

# Now, an 'IAS officer' in immigration scam

**Yogesh Kumar in New Delhi**

Nov. 17. — Another immigration racket, another incident of "flight of pigeons" (credulous worker desiring to work abroad) never taking place.

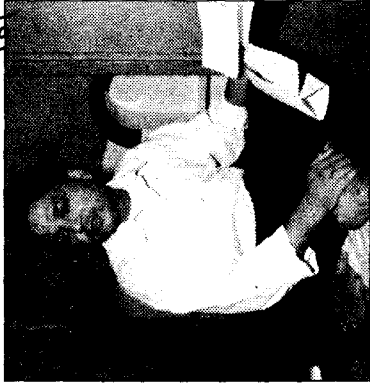
The accused, this time, is not as high-profile as pop star Daler Mehndi, but a government official, who posed as a member of the Indian Administrative Service and duped over a dozen odd people — in and around Delhi — of several lakhs promising them "attractive high paying jobs" overseas.

The incident came to light when one of the victims, Mr Asif Raza, filed a complaint against one Baldev Singh. Singh had claimed that

he was an IAS officer with the Union health ministry. Mr Raza has said in his complaint that Singh operates the racket from House No 110 in Shastrri Nagar, east Delhi.

Though Delhi Police is yet to register an FIR, preliminary investigations have shown Singh to be a government official who posed as a senior bureaucrat to earn the "confidence of victims" who approached him for a visa clearance and job abroad.

Mr Raza said: "Like many others who had met him, I too was impressed by Singh. He used to continuously brag about his connections in the government department and political circuit in Delhi." Mr Raza said he had paid



Asif Raza

Singh Rs 1 lakh to get a visa and work permit for Malaysia. "After taking the money, Singh gave us copies of tickets, travel documents, work permit which was

purportedly issued by Malaysian immigration authorities. There are over a dozen people, including many from Punjab, who have been cheated by Singh."

According to Mr Raza, all of them were taken to Chennai where "agents of Singh" were supposed to hand them airline tickets and other relevant documents. "After putting us up in a dingy private hotel, they vanished. Only after a month when they didn't turn up we realised we had been duped," Mr Raza said.

After returning to the Capital Mr Raza and others tried to get in touch with Singh. But he could not be traced. Mr Raza registered a complaint in Geeta Colony police station on 19 October.

THE STAFF

18 NOV 2003

9 NOV 2003

## HC orders case study on Punjab human trafficking

CHANDIGARH, Nov. 15. — With the human trafficking cases involving singers and theatre artistes on the rise in Punjab, the Punjab and Haryana High Court today ruled that a “case study has to be undertaken by the government to identify the dimensions of the crime”.

Pronouncing the order on a petition filed by a travel agent seeking anticipatory bail, Mr Justice MM Kumar further ruled that the study was to be carried out with “the object of finalising preventive measures required to effectively control the menace of crime” in such cases.

The court also issued notice to Punjab through the home and justice secretary and the Punjab DGP through the Advocate-General. In his detailed order, Mr Justice Kumar ruled: “While dealing with numerous cases on the criminal side, I have come across a large number of cases of this nature where the gullible public was deprived of their hard earned money on the pretext of sending them abroad by showing them green pastures”.

The Judge further ruled, “This trend is discernible and more pronounced in the Doaba area of Punjab. In order to protect the innocent public from illegal designs and onslaught of unscrupulous travel agents who are in some cases not even authorised to deal with prospective contenders who wish to go abroad, it has become necessary to issue directions to the state of Punjab.” The case will now come up for further hearing on 25 November.

