

300 Indians sequestered in French airport for the third day in human trafficking probe

Indian Embassy says it got consular access to passengers

ASSOCIATED PRESS
VATRY, FRANCE, DEC 23

ABOUT 300 passengers, mostly Indians, heading to Central America were sequestered in a French airport for a third day Saturday after a dramatic police operation prompted by a tip that those aboard might be victims of human trafficking, authorities said. Those aboard included children and families.

The local civil protection agency told regional broadcaster France-3 that the youngest passenger is a toddler of 21 months, and that among the children are 13 unaccompanied minors. Local authorities hung white tarps across the soaring by windows of the small Vetry Airport in Champagne country to ensure privacy for the passengers inside. An unmarked plane near the ter-



The plane, which was on its way to Nicaragua from UAE, at the Vetry airport in eastern France on Saturday. AP

minial appeared to be the aircraft grounded since Thursday. Other flights were canceled or rerouted as the airport was transformed into the hub of a vast trafficking investigation. The 15 crew members of the Legend Airlines charter flight — en route from Fujairah airport in the United Arab Emirates to Managua, Nicaragua — were questioned and released, according to a lawyer for the Romania-based airline. She said they are deeply shaken by what happened.

A surreal holiday weekend

scene has been unfolding in the Vetry Airport since Thursday. The flight stopped for refueling, and was grounded by French police based on an anonymous tip that it could be carrying victims of human trafficking, the Paris prosecutor's office said.

It said two people have been detained and special investigators are questioning the other passengers. The unusual and sudden probe disrupted air travel as police cordoned off the airport and flights in and out of the regional airport were disrupted, according

to the administration for the Mame region. The airfield is used primarily for charter and cargo flights. Police sequestered the passengers in the airport, where they have spent two nights on camp beds while the investigation continues, according to an official with the Mame administration.

The official said the passengers initially remained in the A340 plane, surrounded by police on the tarmac, but were then transferred to the main hall of the airport to sleep.

Emergency workers, Red Cross workers, a doctor and local volunteers are on the scene to look after the needs of the passengers, including regular meals and medical care and access to toilets and showers, the administration said in a statement Saturday. A special section of the terminal has been equipped for families.

Indian consular representatives are visiting regularly, the administration said. The Indian Embassy in France posted on X that embassy staff had obtained consular access to the passengers. "We are investigating the situation and ensuring the wellbeing of passengers," it said.

Legend Airlines lawyer Liliana Bakayoko said the company denies any role in possible human trafficking, and welcomed the news that the plane's crew had been released after questioning as "good news for the airline."

A "partner" company that chartered the plane was responsible for verifying the identity documents of each passenger, and communicated the passengers' passport information to the airline 48 hours before the flight, Bakayoko told The Associated Press.

The customer had chartered multiple flights on Legend Airlines from Dubai to Nicaragua, and a few other flights have already made the journey without incident, she said. She would not identify the customer, saying only that it is not a European company. The crew members, who are of multiple nationalities, "are rather traumatised," she said.

"They wrote me messages that they want to see their families for Christmas."

The US government has designated Nicaragua as one of several countries deemed as failing to meet minimum standards for eliminating human trafficking.

Three more arrested by ED in Vivo money laundering case

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23

THE ENFORCEMENT Directorate recently arrested three executives in connection with a money laundering probe against smartphone maker Vivo.

Among these were CEO of Vivo India Hong Xuquan (Chinese national), Chief Financial Officer of Vivo India Harinder Dahiya and consultant Hemant Munjal. On Saturday, the three accused were presented before a court which sent them to ED custody for three days.

Earlier in October, the ED had arrested four persons, including a Chinese National and the managing director of Lava International mobile company, in connection with the case.

In its remand application, the ED alleged that the accused had cheated the government by en-

tering India in a "disguised and fraudulent manner to set up an elaborate Chinese-controlled network throughout the country... carrying out activities prejudicial to the economic sovereignty of India". It was further alleged by the ED that Vivo employees worked without appropriate visas and were acting in a way that was in grave violation of the employment visa rules for entry into India.

The ED also said that the accused were guilty of concealing Chinese control over Indian entities from the government of India. It was further alleged that the accused used forged documents to open bank accounts.

The ED found out during its investigation that remittances over Rs 1 lakh crore were allegedly transferred outside India to "trading companies" so that Vivo could not be noticed by the government of India.



