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FOLLOWING FOR DUTY CLERK, 10 DOWNING STREET
FROM PRIME MINISTER'S PARTY, DELHI

PRIME MINISTER'S PRESS CONFERENCE : SATURDAY 3 NOVEMBER

OPENING STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, OBVIOUSLY THIS IS A JOURNEY I HAD HOPED NOT TO HAVE TO MAKE, BUT THE MOMENT I HEARD THE TERRIBLE NEWS OF THE ASSASSINATION OF MRS. GANDHI THERE WAS NO DOUBT ABOUT IT, I HAD TO COME. I HAD TO COME BECAUSE OF MY ENORMOUS RESPECT FOR HER WORK AS PRIME MINISTER AND THE WAY IN WHICH SHE HAS DOMINATED INDIAN POLITICS FOR SUCH A LONG TIME. BECAUSE OF MY ENORMOUS RESPECT FOR HER WORK FOR THE COMMONWEALTH AND HER WORK AS A WORLD STATESMAN BOTH IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT, THE CANCUN CONVENTION, WHERE WE WERE BOTH PRESENT, AND IN SO MANY THINGS. ALSO BECAUSE I FELT THAT IN ONE WAY, A VERY SPECIAL WAY, SHE AND I HAD SOMETHING IN COMMON. WE WERE BOTH PRIME MINISTERS: WE WERE BOTH FORTUNATE IN HAVING A WONDERFUL FAMILY: AND I THINK PERHAPS WE BOTH UNDERSTOOD WHAT TO SOME PEOPLE IS A PARADOX - NAMELY THAT ONE CAN BE WARM, HUMAN, LOVING, KNOWING ALL OF THE LITTLE THINGS OF LIFE AND AT THE SAME TIME FIRM, DETERMINED AND DECISIVE. IT WAS A PARADOX WE BOTH UNDERSTOOD. WE UNDERSTOOD THE LONELINESS OF THE WORK AND THEREFORE WHENEVER I SPOKE WITH MRS. GANDHI THERE WAS A QUALITY THAT WAS NOT PRESENT WHEN I SPOKE WITH OTHER HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, AND SO OF COURSE I HAD TO COME. WE ARRIVED, PRINCESS ANNE OF COURSE IS REPRESENTING HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN, AND I CAME REPRESENTING THE GOVERNMENT AND I HOPE THAT WE BOTH REPRESENT THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN WHO WHETHER THEY HAVE BEEN IN BRITAIN FOR GENERATIONS OR WHETHER THEY HAVE COME TO BRITAIN RECENTLY, SOME OF THE HINDUS, SIKHS, MUSLIMS, SO MANY DIFFERENT KINDS, I THINK I SPEAK FOR THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY WHEN I SAY THAT WE ALL DEEPLY MOURN THE LOSS OF MRS. GANDHI AND WE SHARE THE SORROW AND SHOCK IN INDIA AT THAT TREACHEROUS DEED. WHEN WE CAME THIS MORNING WE WENT TO THE LYING IN STATE. I WAS VERY GLAD TO GO BECAUSE IN A WAY ONE CAME A LITTLE BIT NEARER TO MRS. GANDHI AT THAT MOMENT. AND THEN WE WENT THIS AFTERNOON TO THE FUNERAL. IT IS DIFFICULT TO FIND WORDS TO DESCRIBE HOW DEEPLY IMPRESSIVE THAT OCCASION IS. IT IS IMPRESSIVE BECAUSE OF ITS DIGNITY, ITS TOGETHERNESS, AND THE FACT THAT ONE FEELS ONE IS PRESENT WITH THE FAMILY OF INDIA IN MOURNING A LOSS. I FELT TOO IN A WAY THE FINALITY OF IT AS A CLOSING CHAPTER OF THE LIFE OF MRS. GANDHI. THAT VOLUME HAS NOW BEEN CLOSED. BUT AS ONE VOLUME IS CLOSED, SO ANOTHER ONE BEGINS. AND SO I SAW RAJIV GANDHI THIS MORNING. I HAVE KNOWN HIM FOR QUITE A LONG TIME. I LIKE HIM VERY MUCH INDEED. I RESPECT HIM GREATLY. I ADMIRE HIS QUIET COURAGE, HIS DIGNITY. HIS GREAT SORROW AT THE FUNERAL CEREMONY THIS AFTERNOON WERE THERE FOR ALL TO SEE AND I FELT THAT INDIA AND HE ARE ONE TOGETHER IN THEIR DESTINY FOR THE NEXT FEW YEARS. WHEN I SAW HIM THIS MORNING WE SPOKE OF COURSE OF THE DEEP PERSONAL THINGS AND OF THE DEEP PERSONAL SORROW, BUT I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT HE WILL HAVE ALL THE LOYALTY, SUPPORT, AFFECTION AND RESPECT THAT WE CAN GIVE HIM IN THE DAYS AND MONTHS AND YEARS THAT LIE AHEAD. I BELIEVE GREATLY IN INDIA. I LOVED IF THE DAY I FIRST VISITED IT AND I LOVE IT STILL. IT IS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT COUNTRY IN WORLD AFFAIRS. I BELIEVE THAT ITS PEOPLE HAVE A GREAT FUTURE AND I BELIEVE THAT THEY WILL, HAVING SUFFERED THIS GREAT SORROW, MAKE EVEN MORE OF THE FUTURE THAT IS YET TO BE. THANK YOU.

