

IndiGo moves passenger from emergency row for not speaking English or Hindi

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Dhaka: IndiGo is facing the heat from select politicians after the airline requested a passenger to relocate from an emergency exit seat to the row behind due to a language barrier.

The female passenger only spoke Telegu and not English or Hindi on the flight to Hyderabad, the language spoken by the crew on the flight.

For safety reasons, the passenger was moved a row behind to a non-emergency exit seat.

The incident occurred on IndiGo flight 6E 7297 from Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh, to Hyderabad Airport, Telangana.

The 65-minute ATR 72 flight occurred on September 16, taking off at 18:22 and arriving at 19:07 local time.

Per one passenger on the flight, a woman in seat 2A, an emergency row seat,

was asked to move to 3C since she could not speak English or Hindi, only Telegu.

IndiGo's decision to move the passenger has drawn the ire of state politicians, according to reports. In particular, some are furious that those speaking only a local language, such as Telegu, have to give up a seat on flights operating to or from their home state.

This view was expressed was also Telangana Minister for IT and Industries, KT Rama Rao, who called on IndiGo to add more crew from the region, saying, "Dear @IndiGo6E Management, I request you to start respecting local languages and passengers who may not be well conversant in English or Hindi. In regional routes, recruit more staff who can speak the local language like Telugu, Tamil, Kannada etc. This will be a win-win solution."

Each country sets its own requirements for who may sit in an emergency exit row. India's aviation watchdog, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), states that a passenger must be: 15 years of age or older, does not have any disabilities, the person should be able to reach and understand instructions related to emergency evacuation provided by the operator in printed, handwritten or graphic form or the ability to understand oral crew commands, and be able and willing to follow all required safety protocols.

While foreign regulators like the FAA state that all those in emergency seats must speak English, the DGCA does not state any specific languages. This is due to the diversity of spoken languages across India, with the constitution listing 22 official languages.

To tackle this, regulators have stated that passengers sitting in exit rows must be able to understand crew commands in whichever language they are issued.

In response to the incident, IndiGo said, "We employ crew from all regions and they speak different languages that are an integral part of the diversity of our vast country. Our crew, as a standard operating procedure, makes announcements informing our customers of the languages the crew can speak and understand on that particular flight."

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