SHOE TIME

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan helps Anuppur district president Ramdas Puri wear shoes. Puri, who had vowed in 2017 not to wear footwear till the party forms a government in the state, started wearing it again on Saturday, days after the party registered a resounding victory in the Assembly polls. PTI

Decode Politics: For BJP, the importance of Brij Bhushan Singh and why it feels 'he cannot be ignored'

LALMANI VERMA
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23

AFTER HIS confidant Sanjay Singh was elected Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president on Thursday, BJP's Kaiserganj MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh celebrated with supporters at his Delhi residence where he raised a slogan: "Dabdaba to hai, dabdaba to rahaga. Yeh to bhagwan ne de rakha hai" (influence prevails and will continue. God has given this influence). His son Prateek Bhushan Singh, the Gonda Sadar MLA, also joined the celebrations and raised a poster with the slogan written on it.

Though no more the WFI president, his loyalist's election shows Brij Bhushan will continue to have his say on how the organisation is run. Despite the nationwide uproar over the sexual harassment allegations levelled at him by women wrestlers earlier this year, he continued participating in party programmes and Parliament proceedings.

Who is Brij Bhushan Singh?

The six-time MP — won five times on a BJP ticket and once for the SP — is a strongman whose writ runs large in eastern UP politics. He is actively associated with more than 50 educational institutions including engineering, pharmacy, education, law and others that he established in Bahraich, Gonda, Balrampur, Ayodhya, and Shravasti districts.

Apart from the time spent wrestling in the akharas of Ayodhya since his youth, Singh was also associated with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement — as per his 2019 election affi-



BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh with newly-elected WFI president Sanjay Singh in New Delhi, Thursday. PTI

davit he was named in the Babri Masjid demolition case — and enjoys the support of a large section of priests in Ayodhya. That support has remained unwavering despite the sexual harassment allegations. "He is popular because of his image of a 'dabang neta' (strongman) and always maintains that image. He has developed an empire in these districts. He runs several colleges and gives fee waivers to those poor students enrolled in his colleges. So, he wins elections both because of his clout and goodwill," said a BJP leader in Gonda.

On January 8 every year, the 67-year-old Singh celebrates his birthday on a grand scale. He conducts a student talent search examination in which the winners are given motorbikes and scooters as rewards apart from cash.

What does he bring to the table for the BJP?

A UP BJP leader said Singh not only ensures victories for the party in Kaiserganj but also has sizeable influence in the adjoining Lok Sabha constituencies of Gonda and Bahraich, among others. Party insiders said the party gave him a long rope because of this.

A senior UP BJP leader said, "So far, the central leadership has not issued him any directive. He has only been asked to not speak to the media about the issue... He wields influence in his constituency and adjoining seats. He cannot be ignored." Another party leader added that if the BJP does not give a ticket to Singh, it may field one of his family members. "In 1996, when he was in jail in TADA case, the BJP fielded his wife Ketaki Devi Singh in the Lok Sabha polls and she won," he said.

An RSS functionary in UP said, "After this controversy, Singh has become a gale ki haddi (an inconvenience) for the BJP. If the BJP denies him the ticket, he may join any other party to win and the BJP will lose a seat. Singh has varchasva (influence) in Kaiserganj, Shravasti, Basti, and Ayodhya Lok Sabha constituencies. He cannot be ignored."

What is the status of cases against the MP?

In April, two FIRs were registered against the MP. One was based on a complaint by six women wrestlers and the other one was registered based on a complaint by a minor, also a wrestler, and her father.

The Delhi Police on June 15 filed a 1,500-page chargesheet against Singh for alleged sexual harassment, assault, and stalking of six women wrestlers. The same day, the police filed another 550-page report requesting the cancellation of the POCSO case against Singh after the minor and her father withdrew their allegations. In August, the girl's father told the court during an in-chamber hearing that they were both satisfied with the police inquiry that found "no evidence" against

ATM JIBE TO 'FATHER'S PROPERTY'

Nirmala, Udhayanidhi spar over TN flood relief

ARUN JANARDHANAN
CHENNAI, DECEMBER 23

ESCALATING THEIR war of words over the allocation of central relief funds for flood-hit Tamil Nadu, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and TN Sports Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin are caught in a no-holds-barred public spat, invoking, among other things, "father's property" and "language lessons".

At the heart of the row is Sitharaman's recent statement, in which she said the Central government is not an ATM, referring to TN's demands for more funds in the wake of the recent floods triggered by heavy rainfall on December 18-19.

Her comment did not sit well with the state government. Udhayanidhi, son of Chief Minister MK Stalin, responded by saying that they were not asking for "their father's property", but a "deserving share of people's taxes paid". Hitting back, Sitharaman said on Friday: "That's always been their language... That's just how they speak. Can we say that those who talk like this are in their positions today because of their father's property?"

