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Air India Resumes US Flights After 5G Rollout Cancellations

Due to the 5G rollout, Air India had earlier cancelled more than eight flights to the USA.

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The News

- Flights to the United States from India resumed recently, as the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) cleared the landing of more aircraft even in low-visibility conditions, despite the rollout of C-band 5G technology.
- Following this announcement by FAA, Air India resumed flights from India to the US.

Why were the flights cancelled?

- On January 14 2022, the FAA warned that the rollout of new 5G technology by AT&T and Verizon in the allotted 3.7-3.98 GHz (gigahertz) band could potentially lead to interference with onboard instruments such as radar altimeters.
- Earlier, Commercial passenger and cargo airlines had also warned of an impending “catastrophic” aviation crisis if the rollout of 5G went ahead as planned.
- The Federation of Indian Pilots (FIP), with a strength of 6,000 pilots, has expressed concern over possible interference of 5G wireless signals with sensitive aircraft equipment such as radio altitude meters, threatening aviation safety.

Why were the flights cancelled?

- Air India announced it would not be operating eight India-US flights on the Delhi-New York, Delhi-Chicago, Delhi-San Francisco sectors, **"due to deployment of the 5G communications in the US"**.
- Besides AI, US-based American Airlines and Delta Airlines too, cancelled their flights.

What is the problem?

- The deployment of 5G by AT&T and Verizon in US triggered concern among airlines. In the in the US, **the auctioned 5G bandwidth in 2021 is in the 3.7-3.98 GHz range on the C-band spectrum range.**
- Airline said that the frequencies used by the telecom companies is very close to the frequencies used by **onboard instruments such as radar altimeters.**
- Altimeter is crucial to gauge the altitude and the distance covered. Altimeters along with global positioning system (GPS) are used to determine flight path, as well as factors such as height above sea level, presence of high rises, mountains, and other obstacles, and the likely flying time.
- **The radio or radar altimeter is a very small, low-power radar system that operates in the 4.2-4.4 GHz frequency microwave C-band.**

Is there chance of interference?

- According to industry experts, there are chances of interference of the two bands as telecom service operators (3.7-3.98 GHz), in order to extract the full value of 5G and give customers the best experience may push operations to the highest band possible.
- Altimeters too need to operate at higher frequencies (4.2-4.4 GHz) in order to get the most accurate readings possible.

Clearance from FAA

FAA Statements on 5G

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Visit our [5G and Aviation Safety page](#) for more information.

The FAA issued new approvals Thursday that allow an estimated 78 percent of the U.S. commercial fleet to perform low-visibility landings at airports where wireless companies deployed 5G C-band. This now includes some regional jets.

Airplane models with one of the 13 cleared altimeters include all Boeing 717, 737, 747, 757, 767, 777, 787, MD-10/-11; all Airbus A300, A310, A319, A320, A330, A340, A350 and A380 models; and some Embraer 170 and 190 regional jets.

The FAA is working diligently to determine which altimeters are reliable and accurate where 5G is deployed in the United States. We anticipate some altimeters will be too susceptible to 5G interference. To preserve safety, aircraft with those altimeters will be prohibited from performing low-visibility landings where 5G is deployed because the altimeter could provide inaccurate information.

*Now you must be thinking...
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Is it safe in India?

- In India, where 5G is yet to be rolled out, the frequency range for 5G telecoms operations is pegged around 3.3-3.68 GHz.
- It is learnt that the Federation of Indian Pilots has, in its meetings with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), expressed concern about the frequencies.
- The DoT assured them that there would be no interference as the frequencies for commercial 5G services were at least 530 MHz away from those used by altimeters.