

**COMMITTEE ON VIOLATION OF PROTOCOL NORMS AND
CONTEMPTUOUS BEHAVIOUR OF GOVERNMENT OFFICERS WITH
MEMBERS OF LOK SABHA
(FIFTEENTH LOK SABHA)**

2

SECOND REPORT

**“Complaint dated 13 May, 2012 given by Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP
against the Duty Manager, Jet Airways and Public Relations Officer of
Domestic Terminal of Delhi Airport for discriminating him on the basis of his
caste and not according him the facilities given to Members of Parliament.”**

(Presented to Speaker, Lok Sabha on 20 February, 2014)

(Laid on the Table on 21 February, 2014)



LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT

NEW DELHI

February, 2014/Magha, 1935 (Saka)

CONTENTS

	PAGE
1) Personnel of the Committee.....	(ii) & (iii)
2) Report.....	(1)
3) Minutes of sittings of Committee*.....	
4) Appendices *.....	

-
- Shall be appended at the time of printing.

**Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and Contemptuous
Behaviour of Government Officers with Members of Lok Sabha¹.**

(15th Lok Sabha)

(2013-14)

Shri M. Krishnasswamy*

Chairman

MEMBERS

- 2.*** Shri T.R. Baalu
3. Shri Kalyan Banerjee
- 4.** Shri A.H.Khan Choudhary
5. Shri Dara Singh Chauhan
6. Shri K. Jayaprakash Hegde
7. Shri Syed Shahnawaz Hussain
8. Shri P. Karunakaran
9. Shri Ananth Kumar
10. Shri A. Sai Prathap
11. Shri Prem Das Rai
- 12.^ Shri A. Raja
13. Shri Yashwant Sinha
14. Shri Dharmendra Yadav
15. Shri Sharad Yadav

SECRETARIAT

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| 1. | Shri V.K. Sharma | ----- | OSD |
| 2. | Shri V.R. Ramesh | ----- | Joint Secretary |
| 3. | Shri Ashok Sajwan | ----- | Director |
| 4. | Dr. Rajiv Mani | ----- | Deputy Secretary |
| 5. | Shri K.G. Sidhartha | ----- | Legislative Officer |
| 6. | Shri K.V.V. Rama Rao | ----- | Legislative Assistant |

¹ constituted on 2 August, 2012 *vide* Bulletin Part-II Para No. 4274.

*Appointed as Chairman on 6 August, 2013 *vice* Dr. (Kum.) Girija Vyas resigned.

**Shri A.H.Khan Choudhary became Minister and subsequently resigned.

*** Shri T. R. Baalu resigned.

^ Appointed on 7 November, 2013.

**Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and Contemptuous Behaviour of
Government Officers with Members of Lok Sabha.**

(15th Lok Sabha)

Second Report

I. Introduction

I, the Chairman of the Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and Contemptuous Behaviour of Government Officers with Members of Lok Sabha having been authorized by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf, present this Report to the Speaker, Lok Sabha on the complaint dated 13 May, 2012 given by Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP against the Duty Manager, Jet Airways and Public Relations Officer of Domestic Terminal of Delhi Airport for discriminating against him on the basis of his caste and not according him the facilities given to Members of Parliament.

2. The Committee held five sittings. The relevant minutes of these sittings form part of the Report and are appended thereto.

3. At their first sitting held on 27 August 2013 the Committee considered Memorandum No. 2 regarding complaint dated 13 May, 2012 given by Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP, against Duty Manager, Jet Airways and PRO of Domestic Terminal Delhi Airport for discriminating against him on the basis of his caste and not according the facilities given to Members of Parliament.

4. The Committee at their second sitting held on 18 September 2013 examined Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP, on oath. The Committee also decided to hear the Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Chairman, Airports Authority of India and representatives of Jet Airways at their next sitting.

5. The Committee at their third sitting held on 9 December 2013 examined Shri K.N. Shrivastava, the then Secretary of Civil Aviation and Shri V.P. Agrawal,

Chairman Airports Authority of India and Shri A.K. Sivanandan, Vice-President (Public Relations) and Shri Narendera Mansukani, Manager (Customer Services) of Jet Airways on oath.

6. The Committee at their fourth sitting held on 21 January 2014 deliberated upon the matter and directed the Secretariat to prepare a draft Report for their consideration at their next sitting.

7. The Committee at their fifth sitting held on 6 February 2014 considered the Draft Report and after some deliberations adopted it.

