

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION
Rajya Sabha
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. : 1131
TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 10th March 2025
CHARGING OF EXORBITANT AIRFARES DURING THE
PRAYAGRAJ MAHA KUMBH

1131. SHRI PARIMAL NATHWANI

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:-

(a) whether Government is aware of instances of airlines charging exorbitant airfares during Prayagraj Maha Kumbh, thereby exploiting pilgrims and visitors;

(b) if so, the details of such instances reported, along with steps taken to monitor and regulate airfare pricing during such large-scale religious events;

(c) whether Government has mechanism to prevent surge pricing by airlines during peak travel periods for major events like Maha Kumbh;

(d) number of complaints, if any, received in this regard during last Maha Kumbh; and

(e) measures being undertaken to ensure that affordable travel options are available for devotees and tourists attending such events in future?

ANSWER

Minister of State in the Ministry of CIVIL AVIATION
(Shri Murlidhar Mohol)

(a) to (e): Regular consultations are held with airlines and airlines are sensitized to exercise moderation/ self- regulation while fixing the airfares and to keep passengers' interest in mind.

As the Maha Kumbh peak days approached, especially during the Shahi Snans and other important Snans, major airlines increased the number of flights to Prayagraj in Uttar Pradesh to check the surge in airfares for the Maha Kumbh event. Initially there were 51 flights per week to/from Prayagraj connecting 08 cities which were increased by 482 additional new flights per week connecting 18 cities with approximately 70,000 weekly passengers to Prayagraj from across India.

The issue of airfares in Prayagraj caught the attention of the Government and after interactions with airlines the airfares to/from Prayagraj saw a decline.

The airlines have committed to ensure that airfares do not surge during events such as natural disasters, calamities, pandemic, Mahakumbh etc.

Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has setup a Tariff Monitoring Unit (TMU) that monitors airfares on select domestic sectors on random basis by using airlines' websites on monthly basis to ensure that the airlines do not charge airfares outside the range declared by them.

The airfares are dynamic in nature and follow the principle of demand & supply. The trends in airfare prices in India exhibit considerable seasonality, prevailing fuel price, the capacity of the aircraft operating on the route, competition on the sector, season, holidays, festivals, long weekends, events (sports, fairs, contests) etc. The months of May and June experience heightened traffic, with a notable peak in international travel commencing in mid-July, which concurrently influences domestic demand. From July to September, there is typically a decline in travel activity due to the

monsoon season. Nevertheless, the arrival of the festive season in October, particularly during the celebration of Diwali, triggers a notable resurgence in travel demand. By mid-January, travel demand begins to wane, continuing its decline until the final week of April. Following this period, a renewed interest in travel coincides with the summer holidays, contributing to an increase in demand once again.

Besides this, the pricing of airfares is significantly influenced by operational constraints at airports. Routes experiencing high tourist demand, are subject to limitations imposed by terrain, weather conditions, and restricted operating hours. The combination of constrained capacity and elevated demand leads to fluctuations in airfares.

Airfares are not subject to regulation by the Government and airlines have the flexibility to determine their airfares based on their operational needs, while adhering to Rule 135 of the Aircraft Rules, 1937. While the government generally refrains from regulating airfares to maintain market competitiveness, however, it remains vigilant, and the Government intervenes to shift capacity from one sector to another to prevent exorbitant pricing to ensure passenger comfort and welfare.
