

**Restriction on check in baggage**

\*81. SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a private airline has restricted the number of pieces of check-in baggage to one weighing 15 kilograms or less for economy class passengers;

(b) whether Government would intervene and direct the airline to revert to the earlier system of restricting the check in baggage to 15 kilograms irrespective of the number of pieces for the benefit of the economy class passengers; and

(c) what is the current status of Government's directions in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SURESH PRABHU): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the table of the House.

***Statement***

(a) Scheduled domestic airlines put no restriction on the number of the check-in baggage except Jet Airways. Effective 15 July 2018, Jet Airways has restricted the number of pieces of check-in baggage to one, weighing 15 kilograms or less.

(b) and (c) Travel by air is a contractual matter between airline and passenger, which is commercial in nature. However, with a view to make basic fare more affordable, the Government issued Air Transport Circular (ATC) 01 of 2013, wherein the airlines were allowed to unbundle certain services and fees, which were previously included in the airfare. The said circular provided consumer an option of paying for the services which he/she wishes to avail on opt-in basis. These service include:-

1. Preferential seating
2. Meal/snack/drink charges (except drinking water)
3. Charges for using airline lounges
4. Check-in baggage charges
5. Sport equipment charges
6. Musical instrument carriage
7. Fee for special declaration of valuable baggage (allow for higher unit on carrier liability)

Hon'ble Delhi High Court in its order dated 16.08.2017 in W.P.(C) 5756/2016 and CM 23726/2016 has stated that DGCA has only been empowered to intervene,

if certain regulatory principles are violated. Thus, the power of DGCA is limited to interdict the separate charging of a product, if the regulatory principles such as opt-in, non-discrimination and transparency are violated. In view of the above, the Hon'ble court has stated that DGCA cannot determine the tariff for a specified flight product. Since, they are to be determined by market forces.

Also, a draft Passenger Charter incorporating rights for air passengers was released on 22.05.2018 for public consultation. The draft Passenger Charter includes measures in the areas of delays and cancellations of flights, denied boarding due to overbooking, cancellation of tickets by passenger, name change on the ticket and lock-in period of ticket and various facilities at airport.

SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY: Sir, I may be a sitting MP now, presently, but I belong to a middle class family from Odisha, and I understand very well how difficult it is for a middle class family person when he or she has to fly from one place to another at high rates of fares. Today, my question is very straight and specific. On the one side, the Government is wanting to multiply the services provided to the passengers, travelling by flights, improving the quality of services, and also multiplying the number of passengers who fly. ...*(Interruptions)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your question?

SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY: Sir, my question here is this. Please tell me the relevance of restricting the number of pieces of check-in baggage without reducing the weight. सर, अगर मुझे दो चीजें लेनी हैं और दोनों को मुझे अलग-अलग बैगेजेज में पैक करके लेना है, मैं उसको एक बैग में ले ही नहीं सकता। So, how can a private airline force me and put a rule in front of me that I am allowed to carry only one piece and I am not allowed to take another luggage with me?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, there is only one airline, Jet Airways, which has put a restriction. Just for the information of the House, there was a circular issued way back in 2013 rightly so unbundling the services the airlines could offer so that the basic fare that the airlines charge to the passenger could be lower over a period of time because all value added services, other services could be charged separately including the baggage. Subsequently, the matter was challenged in the hon. High Court, which has directed that the Director General of Civil Aviation has a very limited power to get into this. But because you have pointed out to us about this 15 kg issue, which is absolutely right, the limit of 15 kg is understandable but why not two bags. So we will definitely look into this. I assure the House. This is a very important issue.

SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY: Sir, my second supplementary is this. Sir, whenever I fly from Odisha to whichever place in India, I get to hear the air hostesses or stewards in the flight speaking. फ्लाइट में जो भी अभी air hostesses हैं, if they are comfortable in speaking English, Hindi, Assamese or Bengali... *...(Interruptions)...*

MR. CHAIRMAN: What is your question? *...(Interruptions)...* More people get the chance; otherwise, I have no problem. *...(Interruptions)...*

SHRI ANUBHAV MOHANTY: Sir, my question is this. यह प्रोविजन इसलिए आपने रखा है, ताकि पैसेंजर्स को कुछ सुविधाएं मिलें, जो अंग्रेजी और हिन्दी नहीं जानते हैं और वे अपनी रीजनल भाषा में बात कर पाएं। सर, यह provision आपने इसलिए किया है, ताकि पैसेंजर्स को वे सुविधाएं मिलें, जो हिन्दी और अंग्रेजी नहीं जानते हों, वे अपनी regional भाषाओं में बात कर पाएं, but, till today, I have never heard any air hostess speaking or any announcement being made that we know Odia also. Any passenger speaking in Odia, can communicate with us. Will the Government take a drive to get air hostesses speaking Odia, or, those air hostesses and stewards who are appointed there in the flights learn Odia also? This is my question, and this is also a suggestion from my side to the Government.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, for the information of the hon. Member, the Government has not appointed any such air hostesses. I know that this is a very important issue that the sensitivity of the people and passengers has to be always taken into account by the airline. We will definitely advise airlines to make sure that the regional languages also are used by the staff when they make an announcement, and particularly, in Odia. I am also fond of Odia.

SHRI V. VIJAYASAI REDDY: Sir, my question is relating to the services that are being provided to the elderly passengers who have less energy to run from one counter to another counter in an airport. Sir, I would like to know one thing from the hon. Minister. Do the airports have adequate and efficient arrangements to provide services to the elderly passengers whose bags are missing and misplaced ?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, there are a lot of challenges which the passengers do face because of the exponential increase in the overall airline traffic which is going at 20 per cent, and India is the market which is going at the highest in the world in terms of more and more passengers joining the air travel experience. So, it is always possible. In view of this, we have picked up a Charter of Passengers Rights on 22nd of May, which is a vast Charter, which is already offered to the people for comments. We will be very happy to include this. But, the point is well taken that elderly people like me, must not be subjected to any challenge.

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS: Sir, I appreciate the fact that the hon. Minister has taken note of the fact of adding more number of pieces of luggage. I appreciate this. But, Sir, I would like to know the total number of complaints received by the airlines from the passengers in relation to the baggage, and also the compensation given to them. I would like to know about the details of it.

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, as a Ministry, we are coming out with a very forward looking idea, which is called 'digi yatra' which will ensure that entire life cycle of air travel will be used through a very different technology so that entire issues, including the baggage-handling and everything will be properly addressed. This is under trial, and we will be launching it soon. I will take the House into confidence at a time when we are appropriately ready to launch it, and I am sure this will give us a different kind of experience as we will be one of the top leaders in terms of offering this service to the people.

SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA: Sir, the question here is of carrying baggage by air passengers, and I may mention here that a lot of air passengers travel from the North Eastern region to Delhi and other places. I am happy that the hon. Minister has increased the number of flights. Now, there is no dearth of flights to travel. So, most of the travellers from that region are either students coming for the studies, or, patients who come for treatment. So, the baggage that is allowed is not sufficient to carry, and they cannot pay more. Will the Minister review it and make the baggage a little larger, as suggested by the hon. Member, 20 kgs. or 25 kgs. so that the students and patients do not suffer?

SHRI SURESH PRABHU: Sir, the suggestion given by the hon. Member is noted. We will just look into it.

#### **Illegal migrants from Bangladesh**

\*82. SHRI RIPUN BORA: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether it is a fact that Bangladesh has agreed to take back a number of infiltrators who are in various detention camps of North-Eastern States;
- (b) if so, the number of deported illegal foreign migrants in such camps;
- (c) the details of proposal from Bangladesh to take back illegal migrants; and
- (d) the timeline by which the migrants would return to Bangladesh?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI KIREN RIJJU): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.