

New Delhi visa scam uncovered

Canadian charged: Police allege man arranged fake marriages to facilitate entry to Canada

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Police in New Delhi have charged a Canadian citizen with scamming thousands of dollars from Indian residents by arranging fake marriages so they can emigrate to Canada, but then not coming through with the desired visa.

Officers in the Indian capital also arrested a Canadian woman who was allegedly being offered up as a bride for would-be immigrants, but she has not been prosecuted.

A 50-year-old Canadian man of Indian origin was charged under local criminal law with "cheating" a businessman of one million rupees -- about \$28,000, Praveer Ranjan, a deputy police commissioner, said in an interview.

The businessman's complaint to New Delhi police sparked an investigation that uncovered similar reports from a number of alleged victims in the Punjab, Mr. Ranjan said.

The Canadian national allegedly set up a marriage between his companion and the businessman and promised to obtain a visa, charging a \$14,000 commission, Mr. Ranjan said. But he later informed the victim the visa application had been turned down.

At that point, he suggested he could try to enter Canada by training as a magician, and extracted another \$14,000 from the victim before returning to Canada himself.

Police are investigating the other complaints, Mr. Ranjan said.

The Canadian High Commission in New Delhi has offered consular services to the suspect, said Kimberley Phillips, a spokeswoman for the Department of Foreign Affairs. She said she could not comment further about the case because of privacy rules.

Internal Citizenship and Immigration Canada documents indicate marriages of convenience -- sometimes accompanied by divorces of convenience -- have become a growing form of immigration fraud in some Canadian missions.

As the second busiest source of requests for visas to Canada in the world, New Delhi sees its share of such problems, although the vast majority of applications are perfectly bona fide, said Maria Iadinardi, a spokeswoman for the department.

But Ms. Iadinardi stressed that Canadian visa officials carefully vet such applications and said a simple marriage certificate of the kind supplied in the New Delhi case would likely not be enough to win immigration. Officers would typically ask the couple to come in for an interview and ask for evidence that

their relationship is genuine, she said.

Sergio Karas, a Toronto immigration lawyer, said detecting marriage-related immigration fraud has always been a challenge in India, with its custom of arranged marriages.

Charged in the New Delhi case is Joginder Singh, 50, whose hometown in Canada was not provided. Also arrested but not charged was a female friend named by Indian reports as Queenie Nigen.

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