II. Facts of the Case

8. Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP, *vide* his initial notice² of question of privilege dated 13 May, 2012 given under Rule 222 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha alleged that the Duty Manager, Jet Airways and the PRO of Delhi Airport (VIP Lounge) had discriminated against him on caste basis and did not provide him the facilities given to Members of Parliament, when he travelled from New Delhi to Bengaluru and back on 11 May, 2012 and 13 May, 2012 respectively. Shri Rawat further stated that he also being a member of the 'Frequent Flyers' club was not extended the desired facilities and courtesies by the Jet Airways. He also alleged that this attitude of Jet Airways displayed its discriminatory approach towards persons/passengers belonging to Scheduled Castes.

9. The member requested for appropriate action against the officials of the Airlines for their improper behaviour.

² Appendix-I

10. A factual note in the matter was called for from the Ministry of Civil Aviation. The Ministry of Civil Aviation furnished a factual note about the incident *vide* their Office Memorandum³ dated 19 July, 2012 stated:

“On the basis of information provided by Jet Airways it has been informed by Director General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) that Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP, was travelling from Bengaluru to New Delhi on 13 May, 2012. He was not provided the “Meet and Assist” service by the Airlines at Bengaluru Airport. Jet Airways have said that due to communication gap between their Bengaluru Airport Staff and Delhi Airport Staff, the travel plans of the member were not intimated to the Bengaluru Airport Staff.

Jet Airways has also informed that as a corrective measure, the Airport Management teams have been briefed so that such communication gap is not repeated in future. In this regard Jet Airways has directly communicated with Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat.”

11. Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat was informed of the above position and copy of the Ministry’s factual note was also given to him.

12. The member *vide* his another letter⁴ dated 23 August, 2012, expressed disagreement with the explanation given by Jet Airways. He stated that the officials of the Airlines first misbehaved with him and have now furnished an ambiguous and evasive response in their explanation through the Ministry of Civil Aviation. He reiterated that his matter deserved serious consideration.

13. The member *vide* another letter⁵ dated 20 December, 2012 reiterated his charges against the Jet Airways and requested the Speaker that the matter be examined by the Committee of Privileges.

³ Appendix-II

⁴ Appendix-III

⁵ Appendix-IV

14. It is well established that privileges are available to members to enable them to perform their parliamentary duties without any let or hindrance. In the instant case there did not appear any breach of privilege of the member as alleged by him as the member was not performing any of his parliamentary duties on the said occasions/days. However, as the matter pertained to non-observance of official protocol and guidelines, the Speaker, on 16 February, 2013 referred the matter to the Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and Contemptuous Behaviour of Government Officers with Members of Lok Sabha, for examination, investigation and report.

III Evidence

(i) Evidence of Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP

15. Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP, during his evidence before the Committee on 18 September, 2013, *inter-alia* has stated:

“Mr. Chairman, Sir, this incident occurred on 11 May, 2012. I wrote about it regularly to the Ministry of Civil Aviation also. That time Lok Sabha was celebrating 60th Anniversary. The complaint dates back to that time or two days around that time. I left Delhi for Bengaluru by flight number S2-4233 and came back from Bengaluru by flight number 9W-2291. Now the thing is that there is Jet Airways which has one service namely ‘Meet & Assist’. I am a member of Jet Privilege. They provide this service to all passengers whether they are ‘J’ class or Business class passengers. This service is also provided to all Members of Parliament. When I asked for such a service, they stated that the service is provided only to Members of Parliament or VIPs. When I went to Bangalore from Delhi, they did not provide me this service. I went there as usual but while returning they were providing the ‘Meet & Assist facility to one my colleagues. I am also a ‘J’ class passenger. I am also a Member of Parliament and this service should also have been provided to me. Even when our boarding pass is issued, the same cannot be done without ID card. You show your ID card, only then you will get boarding. Once I show my ID card, it is evident that I am a Member of Parliament and it is their duty to inform whether the service is being provided or not for a Member of Parliament and assist properly for the same. We go from one place, the service is not provided and at another place we are denied this service even though we show our ID cards. It means Jet Airways is committing some irregularities or sending some wrong persons. If they are checking ID cards and they do not understand my identity whom

are they sending with ID cards and who are they checking. If they are not aware that I am a Member of Parliament even after informing them, what does it mean?

I will tell you a recent case. I did not write about it because I have been writing about this matter for almost one year. There is an ex Member of Parliament of 14th Lok Sabha namely Shri Mitrasen Yadav. He is a senior Member of Parliament but unfortunately he lost the election this time and has been elected as member of Legislative Assembly. When we were leaving, I came across him at the Airport. I was travelling by Jet Airways on that day too. I had to go to Lucknow and had a business class ticket whereas he had a economy class ticket. I expressed my intention to go and wait at the lounge. I am a privileged member, but I would like to know whether a Member of Parliament is authorized to sit in the lounge whereas members of Legislative Assembly as well as ex Members of Parliament are waiting. The Duty Manager told me straight away that I was not allowed to sit in that lounge. What rights do I have? The Prime Minister is elected from amongst us. The Chief Minister is also elected from amongst members of Legislative Assembly, then what right I don't have. Who will protect us? We are not getting our privileges. In this connection, I met with the Speaker too and placed my points before her. I found out that these facilities were provided only to business class ticket holders who are either bureaucrats or those belonging to corporate houses.

