

Individuals traveling to US face heightened scrutiny

- A Monitor Report

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New York : Travelers visiting the United States have been facing heightened scrutiny due to President Donald Trump's hardline immigration policies.

Immigration officers have repeatedly detained US-bound tourists at the border in recent weeks, leading to outrage and fear among those who are planning to travel to the US.

International travelers have been wondering what their rights are if they plan to travel to the US. Many people living in the country on visas are also worried.

US customs officers do have the right to stop and search at entry points in order to determine eligibility to enter the country. They are authorized to search belongings for contraband, according to the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Pennsylvania. However,

custom agents cannot search or conduct another inspection "based on your religion, race, national origin, gender, ethnicity or political beliefs."

According to the US government, it has the right to search your electronic devices, including phones and laptops. However, according to the ACLU, this assertion remains "a contested legal issue." Some travelers have reportedly been asked to provide device passwords at US entry points.

If US citizens refuse to provide passwords or refuse to unlock their devices, they cannot be denied entry, but it may lead to delays and further questioning. Officers may even retain the phone or other devices for more inspection. The ACLU says that if visa holders entering under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) refuse to unlock their devices, they could be denied entry. However, authorities generally cannot revoke the status of permanent residents who have valid green cards without a hearing before an immigration judge.

Civil rights groups believe it is important for travellers, specifically non-citizens, to carry contact information for an immigration lawyer or an emergency contact. As per reports, if a traveler is detained, they should comply with the directions of immigration officers, and contact a lawyer at the earliest.

Reports said, people visiting the United States have the right to remain silent. However, entry into the country could get jeopardized if they choose to do so. If a visitor is not allowed to enter the US, they can always "withdraw" their intent to do so and will be allowed to return home. In such cases, their visas could be cancelled, and they would have to fly back immediately.