

US Congress members for probe on roughing up of Indo-Canadian

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WASHINGTON: Concerned over US immigration officials' ignorance of races and religions, several members of American Congress have demanded a probe into the recent rough treatment of an Indo-Canadian woman at Chicago airport.

The members have co-signed the letter being sent by Congressman Joseph Crowley, Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, to Secretary for Homeland Security Tom Ridge asking for investigation of the rough treatment meted out to Bema Cruz at Chicago airport while returning from India to Canada.

US immigration officials did not believe that Cruz was an Indo-Canadian because her last name was not "Singh" -- they thought all Indians were Singhs.

Congressman Crowley wants Ridge to educate US immigration officials that Canada, like the US, is multiethnic, multiracial and multireligious and so is India.

Co-signers of the letter include Representatives Sherrod Brown, Sheila Jackson, Gary Ackerman, Frank Pallone, Janice Schakowsky, Lloyd Doggett, Jim McDermott, Chris Bell, Brad Miller and Bob Filner.

Cruz's problem was, in the eyes of immigration officials in Chicago, that she did not "look Canadian." So convinced were they on that score that they would not let her telephone the Canadian Consulate for help.

Fortunately for her, on her way back to India via Kuwait Airlines, the Kuwaiti captain of her plane

helped her get in touch with the Canadian Consulate, which promptly gave her a temporary entry permit to return to Canada, where she could get a regular passport.