**Amarinder on Daler arrest**  
Punjab chief minister Mr Amarinder Singh said Daler Mehndi would be arrested soon as investigations revealed his involvement in human trafficking case. “Daler cannot evade arrest for long as investigations have revealed his complicity.” — SNS/PTI

THE OFFICE

16 NOV 2003

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## THE GREAT IMMIGRANT BAZAAR

IT SHOULD HAVE made for the perfect equation. By 2050, many rich countries with low fertility and birth rates will need to have allowed in millions of immigrants to replace their own ageing labour force. Millions of people in the developing world are waiting to meet the demand. But add to this the strict controls in the developed world on the inflow of economic migrants through its borders and what do you get? People from poor countries who will do anything — to the extent of putting their lives at risk — to sneak into the land of their dreams. Rapacious middlemen who will exploit people's aspirations by making illegal immigration sound easy in return for vast sums of money. It has been happening for years. The case registered recently by the Punjab police against the bhangra pop star Daler Mehndi, accusing him of involvement in an illegal immigration racket, has only served to highlight the constantly evolving techniques of this flourishing world-wide business and the ever higher sums that individuals are willing to pay to its purveyors.

Cases of flight from political persecution apart, people emigrate mostly for economic betterment. Even many so-called asylum seekers who wash up on western shores are in fact economic migrants. Pundits predict that with the advance towards a globalised economy, this sort of migration will become unnecessary. Yet, of this planet's six billion people, more than four billion still live on less than two dollars a day, of which more than one billion live for less than one dollar a day. The rewards of globalisation have spread unevenly. And where they have spread, they have whetted the appetite for a better life that salaries from jobs in the Bangalore back offices or call centres of international companies may not be able to meet. Most illegal Indian immigrants seem to be from Punjab, one of the most prosperous

States in the country. Evidently, only those who have money can afford the high sums demanded by futures abroad salesmen. The Punjab police say that from the beginning of 2003 up to July, they received 1,909 requests from Indian missions abroad to verify the backgrounds of individuals who had shown up in those countries under dubious circumstances and were detained by the authorities. Hundreds of others must go undetected.

Illegal immigration cannot be stopped. It can only be checked. For this, without doubt, border control regimes in the developed world that seek to keep out foreigners have to first loosen up. In any case, these laws go against the right to work, the right to free choice of employment and to protection against unemployment enshrined in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. More than this, the realisation that they could be stranded without an adequate work force in the years to come has already spurred an awareness in many host western countries that their immigration laws need to be relaxed. The sending country also has an important role to play. Here, India, whose shores thousands of people attempt to or successfully leave illegally, could learn from Sri Lanka where the Government plays an active regulatory and facilitating role in economic emigration. It assesses demand for unskilled immigrant labour abroad, provides basic training — including language skills — to potential emigrants, regulates middlemen through licensing and runs a large-scale awareness campaign about the risks of illegal immigration abroad. The courts will deal with the allegations against Daler Mehndi. But the way to minimise such cases is for the Indian Government seriously to address the issues around emigration as a means used by people to achieve the legitimate aspiration of bettering their economic prospects.

THE HINDU  
THE HINDU

10 NOV 2003

# Phoren-bound, by hook or by crook

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Thousands of illegal immigrants from India are languishing in various jails, refugee homes and refugee camps in Europe alone, according to the latest UNHCR reports. *The Sunday Times* tracks the treacherous route and the modus operandi of this thriving operation.

## Step 1: Pigeon Mania

Satvinder Singh (24) has a dream. He wants to build a palatial *makaan* with some *dukaans* and an aeroplane-shaped water tank on the top in Phagwara. He knows working at odd jobs in Phagwara—or any other place in Punjab—isn't going to give him the required moolah. So, Satvinder decides to become a 'kabootar' because that's the only way he can bring home the dollars to turn fantasy into reality.

Kabootar? That's the Punjabi code for the illegal immigrant who goes abroad in a group on a visitor's visa or a 'sticker visa' (fake visa) and then simply vanishes. He resurfaces in public memory (for family and friends back home) only when the dollars start coming home after six to eight months of ducking cops and staying invisible in sundry countries.

