

Air India's Delhi-SFO flight departs after inordinate delay

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New Delhi: More than 200 passengers of a San Francisco-bound Air India flight faced an ordeal in the national capital due to a delay of over 30 hours caused by a technical glitch, the aircraft's non-functional air conditioning system and payload issues.

After being rescheduled multiple times since Thursday (May 30) evening, flight AI 1183 took off from the Delhi airport at around 2155 hours, capping a long wait for the passengers, including aged people and children, sources in the know said.

While there were more than 200 passengers, 21 of them decided to deboard the flight on Friday (May 31) night, the sources added.

Since there are night landing restrictions at San Francisco, the sources said Air India officials have done the work for requisite permission to land there. The Delhi-San Francisco flight duration is around 16 hours and by the time it lands in the American city, it would be night.

The flight, which was originally scheduled to take off at around 1530 hours on Thursday, was delayed for nearly 6 hours before being rescheduled for Friday. On Friday, the flight, to be operated with a Boeing 777 aircraft, was first scheduled for around 1100 hours departure which was changed to 1500 hours and after finally pushing back at around 1745 hours, the plane came back to the bay, the sources said.

Initially, a technical glitch was suspected and later payload issues were noticed. The airline is expected to offload some cargo and then depart for San Francisco, the sources added.

One of the sources said an announcement was made that due to temperature issues, the flight could not take off, and added that the air conditioning was also switched off.

There has been no official statement from Air India on the inordinate flight delay while earlier in the day, aviation regulator DGCA issued a show cause notice to the airline for some flight delays and failure to take due care of the passengers.

In the show cause notice, the watchdog mentioned the inordinate delay of two international flights -- AI 183 from Delhi to San Francisco on May 30 and AI 179 from Mumbai to San Francisco on May 24.

Meanwhile, Air India's regular flight from Delhi to San Francisco departed at around 1900 hours on Friday.

On Thursday, some passengers of the Delhi-San Francisco flight had fainted as the aircraft's air-conditioning system was non-functional and passengers also had to wait for around an hour in the aerobridge, Shilpa Jain told PTI.

Jain, who is a passenger on the flight, said that on Thursday, the aircraft was changed due to a technical glitch and the passengers boarded another plane, wherein the air-conditioning system was not working.

The plane had aged people and children, who were feeling uneasy. Later, at around 2200 hours on Thursday, the flight was rescheduled, she added.

According to her, the revised departure time was about 2000 hours and passengers had boarded the aircraft at around 1920 hours. With the air-

conditioning system non-functional, passengers were agitated and after almost an hour, they came out. The passengers had to wait for nearly an hour in the aerobridge before the gates were opened to go back to the airport, she said.

About the delay and subsequent rescheduling of the flight on Thursday, an Air India official said the aircraft had developed a technical issue and engineering checks were carried out. Due to the delay, the crew had crossed the Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) and also if the flight had taken off, it would have reached San Francisco when there are night landing restrictions there, the official added.

Jain said the flight was originally rescheduled for 1100 hours departure on Friday and that has now been revised to 1500 hours. She also claimed that the airline did not offer the option to reschedule or cancel the bookings.

However, the airline official claimed that passengers were offered the options of full refund, complimentary rescheduling and hotel accommodation.

This is the second time in one week that Air India passengers on a San Francisco flight have faced a harrowing time due to inordinate delay.

On Thursday, some passengers of the AI 183 flight took to social media complaining about the delay and one of them said that there was no air-conditioning in the plane.

"If there is a privatisation story that has failed it is @airindia @DGCAIndia AI 183 flight has been delayed for over 8 hours, passengers were made to board the plane without air conditioning, and then deplaned after some people fainted in the flight. This is inhuman! @JM_Scindia," Shweta Punj, a journalist, said in a post on X on Thursday night.

She also shared a picture of passengers sitting on the floor at the Delhi airport.

Meanwhile, an Air India flight from Mumbai to San Francisco, which was originally scheduled to take off at 1600 hours on May 24, was rescheduled and finally departed at around 1730 hours on May 25. The inordinate delay was due to multiple reasons, including a technical glitch.

