

Will new law help curb fake travel agents racket in Punjab?

WSN Network
CHANDIGARH

Even as the business of fake travel agents thrives in Punjab and little has the state government done in terms of trying to save Punjab's youth being exploited by these agents, the Union Government seems to be moving to make a dent. India's Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs is now working on a new legislation to crack down on unscrupulous agents cheating gullible aspirants.

In Punjab, the fake agents lord over an empire with more than Rs 2000 crore turnover as the craze for foreign lands among its youth continues and increases unabated.

The proposed bill will help keep a check on the recruiting agents who

The Bill will replace the existing Emigration Act, 1983 and will regulate all recruiting and travel agents who send people abroad for employment, education or on any other basis. The existing Act covers only the recruiting agents.

send lakhs of Indians for various jobs in the US, Europe and the Gulf, and will also cover facilitation of visas under all categories.

Earlier, the Punjab government during Amarinder Singh regime had come up with the draft of a Human Trafficking Prevention Act but that remained on the back burner all these years despite bitter memories of tragedies like Malta drowning of hundreds of Punjabi youth.

Four Indian ministries — Labour, Finance, Home and Law and Justice — are involved in the drafting of the latest bill which will go to Parliament to become the Emigration Management Act



Currency notes wads are also sort of travel documents for many agents

(EMA).

The Bill will replace the existing Emigration Act, 1983 and will regulate all recruiting and travel agents who send people abroad for employment, education or on any other basis. The existing Act covers only the recruiting agents.

Under the new Act, all travel agents facilitating visas must get themselves registered with Union External Affairs Ministry.

For recruitment from India, foreign employers will also have to get accredited with Indian missions in the country of employment, without which they would not be allowed to hire anybody from here.

Visa and recruitment agents will also be required to create their own websites, giving information on their track record and the number of people they have facilitated. The websites will need to be updated every day. While agents sending students abroad will have to register online, foreign employers and project exporters will also need to register their demands online.

Hundreds of Punjabis migrate to foreign countries, especially the US and Europe, in search of greener pastures after paying hefty sums to unscrupulous agents, only to find they've been cheated and that their migration was not legal. Often, such agents never return the money even if the promised service was not rendered. As per a report, this year, till July-end, over 4,000 Punjabis had been apprehended by the authorities of various countries for trying to sneak in without valid documents — 2,176 in Italy, 426 US, 420 Greece, 180 Germany, 123 France, 80 Canada, and 373 in the UK.

Under the new legislation, the present system of Protector General of Emigrants (PGE) and Protector of Emigrants (POEs) will be abolished. A committee under the Union Cabinet Secretary will be created to regulate the recruiters and will also be responsible for redressing grievances.

THUMBNAILS

High Court hits out at petition on hair case

CHANDIGARH: When advocate M S Rahi, counsel for the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), sought a review of certain parts of the Full-Bench judgment on the significance of unshorn hair for Sikhs, the three judge bench comprising Justice J.S. Khehar, Justice Jasbir Singh and Justice Ajay Kumar Mittal considered the petition as frivolous and imposed a Rs 101 fine on the DSGMC and its counsel. The Bench cornered Dr Rahi on his contention that their were certain factual mistakes in the judgment and that the ideological aspect of definitional part of Guru Granth Sahib was not related to the case. The Bench also questioned Dr Rahi on the contents of the petition being reported in the media in advance. In its judgment, the Full Bench had held that unshorn hair was one of the fundamental tenets of the Sikh religion.

Dal Khalsa remembers Sheikh Abdul Aziz

AMRITSAR: The Dal Khalsa paid tributes to Sheikh Abdul Aziz, chairman of People's League and senior leader of the conglomerate APHC, on his first death anniversary and expressed solidarity with the rightful aspirations of the people of Kashmir. Hurriyat leader Sheikh Abdul Aziz was a member of the co-ordination committee of ethnic and religious nationalities struggling for right to self determination under the chairmanship of Justice Ajit Singh Bains formed in Delhi on March 23, 2008. He died last year in police firing.

