

Air India ordered to pay compensation over ‘horrible’ Delhi–New York flight

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Dhaka: An Indian consumer court has directed Air India to pay compensation to two passengers over what it described as a “horrible” travel experience on a Delhi-New York flight, citing mental agony and harassment caused by substandard onboard conditions.

The District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission in New Delhi passed the order on January 14. The airline was held responsible for failing to provide facilities for which passengers had paid a substantial fare.

Earlier, Shailendra Bhatnagar and his daughter, who traveled on an Air India Delhi-New York-Delhi service in September 2023 on economy class tickets, filed the complaint.

According to the complainants, the aircraft was in an “obnoxious” condition, with broken seats and non-functional in-flight entertainment systems. In addition, the washrooms were unhygienic and foul-smelling throughout the long-haul journey.

The complaint further cited poor food quality and an unresponsive cabin crew, claiming that repeated requests to address the issues were ignored, adding to their discomfort during the flight.

In its order, the commission said the complainants were entitled to compensation for mental agony and harassment, as Air India failed to deliver the standard of service promised at the time of booking.

The forum directed the airline to pay INR 150,000, equivalent to USD 1640, in total. This includes INR 50,000 each as compensation to the complainant and his daughter, along with INR 50,000 toward litigation expenses.

Air India, however, denied the allegations before the commission. The airline said the aircraft underwent thorough inspections prior to departure, including checks by the engineering department, and no discernible issues were found.

The carrier also argued that the complainants had made unfounded claims with the intent to illicitly obtain advantages from the airline, a contention rejected by the consumer court.

The ruling adds to growing scrutiny of service quality on long-haul flights operated by Indian carriers, particularly as passenger expectations rise in the post-pandemic travel environment.

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