

Three MPs named in human trafficking racket

The human trafficking scandal threw up more revelations late Saturday with an aide of suspended Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Babubhai Katara, accused of smuggling people abroad on his family's diplomatic passport, naming one more lawmaker to the two he had named earlier as involved in the racket.

Sunder Lal Yadav, a travel agent arrested Saturday morning with Katara's aide Rajendra Kumar Gampa and their female accomplice Kiran Dhar, told police during interrogation that Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) MP Mitrasen Yadav, representing Faizabad (Uttar Pradesh), was also involved in human trafficking.

'During interrogations, Sunder Lal Yadav revealed that Mitrasen Yadav was involved in the racket. Sunder was also staying with Mitrasen for some time and they have some connection,' a senior police official told IANS.

However, a television channel also named another MP, Ashok Rawat, (BSP from Misrikh in Uttar Pradesh) as having been named by Sunder. But police officials said it would be 'too early to say that he (Rawat) is involved'.

Earlier in the court of Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Kamini Lau, Sunder Yadav named lawmakers Mohammed Tahir Khan of the BSP and Ramswaroop Koli of BJP as the central figures in the racket of smuggling people abroad on passports of politicians' families or forged documents for a big price.

Yadav, who apparently knew many MPs as he stayed in the house of one of them, said, Ram Awadh, a former MP who is no more, was also linked to the scandal.

The revelations stunned Delhi Police officers and came two days after Katara was arrested shortly before he was to fly to Toronto with a woman and her son travelling on the passports of the MP's wife and son.

Yadav said he and Gampa had met the BJP MP thrice to facilitate the travel of the woman, Paramjeet Kaur, and the 15-year-old boy with Katara.

An embarrassed BJP suspended Katara, who is now in police custody along with the woman. The teenager has been sent to a juvenile home.

'Going by the admissions so far, this clearly looks like a major racket spanning several states and has been running successfully for many years with the connivance of top politicians,' a senior police officer told IANS.

BJP's Koli represents Bayana in Rajasthan in the Lok Sabha while Khan represents Sultanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Khan angrily denied the allegations.

'It's a conspiracy. I don't even know Yadav. All the allegations made against me are false and baseless,' Khan told reporters in Uttar Pradesh.

With more skeletons tumbling out of the cupboard, police officials said the full picture of the trafficking syndicate was yet to unfold.

'We have sent teams to several states including Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Punjab to probe various aspects of the case and more arrests are likely,' Deputy Commissioner of Police Neeraj Thakur said.

The court sent Yadav and Gampa to police custody for three and five days respectively. Kiran was sent to jail till May 4.

Police said Gampa, a part-time office assistant to Katara, was charged with forging documents and passports. Yadav was said to arrange visas. Gampa and Kiran were picked up from the middle class neighbourhood of Lajpat Nagar in south Delhi.

Katara represents Dahod in Gujarat. He was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time in 1999 and again, by a just over 300 votes, in 2004. He was also said to be an active member of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Police suspect that Katara had helped other women too in the past to immigrate illegally.

Kiran Dhar allegedly 'trained' women travelling with MPs on forged passports how to behave and speak at the immigration counter and on flights. 'She taught women how to carry themselves while travelling with the MPs,' Thakur said.

Police said Yadav ran a kiosk near Barakhamba Road in the heart of Delhi. They said Gampa had admitted to introducing Paramjeet Kaur and the boy to Katara. He also revealed the names of other travel agents involved in the racket.

As developments unfolded, the BJP leadership said it had no intention of shielding Katara. 'We will not spare the guilty,' BJP president Rajnath Singh said.

Said D. Raja of the Communist Party of India: 'This case has brought disrepute to our parliament and democracy. This racket needs to be thoroughly investigated and the guilty bought to book without fear or prejudice.'

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