treatment at a



Final investigation report is expected within six months.

hospital after he collapsed a few minutes after landing Flight IX-1153 from Srinagar to Delhi. Soon after the incident, a group of pilots alleged in the media that the situation was poorly handled and that the deceased pilot was fatigued.

Kidwai has appointed deputy director of Air Safety, Vishal Yadav, as the investigator-in-charge, and Group Capt Murtaza,

Director of Medical Services (Counter Air), as subject matter expert and member for carrying out the investigation.

Kidwai has asked the team to investigate whether the crew reported any sickness to air traffic control (ATC) while in the air and, if so, whether the ATC initiated appropriate action.

The team will also check the medical history of the deceased crew member and whether the airline took due precautions while rostering (or scheduling) the crew member with flying restrictions.

The DG further directed the team to investigate whether any specific medical checks are required for such pilots before undertaking flights, and whether fellow crew members took appropriate action when the co-pilot reported feeling unwell.

To be sure, medical examination of pilots with pre-existing medical conditions are done by a team of the Air Force.

The DGCA team has also been asked to assess the preparedness of the airport's medical centre in handling such emergencies. "...examine the existing guidelines/circulars in this regard and suggest changes if needed," the order stated.

The order asked the team to submit the final investigation report as early as possible, preferably within a period of six months.

The deceased pilot was last assessed by the Indian Air Force medical team in January this year, under the norms, and declared fit to fly, but his flying licence did not permit him to operate without an experienced pilot, people cited above said.



Corporate Communications Directorate

HINDU

CHENNAI

19 APRIL 2025

DGCA orders probe into Air India Express pilot's death

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has launched an investigation into the death of an Air India Express pilot who suffered a heart attack aboard an aircraft shortly after landing in Delhi last week. The probe will examine allegations of delayed medical response and poor preparedness at the Indira Gandhi International Airport. Armaan, a 36-year-old First Officer, died aboard the plane on April 9 after flying the Air India Express Srinagar-Delhi flight IX 1153. Armaan's family has claimed that it took nearly 40 minutes for the emergency response team to rush him to the medical facility at the airport.

Australia seeks to boost Air India, IndiGo direct flights to Sydney

Lalatendu Mishra

MUMBAI

With the number of Indian tourists to Australia rising in high double digits, Australian authorities are talking to Air India and IndiGo to offer more direct flights from India to Sydney, an Australian official said.

“The Western Sydney International Airport, located in Western part of Sydney, has done trial runs with the first runway. It will be operational towards end 2026. Discussions are on with Air India and IndiGo to operate direct flights to this airport once they get new aircraft,” said Samar Chokshi, country



Indian tourists to Australia are growing in high double digits.

manager-India, destination NSW in an interview.

“The location of the new airport is interesting because it is close to Parramatta, where a lot of the Indian community stays. It is going to be very good for

them when they travel to Sydney and New South Wales (NSW),” he added.

“It is going to be NSW’s first ever 24-hour airport, so we would not have the issues of flights arriving late at night or early morning. Due to aviation rules flight operations are banned at the existing Sydney airport from 11 pm to 6 am every night,” he said.

Currently, two direct flights operate between India and the Sydney airport. These include Air India operating a daily flight from New Delhi to Sydney using Dreamliners and Qantas operating daily in the Bengaluru-Sydney sector using the A330-300s.

So with the new airport coming into operation in 2026 and as and when Air India and IndiGo commence flights, the number of direct flights would double from now to Sydney.

Aside from the direct flights to Sydney, Indian travellers also fly by Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines, Thai Airways, Cathay Pacific, Scoot, Vietnam Airlines, Vietjet and Sri Lankan Airlines, which provide connectivity from multiple Indian cities to Sydney via one stopover.

“Travel to Australia from India is growing exponentially, we are growing in high double digits,” he said.