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Q. IT WAS DUE TO MRS. GANDHI'S SPECIAL QUALITIES THAT INDIA HAS HELD TOGETHER AS ONE NATION OVER THE PAST 16 OR 17 YEARS AND NOW THAT SHE HAS GONE, AND HOWEVER CAPABLE RAJIV GANDHI MAY BE, HE IS NOT AS EXPERIENCED A POLITICIAN IN A LONG, LONG WAY. ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO THE STABILITY OF INDIA AND ABOUT INDIA'S SPECIAL PLACE IN THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT?

PM. MRS. GANDHI WAS ALWAYS VERY STRONG ON THE UNITY OF INDIA. TODAY ONE FELT THE UNITY OF INDIA. I BELIEVE THAT WITH THE HISTORY OF PANDIT NEHRU, FIRST MAHATMA GANDHI, PANDIT NEHRU, MRS. GANDHI AND NOW RAJIV GANDHI, I FEEL THAT THERE WILL BE A PULLING TOGETHER, A RECONCILIATION TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF INDIA. OUT OF THESE TERRIBLE TRAGEDIES CAN COME STRENGTH AND A QUIET FEELING OF WHAT IS NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE. AND I BELIEVE THAT FEELING WILL BE THAT RECONCILIATION IS NEEDED AND THE UNITY OF INDIA WILL CONTINUE.

Q. DO YOU THINK THAT INDIA WILL RETAIN ITS NEUTRAL POSITION AS IT HAS DONE FOR SO LONG?

PM. I BELIEVE THAT INDIA WILL CONTINUE IN THIS VERY VERY IMPORTANT POSITION THAT SHE HAS. NO COUNTRY CAN DENY ITS GEOGRAPHY EVER. BUT INDIA IS A DEMOCRACY. SHE REMAINS A DEMOCRACY, I BELIEVE SHE WILL REMAIN A DEMOCRACY. THEREIN LIES A HOPE AND INSPIRATION FOR THE THIRD WORLD AND A HOPE AND INSPIRATION FOR MANY OF THOSE WHO WOULD LIKE TO BE DEMOCRACIES BUT DO NOT YET HAVE THE CHANCE TO BE SO.

Q. MRS. THATCHER, A QUESTION OF A RATHER PERSONAL NATURE. A FEW WEEKS AGO YOU YOURSELF COULD HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT. WERE YOU REMINDED OF THAT TODAY?

PM. IN A STRANGE WAY IT DIDN'T BECAUSE MY THOUGHTS WERE ALL UPON MRS. GANDHI, AND THE TERRIBLE LOSS TO INDIA. MY THOUGHTS WERE WITH THE FAMILY WHO WERE ALL THERE TAKING SUCH A CLOSE PART AND ALL TOGETHER IN THE FUNERAL CEREMONY. I DO RECALL THAT MRS. GANDHI WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO SEND ME A MESSAGE AND I DO RECALL THAT EARLY IN THE MORNING AT ABOUT HALF PAST SIX WHEN I SWITCHED ON TO HEAR THE NEWS OF THE ATTEMPTED ASSASSINATION, AND WE DID NOT THEN KNOW THE RESULT, THAT I COULD NOT THEN BELIEVE IT. BUT SOMEHOW I MANAGED TO SEPARATE THE TWO THINGS IN MY MIND EXCEPT THAT I UNDERSTAND AGAIN PERHAPS IN HAVING THIS IN COMMON WITH HER, YES THERE ARE DANGERS BUT THE WORK MUST GO ON. WITH HER THE WORK DID GO ON. WITH ME THE WORK WILL GO ON.