## Step 2: Pigeon Managers

Dreaming pigeons is one thing. Becoming one is



### Kabootar kaun?

Singers, artistes, granthis, exhibitors, entrepreneurs and exporters

### Where do they go?

Italy, Greece, Spain, US and UK

### Flight money

- 'Visas' for Hungary, Latvia, Estonia and Kazakhstan: Rs 6 lakh
- To Mexico and from there illegally by helicopter/ship to US: Rs 16 lakh
- To Nigeria, and onwards to Spain and Italy: Rs 6 lakh
- To South Africa: Rs 6 lakh
- To Greece and US from there: Rs 4-5 lakh

tough. Satvinder must first collect Rs 5-15 lakhs to buy himself a fake passport and an undercover passage to his dream destination. Armed with the requisite fee, he must find a 'kabootar-baaz' (tout)—and that's not difficult.

● Fake passports are issued in Mumbai, Page 6

THE TIMES OF INDIA

7 NOV 2003

# Double blow: Patiala court denies bail to Mehndi

HT Correspondent  
Patiala, November 4

THE COURT of additional chief judicial magistrate Patiala P.S. Dhanoa has dismissed application of Daler Mehndi for regular bail. The main reason for rejecting the bail was that Daler should have himself come to the court. Subsequent to rejection of Daler's bail plea the police have intensified raids at suspected places of hiding for pop singer.

After rejection of bail, Daler's counsel have decided to approach Punjab and Haryana High Court for regular bail on Wednesday.

The pop singer was on interim bail of 10 days till November 1. This interim bail was granted by Delhi High Court on October 23.

Defence counsel Anand Parkash contented that his client has complied with the orders of Delhi High Court by joining investigations twice, he was formally ar-



Daler Mehndi

rested by the police and was released on Rs 5 lakh surety bond. But police since October 27, when Daler for the first time appeared before police, has been claiming that the pop singer never cooperated because of which they want his custodial interrogation.

Defence counsel seeking bail also told the court that

Daler was gheraoed by over 500 protesters on October 27 in front of the police station. He also said that when on October 31 he came to police station to hand over documents required by the police, the duty officer refused to accept the documents. He also said the address given in the complaint was incorrect.

## Noose tightens

- ▶ The pop singer should have appeared personally, the Patiala court maintained
- ▶ The police have intensified raids at suspected places of hiding
- ▶ Daler's counsel will move the high court for regular bail

# Traffic in Tragedy

Immigration could become more difficult  
for Indians as the West raises barriers

It transpires now that there was a forbidding story of extortion and cheating behind the runaway success of Indipop star Daler Mehndi's robust tunes. It must be recognised though that Mehndi — if he is indeed guilty — is at best one among the countless immigration agents who have built their fortunes on false promises made to wannabe immigrants. Many of the ill-luck accounts carry the same dre-ary undertones of exploitation that we have been familiar with for over a century now, starting with the time Indians went out to live as indentured labour. The element of force that characterised the early migrations may be missing today, but nevertheless it is a terrible life that awaits the 21st century illegal immigrant, whether in the hostile environs of the Gulf or in the once land of opportunities that is now the increasingly unfriendly United States. And the future seems bleaker, judging by growing calls in the West to raise immigration barriers. The irony is India has been exporting its best intellectual capital to the West. This week, India topped the list of countries sending students to the US. Indians have also gloried in the elevation of Diwali as a White House festival.

As always, the contrasts are glaring. A much-toasted community of successful NRIs on the one hand and, on the other, millions of job seekers who would pledge their life's savings for that elusive document called the American immigration visa. A report in this paper suggested that prospective immigrants spend anything between Rs 5 lakh and 15 lakh for passports and visas. However, it might not be long before the passage is blocked even for the white collar class, including Indian IT professionals who earlier walked into coveted jobs in America. Indeed, a growing band of overseas analysts are now veering round to the view that the Cancun round of WTO collapsed more due to the West's concern with domestic job losses than because of perceived disagreements over subsidised northern agriculture. For the West, it's undoubtedly a hard choice: Between losing domestic support over job losses and allowing cheap labour influx through ever more open markets. It would be easy to sympathise with this predicament were it not for the double standards evident in the western insistence on the developing countries keeping their part of the bargain by lowering import barriers on key food commodities. The message is clear: Free passage for their goods, but none for our people.

