

## India introduces new directives to cut airline seat charges

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**Dhaka: India has directed airlines to make at least 60% of seats on every flight available at no additional cost, addressing growing passenger complaints over hidden seat selection fees.**

The new directive, issued by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation under the Ministry of Civil Aviation in India, targets a long-standing concern among travelers, as airlines have typically priced window, aisle, and extra legroom seats at a premium and left only a limited number of free options in less preferred rows.

The new rule shifts that balance significantly, ensuring the majority of seats can be selected without added cost and giving passengers greater flexibility.

Another key change targets group travelers. Airlines have been

instructed to seat passengers booked under the same PNR together, preferably in adjacent seats. This addresses a common frustration where families and groups are split across rows, often resulting in last-minute disputes before departure.

The regulator has also asked carriers to adopt transparent policies for sports equipment, musical instruments, and pets — areas that have seen inconsistent rules and pricing across airlines. "Carriage of sports equipment and musical instruments to be facilitated in a transparent and passenger-friendly manner, subject to applicable safety and operational regulations," the directive read.

Airlines have further been directed to strictly follow passenger rights rules in cases of delays, cancellations, and denied boarding, and to prominently display these rights across websites, mobile applications, booking platforms, and airport counters. Communication of passenger entitlements in regional languages has also been mandated to improve accessibility.

India's Civil Aviation Minister Ram Mohan Naidu described the reforms as part of a broader effort to improve the passenger experience, citing free seat access, assured family seating, and clearer norms for special baggage among the highlights.

India's aviation sector has grown into the world's third-largest domestic market, with airports now handling more than 500,000 passengers daily. The new framework is expected to reduce hidden costs and create a more predictable flying experience across the country's fast-expanding aviation market.

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