Her statement, which took a jab at the DMK's dynastic politics, did not end there. "Elected officials deserve the respect they are due... He is the grandson of a man



Nirmala Sitharaman, Udhayanidhi Stalin. File

(MKarunanidhi) who was known for his literary skills. One should have control over the words that come out of his mouth when he holds an important position. I have no grudge against him, but he should realise that there is no room in politics to talk about 'father's property' etc," she said.

Addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Friday, Sitharaman also criticised Stalin, saying that even as parts of TN were flooded, the CM was in the Capital (on December 19) "meeting INDIA bloc leaders rather than overseeing rescue operations".

Her reply invited further comments from Udhayanidhi, who said it was necessary to speak like Periyar with some people. "Periyar, Anna (former CM and DMK founder C N Annadurai), Karunanidhi, and our party leader (Stalin) have taught us well how to speak with whom. We speak to some like Annadurai, to others like Karunanidhi, and to some like our party leader. However, with cer-

tain individuals, it is necessary to speak in the manner of Periyar," he said.

"When asked about her comment comparing the state's request for flood relief funds to an ATM, I replied that 'we were not asking for their father's property, we are asking for the tax money contributed by the people of Tamil Nadu'," he said.

He said some people complained that his reply "lacked a bit of respect". "The next day, I clarified again, with 'great respect' as shown by the Union Finance Minister in her own statement, that we did not ask for the assets of the Honourable Union Minister's father. Despite that, she has taught a lesson about my 'language' today. I reiterate... we are not asking for the property of the respectable father of Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. We are only asking for the disaster relief funds, from the tax money paid by the people of Tamil Nadu," Udhayanidhi said in similar statements on Friday and Saturday.

He also asked Sitharaman to refrain from speaking as if the annual state disaster relief funds were provided as a "favour" from the Centre's national disaster relief fund. "We are always ready to show 'respect', as much as needed — just show a little concern for the people of Tamil Nadu and provide the funds, Union Finance Minister," he said.

Man, his infant daughter burnt alive in fire caused by heater

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
JAIPUR, DECEMBER 23

A MAN and his three-month-old daughter were burnt alive, and his wife sustained injuries in a fire caused by heater in Khairthal-Tijara district of Rajasthan, police said.

The incident occurred under Shekhpur Police Station area on Friday night. Police said a quilt caught fire due to the heater, and Deepak Yadav and his three-month-old daughter Nishika were burnt alive. Deepak's wife Sanju received burn injuries.

Neighbours rushed after hearing the cries and extinguished the fire. The victims were rushed to a hospital, where Deepak and Nishika were declared dead. Sanju's condition is critical, the police said.

Award wapsi': Khushwant Singh to Bajrang Punia, the history of returning govt honours in protest

VIDHATRI RAO
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 23

"ASAMMANIT PEHELWAN (Dishonoured wrestler)". That is how Olympics bronze medalist Bajrang Punia signed off his letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, published on social media on Friday, announcing he was returning his Padma Shri award. It started on September 9 when Hindi writer Uday Prakash returned the Sahitya Akademi award he won in 2010, for the novella Mohandas, to protest against the Akademi's "indifference" over the murder of scholar M M Kalburgi.

Nearly a month later, authors Nayantara Sahgal and Ashok Vajpeyi returned their awards and were followed by writers Krishna Sobti and Shashi Deshpande. Sahgal said that "India's culture of diversity" and the "right to dissent" were under "vigorous assault". Several others followed suit, with new authors joining the rebellion almost every day returning their awards. Punjabi writer Dalip Kaur Tiwana also returned her Padma Shri.

Directors such as Saeed Mirza, Kundan Shah, and Dibakar Banerjee and documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan followed suit and gave up their National Awards — both in solidarity with the literary figures and in support of Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) students who were at the time protesting against the appointment of Gajendra Chauhan as institution's chairman. The government came down on these artists, calling the situation a manufactured "paper rebellion against it in the wake of a manufactured crisis".

Journalist and writer Khushwant Singh was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 1974 but he returned it in 1984 in protest against Operation Blue Star at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the government of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and was an MP from 1980 to 1986. He was subsequently awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2007.

In his autobiography Truth, Love and a Little Malice, Singh writes, "I regarded (Khalistani leader) Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale) as an evil man who deserved his fate. But 'Operation Blue Star' went well beyond the slaying of Bhindranwale: it was a well-calculated and deliberate slap in the face of an entire community. I felt strongly that I must register my protest... (Then President) Giani Zail Singh was in a state of acute depression. 'I know how you feel,' he said to me, 'but don't be hasty. Think over the matter for a few days and then decide what you should do. I held my ground. 'No Gianiji. I don't want to give myself time to change my mind. I had sworn that if the army entered the temple I would renounce the honours bestowed on me by this government.'"