Q. MR. GANDHI HAS ASKED FOR UNITY BETWEEN THE DIFFERENT SECTS ...

PM. LOOK, THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE SIKHS, HINDUS AND THE MUSLIMS MOURN MRS. GANDHI'S DEATH. THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY WILL ACT TOGETHER AS DIFFERENT RELIGIONS BUT IN ONE COUNTRY AND A COUNTRY HAS MANY, MANY DIFFERENT VARIETIES, MANY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS, MANY DIFFERENT HABITS, AND MANY DIFFERENT CUSTOMS. BUT IT HAS AN ESSENTIAL UNITY THAT HAPPENS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM - IT HAPPENS WITH INDIA TOO. YES, WE SAW A TINY IRRESPONSIBLE MINORITY BEHAVING OUTRAGEOUSLY, AND THE PEOPLE OF BRITAIN WERE ANGRY AND DISMAYED AND DISGUSTED. AND SO WERE THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF SIKHS, MUSLIMS AND HINDUS, AND THEY SHOWED IT. AND THOSE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WHO REPRESENTED CONSTITUENCIES WHO HAVE MANY HINDUS AND MUSLIMS AND SIKHS WERE JUST AS SORROWFUL, JUST AS SINCERE AND DEEP IN THEIR ADMIRATION FOR MRS. GANDHI AND WHAT SHE HAD DONE AS OTHERS WERE REPRESENTED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN BRITAIN FOR MANY GENERATIONS. DO NEVER NEVER NEVER BE MISLED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN IN BRITAIN FOR MANY GENERATIONS. DO NEVER NEVER NEVER BE MISLED BY A TINY MINORITY. JUST LOOK AT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY THAT FEEL THE SAME WAY AS WE DO. AND WOULD USE THEIR STRENGTH TO GO FORWARD TO SECURE THE UNITY AND PROGRESS OF INDIA.

Q. IS THERE ANYTHING THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CAN DO TO CONTROL THE ACTIVITIES OF THESE MINORITIES, THESE REVOLUTIONARY INDEPENDENT MOVEMENTS IN BRITAIN?

PM. WE CANNOT CONTROL THEM. IF THEY INFRINGE THE LAW THEN OF COURSE THE POLICE AND THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS WOULD, I HAVE NOT THE SLIGHTEST SHRED OF DOUBT, TAKE THEM TO COURT. SO THAT IF THEY INFRINGE THE LAW NORMAL PROCESSES OF THE LAW WOULD TAKE CARE OF THEM.

Q. BUT IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH?

PM. IS THERE SOMETHING THAT WORRIES US A GREAT DEAL. IT IS A QUESTION WE ARE ASKED A GREAT DEAL BY MANY HEADS OF GOVERNMENT WHO COME TO LONDON AND THEN WHO TURN AND SAY TO ME THERE IS A DISSIDENT MOVEMENT IN LONDON WHICH IS PREACHING HATRED AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT OF AN OVERSEAS COUNTRY. I SAY WELL I'M SORRY THAT I DO NOT THINK THAT THERE IS ANYTHING THAT I CAN DO ABOUT THAT UNLESS THEY DO INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE, THAT OF COURSE IS DIFFERENT. THAT OF COURSE WOULD BE AN OFFENCE. BUT THEN I DO GO ON TO SAY YOU SHOULD HEAR WHAT SOME OF THEM SAY ABOUT ME. I CANNOT DO ANYTHING ABOUT THAT EITHER.

Q. (NAME) ACTUALLY CALLED FOR THE ASSASSINATION OF MRS. GANDHI ON BRITISH TELEVISION.

PM. LOOK, I SHARE YOUR SHOCK ABOUT THAT AND WAS PRETTY OUTSPOKEN ABOUT IT TOO. WHETHER OR NOT WHAT HE SAID ACTUALLY AMOUNTED TO A POSSIBLE CRIME WAS A MATTER FOR THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC PROSECUTIONS AND THE POLICE, NOT FOR A POLITICIAN. BUT I BELIEVE THEY LOOKED AT IT, LOOKED VERY CAREFULLY AT WHAT WAS SAID, AND CAME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT THEY COULD NOT IN FACT PROSECUTE. YOU KNOW THERE ARE SOMETIMES VERY DIFFICULT CASES. BUT WHETHER THEY DECIDE TO PROSECUTE OR NOT IS A MATTER FOR THEM. BUT THEY DID NOT AND THAT MUST HAVE BEEN BECAUSE THERE WAS IN THEIR VIEW NOT A SUFFICIENT CASE TO PROSECUTE.

