

## In the air: on the no-fly list

The Centre's decision to put unruly air passengers on a [no-fly list ranging from three months to a lifetime](#), depending upon the gravity of the offence, is stringent but welcome. The list will be maintained by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation, and be put in the public domain. The quantum of punishment is to be decided by an internal committee of the airline in question based on evidence produced by both the airline and the passenger within 30 days, during which time the passenger would not be allowed to fly. No compensation will be offered to the passenger in case the allegations of the airline are proven wrong. Aggrieved passengers can appeal within 60 days to an appellate committee. Other airlines will not, however, be bound by one airline's no-fly ban. The no-fly list provisions look stringent, empowering airlines to impose strict penalties in case of alleged misbehaviour or graver offences by passengers. But in the case of India, these appear necessary in particular because of a widespread culture of entitlement, especially among 'VIPs', and growing incidents of air rage. The new rules are, specifically, a response to the recent case of unruly and [violent behaviour by Shiv Sena MP Ravindra Gaikwad](#) on board an Air India plane six months ago. There have been other recent incidents of 'VIP' misbehaviour with airline staff — both in the air and on the ground. In Mr. Gaikwad's case, Air India had imposed a temporary no-fly ban, which was [subsequently withdrawn](#) after a grudging apology from him. Existing guidelines and rules on unruly behaviour did not have provisions for a no-fly ban, necessitating these rules.

Defusing air rage: Airlines should take a tough line against unruly VIP behaviour

The no-fly list system, which has been adopted by other countries too, is a relatively new development in civil aviation. Care must be taken by the airlines to ensure that the imposition of the no-fly ban is used as the last resort; ideally, it should remain in the books as a deterrent. While incidents of egregious behaviour by VIPs and unruly passengers have not been isolated events, passenger anger has also been a consequence of airline inefficiencies. The record of some airlines in ensuring service on time and avoiding over-booking of tickets that result in last-minute cancellation of tickets is not satisfactory. Airlines must be careful not to hold out the threat of the no-fly list to keep passenger frustration in check, and thereby evade giving a full explanation for their mistakes. Thanks to lower fuel prices and profitability, the civil aviation industry in India is in a phase of recovery and stability following a shakeout. This is a good time for airlines to enhance their reach and service and keep prices competitive as more Indians take to air travel. While this is a guaranteed way to keep both passenger angst and air rage in check, preventive measures such as a no-fly list should be enforced only for the most egregious of cases.

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