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OO NEW DELHI

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TO IMMEDIATE NEW DELHI

TELEGRAM NUMBER 786 OF 2 NOVEMBER

FOLLOWING FOR THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER

1. THE FOLLOWING IS THE TEXT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BBC'S
REPLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

BEGINS: MAY I REPLY IMMEDIATELY TO YOUR LETTER RECEIVED THIS
AFTERNOON.

I WISH TO ASSURE YOU THAT THE BBC IS FULLY AWARE OF ITS
RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE MOST DIFFICULT AND DELICATE SITUATION
WHICH EXISTS IN THE WAKE OF MRS GANDHI'S ASSASSINATION. BOTH
GOVERNORS AND MANAGEMENT WOULD FEEL THE DEEPEST CONCERN IF BBC
BROADCASTS WERE IN ANY WAY TO HAVE THE SERIOUS EFFECTS MENTIONED
IN YOUR LETTER. I HAVE MADE EXTENSIVE ENQUIRIES AND CAN ASSURE
YOU THAT MR CHOHAN HAS ONLY MADE ONE BROADCAST ON BBC SINCE THE
ASSASSINATION OF MRS GANDHI. THAT WAS ON OUR LOCAL RADIO
STATION, BBC RADIO LONDON, VERY EARLY ON WEDNESDAY MORNING. ON
THE SAME DAY, OUR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR-GENERAL, RESPONSIBLE FOR
THE CORPORATION'S JOURNALISM, GAVE STRICT INSTRUCTIONS THAT
MR CHOHAN SHOULD NOT BE INVITED TO BROADCAST ON BBC WITHOUT
SPECIAL CLEARANCE BEING OBTAINED FROM HIM. SUCH CLEARANCE HAS
NOT BEEN GIVEN. INDEED, INSTRUCTIONS WERE ISSUED ON WEDNESDAY
TO ALL PROGRAMMES THAT THE WIDER CONSEQUENCES OF ANY COVERAGE
OF INDIAN OPINION IN THIS COUNTRY SHOULD BE IN THE FOREFRONT
OF EDITORIAL MINDS.

I WOULD ADD THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO LACK OF COVERAGE ON
BBC PROGRAMMES REFLECTING THE WIDESPREAD REVULSION AT THE VIOLENCE
OF MRS GANDHI'S DEATH FELT BY THE ENTIRE NATION.

I OFFER YOU THIS FIRST RESPONSE TO THE VERY SERIOUS MATTERS
RAISED IN YOUR LETTER. THE BOARD AND I WILL, OF COURSE, BE
MAKING THE FULLEST EXAMINATION OF ALL ASPECTS OF THE CORPORATION'S
COVERAGE, WHICH I BELIEVE HAS DEMONSTRATED BOTH SENSITIVITY AND
JUDGEMENT.

I APPRECIATE YOU DO NOT QUESTION THE BBC'S EDITORIAL
INDEPENDENCE, AND I CAN ASSURE YOU WE ARE AWARE OF THE
RESPONSIBILITY THAT GOES WITH THAT INDEPENDENCE. ENDS.

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