

Business Standard

First human trafficking charges filed in New Zealand

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Two men who allegedly helped 18 Indian nationals to deceive the authorities and enter New Zealand, appeared in court Thursday to face the country's first human trafficking charges.

Police arrested the men in the Motueka area and they appeared in the Nelson District Court, where they entered no pleas and were provided bail until Sept 4, said a statement from the government's Immigration New Zealand (INZ) agency.

Human trafficking can carry penalties of up to 20 years, a fine of 500,000 NZ dollars (\$419,463) or both, Xinhua reported.

A third defendant was arrested in Auckland on charges of organising and lodging false refugee claims for the 18 Indian nationals once they arrived in New Zealand.

That offense can carry a penalty of up to seven years in jail, or a fine of up to 100,000 NZ dollars (\$83,893) or both.

INZ assistant general manager for compliance and border operations Peter Devoy said the prosecution was an extremely significant development.

"It shows how seriously we treat such allegations and the fact that this is the first prosecution for people trafficking in New Zealand sends a very strong message that we will thoroughly investigate any other case," Devoy said in a statement.

--Indo-Asian News Service

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