SUKHWINDER HELD ON SIMILAR CHARGE

# Daler on the run

*Human Trafficking*

*SI-3*  
*4/11*

Press Trust of India

PATIALA, Nov. 3. — The cup of woes is overflowing for Punjabi pop singers. Or so it seems for at least a couple of them.

Not only did the police today continue its search for the elusive Daler Mehndi, but they also arrested another Punjabi singer, Sukhwinder Mann alias 'Sukha Delhi,' in another alleged human trafficking case registered on the complaint of a resident of Noorkhedian village near here.

Daler's interim anticipatory bail plea was dismissed by Delhi High Court today while another bail plea filed by him is to come up before a local court tomorrow. Police conducted searches at some places in Delhi for Daler who has failed to appear before police for questioning since last Wednesday in connection with the alleged illegal human trafficking case. He was not traceable at his known addresses, police said and added search parties were sent to his two farm houses, his office and residential premises in different parts of Delhi.

Sources said a vigil was also being kept at certain places which were frequented by Daler earlier or could be visited by him. He was questioned for

seven hours last Monday and for four hours the next day in the case registered on the complaint of one Bakshish Singh who claimed that he was not taken abroad despite having paid the singer Rs 13 lakh out of the demanded Rs 15 lakh.

Sukhwinder Mann was arrested from here while allegedly receiving the final instalment of Rs 8 lakh from the complainant Balbir Singh, a resi-

dent of Noorkhedian, a senior police officer said. He is the second singer to have been booked by the local police after Daler. Both face accusations of human trafficking.

Balbir alleged that Mann had promised to take his two sons, Pargat and Pushpinder, abroad after fixing an alliance with two girls reportedly settled in the USA, but failed to do so. Senior SP Mr Paramraj Singh Umaranangal said Mann's

modus operandi was to insert an advertisement in a Jalandhar daily seeking matrimonial alliances, preferably from brothers, for two girls in the USA. The boys, it was learnt later, were to be taken as part of a troupe. Balbir alleged neither of his sons were taken abroad nor any visa obtained in their name. A case of fraud and cheating has been registered against Mann, police said.



Sukhwinder Mann

THE STATESMAN

4 NOV 2003

# Jharkhand move against tribal trafficking

Statesman News Service

RANCHI, Nov. 3. — In an attempt to prevent the migration of young tribal girls to metropolitan cities and their illegal trafficking, the state government has decided to set up checkpoints in districts vulnerable to the exodus.

The government has decided to act tough following the recent rescue of a few tribal girls from New Delhi who were sold off and employed as domestics. All officials attached to the district administration, along with respective local police stations, have been asked to remain alert and ensure every possible security to such girls in distress.

A social activist said tribal girls from remote corners of Jharkhand are lured by brokers to leave their homes with promises of hefty salaries and accommodation. Expectedly, they are instead taken to brick kilns and tea gardens where they are forced to do petty jobs, even as a few are forced to work as domestics. Of late, trafficking of tribal girls has been thriving and several tribal girls are being taken to Delhi and Mumbai where they are being forced into prostitution. Most victims are from Ranchi, Gumla, Lohardagga and Hazaribagh.

Home officials said checkpoints would come up later this month and would be manned by the state police.

The latter would monitor the movements of men and women en masse.

The department has also decided to focus on public awareness by placing advertisements detailing the idea behind the checkpoints. The aim behind the campaign, officials pointed out, was to educate the rural people on the threats posed to their women folk in the villages. Under the campaign, the people would be educated on the dangers that lie behind the promises made by strangers (brokers). "All district officials, including BDOs and local policemen, will be sensitised about the problem to make the checkpoints effective," officials said.

