

More problems for Kathmandu-Lhasa bus link.

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(KOLNEWS) The direct Kathmandu-Lhasa bus service operated by Sajha Yatayat (SY) has suffered further problems after the Chinese authorities refused to issue visas to foreign tourists travelling by the bus. An official of SY said that the Tibet Tourism Bureau refused to grant visas to all foreign nationals who wished to travel to Tibet on SY's bus service on 27 September without any prior notice. Around six foreign nationals from Germany, Italy, France and the US had applied for visas. *"We assumed that rejection of visa was just a misunderstanding. But, latest development suggests that the Chinese authorities are making attempts to completely ban foreign nationals from entering Tibet by bus"*, he said. There have been problems for foreign tourists travelling on the route since the service came into operation on 01 May 2005. First the passengers were asked to pay extra amount to expedite visa issuance procedures. Then problems related to visa processing surfaced, bringing the service to a halt for around four months. *"SY agrees that decisions regarding whether to issue visas to travellers are at the embassy's discretion, but it cannot restrict all the foreigners from travelling on SY without any reason as this goes completely against the terms and conditions of the agreement signed between the two countries"*, the official said. The agreement signed at the ministerial level between Nepal and China, the official said, clearly states that buses operating from both the sides can ferry both locals as well as foreign tourists. *"Sajha will not be able to afford the operation cost and may be forced to terminate the service if the concerned authorities do not allow foreigners to use the bus services operated by SY"*, he said.

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