I will tell you one more peculiar thing. Today there is a different situation being created by the private airline operators. It is a matter of 25th January wherein our Committee was going on a tour to Mumbai. I am a member of Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers whose Chairman happens to be Hon'ble Member Shri Gopinath Munde. I am a member of this Committee till date. There is a hotel in Mumbai. When we went to that hotel, the

authorities told us that because of 26th January, your vehicle is not allowed in the porch. But when the foreign delegates or the tourists visited there, their vehicles were/are allowed upto the porch whereas our vehicles are parked outside. This is the situation over there. That very instant, I decided to go to a circuit house or government guest house. I did not stay in the hotel and refused to go there. This is the situation we have to face. How are the private operators treating us? Jet Airways is a private operator, but they are availing the facilities provided by the Government. They are using the Government airport.

Sir, I would submit that I am a Scheduled Caste Member, a second term Member, so I would like to know whether there is a protection for me or not? I do not belong to any business class or the Corporate House. I, too, should have been provided that facility as a Member of Parliament, as a Senior Member of Parliament. I have returned second time. I do not belong to any Corporate House. My political identity is not so strong. Had I been the son of any senior Parliamentarian or any Minister... I would also have been provided and given the proper treatment. This is my submission to the Hon'ble Chairman that I may please be given justice. What action has the Ministry taken? They simply sent a letter stating that they were taking corrective measures. What corrective measures are being taken? Against whom action was taken? When I go to register my complaint there, they say there is no use of it. They do not care about my complaint by saying that I may write down whatsoever I want to. I do have the copy of the complaint. I got my complaint registered seeking action thereon, but no action was taken thereon. I got my complaint registered, but they are not giving information as to what action they are taking thereon. I have taken contact numbers and addresses of the colleagues accompanying me and if you say I may call

those passengers who were travelling in business class or you may call them if you wish to do so on your own.

Mr. Chairman Sir, I wish to put one more point that I wrote to the Ministry and the DGCA as well, but no action was taken. I would like to know from them also as to why did they not take any action. At least Ministry as well as the DGCA should have stated about the action taken or corrective measures taken, but nothing like this was done at all. If one says sorry after misbehaving and administering slap to some ones, this will not do. A mistake is a mistake. Misbehaviour is misbehaviour. At least they should be punished, only then such a nuisance can be checked next time. It was very painful for me. I stopped travelling by that flight. Now, I travel... by the Indian Airlines. I stopped travelling by Jet Airways. Why should I go there where there is no regard for me? I had better adopt other route or change my track. Action should be taken thereon. If no action is taken, there will be no remedy for these people. I wanted to say only this.”

Shri Rawat, thereafter, submitted to the Committee a copy of the complaint lodged by him with Jet Airways at Delhi Airport and the acknowledgement of his letter sent by the Hon’ble Minister of Civil Aviation.

16. When asked, whether he informed the Ministry of Civil Aviation about the incident and what action was taken by the Ministry, Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat replied:

"I informed the Ministry about it on 13 May, 2012 and an acknowledgement of the complaint was received by me on 8 June, 2012. No further action was taken by the Ministry on my complaint."

17. On being enquired as to what specific lapse occurred on the part of Airlines in their dealings with him, Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat stated:

"After reaching Delhi from Bengaluru, no facility was provided to me under the facility of 'Meet and Assist Service'. I was having hand baggage with me and they were supposed to provide help which they did not do. They did not inform their staff that a Member of Parliament was travelling and so nobody was there."

18. On being specifically asked to elaborate about his contention of being discriminated on the basis of his caste, Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat stated:

“The fact is that I am a Member of Parliament. My face does not say that I belong to a Scheduled Caste. But, if they have provided the ‘meet & assist’ facility to other Members of Parliament, why should they not provide that facility to me? I am a second time Member of Parliament. I have completed my ninth year in Parliament. How can they (Jet Airways officials) say that they were not able to recognize me”

19. On being asked if such incidents had happened with him on earlier occasions, Shri Rawat clarified:

“This has happened on other occasions also. That is why I stopped flying by Jet Airways. I have been writing letters about this since then. This is happening quite often.”

