

## No physical frisking at airports, MPs demand

Indian parliamentarians want private airport developers to install the latest scanning machines so that passengers are not subjected to the 'unpleasant' and 'often embarrassing' ordeal of physical frisking.

Members of the consultative committee on civil aviation headed by minister Praful Patel met Wednesday and said they had 'serious reservations' about physical frisking, informed sources said.

'You have privatised airports; so why can't airport developers install modern equipment to avoid this?' Madhu Goud Yaskhi, Congress MP from Nizamabad, reportedly asked.

Yaskhi is believed to have pointed out that no other airport in the world uses the hand-held scanner anymore.

'All over the world, passengers have to undergo physical frisking only if the scanner beeps. But here, security personnel make you go through the uncomfortable and often embarrassing process in any case,' the MP was quoted saying in the meeting.

He said he was not seeking exception only for MPs, but was speaking for all passengers who had undergo the 'unpleasant ordeal during which even your private parts are not spared'.

The members also asked the government what steps it was taking to improve the market share of national carrier Air India, which is currently number three behind Kingfisher and Jet Airways.

'The MPs pointed out that there had been no change in the menu nor any move to ascertain passenger feedback to improve services,' said an insider in the ministry.

One parliamentarian apparently said a domestic business class passenger paid an exorbitant amount, which could probably fund an international trip. But in Air India, business class passengers have to make do with the same old menu and services, while other private airlines provide attendants and specially-prepared food.

Members of the panel also persisted with their demand that low-alcohol drinks like wine and beer be introduced on domestic flights.

'(Congress MP) Rajiv Shukla has raised this issue in the last meeting. We would like to know what happened to the demand?' one MP is said to have asked.

The minister responded by saying the matter was 'under serious consideration'.

Alcohol can be served on Air India's international flights. Private airlines like Kingfisher have recently been lobbying for permission to serve liquor on domestic flights. The UB group, which owns Kingfisher Airlines, is also the world's third largest producer of spirits.

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