

Delhi Airport to Become Zero Diversionary Airport

Delhi Airport will soon become a zero-diversionary airport, as the Committee set up in January this year, by the Director General of Civil Aviation, to look into the matter, has submitted its report with 27 recommendations. The Terms of Reference of the Committee were:-

- (i) To make Delhi a zero diversionary airport without compromising safety of aircraft operations;
- (ii) To prepare a comprehensive document on low visibility operations defining duties and responsibilities of all stakeholders; and
- (iii) To look into the specific issues pertaining to international operations and modalities to deal with stranded passengers during low visibility conditions

The Committee's recommendations relate to India Meteorological Department, Airports Authority of India, Delhi International Airport Ltd, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security, DGCA and various airlines. The Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Shri Ashok Lavasa, in a meeting with all stakeholders who would be responsible for carrying out various activities within their ambit of responsibility, emphasised to ensure that various actions on the recommendations must be completed before October this year.

The Delhi International Airport Ltd, during the last three winter seasons, has witnessed a total of 289 diversions. There were 57 diversions in 2011, 89 in 2012 and 143 last year. It is expected that after the recommendations of the Committee are implemented, the chances of diversions of flights at Delhi Airport will come down drastically. The Committee has also given recommendations for setting up of a procedure for dealing with stranded passengers if the flight is delayed or diverted at Delhi and other alternate airports.

Director General Civil Aviation Dr. Prabhat Kumar has written to heads of the various stakeholders to draw a definite timeline for the immediate implementation of various recommendations before the onset of next winter season.

Following are the recommendations made by the Committee:

1. Meteorological department should upgrade the meteorological facilities at IGIA and its designated alternate airports. In this regard, integration of meteorological data in one panel should be considered.
2. Additional RVR equipment should be installed wherever needed and a provision of live RVR for all the runways at IGIA be made at ATC Unit.
3. During fog, a dedicated fog forecast should be provided at three hour intervals for IGIA and alternate airports.
4. New equipment for measuring instantaneous low level wind, temperature, moisture content should be commissioned at IGIA for increasing accuracy of forecast (onset and lifting timings of fog).
5. Alternate airports near IGIA viz. Jaipur, Lucknow and Amritsar should be upgraded to Cat III B level.
6. ATC shall establish ATFM Unit to implement capacity adjustment and collaborative decision making procedures.
7. ATC shall provide proactive diversion management in coordination with meteorological department and other airport operators.
8. Airport operators shall not schedule any maintenance work at IGIA and alternate airports during the fog period unless it is unavoidable.
9. AAI shall ensure that required navigational aids are maintained in fully serviceable conditions both at IGIA and alternate airports during fog period.

10. ATC shall separate Cat I traffic from Cat II/III traffic as applicable for holding at Delhi. ATFM Unit shall decide when to suspend Cat I/II holding at Delhi.
11. ATC shall define specific trigger points for implementation of progressive flow control measures.
12. During fog season, operators shall not be allowed to file IGIA as alternate airport without prior permission of ATC.
13. AIP shall be amended to indicate that the term fuel emergency would not be recognised at Indian aerodromes.
14. DIAL shall ensure that all foreign carriers deploy only Cat IIIB compliant aircraft along with qualified flight crew during winter season subject to compliance of weekly capacity entitlements.
15. DIAL shall coordinate with AAI for issuance of NOTAM and AIP amendments for full implementation of Recommendation No. 13.
16. DIAL shall implement restrictions on use of APU at T3 IGIA with the objective of reducing pollution.
17. DIAL should identify and implement measures for reducing vehicular traffic at IGIA during low visibility operations.
18. DIAL shall make provision for container silage at IGIA in line with international practice.
19. Operators shall deploy only Cat IIIB compliant aircraft along with qualified flight crew during winter season to/from IGIA. For this purpose, operators must ensure adequate capacity build-up in terms of aircraft capability and crew qualification well in time before the onset of next fog season. All scheduled airlines shall provide their detailed Cat III status indicating aircraft and crew numbers through a consolidated return to DGCA every year.
20. During the fog period, operators shall indicate their take-off and landing minima in Item No. 18 of ICAO Flight Plan.
21. Operators shall provide their proposed schedule indicating aircraft Cat II/Cat III capability details one day prior to actual operations during the fog period. This information should reach ATC latest by 2200 hrs every day. Any tactical changes after filing the requisite information must be notified to ATC as soon as practicable.
22. DGCA shall amend regulations applicable to authorisation of aircraft and pilots for Cat II/III operations in line with major international regulations.
23. BCAS shall formulate and issue passenger deboarding procedure during delays in low visibility at both the terminals of IGIA.
24. Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for de-boarding of passengers shall be developed and implemented at IGIA during low visibility operations.
25. All stakeholders viz. DIAL, BCAS, airlines, ATC and GHAs shall coordinate towards development of joint SOP.
26. To effectively implement the strategies, a dedicated group of stakeholders be constituted to oversee fog related issues at IGIA.
27. Airlines, ATC and airport operators shall conduct a one day refresher training programme dedicated to low visibility operations for their concerned operations personnel. Regular pre-fog consultation and preparatory exercises involving all stakeholders shall be held well in advance before the commencement of fog season to duly assess the capabilities of the entire system and address any shortcomings.