20. When enquired if the Jet Airways communicated directly to him regarding the incident and if he has anything to say about it, Shri Rawat stated:

“They have written a letter....They (officials of Jet Airways) saw my ID card while issuing the boarding pass. Despite this they did not communicate this to the Delhi Airport and did not extend the facility of ‘Meet & Assist’ despite my being a member of the ‘Jet Privilege Club’.”

(ii) **Evidence of Shri K. N. Shrivastava, the then Secretary, Ministry of Civil Aviation**

21. Shri K. N. Shrivastava, Secretary, during his evidence before the Committee on 9 December, 2013, *inter-alia* stated:

“Sir, we have given detailed instructions to all the Airlines through DGCA regarding the protocol facilities which are to be extended to the Members of Parliament and VIPs by the Airlines. Now, these facilities include reserved lounge facilities at Airports; tea, coffee and water are served free of cost; even free access in Terminal building and Visitor’s Gallery; parking of vehicles of MPs in the VIP car parking area; Airport Entry Pass to one person of MP staff when required; and one Officer at the Airport is to be designated as a Protocol Officer at the Airport.

What happens is that whenever any Member of Parliament books his ticket, the Airlines records that so and so is a Member of Parliament. So, automatically that message goes to all the counters, etc. The checking staff immediately comes to know that so and so is a Member of Parliament and automatically these facilities are required to be extended. In this particular case, there has been certainly – I would say – a mistake on the part of the Jet Airways staff.

The Jet Airways has informed, that in the booking, it was not mentioned that so and so is a Member of Parliament. But nevertheless, once the Hon’ble Member mentioned it to the staff, they should have extended this facility. At the Bengaluru Airport, it was informed that, though the Jet Airways contend that they extended courtesy at the time of booking, there was nobody to carry the hand baggage of the Hon’ble Member to the Aircraft and things like that.

All the Airlines are supposed to do this. But in this case, they did not do it. Not only that, they did not pass on the message that a Member in travelling by this plane to Delhi, so that he could be received and extended all the facilities. So, it was a mistake on the part of the Jet Airways for which they have apologized.

I have also written a letter to the Hon'ble Member saying that this kind of mistake will not be allowed to recur. The two staffers who did this check-in for the Hon'ble Member in May 2012 have already left the services of the Jet Airways. So, no action could be taken against them. So, my submission to the Hon'ble Committee is that this was certainly a mistake by the Jet Airways. They have already apologized. On behalf of the Ministry, I would like to assure the Hon'ble Committee that in future, we shall see that whatever instructions have been given are actually followed by all the Airlines and there should not be any scope of repetition of such lapses hereafter."

22. On being enquired about the procedure being followed by the Airlines about extending due protocol to MPs and the infirmities formed therein, Shri K. N. Shrivastava replied:

"Sir, right now, the Airlines are providing (protocol officer) facilities themselves. But now, in order to streamline the entire system, we are coming out with a policy, which is under finalisation. We are going to see that it is the responsibility of a particular Airport as regards protocol officers.

I agree with you that right now, there are certain problems. That is why we are bringing about a policy whereby at every Airport, designated numbers are going to be provided. These numbers will be given out to all the VIPs including the Members of Parliament. They can simply ring up that number there to inform. Once they go there, it will be the responsibility of the

Airport itself to receive the VIPs. In addition to that, whatever the airlines can give additional courtesy, is a separate thing. But basically, the responsibility is of individual airports."

23. When asked about the action taken against the concerned staff responsible for such lapse in duty, Shri Shrivastava stated:

"We took it up with the Jet Airways. That is why I submitted that they have regrets saying that there has been a failure on this part. Since both these officers have already resigned from their service, they could not take any action against them."

24. On being asked about instant remedial steps, if any, being contemplated by the Ministry of Civil Aviation, Shri K. N. Shrivastava replied:

"Sir, what we will do right now is, even before the policy is finalised, all these major airports have got guest liaison officers. So, we will circulate the number of all those officers. So, if any Member of Parliament is going to travel through a particular airport, he can immediately ring up so that there will be a Protocol Assistant provided by the airport over and above whatever the airline is supposed to do. So, we will do that immediately. Once our policy comes, then, of course, everything is taken care of."

25. On being apprised about certain problems being frequently witnessed by passengers (particularly senior citizens and ladies) at the Airports, Shri K. N. Shrivastava commented:

"Buggy facility is supposed to be extended to all the needy persons. If a telephone goes to the Guest Liaison Office that so and so is coming and requiring the facility, they are duty bound to give.....call is to be given to the Guest Liaison Officer.....at the counter when the checking is being done,

that counter immediately should pass on this message online to the other receiving airport. So, automatically the facility should be available."

