

The Standard WORLD

Sports. McIlroy withdraws from RBC event. Page 45



Air travel chaos looms as USA keeps 5G altimeter refit deadline

► Airlines say they will not be able to meet the July 1 deadline.

► Some may be forced to ground planes.

MAX MATZA, BBC

The US will not delay a deadline for airlines to refit planes with new sensors to address possible 5G interference, despite concerns the cut-off date could cause travel disruption. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said on Tuesday that airlines were told the July 1 deadline remained in place. Airlines have warned that they will not be able to meet the deadline and may be forced to ground some planes.

Telecoms firms have previously delayed 5G rollout to allow airlines to adapt. In the US, the radio frequencies being used for 5G are in part of the spectrum known as C-Band. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and aviation companies have previously raised concerns that C-Band spectrum 5G wireless could interfere with aircraft altimeters, which measure a plane's height above the ground.

In a call with airline companies on Tuesday, Buttigieg called on them to work aggressively to retrofit their planes before the deadline, according to the Reuters news agency.

Concerns about 5G interference led to some disruptions at US airports last year.

Major tech companies, like Verizon and AT&T agreed last year to delay the rollout of 5G technology until July 1, 2023 to allow airlines time to retrofit their altimeters. The decision came after several other previous delays.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), a trade group representing more than 100 airlines that fly in and out of the US, has said that the decision to not extend the deadline makes summer disruptions more likely.

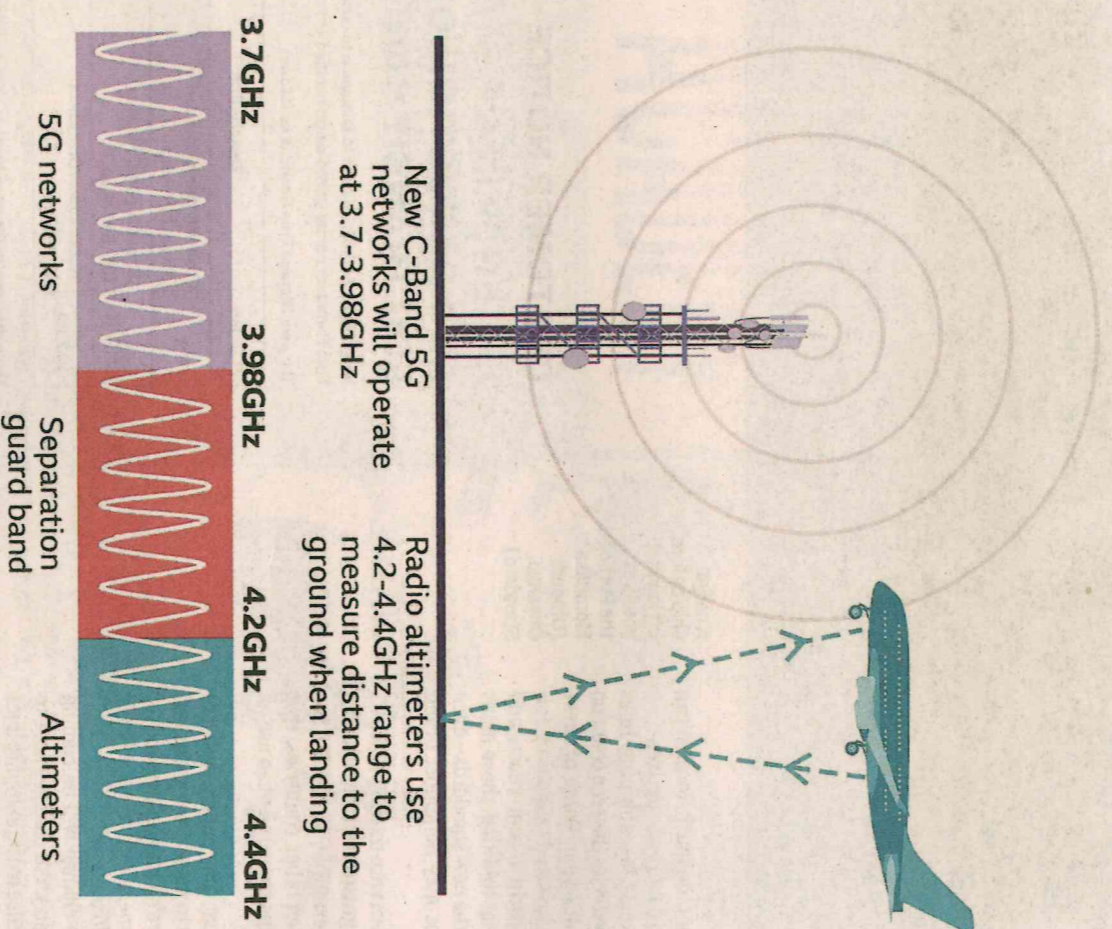
"Supply chain issues make it unlikely that all aircraft can be upgraded by the 1 July deadline, threatening operational disruptions during the peak northern summer travel season," the organisation said, adding that the estimated cost to upgrade planes is \$638 million (Sh86.86 billion).

