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COMMISSIONER FOR NRI AFFAIRS
(Cabinet Minister Rank)
GOVERNMENT OF GOA



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October 15, 2014

Dear Shri Ashok Gajapati,

Greetings and Compliments from the Government of Goa, Department of NRI Affairs.

I am writing to you regarding a matter of public importance i.e. Direct Flights from Muscat to Goa.

When I took charge of this Commission in the new Government headed by Shri Manohar Parrikar, I took stock of the problems of Overseas Indians. One of the issues raised by the Non Resident Goans (NRGs) of Oman was a long standing issue of direct flights from Muscat to Goa and back. This matter had been taken up by this office in July 2012 with NACIL. Nothing materialized. To date NACIL has not reverted back and this office did not pursue the matter as it was believed that Oman Air was due to start a direct flight from Muscat to Goa. Subsequently, this flight too did not materialize. Now with high expectations in the new Central Government the Muscat NRGs have represented again with much greater hopes than earlier.

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Justification

Presently the Goans from Muscat take the flight to Mumbai and then take a connecting flight to Goa. It is pertinent to mention that all these passengers are keen to fly by AI due to the highly subsidized cost of the Mumbai Goa ticket. This flight leaves at midnight from Muscat and reaches Mumbai early morning at 0410 hrs. There is no convenient AI connecting flight to take them to Goa as the only AI flight is at 0515 hrs. The Goa airport is closed from Monday to Friday from 0830hrs to 1300 hrs, and so there is great hardship routing through Mumbai. Passengers are required to spend about 8 hours in Mumbai before they can get an Air India flight to Goa at 1300hrs. According to the estimate of the Muscat Goan leaders, the number of Goans in Muscat is about 10,000. On an average, all the Goans make at least one trip back to Goa in a year.

This issue was discussed earlier with the AI managers in the Gulf, and the following options came up:-

Options

If a direct Muscat-Goa flight is not possible the other options are as follows:-

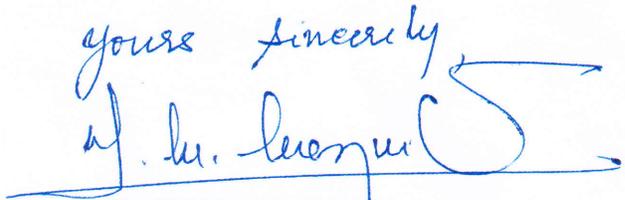
- The AI Mumbai-Goa flight in the morning be re-scheduled to leave an hour later i.e. 0630 hrs or better still at 0700 hrs.
- Some of the existing Kerala-Gulf flights be routed through Goa en route to Muscat.
- Advance the Muscat-Mumbai flights departure time by at least two hours. This will allow adequate time to check into the Mumbai Goa flight.
- Since most of the Goans travel during the summer school holidays or at Christmas, feasibility of special flights on Saturdays during the holiday season.

- Schedule the AI flight from Muscat to Mumbai to go on further to Goa, taking local Mumbai passengers also. If this flight is so scheduled all the Goa passengers of other earlier Gulf Mumbai flights can also board this latest flight for the lap to Goa.

All things considered, AI is the national carrier and therefore if any airline can give them relief, it would be and should be our own national airline. Another important factor is the tourism angle. During the visit of the Goan delegation to the Gulf, travel agents and tour operators categorically stated that Goa can be promoted as a destination for the Arab tourists and other expatriates, if it is directly connected with countries in the Gulf. Presently due to the inconvenience of changing flights, they prefer to holiday in Thailand or Sri Lanka.

The Government of Goa looks forward to some solution to ease the hardship of Goan workers who are contributing so much to the Indian exchequer through their remittances. I am sure that the Hon Minister will easily find a solution to this small problem which earlier Governments did not seem to have the will to solve.

With deep regards,

yours sincerely
W. M. Mesquita

(Dr Wilfred M Mesquita)
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