

Hoax bomb threats plague airlines with flights diverted and fighters scrambled

Agence France-Presse in New Delhi

More than 70 fake bomb threats were made against flights operated by multiple Indian airlines last week, Indian media reported yesterday, sparking fear among passengers and global delays.

All flights landed safely, but the spate of threats has resulted in planes being diverted to Canada and Germany, and fighter jets scrambled to escort aircraft in the skies above Britain and Singapore.

India's government and civil aviation authorities warned that "very strict action" would be taken.

New Delhi's civil aviation authorities have not said how many threats have been received, but the Times of India and broadcaster News18 reported more than 70 hoaxes targeting domestic and international flights since October 13.

At least 30 hoax threats were made on Saturday alone.

The global impact of delays and diversions has been heavy on airline schedules and costs.

At least one person – a minor – has been arrested in India, but the threats have continued.

"All others responsible for the disruptions will be identified and duly prosecuted," India's aviation minister Ram Mohan Naidu said after the arrest on Wednesday.

A report in The Indian Express said an account on the X platform was suspended after posting bomb threats to at least 40 flights on Friday and Saturday.



Air India flights were among those targeted by the hoaxes.

70

More than this many hoax bomb threats have been made against multiple Indian domestic and international flights in the past week

This included Indian and international airlines, including from the United States and New Zealand.

"There are bombs placed on board ... No one will make [it] out alive. Hurry up and evacuate the plane," read the identical messages from the suspended account, The Indian Express reported.

Among recent flights affected was an Air India flight from Mumbai to New York, with US security officials sweeping the plane after its safe landing on Saturday.

Other flights affected included an Air India plane from Delhi to Chicago, which was forced to make an emergency landing in the far northern Canadian city of Iqaluit on Tuesday.

Canada's air force had to fly the passengers on.

On the same day, Singapore scrambled fighter jets to escort an Air India Express plane.

On Thursday, British RAF fighter jets escorted an Air India Boeing 777-300 after a threat was made against the plane, which landed safely in London.

On Friday, a Vistara flight from Delhi to London had to divert to Frankfurt in Germany.