"Airlines did not create this situation. They are victims of poor government planning and coordination," Nick Careen, from IATA, said.

Airlines have previously said they want 5G signals to be excluded from "the approximate two miles of airport runways at affected airports as defined by the FAA".

Phone companies have spent tens of billions of dollars on upgrading their networks to deploy the 5G technology, which they say brings much faster internet services and greater connectivity. Technology companies have said 5G is safe

New 5G spectrum in US faces resistance from aviation industry



Source: Federal Communications Commission,

and have accused the aviation industry of fear-mongering and distorting facts.

In the EU, networks operate at lower frequencies than those which US providers are planning to use - reducing the risk of interference. 5G masts can also operate at lower power. Nevertheless, some countries have taken further steps to reduce possible risks.

In France, there are so-called "buffer zones" around airports where 5G signals are restricted, while antennas have to be tilted downwards to prevent potential interference.

The UK's Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has said "there have been no confirmed instances where 5G interference has resulted in aircraft system malfunction or unexpected behaviour". But it has stressed that "different national

Radio altimeters use 4.2-4.4GHz range to measure distance to the ground when landing

FILE

mobile telecommunication strategies may mean that some (countries) have a higher threat exposure than others".

In a separate development, the FAA on Tuesday proposed new rules for many Boeing aircrafts due to the possibility of new 5G interference. The proposed rules affect nearly 20,000 planes worldwide. They require revised flight manuals, bans on some landings, and new operating procedures for landings and approaches when dealing with 5G interference.

A representative for Boeing told Reuters that the company "continues to work with suppliers, regulators, the airlines and telecom companies to ensure long-term stability and help mitigate operational restrictions where possible".

SOUTHERN AFRICA Mswati hails Zimbabwe's key projects

King Mswati III was left impressed by ongoing development projects in Zimbabwe including the new Parliament building in Mt Hampden during his tour of the southern African nation that ended yesterday.

He said Eswatini, which is also building a new parliament, would send a team to Harare to benchmark King Mswati, who spoke after touring the new Parliament building, accompanied by Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa noted that the progress the country had made was worth emulating.

"We have been very pleased to see the level of development since we came here. I have visited many parts of Zimbabwe," he said.

"We started off in Victoria Falls, we came to Harare and we went to Bulawayo, where we officially opened the trade fair (Zimbabwe International Trade Fair) there."

Projects that have an enduring legacy, he said are cherished by all.

"We need such buildings in Africa. The people of Zimbabwe will always appreciate this infrastructure. This is one of the legacies of the Government that they will leave behind. People will always want to know what has the leadership done for them and for Zimbabweans, this will be a testimony," Mswati said.

"We are in the process of designing our own Parliament, we have already started work on the fencing of the area design. We will send our team here to come and share expertise. This is the kind of Parliament...will be able to conduct an government business and come up with solutions to all the challenges country is facing.

Mnangagwa said the good relationship between Zimbabwe and Eswatini stretches back to the struggle for independence.

"I am happy that King Mswati has come to visit this once-magnificent but now majestic Parliament building. He is the first Head of State to come and visit this building, and from today we call it the majestic Parliament of Zimbabwe.

The President also said the Swazi royal family provided invaluable support during the liberation struggle. [Agencies]



King Mswati III with Zimbabwe President Emmerson Mnangagwa. [Courtesy]