TATA SONS INVOKES AIR INDIA, SEEKS FAIR PLAY FROM RIVALS

News / Airlines



Tata Sons Ltd on Tuesday said the group also had to face unfair hurdles in the aviation space in the past and sought fair play for its new airlines.

Tata Sons' Vistara and AirAsia airlines are asking the government to relax rules that would allow them to fly on international routes. Older airlines IndiGo, Jet Airways, GoAir and SpiceJet are lobbying to prevent a rule relaxation.

Existing airlines say they have spent five years flying local routes before being allowed to fly abroad and the rules should not be changed for new airlines.

"For people who say that look at the recent past and this is also unfair. We could also say look at the distant past which is even more unfair. We are the pioneers in the space and we are having to... (fight it out)," said Mukund Rajan, member (group executive council) and the brand custodian of Tata Sons, on the sidelines of the launch of the first airport lounge for Vistara in the capital.

"We don't need a certificate from anybody to tell us on whether we have a right to belong here or

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not. If anyone has a right to be in aviation, it’s Tatas,” said Rajan.

Air India, the country’s oldest airline, was started by Tata group’s J.R.D. Tata in 1932 as Tata Airlines. The government decided to take it over later.

The Tata group later tried to gain control of Air India during a privatization drive but was thwarted by similar lobbying by rival airlines then, said Rajan.

Air traffic in India is booming. The domestic market is growing at 20% and international market at 10%.

“Let’s all move on. The market has opportunities. Our competition should move on and we also will evolve. It’s not like we are winning everywhere. We have some very powerful competition. Let everyone give their best and I am sure the market will reward those who are sincere to customers. That’s what a market is about,” said Rajan.

Chairman emeritus of Tata Sons, Ratan Tata, went public last month terming the lobbying by existing airlines as “sad”.

Jitender Bhargava, a former Air India executive director, said new airlines had faced similar protests in the past too.

“In mid-1990s when Air India and Indian Airlines were protesting the upcoming new airlines and liberal grant of seats to foreign carriers, the two national carriers were criticized by saying India cannot wait if these two government airlines can’t evolve,” said Bhargava. “We are witnessing a similar scenario today except that those that were advocating the growth of private airlines at that time are today wanting status quo.”

What is good for India must take precedence over views of individual airlines, he added.

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