26. On being asked to clarify about remedial action on complaints of non-compliance of the proposed new policy of dedicated protocol facilities to VIPs at airports, Shri K. N. Shrivastava submitted:

"Right now, as I mentioned already, the DGCA being the regulator of this sector has the power even for inflicting financial penalties on them.

We are also now deliberating to bring out the institution of Ombudsman for this sector. That would be a very effective kind of tool where these things could be disposed of very quickly. Right now, even before that, the DGCA has the power to levy the penalty. That can also be certainly looked into."

27. On being enquired about specific guidelines issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority of India to the airport and the airlines in connection with courtesies and facilities to be extended to Members of Parliament, Shri K. N. Shrivastava stated:

"The Airports Authority has already issued a circular on 16.5.2012 on the subject of courtesies towards Members of Parliament at airports. They have given what are the courtesies to be extended, basically the same courtesies that I mentioned in the beginning. Separately we have communicated it to the private airlines through DGCA. As we have found now, there are certain gaps which require to be filled up. That is why through this policy we are trying to see that this system becomes perfect."

28. On being asked about any other similar complaints pending with the Ministry, Shri K. N. Shrivastava replied:

"Not exactly from Members of Parliament. But, we do keep getting some complaints from the members of the public. We take up the matter through the DGCA with the airlines or airports concerned."

29. On being asked to elaborate about the role of the Ministry in the supervision and control of airports constructed under the PPP mode and the security infrastructure therein, including protocol facilities to MPs, Shri K. N. Shrivastava stated:

"Sir, security at these airports is the responsibility of the Government. So, CISF or any security personnel that you see at the airport, they have been deployed by the Government and they are being paid through a fund managed by the Government.

So far as the airport facilities are concerned, the facilities are to be provided by the respective airports. The facilities that an airport is supposed to provide to all the passengers is laid down and communicated to them through the DGCA. In addition, the Airport Council International have also laid down some 35 parameters on which the performance of an airport is being judged, and on a scale of zero to 5, an airport is supposed to be having minimum 3.5. If they do not get more than 3.5, then even their license can get into trouble. This kind of thing has already been provided, but I do agree with hon. Member Shri Kalyan Banerjee that there are certain issues, which require to be looked into, particularly, about aged people, ladies, etc. We will certainly bring out a system whereby people know whom to contact and how these facilities can be made available to them. We will certainly do it."

30. When asked about the procedure undertaken by the Airlines and follow up action thereafter to case facilities related incidents with Members of Parliament, Shri Shrivastava replied:

“We are bringing about a policy whereby at every Airport, designated numbers are going to be provided. These numbers will be given out to all the VIP’s including Members of Parliament. They can simply ring up that number there to inform...All these major airport have got guest liaison officers. So we will circulate the numbers of all those officers. So, if any MP is going to travel through a particular Airport, he can immediately ring up so that there will be protocol assistant provided by the airport and everything is taken care of.”

(iii) **Evidence of Shri V. P. Agrawal, Chairman, Airports Authority of India**

31. On being asked about the protocol facilities being extended by the Airports Authority of India, Shri V. P. Agrawal replied:

"Once we receive the information (from Nodal Officers at Airports) that a Hon'ble Member is travelling, we escort him to the VIP room...we have directed all our officers in the field formations that this type of courtesies should be extended..."

32. On the desirability of keeping a complaint register at a specific place in the airports, Shri Agrawal submitted:

"Sir, we have a Duty Officer (who sits at a visible location) and there is Complaint Register. The Duty Officer will immediately record the complaint there. In case the complainant is not able to record his complaint, he can post the complaint electronically."

(iv) **Evidence of Shri Narendra Mansukani, Manager (Customer Services), Jet Airways**

33. Shri Narendra Mansukani, Manager (Customer Services), Jet Airways during his evidence before the Committee on 9 December, 2013, *inter-alia* stated:

"Sir, we have received the complaint and the Airport staff have detailed us with the experience that Mr. Rawat had at Delhi Airport. He was not given the free access which we as a service person give to Hon'ble Member of Parliament or the frequent flyer members with us. There was a lapse in communication between the airport teams and the Delhi arrival airport was not aware that Shri Rawat is Member of Parliament. It did not reflect in his booking records and he identified himself to the ground staff at the arrival hall to Shri Amit Mukherjee and that is where it all started. The Customer Service Officer/the PR officer, Ms. Mallika Sharma was called in immediately and thereafter, they interacted with Mr. Rawat. They did apologize to him for not being aware about him but he seemed very upset about the entire experience. More so, because there were some other MPs on the said flight who were given attendants and he was very upset. So, he expressed his displeasure and then gave us a written complaint.

