

## IndiGo's operational meltdown strands thousands, government steps in

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Dhaka: India's largest domestic airline, IndiGo, has plunged into a severe operational crisis this week, triggering mass flight cancellations, stranded passengers, and chaos across major airports nationwide.

The disruption stems primarily from recently enforced crew-roster regulations under the new Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) "Flight Duty Time Limitations" (FDTL) which came into full effect on November 1, 2025.

Under the updated norms, pilots must observe 48 consecutive hours of rest weekly (up from 36), night-duty definitions were extended, and the permissible number of night landings per pilot dramatically reduced — from six per week to two.

For an airline like IndiGo, which operates heavily in night- and early-

morning slots and runs one of the densest domestic networks in India, the change has proved painful. Despite a two-year transition window, airline sources say the carrier underestimated its crew requirements and failed to adjust rostering in time.

### **Fallout: flights cancelled, airports in turmoil**

The results have been dramatic. On December 5 alone, over 1,000 IndiGo flights were cancelled nationwide.

Domestic departures from major hubs — including the Delhi international airport — were grounded until midnight.

Across six of India's major metro airports (Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad and Kolkata), IndiGo's on-time performance (OTP) plunged to as low as 8.5 percent, down sharply from over 84 percent in October.

Reports from terminals describe chaotic scenes: long queues, frustrated and stranded travelers, lost luggage, and mounting confusion.

Passenger frustration has been intense. One married couple reportedly missed their own wedding reception after repeated delays and cancellations.

### **Regulators step in: temporary relief, probe ordered**

Facing mounting public backlash and widespread disruption, the DGCA and India's civil aviation ministry took extraordinary steps: temporarily suspending key portions of the FDTL rules for IndiGo's fleet until at least February 2026.

Simultaneously, a high-level inquiry panel has been constituted to investigate the airline's failures and hold responsible parties accountable.

In a public address, IndiGo's CEO acknowledged "severe operational disruptions" and promised gradual restoration of services between December 10-15, with full normalization targeted by February 2026.

The airline has also waived cancellation and rescheduling fees for affected tickets, and pledged refunds and accommodation assistance for stranded passengers.

## **Bigger ramifications: airfare surge, industry doubts**

Analysts warn that the drop in capacity is already pushing domestic airfares up — with price increases of at least 5-10 percent expected through January.

The crisis has dealt a blow to IndiGo's once-reliable reputation for punctuality and affordability. With its market share commanding around two-thirds of India's domestic traffic, the airline's disruption has exposed how overreliance on a single carrier can jeopardize network-wide stability.

As passengers continue to bear the brunt, regulatory scrutiny and public anger are poised to reshape how airlines plan crew rostering and network schedules — possibly triggering a broader rethink across India's aviation sector.

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