

Indian among 20 arrested in China for suspected 'terror' link

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London/Beijing : An Indian was among 20 foreigners associated with a religiously inspired African charity arrested by Chinese authorities at an airport in northern Inner Mongolia for suspected links to "a terror group", British officials and the charity group said today.

The reason behind their arrest remains unclear but the tourists, including nine Britons and one Indian, detained at Ordos airport in Inner Mongolia on July 10 were linked to the South Africa-based charity, Gift of the Givers.

"Nine British nationals, and two British and South African dual nationals, have been detained in northern China. Consular staff have visited the group to provide assistance and we are liaising with Chinese authorities," a Foreign Office spokesperson said today.

According to Gift of the Givers, the tour operator realised something was wrong on Sunday, 48 hours after the arrests, and discovered that the holidaymakers had been detained after travelling to the airport.

"This was supposed to be a tour to explore ancient China; a planned 47 day journey for ten South Africans, nine Britons and one Indian national. A tour that went horribly wrong on Friday, 10 July, when they were arrested at Erdos Airport, Inner Mongolia, at 9.40 am local time," the group said.

A team from the South African Embassy and the British Embassy met with the Chinese Foreign Ministry officials this morning, it said yesterday, adding that 11 of the 20 had been released but would remain in detention without being charged until flights out of China could be booked for them.

The remaining nine - three Britons, five South Africans and one Indian, are being held without charge at a detention centre.

"The Chinese suggested that some members were linked to a terror group, to a banned organisation, to watching propaganda videos in their hotel room," the charity says on its Facebook page.

"No reasons were given for the arrest, cellphones were confiscated, there was no access to the embassies of origin nor to their families. They were detained without charge with no access to any communication nor to legal representation," it added in a statement.

The group dismissed the claim, saying "These individuals have no terror links, no criminal record in their country."

Meanwhile, UK diplomats in Beijing have indicated that six of the Britons held are likely to be deported soon.

- PTI