

IndiGo Flight Cancellations Spark Aviation Crisis Across India



Published on December 9, 2025

Document Date: Fri, May 15 2026 01:03:11 am

Category: ,Articles,English,International - ,Snippets

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NEW DELHI, Dec. 9— India's largest airline, IndiGo, has thrown the country's aviation sector into chaos following a wave of sudden flight cancellations, stranding thousands of passengers and prompting widespread criticism. On December 5 alone, the airline cancelled over 1,600 flights, disrupting travel for families, students, and business travellers nationwide.

The crisis stems from new crew-rostering rules designed to enhance pilot and cabin crew rest periods, which IndiGo struggled to implement. Despite months of notice, the airline failed to adjust staffing levels and rosters, leaving it short of legally rested personnel and grounding more than half its fleet. Competitors like Air India report full compliance with the updated regulations.

IndiGo executives have apologised for the disruptions, citing operational challenges and planning gaps, but insiders suggest deeper issues. Pilots and industry experts point to a long-standing focus on cost-cutting and aggressive expansion, leaving the airline ill-prepared for regulatory changes. Analysts warn of financial losses from refunds, penalties, and reputational damage, while on-time performance has dropped sharply.

The airline has secured a temporary exemption until February, but regulatory scrutiny remains intense. India's aviation minister has pledged "very strict action," and the Airline Pilots Association criticised the exemption for compromising safety. Competitors, including Air India and SpiceJet, have added flights to accommodate affected passengers.

Experts say it could take years for IndiGo to restore public trust, regain operational stability, and recover its dominant position in India's aviation market.