DGCA orders probe into death of Air India Express pilot

NEW DELHI: Aviation watchdog DGCA has ordered a detailed investigation into the circumstances that led to the recent death of an Air India Express pilot, including checking the medical history of the deceased crew member and examining the existing guidelines to deal with such emergencies.

The Air India Express pilot, who was the first officer, died due to a sudden cardiac arrest while operating the flight IX1153 from Srinagar to Delhi on April 9.

Ordering the probe, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) investigation team will check whether the crew reported the sickness to the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) while in air and if so, whether the ATC initiated action appropriately.

Apart from checking the medical history of the deceased crew member, the team will probe whether due precaution was taken during rostering of such crew who have flying restriction due to medical reasons, as per the DGCA order issued on April 17.

Among other aspects, the regulator will investigate whether any specific medical checks are required for such pilots to undergo before undertaking flights and whether the remaining onboard crew took action when the crew member reported feeling unwell.

According to DGCA, the probe will also look at the time taken in taking the crew member to the medical centre at the airport. Further, the probe

The pilot died due to a sudden cardiac arrest while operating the flight from Srinagar to Delhi on April 9

team will check the level of preparedness of the medical centre at the airport in handling such emergencies as well as examine and suggest changes with respect to existing guidelines in this regard. Deputy Director of Air Safety Vishal Yadav will be the Investigator-in-Charge and Group Captain Murtaza as a subject matter expert will carry out the probe.

The team has been directed to submit its final investigation report as early as possible, preferably within a period of six months, as per the order.

In a statement on April 10, an Air India Express spokesperson said it deeply regrets the loss of a valued colleague due to a medical condition.

Without providing specific details, the spokesperson also said, "we request all concerned to respect privacy at this time and avoid unnecessary speculation, while we commit to assisting the relevant authorities in due process".

Last week, the Airline Pilots' Association of India said there is an urgent need to put in place transparent regulations that prioritise rest for pilots, safety and humane scheduling practices.



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NAVODHYA TIMES

DELHI

20 APRIL 2025

पटना एयरपोर्ट पर हादसे से बची इंडिगो की फ्लाइट

पटना, 19 अप्रैल (एजेंसी): पटना एयरपोर्ट पर इंडिगो की फ्लाइट एक बड़े हादसे से बच गई। पुणे से आ रही इंडिगो की फ्लाइट शाम 6.30 बजे लैंड करने वाली थी। इसी दौरान किसी अज्ञात व्यक्ति ने डी.जे. की लेजर लाइट विमान की ओर मारी, जो पायलट की आंख पर पड़ी। इससे विमान का संतुलन कुछ देर के लिए बिगड़ गया।



हालांकि, पायलट की सतर्कता और सूझबूझ के कारण एक बड़ी दुर्घटना होने से टल गई और विमान को सेफ लैंड करा लिया गया। पुलिस मामले की जांच में जुट गई है। एयरपोर्ट थाना प्रभारी के अनुसार, लेजर लाइट की सूचना मिलते ही एयरपोर्ट प्रशासन सतर्क हो गया। तत्काल वायरलेस के माध्यम से एयरपोर्ट थाना और फुलवारी शरीफ थाना को सूचना दी गई।



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STATEMEN

KOLKATA

19 APRIL 2025

Flyer nabbed for carrying bullet in luggage

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ASANSOL, 18 APRIL

An air passenger from Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport at Andal in West Burdwan on Thursday was arrested. A team from Andal police station, under the office of Asansol Durgapur Police Commissionerate (ADPC), nabbed one Mukteswar Ghosh (55).

Sources informed that a resident of Hindustan Press Road area in Dhanbad, Ghosh was going to Mumbai from Andal airport. During the routine security check

and frisking, guards at the airport found a spent bullet from his possession. He had been detained. Without wasting time, the airport authority informed Andal police station and handed him over to the police. He was forwarded to Durgapur sub-divisional court on Thursday and cops sought police custody of the arrested person to interrogate him.

Sources also informed, this is the second such incident of arrest of a flyer from Kazi Nazrul Islam Airport in one year with unlicensed firearms or cartridges.

