

**DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND CULTURE**

**Two Hundred Fifty Sixth Report on the "Issues related to improving consumers'  
satisfaction of airlines"**

Two Hundred Fifty Sixth Report of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture on "Issues related to improving consumers' satisfaction of airlines" was presented to both the Houses of Parliament on the 4<sup>th</sup> January, 2018. The Committee consisting of 31 Members of Parliament is chaired by **Shri Derek O'Brien, M.P.**

The major points discussed in the Report are Pricing of Air tickets; Behaviour of Airlines staff; Training of Airlines staff; Problems at check-in counters; Quality of food served; Seating space in the aircraft; Unserviceable seats; Cancellation charges; Facilities for persons with disability; Frisking of passengers; E-boarding facility; Clean toilets at the airports; Complaints redressal mechanism; Immigration counters; Airport infrastructure; Erroneous practice of "non-uniform block time"; Availability of slots / bilateral; and Corporate social responsibility.

The major recommendations/observations of the Committee are as under:-

1. The Committee noted that around festivals and for bookings made closer to the date of travel, some airlines are charging more than ten times of the advance booking fare. The Committee observed that this is arbitrary. The Ministry of Civil Aviation, though aware of the rampant exploitation, is not showing any proactive role in regulating the airfares. The Committee, therefore, recommended the Ministry of Civil Aviation to consider fixing an upper limit of the air tickets for every sector.

(Para 8)

2. The Committee noted that recently there were many incidents of manhandling, discourteous and rude behavior by airlines staff, both ground staff and cabin crew. The Committee emphasizes that the arrogant behavior of employees should stop. The Committee, keeping in view the recent incidents of misbehavior of airlines staff including the manhandling of a passenger by staff of Indigo Airlines, emphasizes on the need for soft skills training and functionality training for all employees across airlines.

(Paras 9, 12 & 16)

3. The Committee desires that the employees be provided training in order to effectively manage crisis situations such as delay in flight take-off, delay in landing, diversion of flights etc. Further, training should also be given to the airlines staff to sensitize them to meet the needs of

persons with disability. Intensive training should be given to the crew and staff to extend courteous and decent behavior to the passengers.

(Para 17)

4. The Committee desired that the Government should come up with a training programme suitable to Indian conditions emphasizing on the courteous behavior to the passengers. The Committee recommended that the Government should formulate the guidelines for such training programmes applicable to all the airlines, at the earliest.

(Para 18)

5. The Committee noted that the check-in process and collection of luggage are cumbersome and time consuming. The Committee recommended that arrangements be made to ensure that the passenger does not spend more than 10 minutes in a queue at the check-in counter to get a boarding pass. AAI and the other airport operators may provide adequate number of check-in counters and self checking kiosks at the airports. The Government should also ensure that if a passenger is denied boarding due to rush at the counter or due to overbooking, the passenger may be compensated adequately and he/she may be sent in an alternative flight.

(Para 20 & 22)

6. The Committee desired that e-boarding facility should be made available to passengers at all airports.

(Para 25)

7. The Committee was informed that there are great difficulties in getting water and food in low cost airlines especially in Indigo. The Committee, therefore, recommended that Indigo and other low cost airlines should take adequate steps to ensure that food is available to the passengers on demand especially to those who are having some medical conditions.

(Para 27)

8. Every airline should maintain the highest quality of food and they should also change the menu occasionally. The Committee recommends that random audits of the catering kitchens should be held to ensure quality, quantity and hygiene and that feedback from customers may also be taken into account. The cost of food may be separately printed on the ticket.

(Para 28)

9. The Committee has been informed by all airlines that no unserviceable seats are being offered to passengers. However, the Committee has noted that unserviceable seats are in fact offered to passengers and complaints made to the cabin crew in this regard have gone unheeded. The airlines should take an initiative to ensure that unserviceable seats are either replaced or repaired at the earliest. Monetary compensation may be given to the affected passengers who are offered the unserviceable seats. The Government should formulate a policy to restrict the use of unserviceable seats.

(Para 31)

10. The Committee noted that cancellation charges levied by private airlines are arbitrarily set. The airlines must be restricted to charging not more than 50% of the base fare as cancellation charges. The tax and fuel surcharge collected should be refunded to the passengers on cancellation of tickets. The Committee desires that DGCA may conduct periodic checks to

ensure that the cancellation charges are not a burden on consumers. The cancellation charges may be printed prominently in the ticket itself and not as a fine print. Norms for cancellation should be given more publicity through posters and websites.

(Paras 40 & 41)

11. With regard to differently abled persons, the Committee recommends the Ministry to reissue guidelines reiterating already existing guidelines, hence ensuring strict compliance by all the airlines. If needed, the schemes and guidelines may be strengthened for the smooth travel of differently abled persons.

(Para 42)

12. The Committee recommends that cleanliness should be given utmost importance by AAI and various other airport operators and they should take effective steps to ensure that toilets at the airports should be maintained in a clean and tidy manner. The Government of India should also monitor the quality of the toilets of all the airports.

(Para 46)

13. Air Sewa Application should be improved and the App may be advertised to ensure that every passenger is aware of the existence of the App. Every grievance redressal mechanism of the Airlines may be integrated with the Air Sewa App of the Government so that better monitoring can be done.

(Para 48)

14. The Committee is of the view that a proper complaints redressal mechanism should be in place with all airlines. The complaints received from the customers should be redressed in a time bound manner. It should be ensured that the complaints have been redressed to the satisfaction of the customers. The details of the complaint redressal mechanism should be adequately advertised and printed bold in the tickets of the airlines.

(Para 49)

15. The Committee noted that due to 'non-uniform block time', the passengers often have to spend more time on board the aircraft. The practice of 'non-uniform block time' is obviously not desirable. The Committee, therefore, recommended that all the airlines may follow uniform block time. The Committee also recommended that a co-ordinated effort should be made by Air Traffic Control, Airports Authority of India, Airport operators and Airlines for maintaining punctuality in air services.

(Para 57)

16. The Committee recommended that all bilateral rights may be directly linked with the slots being given to the Indian carriers in foreign destinations. The Committee recommended that the Ministry should thoroughly examine this issue of making slots available to the Indian airlines and ensure that airlines of India get fair allocations.

(Para 60)

17. The Committee notes with dismay that the Government has adopted the open sky policy without laying down the necessary guidelines, rules and regulations to control the activities of the airlines. The consumers are at the receiving end and at the mercy of the private airlines for any kind of services. The Committee is not clear who fixes the standards and what are the

standards, be it training, quality of food, amenities to passengers, behavior of airlines staff, quality of seats, cancellation charges, pricing of air tickets etc. The Committee desires that the Government should wake up from its slumber and perform their duties to save the airline passengers from the vices and to make the air travel an enjoyable experience for them. Civil Aviation and Airlines industry is service industry and any service industry has to be user friendly and customer friendly.

(Para 62)

(The full report is available on the website of Rajya Sabha <http://www.rajyasabha.nic.in>-Committees-Department related RS-Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture-Report).

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