

Air India fliers to London stranded for second time in a week

By Neha LM Tripathi, 04-Jan-2016, India

While the first time the Air India flight AI 131 was grounded was after a rat sighting aboard, on Sunday it was a technical snag

Air India's Ahmedabad-Mumbai-London flight is quickly turning into a dreaded route, with fliers being stranded for 12 hours or longer for the second time in less than a week.

In the first incident, a rat scare had forced the pilot to turn back to Mumbai after 2.5 hours of flying. Yesterday, however, the flight did not even get a chance to take off before a technical snag was declared. The two incidents took place on different aircraft.

AI 131 was to depart for London from Mumbai at 7 am, but was delayed due to a technical issue in the Dreamliner aircraft. Fliers were, at first, told they would be accommodated in an alternate flight, but this did not happen. They were finally allowed to board another flight at 5.30 pm, only to have to land in Delhi – the flight crew's duty time had come to an end. The flight usually reaches London in nine hours, but they remained stranded at Delhi airport till 9 pm.

One of the fliers, 18-year-old student Kashish Doshi, was to take a connecting flight from London to Vancouver where he studies Biotechnology, but he not only missed that flight but also the first day of college.

Describing it as the 'first and last time' he would ever try the national carrier, Kashish said, "I had a connecting flight to Vancouver from London so I could attend college from Monday. Because of Air India, I will now miss the first day of college. Thankfully, I decided to offload in Mumbai when they said they would take off at 5.30 pm. Had I not done that, I would have been struggling at Delhi airport."

Rat sighting

The year ended on a frustrating note for AI-131's passengers on December 30, who had already touched Iranian airspace after 2.5 hours of flying, after the pilot announced he was turning back. It was much later that they were told that a rat had been spotted onboard the aircraft, also a Dreamliner like yesterday's incident. In such cases, aircraft are supposed to be grounded and checked for any damages from gnawing. The passengers finally took off for London at 6.35 pm, over 11 hours after the original scheduled time (7 am). The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) later ordered a probe into the incident.