Q. PRIME MINISTER, DO YOU NOT FEEL THAT THERE IS A CASE THEREFORE FOR TIGHTENING UP OR ALTERING THE LAW ... INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE?

PM. INCITEMENT TO VIOLENCE - I THINK THE LAW IS FAIRLY CLEAR. SOMETIMES IT IS NOT EASY TO GET THE PRECISE EVIDENCE BUT WE WILL HAVE A LOOK AT IF NEED BE. VIOLENCE IS SOMETHING WHICH IS AFFLICTING MANY DEMOCRACIES AT PRESENT. AND AS YOU KNOW, I FIGHT IT ON ALL FRONTS WHEREVER AND WHENEVER IT APPEARS. IT IS THE NEGATION OF DEMOCRACY, AND I DO STAND VERY FIRMLY FOR DEMOCRACY. BUT WE MUST RECOGNISE AGAIN WHAT IS AN APPARENT PARADOX THAT IF YOU ARE A FREE COUNTRY THEN YOU ARE FREE TO SAY WHAT YOU THINK WITHIN THE LAW, BUT A FREE SOCIETY OFFERS MANY MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DOING THE WRONG THING THAN OF COURSE A TYRANNY. BUT THEN OF COURSE WHO WOULD WISH TO LIVE UNDER TYRANNY. AND THERE ARE OCCASIONS WHEN YOU DO HAVE A DIFFICULT QUESTION TO ASK. DO YOU RESORT TO THE METHODS OF A TYRANNICAL SOCIETY IN ORDER TO PRESERVE FREEDOM? YOU CAN SEE THE PARADOX. NOW I BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE GOT JUST ABOUT THE RIGHT ANSWER IN BRITAIN. BUT WE ARE VERY WELL AWARE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF VIOLENCE AND OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF GETTING EVIDENCE SUFFICIENT TO ENABLE OUR POLICE AND THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR INDICTING THESE PEOPLE TO BRING CASES TO COURT.

Q. DURING YOUR MEETING WITH MR. GANDHI DID HE COMMENT ON THE BEHAVIOUR OF THE SIKHS?

PM. LOOK, THE MEETING I HAD THIS MORNING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER WAS ENTIRELY PRIVATE. WE DID NOT GO INTO DETAIL. I HAD MADE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR AND REPEATED AGAIN THE SAME THING WHICH I HAVE SAID TO YOU IN MY OPENING STATEMENT THIS EVENING, BECAUSE I WANTED TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM WHATEVER THEIR BACKGROUND ARE ABSOLUTELY AT ONE WITH ALL OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS AND POLITICAL LEADERS WHO HAVE COME TO THE FUNERAL. WE GREATLY MOURN THE LOSS OF MRS. GANDHI WE GREATLY ADMIRE HER AND MANY OF US HAD A VERY GREAT AFFECTION FOR HER AS WELL.

Q. DID YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MRS. GANDHI HELP BRITAIN TO WIN CONTRACTS IN THIS COUNTRY? DO YOU THINK THAT YOU WILL HAVE EXACTLY THE SAME SORT OF PARGORT WITH THE NEW PRIME MINISTER?

PM. WELL ONE CANNOT WIN CONTRACTS UNLESS ONES PEOPLE ARE EFFICIENT AND PUT IN VERY GOOD OFFERS AND VERY GOOD TENDERS FOR THE CONTRACTS. I OBVIOUSLY HOPE THAT WILL CONTINUE. I THINK WE DO HAVE A SPECIAL FEEL FOR INDIA AND THAT ALWAYS HELPS. IN ADDITION TO THAT I THINK OUR COMPANIES ARE NOW VERY EFFICIENT AND THAT THEY WILL HAVE A VERY GOOD CHANCE OF GETTING FUTURE CONTRACTS IN INDIA BECAUSE OF THEIR EFFECIENCY. AND OF COURSE WE COME IN BEHIND THEM BECAUSE SOMETIMES IT IS A QUESTION OF ONE COMPANY IN ONE COUNTRY PLUS A GOVERNMENT IN THAT COUNTRY AGAINST ANOTHER COMPANY IN ANOTHER COUNTRY PLUS THE GOVERNMENT IN THAT COUNTRY. WE TRY TO SUPPORT OUR OWN COMPANIES JUST AS OTHER GOVERNMENTS SUPPORT THE IRS.