We investigated with the Airport teams both at Bangalore and in Delhi and based on the feedback which was given to us and after speaking with the Airport Management Team and the staff members, we duly reverted back to Shri Rawat. Subsequently, there was an escalation wherein our Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Nicoskar reverted and in the last couple of months, when this matter once again came up for hearing, I personally made an attempt to meet Shri Rawat and left messages seeking a personal appointment. However, we did not get an appointment with him."

Elaborating further, Shri Mansukani stated that:

“Actually the root cause of this was two ladies at the Bangalore. While in Bangalore, they gave the assistance to him but they failed to intimate Delhi or update the check in history. As a process, there is preflight added before departure and arrival of every aircraft. If they are any members or any frequent fliers, some are recognized by the frequent flier numbers as the Platinum Members and if there is any dignitary travelling, they are basically mentioned in the booking record, if there is a Member of Parliament or a Supreme Court Judge and so on, we have been consistently delivering our service. In this case, it was not mentioned in the booking record. That is the reason why on arrival, Shri Rawat felt quite upset. He was not given the attention.”

34. When asked to comment about the need for any specialized training imparted to staff deputed by the Airlines to meet and assist passengers and upgradation of passengers amenities at the airport and in flight, Shri Mansukani replied:

"Yes sir, there is a training programme called Jet Impression. The Jet Impression training programme is incorporated into every basic airport handling staff. Training programmes are periodically reviewed...In terms of the soft skills, we are working on it. We will address the specific training needs of Delhi Airport in particular as well as of the network."

He further added:

“These were primarily with regard to the quality of food that has been served at the stalls. There were some food courts in some airports where the quality was not up to the mark and we were getting complaints that there were no facilities; but now we have revived all of that; again we review our catering

uplifts and we will also review the facilities provided in the lounges and we are trying to bring in consistency.”

35. On being asked about other complaints received by the Jet Airways, Shri Mansukani replied:

"We do get generic complaints on various counts. We do look into every complaint and take whatever corrective measures to be adopted."

36. On being enquired whether he wanted to say anything else in the matter, Shri Mansukani stated:

"On behalf of the Airlines, we are sincerely sorry. There is an evident lapse in communication...I honestly feel complaints are basically expressions, somebody is expressing his dissatisfaction. We do look into every complaint and take whatever corrective measures to be adopted. Maybe we need to demonstrate more. I assure you that we will do that."

(v) **Evidence of Shri A. K. Sivanandan, Vice President (Public Relations),
Jet Airways**

37. On being asked what he has to say about the complaint of the MP, Shri A. K. Sivanandan submitted:

"We had some communication with the DGCA. But from the Minister's officer, directly it has not come to us. I would like to submit one point. Kindly advice all the MPs when they travel, they should say that they are the Members of Parliament whether it is Rajya Sabha or Lok Sabha because they do not mention anything in the booking...Everyday about 35,000 to 40,000 people are travelling. It is very difficult for us to recognise."

IV Findings and Conclusions:

38. The main issue before the Committee is to determine:

- (i) Whether Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP was discriminated by Jet Airways on the basis of his caste; and
- (ii) Whether he was misbehaved with and not accorded the facilities and courtesies given to other MPs.

39. The Committee would like to reaffirm that Right to Equality being one of the Fundamental Rights provides for equal treatment of all citizens in similar circumstances, as enshrined in our Constitution. Any complaint from a citizen alleging caste based discrimination, more so coming from an MP needs to be examined and taken with all seriousness. Such discrimination against any person not only poses a social challenge but undermines the very basic ideals of our Constitution. In a modern and progressive society, it is imperative that all sections of the citizens feel equal and are treated equally at all levels both by the State and the Society.

Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP has contended that the discriminatory treatment meted to him by the Jet Airways was on account of him belonging to the Scheduled Caste. During his evidence when the Committee sought further elucidation from on this point, he stated that Jet Airways should have provided him the 'Meet and Assist Facility' not only because he is a (second time) Member of Lok Sabha having completed nine years in Parliament but also a member of the Frequent Flying Club and a passenger in the 'J' class. Despite all these attributes, if he has not been extended the due courtesy and facility by 'Jet Airways', it gives rise to a presumption that it is because on account of his belonging to the Scheduled Caste, that such discriminatory treatment is being meted out to him *inter alia* due to age old prejudice.

