

Tytler's London visit aborted by arrest threat?

Congress leader Jagdish Tytler was dropped from the Indian delegation for the launch of the Commonwealth Games baton relay in London last week, Sikh groups said, after a British MP asked Scotland Yard to arrest him for his role in the 1984 Sikh massacre. However, Indian diplomats said they had no knowledge of the reported plans by Tytler to visit Britain.

Rob Marris, MP and chair of the British parliament's all-party group on Sikhs, said he objected to Tytler's planned Oct 29 entry to Britain in an emergency meeting with Ivan Lewis, Junior Foreign Office Minister responsible for India, and in a letter to Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

Sikh groups claimed Tytler was dropped from the Indian delegation at the eleventh hour after Marris wrote to Miliband Oct 28 saying his presence in Britain was 'unacceptable'.

Invitation cards sent more than a week in advance of the baton relay launch Oct 29 mentioned the presence of only Games Organising Committee chairman Suresh Kalmadi and Sports Minister M.S. Gill.

In his letter to Miliband, Morris described Tytler, a former minister, as 'a controversial former politician from India, who is alleged to have been deeply involved in the November 1984 anti-Sikh pogroms in India, in the aftermath of the assassination of Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi'.

'Many survivors of those harrowing events are now living in the UK; as are the relatives of many victims. It would be unacceptable for someone who had committed such acts to be admitted to the UK, even to visit,' said the MP, whose constituents in west-central England include many Sikhs.

Marris recalled his campaign at a meeting in the British parliament Wednesday to mark the 25th anniversary of the Delhi massacre, in which more than 3,000 Sikhs died.

'You can't just go to the (London) Metropolitan police and say - as we tried last week - that 'Jagdish Tytler is coming to Britain and we want you to investigate him, imprison him',' Marris told the meeting.

'You have to present them with a sufficient cut-and-dry dossier. We only need two or three of the ringleaders - not hundreds of them - so that if they set foot in Britain, they get arrested and they get charged,' Marris said.

The meeting was organised by the all-party parliamentary human rights group and addressed by its chair Ann Clwyd, fellow-MP John McDonnell, Indian journalist and author of an acclaimed book on the pogrom, Manoj Mitta, and Bikramjit Batra of the human rights group Amnesty International, among others.

'Last week's exercise of barring Jagdish Tytler from coming here was useful,' said McDonnell.

The Nanavati Commission said in its report submitted Aug 2005 that there is evidence against Congress leaders Tytler, Sajjan Kumar and H.K.L. Bhagat for instigating mobs to attack and kill Sikhs.

Tytler is chairman of the volunteers committee of the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee.

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