

## Passengers on SpiceJet flight stranded 6 hours

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- A Monitor Desk Report

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SpiceJet passengers booked to fly from Mumbai to Srinagar on Saturday (July 9) morning had a harrowing time waiting in their coach bus and terminal building as the airline postponed the departure at least thrice, only to finally depart over six hours late.

The aircraft was under scrutiny by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) flight operations inspectors and the airline eventually operated the flight with another aircraft, sources said.

The cash-strapped airline is under the DGCA scanner over safety. The regulator had issued a showcause notice to SpiceJet last week over malfunctions and air turn-backs related to aircraft maintenance.

SpiceJet flight SG-950 was to leave at 7am. An airport source said, "The aircraft landed late from Dubai. DGCA inspectors had to wait for Customs clearance to enter the tarmac. They must have pointed out a problem with the aircraft as another aircraft operated the flight."

Kanchan Srivastava, the of a media start-up who was on board, tweeted: "It's 9.10am and staff has no clue when it will fly. Fliers losing cool as many have to travel to other cities which is now impossible. Book SpiceJet at own risk." The airline responded that the flight was delayed due to operational reasons and would depart at 10.20am.

An hour later passengers had not boarded the aircraft. They were stranded for over 30 minutes in a coach bus on the tarmac, social media posts said. After another tweet, SpiceJet responded that the departure was now at 11.15am. A video shot at 10.41am shows a SpiceJet ground staffer surrounded by angry passengers. He explains to passengers that DGCA, which had cleared the aircraft, had revoked permission. The passengers' bags were being moved to another aircraft that had landed, the SpiceJet staff said.

DGCA norms for flight delays require airlines to provide beverages and snacks to passengers. But passengers said that, "no breakfast, no tea, all passengers including seniors and kids are stuck for more hours". Passengers, stranded in the coach bus for over an hour, began shouting slogans against the airline. CISF personnel tried to

pacify the passengers. Some passengers were tourists.

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