Swami Ranganathananda of the Ramakrishna Mission declined the award in 2000 as it was conferred to him as an individual and not to the Mission. For historian Romila Thapar, not accepting government honours was a matter of principle and not protest. She refused to accept the Padma

Bhushan twice: in 1992 and later again in 2005, stating that she would accept awards only "from academic institutions or those associated with my professional work". Just one year into the first Narendra Modi government, between September and November 2015 there were 33 cases of writers and intellectuals returning their Sahitya Akademi award. It started on September 9 when Hindi writer Uday Prakash returned the Sahitya Akademi award he won in 2010, for the novella Mohandas, to protest against the Akademi's "indifference" over the murder of scholar M M Kalburgi.

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Politicians on the list

Among the more recent examples is from January 2022, when former West Bengal Chief Minister and veteran CPI(M) leader Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee turned down the Padma Bhushan hours after the announcement. The Indian Express reported at the time that the CPI(M) top leadership in New Delhi had worked the phones and conveyed to Bhattacharjee's family that the party's tradition was not to accept such honours.

With this, Bhattacharjee joined the company of Kerala's first CM and Communist icon E M S Nambudiripad who turned down the Padma Vibhushan awarded by the P V Narasimha Rao government, saying it went against his nature to accept state honour. Former Punjab CM Parkash Singh Badal returned his Padma Vibhushan in 2020 in the wake of the farmers' protests in the state against three central agricultural laws that the Modi government had pushed through Parliament. The laws were subsequently repealed.

SALUTE THE SOLDIER
INDO-TIBETAN BORDER POLICE (ITBP)
24 December, 2023

ITBP salutes its braveheart Constable Md. Ahmad Ali of 32nd Battalion, who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty on this day in Jammu & Kashmir in 2018.

Resident of: Villageage - Kadwan, Distt- Rohtas Rohtas, Bihar

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE
GRD TRUCKS PRIVATE LIMITED (IN LIQUIDATION)
Reg. Off.: 1st Floor, C-84, Jangpali Lal Kothi Scheme, Jaipur, Rajasthan, 302015
Liquidator: Vijay Kishore Saxena
Liquidator Correspondence Address: D-69 (LGF), East of Kailash, New Delhi-110065
E-mail: cirp.grd@gmail.com Contact No. - 9540011155

E-Auction
Sale of Assets under Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016
Date of Auction: 18.01.2024, Time of Auction: 3:00 pm to 4:00 pm
(With unlimited extension of 5 minutes each)

Sale of Assets owned by GRD Trucks Private Limited (In Liquidation) forming part of Liquidation Estate of GRD Trucks Private Limited in possession of the Liquidator, appointed by the Hon'ble National Company Law Tribunal, Jaipur vide order dated 12.10.2023. The sale of assets will be done by the undersigned through the e-auction platform <https://bankauctions.in>

Asset	(Amount in Rs.)		
	Reserve Price	EMD	Incremental Value
Plant & Machinery, Office Equipment, Furniture & Fixtures, Vehicles, Shed, Containers, Inventory and spare parts, etc. (at Kharsa No. 196-197, Khewat No. 16, Khatori No. 17, Kila No. 21-22, Balabagarh, Sona Pali Road, Faridabad 121004, Haryana)	52,93,000/-	5,30,000/-	50,000/-

OR

Asset	(Amount in Rs.)		
	Reserve Price	EMD	Incremental Value
Block-I Plant & machinery	11,63,800	1,17,000	40,000
Block-II Office Equipment	1,09,700	11,000	10,000
Block-III Furniture & Fixtures	2,84,800	29,000	20,000
Block-IV Vehicles	19,38,500	1,94,000	50,000
Block-V Shed	2,30,200	23,000	20,000
Block-VI Container	9,66,000	97,000	30,000
Block-VII Inventory & Spare Parts	6,00,000	60,000	30,000

Terms and Condition of the E-auction are as under:

- E-auction will be conducted on "AS IS WHERE IS", "AS IS WHAT IS", "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS AND NO RECOURSE BASIS" through approved service provider M/s 4 Closure.
- Time Line for Auction process is as follows:

Last date Submission of Eligibility docs by Prospective Bidder	07.01.2024
Last date for Inspection and Due Diligence of Assets under Auction by Qualified Buyer	14.01.2024
Last date to deposit EMD	16.01.2024
Date of Auction	18.01.2024

- The Complete E-auction process document containing details of the Assets, online e-auction Bid Form, General Terms and Conditions of online auction sale are available with the Liquidator and can be shared on specific request.
- For further clarifications, please contact the undersigned

Date : 24.12.2023
Place : New Delhi

Vijay Kishore Saxena
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