AIRLINES ISSUE INFORMAL WARNING TO PILOTS: 'AVOID LANDING IN PAKISTAN'

News / Airlines



Airlines have "informally" asked its pilots to avoid landing in Pakistan unless there is an "emergency" situation such as engine failure or fire on-board.

In the wake of the current hostile situation between India and Pakistan, pilots have been asked to opt for Oman or United Arab Emirates, when flying overseas or heading to Delhi, Mumbai or Ahmedabad on domestic flights.

"Flight despatchers are asking that Pakistani airports be avoided for emergency landings if possible. These instructions have not come in writing, but verbally. Making an emergency landing in Pakistan is the last resort for us in an extreme emergency," a pilot, who regularly operates international flights, was quoted as saying by the Economic Times.

Almost all flights from central and east India, which fly to Europe, Gulf region and America fly over Pakistan.

For flights that are west-bound, the closest "emergency" landing airports are in Muscat, Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. "Iran and Afghanistan, though the immediate neighbours of Pakistan are considered less of an alternative," a route planner with a domestic airline told the daily.

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Several "informal instructions" have also been issued in the past due to deteriorating relations with Pakistan. The instructions came after the 1999 Kandahar hijacking incident, 9/11 and 26/11 Mumbai terror attack.

In the aftermath of the Uri attack that left 19 soldiers dead, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) was "considering" suspending all aviation ties with Pakistan. The move is seen as a step to increase pressure on the neighbour country.

None of the major Indian carriers, including IndiGo, SpiceJet, Jet Airways, Go Air or Air India, fly to Pakistan. However, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) operates five services every week to India. In 2001, the Indian government had suspended aviation ties with the neighbour country after the Parliament terror attack.

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