

AI Express flights cancelled for 2nd consecutive day; passengers unhappy

STATE TIMES NEWS
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM/KOZHIKODE: Air India Express passengers who were promised travel to various destinations from airports in Kerala were left stranded on Thursday as their flights were unexpectedly canceled for the second day in a row.

Travelers at Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and Kannur airports faced disappointment when flights to Gulf nations were called off at the last minute for the second consecutive day.

This sudden cancellation has sparked frustration and caused inconvenience among passengers who relied on the airline's assurance for their travel plans.

"I was assured by Air India Express yesterday that I can



travel to Qatar on Thursday. But they did not keep their promise. I was told at the last moment that my flight has been cancelled again for the second consecutive day," an aggrieved passenger at Karipur airport in Kozhikode told reporters.

Another passenger, who claimed his work visa would expire today, told a TV channel at Thiruvananthapuram airport that when his flight to the Gulf region was cancelled yesterday, he was given a ticket for today.

"When I arrived here (Thiruvananthapuram airport), the airline told me that the flight was cancelled. If I do not reach my place of work by tonight, my visa will expire and I will lose my job," he said.

Another passenger at the Thiruvananthapuram airport said that AI Express asked him to take a ticket on another airline, but he was unable to do so.

"Why can't they help us get tickets on another airline? Let them charge us for that," he said.

Air India Express has issued termination letters to around 25 cabin crew members who reported sick that led to the cancellation of more than 90 flights, airline sources said on Thursday.

The Tata Group-owned airline has also given an ultimatum to the remaining cabin crew members reporting sick to join back duty by 4 pm on Thursday or face termination, they added.

Air India Express has also cancelled at least 60 flights for Thursday due to the non-availability of cabin crew, the sources said, and added that mass leaves by a section of the cabin crew have caused immense inconvenience to passengers.

Effective defence-industry ecosystem taking shape in the country: Gen Pande

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Army Chief Gen Manoj Pande has said that an effective defence-industry ecosystem is taking shape in the country and veterans with their field experience are "ideally suited" for incorporation into indigenous research and manufacturing of technological solutions required by the force.

In his address at the Army Welfare Placement Organisation (AWPO) Summit 2024 held at the Manekshaw Centre here on Wednesday, he said the Army's responsibility towards its veterans remains a "sacred commitment".

The aim of the summit was to bring together different stakeholders on a common platform, to narrow down the gap between enterprise

requirements, veteran competencies and the pursuits of AWPO.

"While the demand for skilled and experienced workforce exists at the industry end, at the same time, a human resource pool of veterans with adequate experience and unique skill sets is also available, after they exit from active service each year.

"The endeavour is to synergise the two as well as strengthen the linkages that can facilitate veteran absorption into not only the industry but also PSUs and quasi-government organisations," the Army chief said.

He said the veterans with their field experience and insights into operational conditions, logistics of the systems and weapon platforms "are ideally suited for

incorporation into indigenous research, development, innovation and manufacturing of technological solutions required by the Indian Army."

They also bring to the table, leadership qualities, and a very sound understanding of the human element and can contribute towards ergonomics and user interface design, aspects which are critical to produce user-friendly equipment, Gen Pande said.

He emphasised the invaluable contributions of veterans to the nation's prosperity.

Gen Pande said services to the nation by the veterans "do not end" when they bid farewell to military life, instead it transitions into "a new chapter" or second innings of commitment to

society and nation building.

He underscored that the Army has undertaken the process of holistic skill certification, as per the core competency of each individual, in collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

He also mentioned initiatives such as 'Project KAUSHALVEER' that help serve personnel in acquiring certification for skill sets according to the established industry standards.

Gen Pande praised the 'Veer Naris', who he said also bring with them unparalleled determination and resilience.

He urged the entrepreneurs to integrate them too as part of their initiatives on human capital intake.

Sensex, Nifty tank on heavy foreign fund outflows



STATE TIMES NEWS
MUMBAI: Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled about 1.5 per cent on Thursday amid heavy foreign fund outflows and selling in HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro and Reliance Industries.

Declining for the third day running, the 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 1,062.22 points or 1.45 per cent to settle at 72,404.17. During the day, it tanked 1,132.21 points or 1.54 per cent to 72,334.18.

In contrast, Tata Motors, Mahindra & Mahindra, State Bank of India, Infosys and HCL Tech were the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 6,669.10 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled with gains, while Seoul and Tokyo ended lower.

European markets were trading on a mixed note.

Wall Street closed mixed in overnight trade on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.48 per cent to USD 83.89 a barrel.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 45.46 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at 73,466.39 on Wednesday. The NSE Nifty remained unchanged at 22,302.50.

