

Indian govt issues fog advisory for airlines

- A Monitor Desk Report

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New Delhi: The Union Ministry of Civil Aviation announced on Wednesday (January 1) that it had conducted a series of consultations over the past two months with airlines, airport operators, and other stakeholders to minimize flight disruptions during the fog season.

The ministry stated that these consultations aimed to streamline travel experiences, reduce delays, and ensure a smoother and more efficient journey for passengers.

To ensure readiness for the fog season, the Ministry of Civil Aviation held a series of consultations over the past two months with airlines, airport operators, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS), Airports Authority of India (AAI), Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), and the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)," the ministry said in a statement.

"In line with the Minister for Civil Aviation (K Rammohan Naidu)'s emphasis on promoting 'Ease of Flying', these initiatives are intended to streamline the travel experience, reduce delays, and offer a smoother, more efficient journey for passengers, including during peak travel times affected by weather disruptions such as fog," it said.

The ministry said that the government has instructed airlines to proactively inform the passengers about potential delays and/ or cancellations. For this, not only the airlines but also the booking agents have been asked to ensure valid contact details are taken down while booking tickets.

The ministry said, "The DGCA has sensitised Online Ticketing Agents (OTAs) for better and clear communication with passengers who are booked with them for smoother experience and convenience."

"All airlines committed to ensure full staffing at check-in counters during peak hours to reduce passenger inconvenience. Stakeholders were reminded to ensure compliance to DGCA guidelines during delays or cancellations, while ensuring passengers are promptly informed on top priority," it said.

The ministry also said that the airlines were advised to sensitise their Operations Control Centers (that oversee and manage various aspects of flight operations to ensure safety and punctuality) and war-room representatives for closer coordination during adverse weather conditions, especially fog.

"This is aimed at improving real-time decision-making by ensuring that airline staff understand the on-ground realities of airport operations, allowing for more effective and timely responses to flight delays or cancellations....the airlines were also reminded of the government's recent instruction to cancel upcoming flights if the delay is more than three hours," the release said.

It said that the AAI too has introduced new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to enhance the management of wide-area air traffic, with an aim to ensure smooth regulation of air traffic, particularly in challenging conditions like fog at affected airports or during operations at originating and destination airports.

"In coordination with AAI, IMD is working proactively to expedite the

implementation of the Advanced Weather Observation System (AWOS) at Delhi Airport and other fog-affected airports, ensuring accurate and timely weather information for pilots and air traffic controllers to enhance operational safety and efficiency," the ministry said.

It also said that the BCAS circular for facilitating the smooth re-entry of passengers in case of flight cancellations have been operationalised. With this, the government clarified that, the aim is that passengers should not be held up inside delayed aircraft for more than 90 minutes. "This would significantly reduce passenger inconvenience and ensure a smoother re-boarding process once flights resume," it said.

Moreover, three runways at the Delhi airport have activated CAT III ILS (instrument landing system), the ministry added.

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