



In-Flight Unruly Behaviour of Passengers

For Prelims: [Directorate General of Civil Aviation \(DGCA\)](#), [FIR \(First Information Report\)](#), The Aircraft Act, 1934, [International Civil Aviation Organisation \(ICAO\)](#).

For Mains: Unruly Behaviour of Passengers in Flight.

Source: [IE](#)

Why in News?

Recently, IndiGo, an Indian airline, has started the procedure **to add a passenger to the no-fly list**. The individual **assaulted a pilot due to unruly behaviour after the flight faced significant delays** amid heavy fog in Delhi.

- The airline declared the passenger “Unruly”, and further action will be guided by the **Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) on “Handling of unruly passengers”** issued by the aviation watchdog [Directorate General of Civil Aviation \(DGCA\)](#).

What is Unruly Behaviour?

- **About:**
 - Unruly behaviour includes, but is not limited to, consuming alcohol or drugs resulting in disruptive behavior, smoking, not obeying pilot instructions, using threatening or abusive language, physically threatening or abusive behavior, intentional interference with crew duties, and endangering aircraft safety.
- **Levels of Disruptive/Unruly Behavior:**
 - **Level 1:** Verbal harassment, Physical gestures, Unruly inebriation.
 - **Level 2:** Physically abusive behaviour, including pushing, kicking, hitting, inappropriate touching, or sexual harassment.
 - **Level 3:** Life-threatening behaviour, such as damaging aircraft systems, physical violence, or attempting to breach the flight crew compartment.

How do Airlines Respond to Unruly Behaviour?

- **Response to Unruly Behaviour:**
 - The airline should inform passengers that **unruly behaviour could lead to arrest according to guidelines**.
 - In cases where the cabin crew cannot control an unruly passenger in-flight, the pilot must **assess the situation** and, if necessary, **land at the nearest available airport**.
 - Upon landing, an [FIR \(First Information Report\)](#) should be lodged with the concerned security agency, and the unruly passenger handed over to them.
- **Procedure After the Incident:**
 - The airline must **refer the complaint of unruly behaviour to an internal committee, including a retired district and sessions judge**, a representative of a different airline,

and a representative of a passengers' association.

- The **internal committee must decide on the matter within 30 days**, categorize the **incident into one of three defined levels**, and determine the duration of the ban on the unruly passenger.

▪ **Penalties for Unruly Behaviour:**

- The airline can impose an **immediate ban of up to 30 days**.
- **A No-Fly List is maintained by the DGCA** based on data shared by airlines.
- Other carriers can also ban passengers based on the offence level, with varying durations.

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Rising unruliness



Passengers put on no-fly list



Airlines that put the highest number on no-fly list

- IndiGo 46 (in 2022)
- Air India 27*

To place unruly passengers on no-fly list, Centre recently categorised unruly behaviour in three levels

Level 1

Unruly behaviour (physical gestures, verbal harassment, unruly inebriation, etc.)

Level 2

Physically abusive behaviour (pushing, kicking, hitting, grabbing or inappropriate touching or sexual harassment, etc.)

Air India penalised two times this year by DGCA for not reporting two incidents on its international flights

Level 3

Life-threatening behaviour (damage to aircraft operating systems, physical violence such as choking, eye gouging, murderous assault, attempt or breach of flight crew compartment, etc)

*Till July 15, 2023

What is the Size of India's Civil Aviation Market?

▪ **Passenger Traffic Growth:**

- India is the **third-largest aviation market globally**, trailing behind the United States and China.
- India's domestic air passenger traffic **hit a record high in 2023 (15.2 crore passengers)**, surpassing pre-pandemic levels (14.4 crore passengers in 2019).

▪ **Potential for Growth:**

- India's civil aviation market has significant growth potential, given the large population that

remains untapped. As more people join the middle class and air **travel becomes more accessible**, the demand for flights is expected to rise further.