In his evidence, Shri Narendra Mansukani, Manager (Customer Services) Jet Airways, admitted to a serious lapse on the part of their ground officials at the Airport and a communication gap between their Bengaluru and Delhi Airport staff which resulted in inconvenience to the member. Without prejudice he attributed the lapse firstly to the fact that Shri Rawat being an MP was not reflected in his booking record. He personally identified himself to the ground staff when they gave him the desired assistance on reaching Delhi. Secondly, the ground staff at Bengaluru Airport failed to intimate the Delhi Airport staff about him being a MP which resulted in the member not being extended the desired assistance on reaching Delhi. Shri Mansukani in unequivocal terms stated that the Jet Airways does not discriminate among its guest on the basis of caste, creed, etc. and extended sincere apologies to the member, as he felt it that way. He also mentioned that their staff do recognise some frequent flier as the Platinum members but basically they revert to the booking record for identifying a VIP. Further, every day about 35,000 to 40,000 passengers travel on their network and hence it is difficult to recognise VIP passengers in a routine way.

40. The Committee on the basis of examination of the complaint, *vis-à-vis* oral averments of the witnesses feel that the incident is primarily a result of Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat being not identified as an MP in the initial booking records. It is needless to say that primarily the responsibility of booking with the airlines rests with the member or his personal staff and it should have been mentioned at the time of booking that the passenger is a Member of Parliament. Had this fact been mentioned in the booking record, it would have been reflected in all the sectors of the journey performed by the member from Delhi to Bangalore and back. It would have prevented the Jet Airways staff from taking the plea of them being unaware about the identity and the resultant inconvenience which the member had to face.

41. The Committee, however, are of the view that when the member had shown his identity card to the ground staff at Bangalore, they should have updated that

fact in his travel records so that he could have got the desired assistance on his arrival at Delhi Airport. However, the Jet Airways have sincerely apologized for their lapse of their ground staff at Bangalore. The Committee, further, note that the said staff of Jet Airways is now no more in the service of the Airlines. The Committee have also taken on record the assurance given by the representation of Jet Airways of not repeating such mistake in future.

42. The Committee hold that the denial of desired assistance to Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP was not on account of his belonging to the Scheduled Caste but because of his incomplete booking record and the negligent attitude of the ground staff of Jet Airways at Bangalore Airport, who attended him.

43. As regards the second issue regarding misbehavior with the Member by the ground staff at Bangalore and Delhi Airports, when he pointed the lapses on their part. The Committee dwelt upon this issue in detail. Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP in his evidence not only highlighted the facts of the present complaint but even his previous experience of ill-treatment and misbehavior by the airport ground staff at some other places. However, the Committee would not like to comment on his other complaints as they are not germane to the facts of the present complaint being referred to the Committee by the Speaker for examination and report.

44. As far as the present case is concerned, the problem was faced by the Member at Bengaluru Airport, when he was on return journey to Delhi and at Delhi Airport on his arrival. Since the member had been denied the desired assistance by the Jet Airways at both the Airports on the same day, naturally he felt hurt and tried to convey his grievances to the Duty Manager and VIP Relations Officer of Jet Airways at Delhi Airport. Instead of expressing regrets over the denial of due benefit to the member, who is also a guest of the Jet Airlines, the said staff was not forthcoming, was discourteous and simply passed on the complaint book saying that the Member may write, whatever, he felt like and it would be

conveyed to the higher ups. The Committee feel that such display of arrogance does not brood well for any organization. Such anger arrogance on the part of any organization/individual towards a Member of Parliament is unacceptable by the Committee. The ground staff which acts as the front office of the Jet Airways also acts as the ambassador of their Airlines.

45. The Committee are of the view that the Duty Manager and the VIP Relations Officer were found lacking in their interaction with the member and the manner of their approach and behaviour left the member further dissatisfied and hurt. The Committee also feel that these officials had an opportunity to remedy the lapses of their colleagues but they, by their immature handling of the situation, further compounded the situation to the detriment of the Member.

The Committee hold these officials guilty of rude and curt behaviour with Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP.

V General Observations

46. The Committee would like to emphasize the fact that Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP who felt hurt by the non-cooperative and recalcitrant attitude of the Jet Airways staff of Bengaluru and Delhi Airports, immediately on his return to Delhi lodged a complaint with the Airlines about the deficiency in their services which resulted in inconvenience to him. He, in his complaint, also recorded his efforts to bring to the notice of the concerned officials of the Airlines, the problem faced by him and the disinterested approach in dealing with it. Shri Rawat, also informed about the incident to the Hon'ble Minister of Civil Aviation promptly. He sought action against the guilty officials who discriminated against him and further displayed total lack of concern in resolving the situation other than giving him the complaint book to lodge his complaint.

47. The Committee feel that any citizen, what to speak of an MP, would take this very approach to highlight the problem faced by him and would expect a reply within a reasonable time. Inaction over the complaint by those, who can provide remedy, definitely disheartens the complainant and shakes his belief not only in the established procedure but the system too.