India in talks with like-minded countries to regulate tourism in Antarctica

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: India is working with like-minded countries to promote regulated tourism in Antarctica as a steady increase in the number of tourists threatens to harm the fragile ecology in the White Continent.

Discussion on regulating tourism in Antarctica will be on the agenda at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) and a meeting of the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) scheduled to be held in Kerala's Kochi from May 20 to May 30.

"The problem is that tourism in Antarctica is not properly regulated. So this year, there is a discussion on its regulation," M Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said in an interaction with PTI editors here.

The Ministry of Earth Sciences is hosting the 46th meeting of the ATCM, the highest governing body for Antarctica, and the 26th CEP meeting.

Ravichandran also hinted at plans to facilitate visits to



Indian research stations in Antarctica for the general public.

"Very soon, we will take it up," he said when asked if a common man can visit Indian research stations in Antarctica.

Highlighting the necessity of regulation, Ravichandran noted the current challenges with unregulated tourism.

India, along with other like-minded countries, is actively working towards promoting regulated tourism in Antarctica, he said.

"India promotes regulated

tourism in Antarctica and it should not hypothetically open up everything. This we started and many like-minded countries have also joined together," Ravichandran said.

"Travel to Antarctica costs an estimated Rs 1 crore per person for researchers who travel onboard a ship from Goa to Cape Town in South Africa and from there, to the White Continent.

Thambam Meloth, Director of the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR), said India operates

two active research stations in Antarctica -- Maitri and Bharati -- where scientists from different institutes across the country conduct research throughout the year.

It costs the government anywhere between Rs 150 and Rs 200 crore every year to maintain the research bases in Antarctica.

Ravichandran emphasised that India's research stations in Antarctica are meticulously maintained, subject to regular inspections to ensure that those are kept in pristine condition.

He emphasised the strict protocols in place for waste management, including the requirement to transport all waste, including human waste, back to the mainland.

Notably, the number of tourists visiting Antarctica has been steadily increasing each year, with several thousands of visitors making the journey annually, transiting through Argentina or Chile.

"There is a major working group in the ATCM and they will discuss and recommend to the Antarctic Treaty to have some criteria that a tourist needs to fulfil when visiting Antarctica," Ravichandran said.

Tourism began in Antarctica way back in the 1950s with tourists hitching rides on supply ships and the numbers have increased steadily over the years. For the 2022-23 season, the International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) reported 32,730 cruise-only visitors, 71,346 landed visitors and 821 deep-field visitors.

EAM meets UK NSA Tim Barrow

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday discussed various bilateral, regional and global issues with visiting British National Security Advisor Tim Barrow.

Barrow is currently on a visit to India.

"Good to meet UK NSA Tim Barrow today in Delhi.

Discussed a range of regional and global issues of importance. Also reviewed the progress in our bilateral ties," Jaishankar said on X.

It is understood that Jaishankar and Barrow delved into the overall situation in West Asia.

Navi Mumbai police register FIR against 3 persons over video on Hemant Karkare

STATE TIMES NEWS
THANE: The Navi Mumbai police have registered an FIR against three persons on charges of promoting enmity between different groups through a video on former Maharashtra ATS chief Hemant Karkare, an official said on Thursday.

The complainant, Suresh Rama Gaikwad (49) from Turbhe in Navi Mumbai, told the police that the accused made the video, 'Salute to Hemant Karkare (Based on true Event)', and posted it on YouTube which he saw on April 22.

The accused presented the video as if it was a true story while it was allegedly based on wrong information and showed that Brahmins resort to terrorist attacks and implicate Muslims in false cases,



the official from Turbhe police station said quoting the complaint filed on Wednesday.

Based on the complaint, the FIR was registered on Wednesday against three persons and their unnamed team members.

The case was registered under Indian Penal Code sections 153-A (promoting enmity between different groups), 295-A (deliberate

NPRD lodges complaint with EC over derogatory disability references by leaders during campaigning

STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: Rights body NPRD has lodged a complaint with the Election Commission over the use of derogatory references to disability by some political leaders including TDP's Chandrababu Naidu and BJP's C P Joshi during election campaigns.

National Platform for the Rights of the Disabled (NPRD) general secretary Muralidharan highlighted several instances where political figures made disparaging remarks about disabilities, and urged the EC to take immediate action to address these violations.

A letter to the EC, dated May 8, condemned the "increasing trend of hate speeches and slurs by political leaders, which continue unabated despite existing legal provisions under the



Representation of the People Act (RP Act), Model Code of Conduct (MCC), and other relevant laws".

The NPRD specifically called out instances where disabilities were invoked to malign opponents, contravening both legal and ethical guidelines governing election conduct.

It referenced a prior complaint lodged against Rajasthan BJP chief Joshi for making offensive remarks likening political opponents to

people "walking on crutches".

