

India asks airlines for risk assessment amid ME tensions

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New Delhi: Amid escalating tensions in the Middle East, India's civil aviation ministry has asked airlines to carry out their own risk assessment on international flight operations.

Air India, Vistara, IndiGo and various international airlines have opted for alternative flight paths to the West and are avoiding the Iranian airspace against the backdrop of tensions flaring up between Iran and Israel.

Civil aviation secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam on Tuesday (16) said that airlines have been asked to make their own risk assessment with respect to their flight operations.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is handholding and interacting with the airlines, and also in touch with the external affairs

ministry, he added.

The secretary was responding to a query on whether there is an advisory by the ministry or the DGCA to airlines amid the crisis in the Middle East.

Air India is operating some of its international flights on alternative flight paths to and from India, and Vistara has also made changes to flight paths for some of its flights due to the Middle East situation.

Also, Air India has temporarily suspended its flights to Tel Aviv.

The alternative flight paths have increased the duration of some of the international flights by around half an hour.

About the Middle East crisis, Suprio Banerjee, vice president and sector head, corporate ratings at ICRA, said commercial airlines may have to take a longer route in order to comply with no-fly regulations, leading to higher fuel expenses.

“This will also impact international air travel to the directly affected and potentially affected nearby geographies during the upcoming summer holiday season if the issue persists,” Banerjee said.

Manan Bajoria, group VP Growth at travel portal ixigo, said re-routing of flights due to the current geopolitical tensions can result in longer routes and higher expenses for airlines that run flights to and from Europe, Middle East, and Southeast Asia.

“Lengthy diversions will add to airline fuel costs and may lead to an increase in airfares across these routes,” Bajoria said.

Banerjee also said the ongoing geopolitical developments in the Middle East region will continue to exert pressure on crude oil prices and, in turn, on ATF prices, which have been on an elevated level compared to the pre-Covid era.

During the weekend, Iran launched dozens of drones and missiles at Israel in a retaliatory attack. On Monday (15), Israel said it will respond to Iran’s weekend attack.

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