

Air India grounds 787 Dreamliner after reported fuel control switch anomaly

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: Air India has grounded one of its Boeing 787-8 Dreamliners after the flight crew reported a possible defect in a fuel control switch. The incident raised renewed attention on a component that has been under scrutiny since a fatal crash last year.

The aircraft, registered VT-ANX, was operating as Air India Flight AI132 from London Heathrow to Bengaluru. It departed Heathrow at 19:19 local time (LT) on February 1 and landed in Bengaluru at 11:54 LT on Monday, February 2.

According to airline sources, the anomaly was observed after landing and was subsequently reported by the flight crew. The aircraft has since been withdrawn from service as a precautionary measure.

In a statement, Air India said it had informed India's aviation regulator

and initiated checks in coordination with the aircraft manufacturer.

“We are aware that one of our pilots has reported a possible defect on the fuel control switch of a Boeing 787-8 aircraft,” the airline said. “After receiving this initial information, we have grounded the said aircraft and are involving the original equipment manufacturer to get the pilot’s concerns checked on a priority basis.”

A statement from the Safety Matters Foundation said the reported issue involved abnormal behavior of the left engine fuel control switch during engine start. The switch allegedly failed to remain locked in the RUN position on two attempts, drifting toward CUTOFF.

While the event occurred on the ground, the foundation noted that such behavior could, under certain conditions, increase the risk of an inadvertent engine shutdown during flight.

The incident has gained widespread attention due to similarities with a previous Air India 787 Dreamliner crash in June 2025, where the aircraft, registered VT-ANB, crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad while operating Flight AI171, killing 260 people.

A preliminary investigation into that accident found that fuel supply to the engines had been cut off seconds after departure. Cockpit voice recordings captured one pilot questioning why the fuel control switch had been moved to CUTOFF, with the other responding that he had not done so.

Following the crash, Air India said it conducted inspections of fuel control switches across its 787 fleet under the direction of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation and found no issues. The airline reiterated that position on February 2.

Aviation safety groups have also cited a 2018 Federal Aviation Administration safety alert, which warned that certain fuel control switches could malfunction in a way that increases the risk of unintended engine shutdown, recommending inspections and replacements where required.