

PRIME MINISTER

Press Conference

You have set aside 20 minutes from 1615 for a Press Conference intended to sum up your entire visit. I expect that about a dozen Omani journalists as well as those travelling with you will attend. The proceedings will be televised and recorded, though I doubt whether BBC and ITN will attend, having had the benefit of your interviews yesterday. The Conference will be held in a ground-floor room in this palace.

The British journalists have been given a transcript of your interview with Keith Graves (BBC) which sums up the entire visit. They are therefore unlikely to wish to spend a great deal of time on a review of the tour but to pursue specific issues.

I therefore recommend you to make a very brief opening statement (before taking questions) in which you could make the following points:-

- invaluable visit;
- personal contact;
- establishing views firsthand;
- cementing personal relations;
- emphasising British Government's backing in sales drive of goods and services;
- efforts rewarded with Hawk in Abu Dhabi;
- more generally, sought to establish a political framework within which our businessmen and jobs at home can prosper;
- invaluable political understanding achieved wherever you have gone.

I would not, on this occasion, hark back much to India but it would be useful for you to give a brief account of your talks with the Sultan of Oman (on which the journalists have learnt little) and to refer in appropriately warm terms to your forthcoming visit to Qatar.

I think on this occasion I ought to preside given you have only 20 minutes and to exercise a tight schedule; you are due to leave here for the airport at 1635.

*Shehan*

24 April 1981

ADDENDUM

I have been discouraging the journalists from asking domestic questions but they may well feel tempted to raise:-

- Northern Ireland, on which Michael Alexander can brief you separately;
- conceivably unemployment (though I doubt it), which is easily dealt with by recognising the unfortunate level but emphasising the importance of winning orders of the kind you achieved in Abu Dhabi;
- Biggs' release: though I think this very unlikely (but this is surely a matter for the courts and not for you to comment on);
- ending of the US grain embargo: a remote possibility which has not so far been mentioned to me by journalists.