A survey conducted by People's Awakening for Traditional Revival and Advancement (Patra) disclosed that 2,500 to 3,000 tribal girls from all over Jharkhand migrate to cities in other states every year. The survey found that as ninety per cent of the families of such girls live below the poverty line, the daughters are compelled to migrate to help make ends meet. For a majority of these families, their lands have been taken over by the government for commercial use, leaving them with no other source of income. Those already working in the metros are tutored by brokers to lure others. And everyday, thousands of girls wait for job brokers at the railway stations of Ranchi, Rourkela, Sahibganj and Jamshedpur.





# Badal springs to Daler defence

GAJINDER SINGH

**Chandigarh, Oct. 30:** Former chief minister Parkash Singh Badal today came down heavily on Punjab police for dragging Bhangra pop star Daler Mehndi into the illegal immigration racket.

The Shiromani Akali Dal president said the issue, including allegations of police high-handedness, needed to be probed by an independent agency.

"A judicial probe at the highest level or even a CBI inquiry would be quite in order to get to the truth of the sordid drama," he said.

Clarifying that he wanted an independent probe into allegations of human trafficking, Badal said no one who



Daler

had indulged in it should be allowed to go scot-free.

"But the Daler Mehndi case and its handling has raised

many questions about the way the police are behaving in Punjab. We strongly oppose an artiste of his stature being subjected to a brutal and stage-managed mob trial, as happened in Patiala. It is also shocking to learn that Punjab police officials allegedly first forced Daler to sing and then asked him to strip," the Akali Dal leader said.

Badal said there had been reports that the police had been deputed to gather crowds to harass and humiliate Daler. People were even provided buses and served food by the police, he said, adding that the crowd had been deliberately incited to cause physical harm to the artiste. "Is this the way Punjab police conduct their investigations?" he asked.

The Akali president said this

was not the first time that a prominent Punjabi artiste had been humiliated.

A couple of months ago, two popular comedians, Jasvinder Bhalla and Bal Mukand Sharma, were slapped at the civil secretariat here by a senior officer for making fun of chief minister Amarinder Singh. Both comedians later denied that they were humiliated.

Fellow comedian Jaspal Bhatti had protested the treatment meted out to Bhalla and Sharma.

The two comedians have released a new cassette, *Jhankata 2003*, which is being publicised as an "offering of revenge".

"Such incidents only reveal the attitude of the Congress government towards Punjabi art and culture," Badal said.

# Stones and eggs greet Daler at police station



Protesters block Daler's car on his way to the police station. (PTI)

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

Chandigarh, Oct. 27: Stones, rotten eggs and tomatoes rained on Daler Mehndi's car as the Bhangra pop star made his way to Patiala's Sadar police station today.

Granting him interim bail in a human trafficking case on October 23, Delhi High Court had asked Daler to present himself today for interrogation.

Patiala police had registered a case earlier this month against Daler, his brother Shamsher Singh Shera and three others after a resident of Belwara village in the district complained that he was cheated by the duo who had promised to send him abroad. Bakshish Singh alleged that he paid Rs 13 lakh out of the Rs 15 lakh demanded by Daler and Shamsher, who is now in judicial custody, but was not sent abroad. Patiala police have since received complaints from over 30 others against the brothers.

The crowd outside the police station today included political activists who waved black flags and attacked Daler's car. Family

sources said it took the singer nearly 40 minutes to wade through the "mostly abusive" crowd.

"Many of those present outside the police station were political activists belonging to the Congress. That is why Daler has asked for a CBI probe into the human trafficking issue," said a relative over phone, seeking anonymity.

"I have done nothing wrong and demand a CBI probe into the issue. This is not a small issue and only a CBI probe will lead to the involvement of big names that people cannot even imagine," asserted a confident Daler in a pink turban at Dukh Niwaran Sahib Gurdwara where he paid obeisance, along with singer brother Mika, before going to the police station.