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All disputes to be settled in Santa Clara Superior Court

School rowdies beat up class 9 student



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KAPURTHALA

Incidents of ragging continue to be reported from the Punjab schools with unfailing regularity and the latest one comes from the Kapurthala Sainik School. Seniors brutally whipped a class 9 hosteller with belts and sticks for not doing their bidding on Friday night, resulting in fracture to his left arm. Lovepreet Singh's back bears severe injury marks, and now his parents say they will not send him back to the school.

The boy's father Sukhpal Singh, a Tarn Taran resident lodged with Principal Col Satbir Singh as did many other visiting parents concerned for their wards. Four class XII students were suspended and asked to bring their parents to school within seven days or face rustication.

Lovepreet, who has been a Sainik School student since class 6, was given First Aid at a private hospital this morning.

He said he had complained to House Master Yadvinder Singh about some senior boys harassing him on Friday evening. He was attacked the same night. The boy, his left arm fractured, remained unattended all night.

Brother cops and ego hassles: Elder not to report to younger

WSN Network
CHANDIGARH

Punjab government made the younger brother the state's top police officer, and then found that his elder brother senior to him will find it difficult to report to him. Now, it has found a new technical solution.

Punjab Police Academy Director and DGP-rank officer R S Gill was last week directed by the state's Home Department to report directly to the state government rather than Punjab DGP P S Gill, who is his younger brother. The order specifies that he will now report directly to the Principal Secretary, Home, about

his routine work, sanction of leave and tour programmes instead of P S Gill, to whom he was reporting so far. "The Home Department has issued orders that R S Gill will now directly report to it," says A R Talwar, Principal Secretary, Home and Justice.

Not only is R S Gill is elder than P S Gill, he is also a batch senior. While the PPA director is a 1973-batch Punjab cadre IPS, P S Gill is a 1974 officer of the J&K



PS Gill

cadre. The seniority discrepancy had come in the way of the precedent that requires the PPA Director to report to the DGP.

It is widely speculated that differences have cropped up between the brothers after P S Gill took over as head of the Punjab Police. RS Gill was earlier given the DGP charge for a month after the then DGP KK Attri retired on June 30 as PS Gill's transfer orders had not reached the government. Interestingly, RS Gill was also made the state DGP in 2007 for three months at the time of the Assembly elections after the Akali Dal complained about partisanship of S S Virk to the Election Commission.

Punjabi University ends bitter chapter in graft case

PATIALA: In a gesture that may signal the end of certain bitterness on the campus among faculty members, the Punjabi University administration has denied prosecution sanction to State Vigilance Bureau to proceed against its previous Director Public Relations and Psychology Department Professor B.S. Sandhu.

A case was registered against Sandhu in the year 2007 when it was claimed that he was caught taking Rs 1 lakh bribe from promoters of a B.Ed college. Many at that time believed that the case was fake and a way of settling scores against the then V-C SS Boparai, considered close to the then CM Amarinder



Professor B.S. Sandhu

Singh. Now, incumbent V-C Dr Jaspal Singh said that he did not want any of his teachers to face prosecution without a justifiable reason. The Syndicate has backed his decision. It is mandatory to procure prosecution sanction from the parent department of the accused before initiating trial. The V-C, when contacted, said that he had studied in detail the case and preliminary investigation reports submitted by the Vigilance Bureau. -WSN

Another dera head claims threat

CHAHERU (KAPURTHALA): The head of a Chaheru-based dera who calls himself with a fancy name of "Phul Dass 108 Sant Kishan Nath" has claimed he has received threats from someone abroad for alleged violation of the Sikh Rehat Maryada. The dera head who has many followers mostly from the Ravidassia community has also said he was not guilty of violating any maryada and his followers never touch his feet in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. It is not clear immediately how valid were his claims but the police have deployed two constables at the Chaheru dera to keep an eye on the visitors. "None my followers have ever touched my feet in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. We treat the holy book with full dignity. I fail to understand why they are targeting me," the dera head said.