▪ **Government Initiatives:**

- The Indian government has also taken steps to promote the aviation sector, such as the [UDAN \(Ude Desh Ka Aam Nagrik\) scheme](#), which aims to enhance **regional connectivity by making air travel affordable** and accessible to a broader population.

▪ **Forecasted Growth:**

- According to the [Directorate General of Civil Aviation \(DGCA\)](#), the outlook for **2024 suggests continued growth**, with estimates ranging from a **5% to 15% increase in domestic air traffic compared to 2023**.

What are the Rules Governing the Unruly Behaviour?

▪ **The Aircraft Rules, 1937:**

- The Aircraft Rules, 1937 were formed in pursuance of **the Aircraft Act, 1934**. The unruly passengers were governed under this Act conjointly read with the **Indian Penal Code, 1860**.
- This legislation lays down the ideal behaviour which is expected from the passengers.

▪ **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA):**

- The Directorate General of Civil Aviation is the principal regulatory body that primarily governs civil aviation in India. It is **responsible for dealing with safety issues, regulation of air transport services**, enforcement of civil air rules and regulations and other such tasks.
 - It also coordinates its functioning with the [International Civil Aviation Organisation \(ICAO\)](#). One of the main tasks of this body is to ensure air safety and airworthiness standards.

▪ **Montreal Protocol, 2014:**

- The Montreal Protocol of 2014 is an **amendment to the Tokyo Convention of 1963**. It specifically **addresses the issue of unruly behaviour on board aircraft**.
- The protocol enhances the legal framework for dealing with offenses and other acts committed on board aircraft.
- It **provides for the jurisdiction of the state in which the aircraft is registered** and gives that state the authority to take legal action against the offenders.
- **Tokyo Convention:**
 - The **Tokyo Convention (Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed on Board Aircraft)** was adopted in 1963.
 - It is an **international treaty that addresses unlawful acts on board civil aircraft**.
 - The convention grants **certain powers to the aircraft commander and other relevant authorities to deal with offenses committed on board**, especially during flight.

What Needs to Be Done to Contain Unruly Behaviour?

▪ **Montreal Protocol, 2014, and Tokyo Convention:**

- Prioritize the **ratification of international conventions such as the Montreal Protocol of 2014**, which amends the Tokyo Convention of 1963.
- Ratification establishes **a clear legal framework for dealing with offenses** and unruly behavior on board aircraft, ensuring uniformity in legal responses.

▪ **Operationalization of CAT III-Enabled Runways:**

- Expedite the **operationalization of (Category-III) CAT III-enabled runways at airports to enhance the capability to handle low visibility conditions**.
- Ensure that **relevant infrastructure and equipment** are in place to support CAT III operations.

▪ **Issuance of SOP by DGCA:**

- Direct the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (**DGCA**) to **issue a comprehensive**

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for better communication and facilitation of passengers **during adverse weather conditions.**

- The SOP should **focus on minimising passenger discomfort in the event of flight cancellations and delays**, providing clear guidelines for airlines, airports, and ground handling agencies.

▪ **Improved Communication Protocols:**

- Establish **robust communication protocols** between airlines, airports, and passengers to provide timely and accurate information about flight status and delays.
- **Utilise modern communication channels**, including mobile apps, SMS, and social media, to keep passengers informed.

▪ **Crew Training on Handling Unruly Passengers:**

- Conduct **specialised training programs for airline crews** to handle unruly passengers effectively and de-escalate potential conflicts.
- Enhance crew awareness of legal frameworks and procedures for reporting and managing unruly behavior.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Examine the development of Airports in India through joint ventures under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model. What are the challenges faced by the authorities in this regard? **(2017)**

Q. International civil aviation laws provide all countries complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above their territory. What do you understand by 'airspace'? What are the implications of these laws on the space above this airspace? Discuss the challenges which this poses and suggest ways to contain the threat. **(2014)**

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