MUMBAI: ANGRY AFTER AIR INDIA PILOT REPORTS LATE, FLIERS DEBOARD AIRCRAFT

News / Airlines

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AI pilot boarded aircraft 4 hours after scheduled departure time of Mumbai-Bhubaneshwar flight, passengers return to the terminal building from the aircraft in protest

The national carrier, Air India, that has been short-staffed and has been struggling to manage its operations, had to delay one of its flights on Thursday afternoon, as the pilot had not reported for duty. The flight was not only delayed for around four and half hours, but saw its passengers returning to the terminal building from the aircraft, in protest.

Pic for representation

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The flight, AI 669, that takes off from Terminal 2 for Bhubaneshwar at around 11.10 am, was delayed and could take off after 3.30 pm. Its 139 passengers had already boarded the aircraft, and according to airport officials, weren't given any reason for delay initially. An airline official said, "The passengers who were waiting at aerobridge 42 A for the boarding to begin, were asked to board the aircraft, but after boarding it, they learnt that the pilot hadn't reported to duty. It was then that the delayed passengers lost their cool and started to protest, coming out of the aircraft."

According to airport officials present at the spot, the passengers were furious when the reason of delay wasn't clearly mentioned to them, but kept their cool until they came to know that the pilot of the flight hadn't reported to work. "It was after they learnt this that they got out of the aircraft and created a ruckus at the aerobridge and few even entered the terminal," said an airport official. The pilot reported to duty at 3.25 pm and the aircraft, an Airbus A 321, pushed back at 3.30 pm.

While the pilot reached the airport late, sources say it wasn't the pilot but the airline who is at fault. "The airline is facing a shortage of pilots. Due to this the pilot doing the Mumbai-Bhubaneshwar sector comes from another station. If that aircraft is delayed then the consecutive flight too is automatically delayed. All the narrow patterns are made in such a way they try to utilize the crew for complete 8 hours. Hence the pilot comes from one station to Mumbai, jumps on to another flight, and then takes off for the next destination," said an ex-airline official.

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