



PM/84/187

PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister
FCO & Home Office are still engaged in discussing this.

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2. Of the three people mentioned on page 2:

- (i) The Home Secretary has no discretion as regards the first: he has been here too long.
- (ii) The application of the second has been refused.
- (iii) There are legal constraints on the handling of the third.

Sikh Extremists: Damage to Indo-British Relations

1. We have had several discussions in Cabinet recently on the damage which the activities of Sikh extremists in this country could do to British interests in India.

EDP
1/4/84

2. This is part of a wider problem of controlling foreign political activists in this country about which I am in touch with the Home Secretary. The Review of the Public Order Act may provide some remedy for some aspects of this in the longer term.

Nevertheless
I hope
we shall
NOT
give
any more
out

3. But the case of Chauhan and his supporters presents a problem of particular urgency and gravity, because of the potential damage they can cause to the very considerable British interests at stake in India. Sir R Wade-Gery in New Delhi has been reporting in worrying terms that Indian Government departments have been instructed not to conclude major contracts with Britain. They have postponed a visit by Michael Heseltine and may well do the same with a visit by Norman Lamont. The Society of British Aircraft Constructors Exhibition and Seminar, an important vehicle for defence and technology sales, has suffered the same treatment. Major contracts at risk are worth some £5 billion. The situation is likely to deteriorate quickly unless we can do something to arrest it.

4. More serious still, Sir Robert considers that there is a high risk of an attempt on Mr Gandhi's life by Sikhs over the next few months. Previous statements and activities by Chauhan and his colleagues, let alone anything further they may say or do at such a time, could all too easily be invoked

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as a pretext for devastating reaction in India, in which British lives and property would be seriously at risk.

5. I am considering urgently how we should proceed, and I shall shortly be bringing forward specific proposals for action. I must emphasise that, in the Indians' present highly emotional state, reasoned statements of the legal constraints on our ability to act are not enough. If we are to prevent serious damage to the whole range of our relations with India, we shall have to be seen to be taking action against Chauhan and his circle.

6. In these circumstances, I was particularly alarmed to discover that a Sikh

and a Kashmiri whom we suspect of complicity in the abduction and murder of an Indian diplomat in February, have applied for registration as British citizens under the 1981 Nationality Act. The Indian Government do not yet know of these applications, but I need hardly rehearse the consequences to British interests in India if the applications go ahead. I very much hope that the Home Secretary will be able to find a way to stop them. Delay will not be sufficient.

7. I also hope that Leon Brittan will be able to take an early, and negative, decision on the application for asylum by another Sikh extremist, who we know has been involved in planning violence in the UK.

8. I am copying this minute to our colleagues in OD & Home Sec..

GEOFFREY HOWE

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

12 December 1984