

Travel agents want commission system back, transaction fee to go

Travel agents associations Thursday called on air operators to withdraw the transaction fee system they introduced Nov 1 and reinstate the earlier five percent travel agents' commission.

The Travel Agents Association of India (TAAI), which earlier agreed to replace the commission regime with the transaction fee, Thursday said it would go its own way charging commission on passengers.

The transaction fee, a minimum of Rs.350 for domestic and a maximum of Rs.10,000 for international passengers, would be denoted as 'other charges', the airlines had announced earlier. First premium class passengers will have to pay Rs.1,500.

TAAI vice-president Rajinder Rai told IANS that the body had asked agents associated with it not to reach any agreements with airlines over transaction fees.

Explaining the difficulties of following the new system, the TAAI Wednesday said it was difficult to make the system work as the airlines did not have a uniform policy.

The IATA Agents Association of India, another leading agents' body, Thursday passed a resolution saying the transaction fee was 'highly unacceptable', and it also sought the prime minister's intervention in this regard.

The five percent agents commission that was scrapped Nov 1 should be reinstated, it said.

According to airline officials, all the 12 carriers that have scrapped the five percent commission have not introduced the transaction fee system.

While the Dubai-based Emirates will start charging transaction fees from April 2009, FinnAir and Eithad will do so from Jan 1 next year.

However, 'British Airways, Cathay Pacific and a few other foreign airlines continue to pay commissions to travel agents', an official of the Travel Agents Federation of India (TAFI), said.

The TAFI has made it clear its agents would not accept the new system and continue to demand commission from the airlines.

About 85 percent of airline bookings in India are done through travel agents, including online agencies.

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