

Alarmed ATC calls as jet drops 5,000ft

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New Delhi: The spectre of "sleeping pilots" seems to be back to haunt Indian flyers. A Jet Airways aircraft winging its way from Mumbai to Brussels last Friday suddenly dropped 5,000 feet in the Ankara airspace over Turkey.

At the time of the incident, the commander of the Boeing 777 was taking 'controlled rest', which means a nap as per rules. The aviation regulator is probing if the co-pilot too had dozed off.

The co-pilot, who was supposed to hold fort in the cockpit, claims she was busy on her tablet and did not notice that the aircraft had lost altitude. It took a call from an alarmed Ankara ATC, asking

40 WINKS AT 34,000FT

► Jet Airways flight from Mumbai to Brussels suddenly falls 5,000ft while flying over Ankara

► Ankara ATC asks plane to immediately revert to assigned height of 34,000 feet

► Pilot was taking scheduled



nap while co-pilot says she was on her tablet when drop took place

► DGCA probing if co-pilot too had dozed off

► DGCA terms it 'serious incident'. Plane had dropped to a height assigned to another aircraft

why 9W-228 had moved away from its assigned flight level of 34,000 feet, for the situation to be rectified.

European ATCs in particular have become particular about aircraft sticking to their flight path in this ultra-

sensitive region. Besides, other aircraft had been assigned the flight level to which Jet's B-777-300 had descended.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) got to know about this incident on Tuesday when its joint DG

AirAsia offers 20% discount till Dec

Budget carrier AirAsia India became the latest airline on Wednesday to hop onto the I-Day discount wagon, giving 20% off on all seats on all flights booked between Bangalore and Chennai; Kochi, Goa and vice versa. The tickets will have to be booked by August 17 for travel between till December 14. **P 17**

Lalit Gupta got an 'anonymous SMS about the "level burst", or uncontrolled descent. The two pilots were summoned and have been grounded pending inquiry.

► DGCA begins probe, P 17

DGCA begins investigation into 'serious incident'

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In its emergency communication, Ankara ATC asked the Jet aircraft to immediately ascend to 32,000 feet as this region's airspace has become very busy in recent days with airlines avoiding nations like Iraq and Ukraine. The co-pilot immediately woke up the commander and he yoked the aircraft to 32,000 feet.

On Tuesday evening, Jet confirmed the incident to Lalit Gupta, who is in charge of flight safety in the DGCA. The DGCA summoned both to initiate a probe into the "serious incident". The two have been grounded pending investigation. Jet has also started an internal probe.

"The commander was taking controlled rest, which means he was sleeping as per global airline norms where pilots take rest in the cockpit by turn on long flights. The co-pilot, who was supposed to ensure that the aircraft flew steadily on its assigned path, told DGCA investigators that she was on her electronic flight bag—a tablet that has all aircraft documents loaded on to it. She did not realize that the aircraft had dropped below its assigned level," said a source.

The DGCA is probing how the plane dropped 5,000 feet without the co-pilot realizing it.