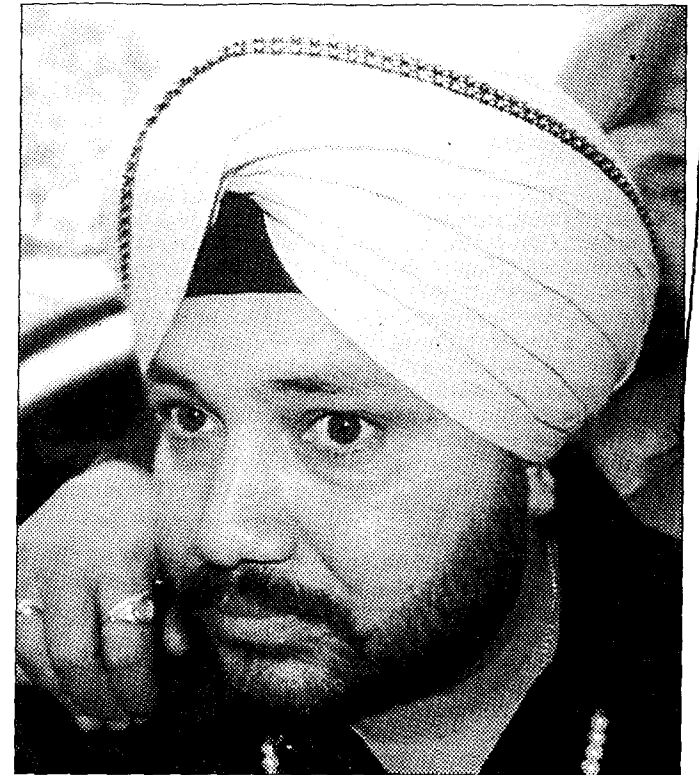
Fearing that the crowd would enter the police station and create trouble, Daler was whisked into an ante-room where superintendent of police (headquarters) R.L. Monga interrogated the singer on his role in the estimated Rs 1,000 crore human trafficking in the state.

Police sources said the interrogation, which lasted for more than six hours and ended after 6 pm, related to documents and data in the computer seized from Daler's Delhi residence and office allegedly showing his involvement in human trafficking by taking people to the UK, the US and Canada as part of his musical troupe. The singer was also questioned about passports seized from his Delhi office.

Patiala superintendent of police Paramraj Singh Umranangal denied that Daler had been arrested. "At the moment, we are questioning the singer on the number of people that he may have helped immigrate illegally," said the police official. "Daler is cooperating," he added. The questioning will resume at 2 pm tomorrow.

But Monga, who questioned the singer, was dissatisfied. "Daler chose not to answer most of the questions. We will oppose any further extension of bail," he said over phone.

Daler refused to elaborate on the questions. "It was nice," he said.



Daler arrives at the police station. (PTI)

# Delhi court relief for Daler

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Oct. 23: Daler Mehndi has earned a reprieve with Delhi High Court today granting him interim anticipatory bail for 10 days. This will allow the Bhangra pop star to approach a Patiala court to seek regular bail in a human trafficking case.

Justice S.K. Aggarwal has directed Mehndi to appear before the Patiala court next Monday at 11 am. The Punjab court had issued non-bailable warrants against the singer on October 15.

Aggarwal today directed Mehndi to furnish a personal bond of Rs 5 lakh and a surety of the same amount. He also ordered him to surrender his passport and not leave India without prior court permission. The judge has also asked Mehndi to help Punjab police with their investigations.

The singer had turned to Delhi High Court to seek protection from arrest after an

additional district and sessions court here had refused to grant him anticipatory bail.

Mehndi and his elder brother Shamsher Singh Shera have been accused of duping people into parting with large sums of money to travel with the singer's troupe to the US, Canada and other countries. The brothers would then allegedly contrive to let them stay on to try and bag lucrative jobs.

Mehndi maintains he is innocent and not involved with Shamsher's activities. He claims to have disowned his brother in 2001.

Delhi police counsel Anil Soni opposed Mehndi's bail plea today, saying the case against the singer had been registered in Punjab. He said the decision could encourage accused facing arrest in one state to seek bail in another.

