

'We have our facts right': China defends Air China's racist travel tip on Indians, Pakistanis

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Beijing: The enormous amount of flak China's flagship carrier Air China received for the racist travel advisory in its inflight magazine about Indians and Pakistanis in London does not appear to have perturbed China.

In an attempt to defend the travel tip that was removed after it kicked up a storm last week, China's state-run media said the airline had got its facts right, but had just presented them inappropriately. The advisory warned passengers to take precautions when entering London areas populated by Indians, Pakistanis and black people.

"According to a report titled Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System 2014 released by the (UK) Ministry of Justice, black and mixed populations have the highest arrest rates per capita. Years of statistics suggest the majority of males accused of violent crimes tend to be from African and Caribbean communities.

"The sad fact, however, cannot be discussed so "blatantly" in Western public discourse. Like a wall, the unspoken rule to not view society's ills from the perspective of race has constrained people's innate xenophobia and prejudice," an article in the state-run Global Times said today.

The article further noted that most Chinese on social media did not regret the incident. "Many have shown understanding of the Chinese airline, suggesting that it had done something right, but unfortunately not in an appropriate way," it said.

Air China's travel tip was not racist, the article said. "It is merely a reflection of the Chinese' unawareness of racial issues because of their much less exposure to other groups compared to most Westerners. Though many may seem prejudiced, they are not racist," Global Times declared.

The article further said that travel alert has unintentionally insulted Londoners and others "who are inclined to use euphemisms to imply the connections between race and crimes."

However, the article was critical of Britain taking offence to the controversial travel tip. It accused British politics of opportunism in raking up the Air China issue.

As for the British Parliamentarians who were offended, "perhaps they should just make their constituencies safer for both local citizens and travelers, so that travel alerts are no longer necessary," the article advised.

"As British ministers plan to build a "Great Wall" in Calais to fend off Afghan and Sudanese refugees camped in France, they have not forgotten to kindly remind others of showing humanity to different races," it said in an apparent dig at British criticism.