

NID 85-043JX

INDIA:

More Sikt. Violence

The growing breach between moderate Sikhs and the Indian Government and sporadic violence by Sikh extremists are complicating prospects for negotiation of Sikh demands.

[REDACTED] even progovernment Sikhs see Prime Minister Gandhi's unwillingness to authorize an official investigation of anti-Sikh riots after his mother's assassination as a decision to barter justice for Hindu votes in next month's state elections. Independent public interest groups have alleged that some Congress Party officials helped instigate the riots. [REDACTED] has said that New Delhi decided to delay negotiations with the Sikhs in hope of scoring electoral gains from the anti-Sikh backlash in the conservative Hindi-speaking states. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] sporadic violence by extremists could force the government to halt its phased transfer of responsibilities for law and order in Punjab from the Army to paramilitary troops and oblige it to reimpose restrictions. The incidents have included acts of sabotage and attacks on two Sikh high priests who were willing to hold talks with New Delhi. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] President Zail Singh, a Sikh, may be asked to resign in the next six months in favor of the current Vice President. [REDACTED]

Comment: The absence of conciliatory gestures from New Delhi and the ability of extremists to target progovernment Sikhs are certain to harden the stance of even moderate Sikhs. Moreover, the disarray among the moderates could give extremists virtual veto power over prospective talks with the government. If Punjab were returned fully to Army control, support for the extremists would be likely to grow.

[REDACTED]

Singh's removal might placate the many Sikhs who demanded his resignation for his alleged approval of the Army's assault on Sikh holy places in Punjab last June. The dwindling number of pro-government Sikhs, however, might see his replacement as an anti-Sikh gesture.

[REDACTED]