

## BAD FOOD: AIRLINES LIABLE

Gone are the days when air passengers had to be content with biscuits and chocolates on board. With the entry of private airlines, passengers have the choice of different types of food, juice, drinks and other eatables. But deficiencies in service have been reported both on Indian and international flights. Consumer forums have witnessed several complaints and have awarded handsome compensation to the passengers.

In a recent case, Rishi Bajoria and associates were traveling from Amsterdam to Frankfurt in a Lufthansa aircraft. In the afternoon meals served in the aircraft, they found broken glass particles in the food.

They complained to the captain, the chief air steward and stewardess, who apologized for the mistake.

But the staff could not arrange for alternative meals. The passengers were told that since a meal preference had been requested, no extra meal trays were available. As a result, the passengers had to travel without food for nearly five hours. Accepting the lapse on their part, the airlines company tried to compensate the passengers with several offers.

The passengers were offered gift coupons for purchase of duty free goods and another trip in their airlines with 50 per cent discounted fare. The passengers refused the offer and filed a complaint in the Consumer Forum claiming compensation of Rs 20 lakh for mental agony.

Lufthansa tried to dispute the passengers' allegation and denied the presence of glass pieces in the food served. They also denied the offers made.

But the passengers were able to produce a letter written by Lufthansa giving the above offers, there by proving the presence of foreign particles in the food.

The State Commission was convinced about the deficiency in service and came to the conclusion that the complainants are to be suitable compensated.

Though the commission was not able to determine the quantum of compensation on scientific basis, on a guess work it directed Lufthansa to pay a sum of Rs 5 lakh within two month.

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