5/20 RULE ‘ANARCHIC’, TRYING TO CHANGE IT: ASHOK GAJAPATHI RAJU

News / Airlines



The rule entails that an airline can fly to international destinations only if it has served within the country for five years and has a 20-aircraft fleet.

Terming the 5/20 rule which allows Indian carriers to fly abroad as “anarchic”, civil aviation minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju on Thursday said he was trying to change it so that new airlines can connect with foreign destinations.

Raju said in Lok Sabha that the government wants more Indian airlines to fly to foreign destinations but as long as the 5/20 rule is not changed, they cannot fly abroad. The rule entails that an airline can fly to international destinations only if it has served within the country for five years and has a 20-aircraft fleet.

“The more the merrier. It is a fact that 5/20 rule came from a particular cabinet at a particular point of time. To my mind, it is an anarchic type of thing. It prevents the Indian registered airlines to function. But as long as that rule is there, we have to follow it.

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“I am trying to change the rule and if I have my way, it will happen,” he said during Question Hour.

Raju’s reply came when Congress member Shashi Tharoor said the Kerala government had tried to set up a state airline called ‘Air Kerala’ to cater to the vast amount of traffic of Keralites going to Gulf countries since private carriers were exploitative, but could not do so due to the 5/20 rule.

“It is our duty to see that people are not exploited. In fact, airfares before 1994 were controlled by the government. Airlines before that had to apply and take government approval. In 1994, the Act was repealed by Parliament,” the minister said.

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) member R K Singh too joined Tharoor saying private airlines often exploit passengers taking emergency situation which government must check.

“Whenever there is an emergency situation, the airlines hike the fare and exploit people. This is nothing but exploitation and if the government keeps watching this happening then what is the use of having a government,” Singh said.

The minister said that the government has analysed the entire issue and found that the high side of the fares in the total ticketing is about less than 2%.

“So, we realise that the prices of tickets have come down in most routes, particularly where the competition is more. What is bothering us is where the competition is less, airfares are a bit high. We need strategies to increase capacity there,” Raju said.

He said capacities and growth in the country have been going up. If the growth is stifled, the problem will not be resolved.

“With regard to emergencies like Chennai floods, Srinagar floods or the Jat agitation and all that, we do see these things coming up and we give advisories to the airlines and some of the airlines do respond,” he said.

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