

PRIME MINISTER

5.00 pm on 1 May

cc. Mr. Pattison

Mr. Lytham o/r

BBC Television Asian Programmes

Mr. Mahendra Kaul, Producer of the Asian Programmes Unit of the BBC, asked at your general reception on 16 February if he could interview you on the BBC weekly network TV programme "New Life" before your visit to India. You showed interest and Mahendra Kaul followed up with me. He is, as you know, very influential in the Asian community here.

The BBC programme "New Life" is beamed at the Asian community in this country every Sunday morning and is very widely watched. It lasts 30 minutes and generally contains a combination of interviews, reports on minority matters and sometimes a musical item.

Mahendra Kaul would be the interviewer and both the Home Office and Central Office believe he would be a sympathetic questioner. He would like an interview of about 15-20 minutes covering:-

- Your interest in India and the purpose of your visit there;
- Anglo/Indian relations covering particularly co-operation in the commercial and technological fields;
- the Asian community in this country and the Government's policies towards them.

Although Mahendra Kaul has not said this, there might well be questions on the Nationality Bill, racial attacks and other controversial minority subjects but he has assured me that he wants to give you a sympathetic platform. Mr. Whitelaw and Mr. Raison have appeared several times on the programme.

Mahendra Kaul is keen to interview you before your visit to  
/India

India mainly, I suspect, so that he can arrange for the interview to be shown on Indian Television as well on the eve of your visit. I can see that this would be a considerable scoop for him but an extensive interview beamed at the Asian community here might, however sympathetic the interviewer, contain hostages to fortune on the eve of your visit. Besides, it would be difficult to fit it in before departure, particularly as you already have interviews for television and radio as well as a meeting with Indian journalists to set the tone for your visit.

I have consulted the Home Office and also Central Office and we all think that this programme would provide a useful platform to put across a number of positive points to the Asian community here. In this context, you might like to see the suggestions Mervyn Kohler at Central Office has put forward (Flag A).

However, on timing we are all agreed that it would be much better for the interview to take place immediately after your visit to India whilst your impressions are still fresh. We would, of course, obtain a detailed outline of the subjects he wishes to cover as well as briefing on controversial points from Departments.

Content to give Mahendra Kaul a 15-20 minute interview soon after your return from India, say, in the first week of May?

*[Handwritten signature]*

B. INGHAM

20 March, 1981

*Yes not.*

*This is the  
Scottish conference  
week we will  
have no speed*

*cf. 2313*