

Nicaragua Flight A Case Of Indian Tourists

Why In News

- A **charter plane** carrying 276 passengers, mostly Indians, arrived in Mumbai.
- The **flight was grounded in France** for the last four days due to suspected human trafficking. Young men up to 40 years made 85 per cent or the bulk of the total 303 passengers on board the Nicaragua-bound Legend Airlines chartered flight.



What It Is All About

- There were **303 Indian passengers**, including **11 unaccompanied minors**, on board when the flight landed at **Vatry Airport**.
- The plane was operated by **Romanian charter company Legend Airlines** and bound for Nicaragua, a country in Central America.



- They had got an **anonymous tip** that the plane could be **carrying human trafficking victims**.
- Over the next three days, the plane along with its passengers remained in France, as authorities initiated a **judicial inquiry** to probe the intent of the journey.
- The charter plane left for Mumbai with 276 passengers on board, according to French authorities. **Sources in Punjab Police said about 70 per cent** of passengers appeared to be from Punjab, given their surnames and second names.



- The **next big group of passengers was from Gujarat**. Police sources in Gujarat said, while close to **65 persons were from their state**, the police has identified only 21 as of now. Some from the state may have stayed back in France, seeking asylum, they said.
- 25 people, including two minors, expressed their wish to apply for asylum and did not board the flight.



- On the other hand, French authorities **initiated action against two individuals**. They were produced before a judge at a local court and placed on assisted witness status.
- On Thursday, the French police intervened in the matter after the flight landed at Vatry for a **technical stopover en route to Nicaragua from Dubai**.
- Soon after, the authorities **launched a judicial investigation** into the conditions and purpose of the trip, while a unit specialising in organised crime started investigating suspected human trafficking.
- As per sources in the Indian security agencies, the possible mastermind of the Dubai-Nicaragua flight could be **Shashi Kiran Reddy** -- the alleged kingpin of the 2022 Dingucha case who was let off by Gujarat police due to lack of evidence, The Times of India reported.

Who Is Shashi Kiran Reddy

- The **Shashi Kiran Reddy**, who is based in Hyderabad, was under scrutiny in the Dingucha case in 2022.
- In January the bodies of Jagdish, his wife Vaishali, and their two children -- daughter Vihangi and son Dharmik -- were recovered approximately 12 metres away from the US border.



- They were residents of **Dingucha, a village in Gujarat's Gandhinagar** district. They were part of a larger group of Indians, who made it to the US side in -35 degrees Celsius weather.
- After reaching the US side, the group was caught by the authorities and they said that four people including two children were left behind. Later, the US

authorities informed agencies in Canada about the family, and their bodies were recovered.

- **Shashi Kiran Reddy's name** emerged in connection with the case.
- Reddy has allegedly been running a human smuggling network for the past 15 years. He arranges chartered flights from Dubai to Nicaragua, from where people are illegally taken to the US by road and sea.