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Title : Need to withdraw the enhanced flight charges by Air India.

SHRIMATI P. SATHEEDEVI (BADAGARA): I am drawing the kind attention of this House to the sudden enhancement of the flight charges by the Air India and to the derangement of the flights scheduled for Haj pilgrimage. Thousands of devotees are going to Haj this time. It is understood that about 11,835 persons have already registered their names from Kerala this year. The first flight carrying the pilgrims started on 3rd December, 2005. It is only on the previous day the Air India declared an increase in the flight charges. The decision came on 29th November, 2005. There was no prior information to the public about the said enhancement. It has really created more difficulties to the pilgrims as a whole.

The increase in the rate of the flight charges is Rs. 5,800. Now, the pilgrims have to pay an amount of Rs. 41,800 for their journey from Calicut International Airport. The decision taken by the Air India to increase the flight fare at this time has created an impression that Air India is, in fact, squeezing the Haj pilgrims.

Moreover, the Air India does not keep the time schedule of the Haj flights. The inordinate delay has created a lot of difficulties to the Haj pilgrims. Due to this inordinate delay, hundreds of pilgrims, including old women, have actually been stranded at the Calicut Airport. They were not even provided with food and accommodation for about 36 hours by the authorities in the airport during the last week.

Hence, I urge upon the Ministry of Civil Aviation to intervene in this matter immediately and give direction to withdraw the enhanced rate of flight charges and also to keep the right time schedule of the Haj flights.