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'Departure tax' scam at Dabolim airport

16, Oct 2012

There is a neat scam going on at the Dabolim Airport. You drive in collect a coupon which allows you to spend five minutes in the airport. If you drive out after 6 minutes you have to pay a "Departure Tax" of Rs 60. Here's how you make money the easy way.

The coupon-handing-out-and-collecting job is given to a civilian sub-contractor. Your car has to slow down, collect the coupon where the time is noted down. You notice the coupon giver's time is four minutes slower than yours. But that does not strike you as important at the time. Oh but it is. Very important. But keep this in mind that the coupon giver's watch is 4 minutes slower than yours.

You thread your car through the rails, the security personnel check your car, you drive up to Departure, unload your passenger, unload the luggage, if your passenger is fragile, you help her or him to load it on a trolley, you say your goodbyes and drive out to the next coupon collecting civilian at the exit point. It sometimes takes more than five minutes. But pay close attention to the time of the exit guard checking your coupon.

You will find that his watch is two minutes fast. Between the first man with his four minutes slow and the exit coupon checker's watch two minutes fast, the duo already have the five-minute rule nicely wrapped up.

Even if you did a Star Trek transportation in ZERO seconds, according to the coupon you will still have spent six minutes at the airport. So they force you to pay Rs 60 Departure Tax unless you are the formidable VEERESH MALIK who put his foot down and raised his camera instead. Here's the account with coupon number and detailed arrival and departure timings in Malik's indignant letter to the Airports Director, who has merely chosen to ignore the Malik's letter and the scam going on right under his nose.

To:-

Airport Director / Public Information Officer
Airports Authority of India
Goa International Airport
Dabolim-403801 (Goa)

On the 18th of September 2012, at about 1225 hours or so, I drove to Dabolim Airport GOI to drop my wife off who was taking a 9W flight from GOI to BLR. I was self-driving in a friend's car.

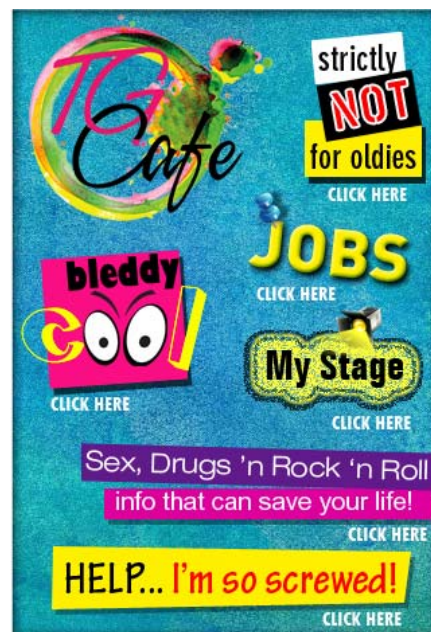
At the entry point, a civilian sub-contractor person handed me a slip for entry, which mentioned a time of 1221. My own watch showed 1225. Slip number is 151905. After that point, a CISF security person took a minute or two to clear me and my vehicle, after which it took me about 2 minutes to drive up to Departure, another 2-3 minutes to stop, find a trolley, unload, and then another 2-3 minutes to clear the rest of the car/taxi/bus traffic to leave the terminal.

I disembarked my wife, unloaded her suitcase as fast as I could, while she searched for a trolley, and we are physically fit. There is no way a vehicle can do the full circuit in 5 minutes.

Especially when the timing is incorrect.

At the exit point, the departure civilian sub-contractor person showed me his time, which was showing 1234, while my own watch now showed 1232.

So, then he asked me for 60/- rupees. I said what for, he said "departure tax". I said, OK, I will wait, please call the Airport Manager. At which point he started giving me his poetry and philosophy so I said forget it, I am going and I am keeping the slip also. He tried to stop me, but moved aside when I took my camera out to take his photo.



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There are a few issues here:

- The timing of 5 minutes entry to exit is not enough. Please try to get this done by anybody with baggage and especially lady passengers.
- The token should be issued AFTER the CISF point, as 2-3 minutes can easily be taken there.
- The whole approach of gundagardee by saying "departure tax" needs to be looked into.
- I don't see any TAN / PAN / Service Tax number and adherence on this money making racket.
- Other locals have told me that for 10/20 rupees cash, there is no issue.
- The synchronisation of timing of arrival/departure needs to be better than this scrawl. Especially since it has your airport's name on it.
- There appears to be no provision for disabled and elderly passengers at all at your airport.

I would appreciate an early response to this message with your comments.

Sincerely,

Veeresh Malik

POINT TO BE NOTED: The next time you drop someone off at the airport, check the entry coupon delivery person's time against yours. Then check the exit coupon

collector's time against yours. If the first is four minutes slower than yours and the second is two minutes faster than yours, then that's the easiest Rs 60 made in zero seconds. It has to be a record of some sort.

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