Q. YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MRS. GANDHI AT SOME POINT...

PM. I THINK IT WAS A RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA, A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND INDIA. DOUBTLESS IT HELPED THAT I SAW MRS. GANDHI AND MADE A POINT OF SEEING HER QUITE FREQUENTLY AND IF EVER I CAME THROUGH INDIA OF COURSE I SAW MRS. GANDHI. BUT I THINK YOU HAVE TO MAKE CONTRACTS ON YOUR PERFORMANCE.

Q. PRIME MINISTER, CAN I ASK YOU HOW MANY PEOPLE YOU ARE SEEING TODAY, THIS EVENING?

PM. QUITE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, INDEED IT GOES UP RATHER FAST. PRESIDENT ZIA, PRESIDENT JAYWEARDENE, PRESIDENT MACHEL, AND MR. SHULTZ, - THAT IS 4 THIS EVENING. I HAD JUST A BRIEF WORD WITH MR. GARRET FITZGERALD. OF COURSE I DO SEE HIM QUITE OFTEN. TOMORROW, WE LEAVE AS YOU KNOW AT 1030 BECAUSE I HAVE TO GET BACK FOR THE STATE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT EARLY NEXT WEEK, AND I AM SEEING MR. NAKASONE EARLY TOMORROW MORNING BEFORE I LEAVE.

Q. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE ENGLAND CRICKET TEAM ARE CONSIDERING THE FUTURE, OR INDEED THE LAUNCHING OF INDIA. HAS YOUR GOVERNMENT MADE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CRICKET AUTHORITIES?

PM. NOT AS FAR AS I AM AWARE. OBVIOUSLY IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE SUCH A REPRESENTATION. CRICKET MATTERS I AM SURE WILL BE DEALT WITH BETWEEN THOSE WHO ARE MANAGING THE CRICKET TEAM AND THEIR INDIAN HOSTS. UNTIL TODAY WAS OVER I DOUBT VERY MUCH WHETHER THEY COULD HAVE CONSIDERED THE FUTURE OF THE TOUR OR WHAT TO DO IN THE INTERIM.

HIGH COMMISSIONER. COULD I SAY A WORD HERE? I HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE BRITISH TEAM WHO ARE HERE AND THEY HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE INDIAN CRICKETING AUTHORITIES AND THEY HAVE REACHED FULL AGREEMENT WITH THEM THAT OF COURSE THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE BRITISH TEAM PLAYING CRICKET IN INDIA, PUBLICLY, OR INDEED PRIVATELY, IN THE PERIOD OF NATIONAL MOURNING - NOBODY WILL BE DOING SO. THEY ARE IN THE PROCESS OF WORKING OUT WHAT SOUND TO ME ARE GOING TO BE VERY SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR RESUMING THEIR INDIAN TOUR AS SOON AS THE PERIOD OF MOURNING IS OVER WITH THE MINIMUM ALTERATION TO IT. MEANWHILE, WITH THE FULL AGREEMENT AND CONSENT OF THE INDIAN CRICKETING AUTHORITIES, THEY ARE MAKING ARRANGEMENTS TO SPEND A FEW DAYS NEXT WEEK OUT OF INDIA PLAYING CRICKET IN SRI LANKA. IT HAS BEEN SORTED OUT JUST IN THE LAST HALF HOUR.

Q. PRIME MINISTER, WHEN YOU SPOKE TO THE NEW PRIME MINISTER DID HE GIVE YOU THE IMPRESSION ... ASSASSINATION?

PM. LOOK, IT WAS BOTH A PRIVATE AND A COURTESY VISIT, AND OBVIOUSLY ON THE MORNING OF THE FUNERAL OF A DEARLY LOVED MOTHER AND PRIME MINISTER, IT WAS NOT THE OCCASION TO GET INTO GREAT DIFFICULTY, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN TACTLESS AND HEARTLESS AND THOUGHTLESS TO HAVE DONE SO.

Q. COULD YOU DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WILL BE TALKING ABOUT TO PRESIDENT ZIA?

PM. I DO NOT NORMALLY DESCRIBE WHAT I AM GOING TO TALK ABOUT BEFORE I TALK ABOUT IT. I DO NOT THINK THERE WILL BE ANY SURPRIZES IN THE CONVERSATION THAT WE HAVE.

Q. AND THE SAME APPLIES TO EVERYONE ELSE I PRESUME?

PM. I THINK SO.

CCNS: ANSWER NO.8 LINE 3 HAVE A LOOK AT IT IF NEED BE
ANSWER NO.9 LINE 9 OF MRS. GANDHI WE GREATLY...