

I'm innocent, says Indian in UK bank data scandal

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An Indian computer worker accused of selling the bank details of more than 1,000 people to a British newspaper says a friend had asked him to give a CD to a Briton to earn extra money, but he had no idea of its contents.

Twenty-four-year-old Karan Bahree, still on probation after starting his 10,000 rupee (\$230) a month job in April, denied any wrongdoing in a one-and-a-half page handwritten explanation to his company, Infinity eSearch, local media reported on Saturday.

Infinity's lawyer told the Indian Express it was likely Bahree did not know how important the information on the CD was.

"He has written that he was supposed to get three pounds (\$5.50) per information," the Express quoted Depak Masih saying.

"Bahree ... thought he could earn some extra money this way by utilizing his free time."

Infinity, which says it never had the kind of information the Sun said it bought, did not say what was on the CD, but said it was checking out Bahree's explanation, the Express said. Infinity helps Web sites increase their hits from search engines.

In the second data loss case since April to rock India's fast-growing call center and business processing industry, Britain's The Sun said on Thursday one of its reporters had bought bank details of 1,000 British customers for three pounds each. Bahree has gone underground and refuses to comment.

Call centers, which employ 350,000, immediately said they would tighten security. Workers are already routinely frisked and banned from bringing everything from paper and pens to portable music players into their office to prevent them copying data.

Industry officials played down the Sun report, saying it was a rare case and no system was foolproof.

But shares in leading outsourcing firms, including MphasiS BFL Ltd. (MBFL.BO: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)), hit by April's scandal, Hinduja TMT (HTMT.BO: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)) and Wipro (WIPR.BO: [Quote](#), [Profile](#), [Research](#)), fell on Friday even as the broader market hit a high.

Helped by cheap telecoms and English speakers employed at a fifth of Western wages, India's \$5.2 billion back-office exports are expected to jump 40 percent in the year to March, 2006.

But India's best known industry faces opposition from politicians and unions in Britain, Europe and the United States who fear the domestic fallout of jobs going overseas.

(\$1 = 43.5 rupees)

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