Punjab police counsel Atul Nanda accused Mehndi's lawyers of deliberately omitting certain portions from the FIR while translating it from the original Punjabi into

English in order to water down the allegations made against him.

Punjab police say they have received 31 human trafficking complaints against Mehndi. As directed by the court on Tuesday, Nanda today filed an affidavit listing all the complaints received against the singer.

R.K. Jain, senior counsel for Mehndi, said all the complaints had been filed after the FIR was registered and no details had been forwarded to him.

Jain added that only one case had been filed against the singer; the rest were mere complaints. He also sought a six-week interim protection for his client. The lawyer added: "The whole thing is mala fide. They want to book Daler (Mehndi) for money because they can't get it from Shamsher."

Punjab police have only managed to arrest Mehndi's elder brother. Three other accused — Rajinder Singh, Surinder Singh and Harcharan Singh — are still at large.



Mehndi

# Kabootar links lead to big birds

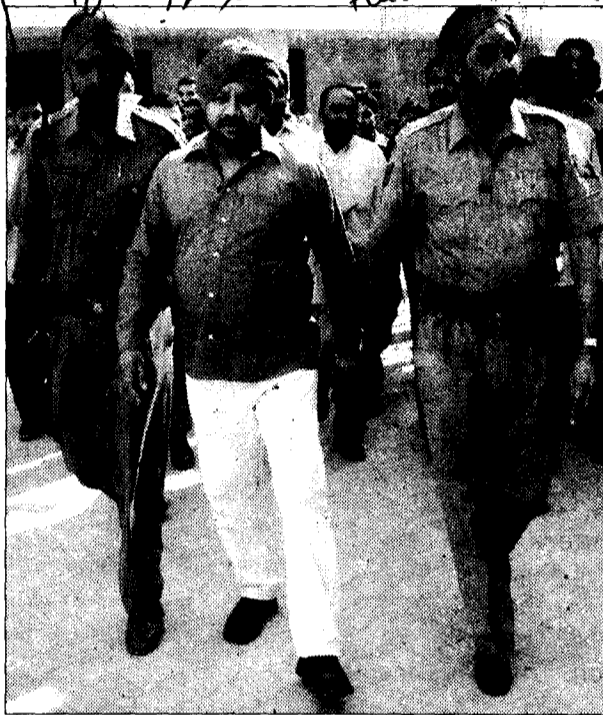
ANJU AGNIHOTRI CHABA  
JALANDHAR, OCTOBER 14.

"WE are small fries, why don't you go for the big fish?" Sukhwinder Panchchi, a Punjabi singer who was arrested by the Delhi Police in August this year for forging visas, may have every reason to tarnish big stars, but the police records too corroborate him.

Sukhi Brar, the voice of Malwa who's been honoured with countless awards, was in trouble last year when the police booked her for cheating a youth from Bholath village in Kapurthala district. He filed an FIR, alleging she had taken Rs 1.5 lakh from him on the promise of taking him abroad for a show, but failed to return the sum after the programme was scrapped. "This was the initial sum, I was to pay her Rs 5 lakh on reaching Canada," says Agya Pal, who got his money back with police intervention.

Jasbir Jassi, the well-known pop star, says the involvement of some Punjabi singers in the immigration racket, is an open secret. "They go abroad every two months, something which isn't possible for even a successful singer like me," says Jassi.

Police records show many such cases booked in the past



Shamsher Mehndi, brother of Daler Mehndi, outside the district court in Patiala on Saturday. PTI

were hushed up because of the connections the accused enjoyed with politicians.

Last year, the police registered five cases against Punjabi singers. These included two against Sukhwinder Panchchi in Nawanshehar, and one each against Sukhi Brar, Rajinder Singh, and Pargat Purewal.

Panchchi lays the blame at the

door of the show promoters. "Most of the time, it's the promoter who chooses the members of the troupe. Later, they disappear, after doing a few programmes."

Sunny Gill, son-in-law of the legendary Dara Singh, was also booked for trying to send three boys abroad as wrestlers.

