



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

Fiji

Fiji – FJI36213 – Passport scams – Indian nationals – Legal proceedings
15 March 2010

Questions

Please contact the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) in regard to a 2007 passport scam case in Fiji involving travel agent Alvin Raj; Indian nationals Manoj Kumar Khera, Prakash Garana, Kishore Jentilal Khera and Sanjay Jentilal Khera; and immigration officials Uday Kumar Nath and Eroni Tuberi.

1. Please provide advice on the current status of the murder and passport scam cases, if possible, and a brief account of its trajectory since February 2008.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) was contacted in regard to this matter on 12 February 2010.¹ DFAT replied on 12 March 2010 and the response is as follows:

We understand the offenders in the Nandhra murder investigation referred to in the request have been charged by the Director of Public Prosecutions since the case was transferred from the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption in February 2008. We believe their case is still before the courts. We are not aware of the details of the proceedings, or if a trial date has been set (it is not uncommon for court cases in Fiji to drag on for several years).

AFP at post has advised Alvin Raj, the travel agent involved in the Nandhra murder investigation, is well-known in Fiji as a facilitator of such schemes. He is currently being investigated by the police over the matter.

2. Please provide any general comment or advice regarding incidents of passport fraud in Fiji, particularly those involving Indian nationals obtaining Fijian passports.

AFP and DIAC at post have advised that over the past three years, the Fiji Police Force has investigated multiple cases of foreign nationals obtaining Fiji passports unlawfully, i.e. fraudulently or corruptly obtaining a genuine Fiji identity. The majority of foreign nationals involved in such cases are nationals of Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, China and Bangladesh. There are also numerous cases of Fiji citizens obtaining passports in false names. Such identity fraud in Fiji is mostly undertaken to disguise an adverse immigration history or criminal convictions.

We note there have been several significant passport fraud cases involving foreign nationals. For example, in September 2009, three local businessmen and an Indian national were charged with various counts of people smuggling for allegedly luring 13 Indian nationals into Fiji after promising them jobs in exchange for large sums of money (see <http://www.fijivillage.com/?mod=archivedstory&id=140909b21505b2fffa1486a54769cc>)

¹ RRT Country Advice Service 2010, Email to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 'Re: RRT Country Information Request FJI36221', 12 February – Attachment 1.

DIAC at post has advised the Fiji passport application process is fairly flawed. Poor administration and governance arrangements by the Births, Deaths and Marriage Departments and passport issuing authorities, as well as corruption amongst government officials, makes identity fraud a relatively simple process in Fiji.

We also note the interim government has reportedly stepped up its efforts to improve Fiji's border security and anti-people smuggling measures since the US President issued a determination detailing sanctions against Fiji's interim government in September 2009 on the grounds of non-compliance with the US Government's Trafficking Victims Protections Act
....²

Attachments

1. RRT Country Advice Service 2010, Email to Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 'Re: RRT Country Information Request FJI36213', 12 February.
2. Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2010, *DFAT Report No. 1124 – Fiji: RRT Information Request: FJI36213*, 12 March.

² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade 2010, *DFAT Report No. 1124 – Fiji: RRT Information Request: FJI36213*, 12 March – Attachment 2.