This complaint, the NPRD emphasized, was submitted on March 29, and underscores the urgency for the EC to take concrete actions against such misconduct.

Moreover, the NPRD drew attention to two recent incidents involving prominent political figures.

One incident involved TDP supreme Naidu, who made "disparaging comments" about the mental health of an opponent.

The other incident highlighted a candidate of the National People's Party, Kritenberth Marak, who reportedly insulted a disabled individual during a campaign event.

The NPRD underscored that these actions flagrantly disregarded the EC's guidelines and advisories against using derogatory language related to disabilities in public statements, speeches, or campaigns.

Its letter called for exemplary action by the EC, urging immediate investigation and appropriate penalties for the offenders in accordance with the MCC and relevant legal provisions.

Failure to address these violations, NPRD warned, would undermine the integrity of the commission's guidelines and embolden further misconduct during the ongoing electoral process.

RML bribery ring: CBI arrests two more, total arrests rise to 11



STATE TIMES NEWS
NEW DELHI: The CBI has arrested two more persons -- a medical equipment supplier and a nurse -- in connection with an alleged bribery racket in Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital here, officials said on Thursday.

With the arrest of Akarshan Gulati, territory sales manager of Biotronics, and nurse Shahu Sharma, the total number of arrests in this case stands at 11. This includes two cardiologists and three hospital support staff who were taken into custody on Wednesday, they said.

Shahu and clerk Bhujwal Jaiswal had allegedly threatened a man that they would throw his pregnant wife out of the hospital if he did not pay them Rs 20,000.

Shahu had allegedly threatened to stop the treatment of the man's wife and discharge her. The man paid the amount through UPI, according to the FIR lodged by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

It is alleged that Assistant Professor Parvatagouda Channappagouda, arrested on Wednesday, had asked Gulati to clear his dues. Gulati had connected him to his employee

Monika Sinha, claiming he was out of the station. Channappagouda then asked Sinha to pay Rs 36,000 through UPI and the rest in cash.

The CBI arrested Channappagouda and RML cardiology Professor Ajay Raj for taking bribes from medical equipment suppliers to use their products and stents, the officials said.

The agency has also arrested medical equipment supplier Naresh Nagpal of Nagpal Technologies, who paid Rs 2.48 lakh to Channappagouda to promote the sale of medical equipment; Bharat Singh Dalal of Bharti Medical Technologies, who bribed Raj using UPI twice; and Abrar Ahmed, who paid bribes to hospital Cath Lab incharge Rajnish Kumar and Channappagouda.

Jaiswal, Sanjay Kumar and middleman Vikas Kumar were also arrested in an operation on Wednesday, the officials said.

Sam Pitroda's 'racist' remarks 'reprehensible', Congress must apologise: Yogi Adityanath

STATE TIMES NEWS
LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday strongly criticised Congress leader Sam Pitroda's "racist" remarks terming them "reprehensible" and demanding an apology from the party.

Highlighting Congress' ongoing efforts to sow division based on colour and ethnicity, the chief minister alleged that the Congress was responsible for the partition of the country in 1947. Even after Independence, the party committed the sin of dividing the country along caste, regional and linguistic lines, he said.

"Sam Pitroda, the advisor and guide of the Congress leadership, espouses the party's historical divide-and-rule tactic. His remarks are reprehensible," the chief minister



said, while talking to reporters here.

"The Congress must apologise to the nation for Pitroda's comments," he added.

Adityanath said Pitroda must refrain from commenting on the Ram temple. Lord Ram symbolises unity, cultural integrity and the values of compassion and development for all. The construction of the

Ram temple is a matter of immense pride for India, reflecting its cultural ethos and national unity, he added.

He said humanity's supporters worldwide, including the followers of 'Sanatan Dharma', are jubilant over the construction of the Ram temple. The positive energy generated by this monumental development and the visits

of numerous ambassadors to Ayodhya indicated international recognition of its significance, he added.

Adityanath expressed confidence in the continuation of this positive momentum.

In a podcast, Pitroda had stated, "We have survived 75 years in a very happy environment where people could live together, leaving

aside a few fights here and there. We could hold a country as diverse as India together. Where people in the east look like the Chinese, people in the west look like the Arabs, people in the north look like, maybe, white and people in the south look like Africa (sic).

"It does not matter. All of us are brothers and sisters. We respect different languages, different religions, different customs, different food," he said.

Earlier, Pitroda was quoted in reports as saying that it bothers him that the entire nation is hung up on the Ram temple.

Pitroda on Wednesday resigned as the chairman of the Indian Overseas Congress after his controversial remarks on race and ethnicity spurred the BJP to label the party "racist".