Delhi-US flights 10-15% cheaper this summer

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai/New Delhi: Airfares from India to US have dropped, a first in many summers. The slump is likely due to the Trump effect, with tickets costing 10% to 15% less out of New Delhi than last summer.

The most noticeable drop is on flights out of Mumbai, with the cheapest one-way ticket to New York, available on Saturday for travel around mid-May, priced as low as Rs 37,000. Although the cheapest return is priced at Rs 76,000, it involves a long transit halt at a Middle East airport.

Delhi-San Francisco return fares this summer are about Rs 1.7 lakh on the nons-

Musk coming to India later this year

Elon Musk said Saturday he would visit India later this year, as Tesla prepares to launch cars in the country and satcom venture Starlink is in the final phase of the govt approval process. Musk's comment on X came a day after he spoke to PM Modi over telephone, and came in reply to the PM's post on their chat. **P 10**

top and Rs 1.1 lakh for one-stop options, said Anil Kalsi, VP of Travel Agents Federation of India.

► 'Drop in airfares', P 17

'Drop in airfares for travel to key US cities in Apr-June'

► Continued from P 1

The New York-Delhi non-stop economy return fare for going in the peak season of May/June and back a month later is about Rs 1 lakh all inclusive," Kalsi said.

Delhi has the maximum nonstop connectivity to the US, with Air India operating 33 weekly flights to New York (Newark and JFK), Chicago, Washington and San Francisco. United and Delta have a daily each between Delhi and New York.

Out of Mumbai, however, for Rs 85,000 you can get a ticket on an airline that will hub you through Delhi or London with a wait time of no more than four hours. To fly out this month, the return fare approaches Rs 1 lakh on flights with agreeable transit times at Middle Eastern airports.

Indians form second-largest immigrant community in US, but it is not only children flying back home to visit their parents or parents flying to and fro to see their children. India also sends the largest number of students to the US, making flights to the US in high demand throughout the year. In past years, airfares to fly between India and the US were high due to the skewed demand-supply dynamics. This summer, however, the scene has changed. For those with a valid visa, travelling to the US is now economical, at least as far as airfares are concerned.

"Summer marks peak holiday season for Indian travellers, with schools closed and families, including multiple-generation families, travelling to popular long-haul destinations like the US. Interestingly, we're seeing a drop in airfares for travel from Delhi and Mumbai to key US cities during the April-June 2025 period, with average fares dropping by 5-8% compared to

the same time last year," said Indiver Rastogi, president and group head, Global Business Travel, Thomas Cook (India) and SOTC Travel. "Based on bookings made in Jan-Feb 2025, fares to San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles averaged Rs 1.15 lakh — down from Rs 1.2-1.25 lakh in 2024. Similarly, fares to Boston, Orlando, and Michigan were around Rs 1.35 lakh, compared to Rs 1.4-1.45 lakh last year," he said.

While these estimates are based on bookings done in first two months of the year, the latest round of fares has shown a further decline. "In the past few summers, airfares for travel to US have been high throughout the year. After pandemic, when India reopened its borders to international flights in March 2022, there was not much cheer for passengers flying to the US

NOT IN HIGH DEMAND

as the Russian invasion of Ukraine early that year brought on fresh problems for airlines and passengers. Avoiding Russian airspace meant flying a longer route, and US carriers pulled out the few flights they had from Mumbai and Delhi to US destinations," said an airline official. While some of the flights were restored in later years, the number of direct flights is still at an all-time low, he added.

According to US department of trade's National Travel and Tourism Office, "International air passenger enplanements to and from the US (were) down 0.5% year over year in March 2025... Overseas visitor arrivals totalled 23.9 lakh in March 2025, which reached 82.9% of pre-pandemic March 2019 volume, down from 84.5% in Feb 2025." International air passenger enplanements to and from the US was 1.4% Y-o-Y in Feb 2025.



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