

Court orders FIR against airline executives over alleged boarding denial

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: An Indian family of eight has taken legal action against KLM Royal Dutch Airlines after allegedly being denied boarding on a business-class flight to Peru, resulting in a court ordering police to register a case against senior airline executives.

J S Sathishkumar, chairman of a local medical institution, purchased eight round-trip business-class tickets on KLM for INR 4,900,000, equivalent to approximately USD 52,000, for traveling to Peru from Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru. The family was scheduled to depart on June 19, 2024, with a return on July 3.

Shortly before departure, airline staff denied the family boarding, citing the absence of Peruvian visas. However, Sathishkumar disputed the decision, arguing that airline staff misread entry regulations.

He maintained that Indian nationals holding valid visas or residency permits from countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, or Schengen member states are permitted entry into Peru without a separate Peruvian visa. This position aligns with regulations currently published by Peru's Consulate General in London.

Following his threat of legal action, Sathishkumar alleged his family was "red-flagged" by the airline, which led to further complications during subsequent international travel.

During a visit to Singapore, his son was reportedly questioned about a deportation from Peru — a country the family had never visited. Sathishkumar faced similar questioning during a trip to Australia.

Sathishkumar subsequently filed a case against the airline in a court in Karnataka state, seeking a refund of the ticket price. A civil judge and judicial magistrate in Devanahalli — the jurisdiction covering Kempegowda International Airport — has since ordered police to file a First Information Report (FIR) against KLM executives, including the CEO and COO, over the alleged incident.

"Action should be taken. Otherwise, this can happen to anyone," Sathishkumar said.

In response, a KLM spokesperson said the airline was "obliged to comply with all applicable travel regulations," urging passengers to carry valid and proper documentation. The airline added that it "regrets that some passengers experienced inconveniences."

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