

Tourists stranded in Himachal over 'invalid' bus permits

Over 300 tourists, headed to [New Delhi](#) after a holiday in the Himachal Pradesh hill station of Manali, were stranded on the roadside for four hours after they were asked to disembark because the luxury buses they were travelling in did not have 'valid' permits.

The tourists, travelling in four buses, were off-loaded by state transport authorities at Kullu town, over 260 km from here, Tuesday night. They had to spend four hours on the road until district authorities provided alternative buses for them in the wee hours of Wednesday.

'We will never visit Himachal again as the state government has harassed us. The state is prospering because of us (tourists) and if we stop coming, the economy of the hill state will suffer,' Narinder Sharma, a tourist from Jaipur, told IANS on telephone.

Said Rajiv Pandey, another tourist: 'The four-hour ordeal upset our schedule of onward air travel to [Chennai](#) from Delhi. Nobody will visit the state again if transport authorities harass their guests.'

Kalpna Jain, a tourist from Gurgaon near Delhi, stressed that they were inconvenienced for no fault of theirs as they had booked tickets through a travel agency in Manali.

'If the government wants to take action, then these travel agents should be booked,' she said.

However, private bus operators say they are running luxury sleeper buses as the previous Congress government had granted them permits, but the present Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government wants 'fresh permits' issued.

M.C. Thakur, a Manali-based hotelier, said: 'If the government drive continues, it might hit the arrival of tourists.'

Nearly 15 private buses ply between Manali and Chandigarh and Manali and Delhi daily.

Regional Transport Officer (Kullu) Shyam Lal Sodha said sleeper buses could not ply in the hill state as per the provisions of the Motor Vehicle Act. He added that tourists travelling in such buses should do so at their own risk as the drive against such buses would be intensified.

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