More recently, president of the Jalandhar Sports Club,

Amarjit Singh Kaypee, brother of Punjab Technical Minister Mohinder Singh Kaypee, took an 18-member cricket team to the UK, but returned without four of the members on July 28 this year. He explained their absence by saying that they will come back before their visa expires in January 2004.

Besides sports and music, there are many who are taking the religion route. "It's commonplace for raagis and preachers to go abroad for a kirtan darbar and never return," says the priest of a gurdwara in Jalandhar. DIG, Jalandhar range, Dinkar Gupta, says such methods are popular because they carry very little risk. "Going abroad as a member of a sports team, a music troupe, or a raagi jatha is a sure shot way to safe landing."

A senior police officer says even some players of the Punjab Armed Police are roped in by sporting clubs to lend them a measure of credibility. Now the embassies are becoming more vigilant. Recently, Agriculture Minister Rajinder Kaur Bhattal was barred from a US visa on charges of abetting alien smuggling when the person she was taking along as her personal assistant was found to have faked his identity.

# Daler Mehndi's bail plea fails

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The anticipatory bail plea of Punjabi pop singer Daler Mehndi was rejected by a city court on Monday, saying his custodial interrogation was necessary in the case pertaining to the alleged illegal trafficking of people.

Additional sessions judge A.K. Mendiratta dismissed the application saying perusal of the FIR revealed that the allegations against Mehndi were of a serious nature and his custodial interrogation was necessary.

The case was registered on the complaint of Bakshish Singh of Balbehra village who alleged Daler's brother, Shamsher, had demanded Rs 15 lakh of which Rs 13 lakh had been paid to him. However, he was not taken abroad. Shamsher was arrested while on his way to receive the instalment money.

Daler, in a press conference in Delhi, had denied any connection with with

Shamsher or his companies, D.M. Entertainment and D.M. Music, saying Shamsher had stopped being a part of his group since 2001.

The judge also said that Mehndi had not approached the competent court in Patiala where the case had been registered, hence the allegations cannot be said to be mala fide.

The Patiala police had on October 5 arrested Daler's brother Shamsher Singh Shera for running an immigration racket. The FIR was registered against both brothers and three others. Wives of Daler and Shamsher are also facing charges.

The Patiala police has been flooded with more than 16 complaints from different parts of the country ever since Shamsher has been arrested. The complainants alleged that the brothers used to take Rs 10 to 12 lakh from people for sending them to countries like US and Canada.

# Daler faces music in immigration scam

HT Correspondents

Patiala/New Delhi, October 6

THEY'VE BELTED out bhangra rap, now they're facing an immigration rap. On Sunday, the Punjab Police arrested Shamsher Singh Shera, elder brother of Punjabi pop singer Daler Mehndi, in Patiala for running an immigration racket. A police team has been sent out to arrest Daler.

An FIR against the brothers and three others says they demanded money from people on the pretext of taking them abroad with Daler's music



Daler Mehndi defends himself at a news conference in Delhi.

The case against the Mehndi brothers was registered on a complaint from Bakshish Singh, of Balwera village, a fortnight ago. Bakshish had alleged that Shamsher had demanded Rs 15 lakh from him, out of which a payment of Rs 13 lakh had been made. The accused had, however, neither sent Bakshish abroad with Daler's troupe nor returned the money.

Shamsher was arrested while he was on his way to receive an instalment of money from Bakshish. He has been sent to police remand till Tuesday and a team sent to Delhi to collect more evi-

Hummer attacked

dence. The police said they had received more such complaints against the Mehndi brothers.

Meanwhile, Daler has denied Shamsher has any connection with him or his companies, D.M. Entertainment Pvt Ltd and D.M. Music. At a press conference in Delhi, the singer said his brother was using his name and even impersonating him. He said he had disowned Shamsher Singh Shera alias Shamsher Mehndi alias Ustad Shamsher Singh in March 2001. Daler claimed Shamsher, who used to play the tabla for his group, had ceased to be a part of it in 2001.