48. The Committee also note that despite repeated emphasis on prompt replies to letters written by members to the different Ministries of Government of India and other Public Authorities, it seen that the time limit is not being adhered to. In the present case also, Shri Ashok Kumar Rawat, MP, wrote to the Ministry of Civil Aviation complaining about the incident on 13 May, 2012 but his complaint was acknowledged only on 8 June, 2012 and he did not receive any further reply even by the time he appeared before the Committee for evidence. This lackadaisical and lethargic attitude of the Ministry of Civil Aviation speaks volumes about the manner and seriousness in which complaints of the Members of Parliament are being dealt with. More so, this being the promptness displayed in dealing with the

complaints received from MPs, the Committee can very well judge the fate of complaints received from the ordinary passengers.

49. The Committee note that since liberalization, a number of private entities have entered as service providers in the domain of air services which otherwise was the exclusive preserve for Government enterprises. However, lack of proper regulatory mechanism and rampant violations of prescribed guidelines laid down by the Government, by these private airlines have gone unchecked. These private entities while fully enjoying the facilities and infrastructures provided by the Government, have failed to adhere to the norms of providing facility and courtesy to the Members of Parliament, which are being followed by the National Career, Air India. The Committee find that it is high time that protocol guidelines prescribed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Airports Authority of India *vis-à-vis* MPs are strictly adhered to by the private airlines and a redressal mechanism is also put in place by the Government at the Airports.

50. The Committee note that the Airports Authority of India (AAI) have time and again issued instructions to the Regional Airport Directors/Airport Directors for extending courtesy to Members of Parliament at Airports. The latest instructions⁶ for strict compliance issued by AAI on 16 May, 2012 direct all Airport Directors to nominate a Protocol Officer from AAI and the Protocol Officer for facilitation of Hon'ble Members of Parliament

- (i) In Reserve lounge.
- (ii) For check in after proper coordination with Airlines.
- (iii) For smooth and prompt security check after coordination with CISF and Airlines, while entering SHA and at boarding gate for smooth pass through SHA.

⁶ Appendix-V

(iv) For boarding to Aircraft in coordination with Airlines.

51. The Committee are aware of the fact that the major airports in the country are now not under the control of the AAI. But this cannot be a ground for either the AAI or the private controller of the Airports or the concerned Airlines to excuse themselves from following the guidelines. The Committee feel that modalities need to be worked out between the AAI, the private enterprises managing the Airports and all the Airlines operating from the said airports to strictly enforce these guidelines for the convenience of the Members of Parliament and other VIPs.

52. The Committee note that the Ministry of Civil Aviation in their communication to the Committee Secretariat have stated that protocol guidelines are to be followed by all the private airlines and at all the airports in the country on prior intimation of travel itinerary of Members of Parliament being communicated to them.

53. The Committee hold that extending courtesy to Members of Parliament is not an out of the way favour or special treatment to them, but a facilitation to provide hassle free travel to them. Thus, it is not to be seen as a privilege but a functional necessity in the discharge of their duties as a legislator and a public representative. The Committee in this context would also invite attention to the fact that travel facilities extended to Members of Parliament are not based on rules but are given to them under statute *i.e.* a law made by the Parliament.

VI Recommendations

54. The Committee recommend that fresh guidelines be issued by the Ministry of Civil Aviation and the Airports Authority of India and other concerned offices of the Ministry to all the airlines to invariably extend the desired protocol and courtesies to Members of Parliament on prior intimation of their travel plans. The Committee further recommend that such policy should not only cover airports under AAI but all other major airports being managed by other private entities also.

55. The Committee also recommend that contact details of nodal/protocol/guest officers at Airports should be given wide publicity among the VIPs travelling for facilitating their travel and reducing the instances of inconvenience faced by members and resolve the issues faced, if any, at the spot.

56. The Committee further recommend that the Ministry of Civil Aviation should re-circulate the Department of Personnel and Training (DOPT) guidelines dated 1 December, 2011 regarding official dealings between the Administration and Members of Parliament, in all its offices/ subordinate offices at Delhi and outside for strict compliance and particularly with regard to prompt disposal of letters written by MPs.

57. The Committee in view of the unconditional apology tendered by Jet Airways and their assurance of not repeating such lapses in future and further in view of the fact that the guilty officials of the Airlines are no more in service, recommend no further action be taken in the matter and it may be treated as closed.

(M. KRISHNASSWAMY)

Chairman,

**New Delhi
20 February, 2014**

**Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and
Contemtuious Behaviour of Government
Officers with Members of Lok Sabha.**