



Saturday, May 4, 2002,
Chandigarh, India

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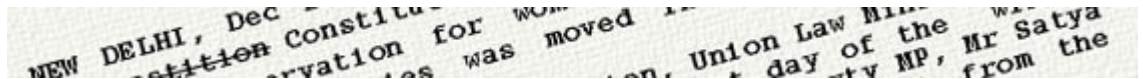
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MAIN NEWS

Blackwill skirts Indians' concern

A. Balu

US Ambassador Robert Blackwill must be complimented for seeking to allay the concerns of thousands of Indians regularly visiting the USA on tourist and business visas following the new regulations recently announced by the US Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) that may limit the duration of stay to 30 days instead of the earlier six-month period.

But unfortunately, the Ambassador may not have succeeded in convincing potential tourists that the vast majority of visitors from India to the USA will experience no disruption of their travel because of the proposed new regulations.

In his article published in Indian newspapers on Friday, Mr Blackwill has skirted the main concern and apprehension of Indian visitors that the immigration officers in US airports are most likely to limit the period of stay to 30 days and the onus of convincing them that a longer stay is required to accomplish the purpose of the visit lies squarely on the visitors. In a petition sent to the USINS, the law office of Rajiv Khanna, based in Washington, has pointed out that the proposed case by case adjudication by immigration officers is bound to be ineffective.

"The most probable consequences of the proposed changes are that entrants will routinely receive 30 days' approval or they will have to wait for hours in secondary inspections. Either way, the service will succeed in creating much confusion and inconvenience."

The Ambassador is probably right in suggesting that it will be wrong to assume that visitors will be allowed only a 30-day stay. What he has overlooked is the fact that a Damocle's sword hangs over the head of every visitor on a tourist visa and his or her fate will be known only on reaching the USA after spending hefty airfare and hours of long journey.

The petitions sent by Indian Americans to the USINS also make the point that the foundation of the rationale for the proposed change, — that it is in the interest of national security, is illogical. A terrorist is unlikely to be deterred by the limitation of his period of stay to 30 days since "a terrorist is just as likely to cause damage as a terrorist let in for six months."



Former VC evades arrest

Jangveer Singh
Tribune News Service

Patiala, May 3

Ousted Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University Dr Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia is proving to

be elusive even as more than 12 senior police officers have been deputed to catch him across four states and in the union territory of Chandigarh.

The state police is being criticised for not having monitored the movements of Dr Ahluwalia just before he was sacked on April 22. The government apparently had an ample opportunity to do so because the Chancellor of the varsity Lt-Gen JFR Jacob (retd), had signed the order removing him from office a day before it was released to the media.

Sources said Dr Ahluwalia had last left the university three days before his dismissal and he was in Chandigarh the next day because of a date in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. They said the next day was a Sunday on which the government had procured the dismissal order of Dr Ahluwalia which was released to mediapersons on Monday. They said in such circumstances, a tab could easily have been kept on Dr Ahluwalia, especially when the government had initiated the process of dismissing the former VC when the chargesheet against him was presented to a local court on Friday, when he was in the university.

The sources disclosed that the senior-level officers had been deputed to Delhi, Haryana, Chandigarh and the University here to uncover information which could lead to his arrest. The sources said a local Superintendent of Police had been in Delhi for nearly a week to investigate the leads which could lead to the arrest of Dr Ahluwalia.

Similarly, sources said the Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) were operating in plain clothes in the university, looking for tip offs which could uncover Dr Ahluwalia's hideout. They said officers who had studied in the university had been specially deputed for this job. The sources said officers had also been sent to Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana for similar purposes.

Meanwhile, momentum is also building up amongst the university teachers who had been agitating for the removal of Dr Ahluwalia to expose the politicians, businessmen and other VIPs who had given refuge to Dr Ahluwalia when he had been on the run for nearly a fortnight following the registration of criminal cases against him. The sources said Dr Ahluwalia had taken refuge with a local Akali leader besides hiding in the house of a Congress leader in Chandigarh and in houses of other businessmen.

These sources said if all these persons had been exposed for harbouring Dr Ahluwalia during his first disappearance from the campus, there would have been very few people willing to give him refuge this time around.

Meanwhile, a local court gave notice to the police for tomorrow in a bail application moved by Dr Ahluwalia. In the application, the former VC has claimed that he had been implicated in two cases of attempt to rape and attempt to murder in which he had been given anticipatory bail by the Punjab and Haryana High Court. He said following this another case under the Corruption Act had been registered against him recently in the Sadar police station and that the Patiala police had conducted various raids at his residences in Patiala and Chandigarh in this context.



Saroj Rani suspended
Tribune News Service

Patiala, May 3

Punjabi University today suspended Dr Saroj Rani, Head, Fine Arts Department, and relieved department technical assistant Jaspal Singh of duty on the ground that both had been detained on a criminal charge.

Both Dr Rani and Jaspal Singh had been made co-accused along with ousted Vice-Chancellor Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia in the attempt-to-rape case registered against the latter and had been booked under the conspiracy heading. According to an order issued by Registrar B.S. Bhatia, Dr Rani is deemed to have been placed under suspension with effect from March 27.

During the period of suspension Dr Rani's headquarters will remain at Patiala.



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