

Why Whitehall said no to plea

A PAKISTANI couple living in Rochdale have been told by the Home Office that entry visas will not be granted to three children, whom they claim are theirs and whom they want to bring to England.

The parents, Mr Shuja Ud Din, aged 34, and Mrs Anwar Sultana Ditta, aged 25, of 127 Crawford Street, Rochdale, have tried since 1975 to arrange for the children to join them in Rochdale. At present, the children, Kamran, aged eight, Imran, aged six, and five-year-old Saima, are with a grandmother in Lahore.

The couple say the decision not to allow them to be reunited in this country with their children is based on a Home Office view that there is insufficient evidence that Mrs Ditta is the mother.

Mrs Ditta says she was born in England but left for her parents' homeland in 1962 on her British passport. She returned in 1975 on her mother's UK passport. Her parents are now separated. The mother has remarried and lives in Baking, and her father lives in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Mrs Ditta claims she married her present husband in Pakistan in October 1963 when she was 15, although she said at the time she was 20. They had another wedding ceremony in Rochdale in November 1975.

In Lahore

The children have been living with their grandmother in Lahore since Mrs Ditta left Pakistan four years ago.

Mrs Ditta has sent clothes and money to her children every month and has letters sent to her by the children. She has shown them to the Home Office.

"My relatives in Bradford have been over to Pakistan," explained Mrs Ditta. "They tell me that all the children say is: 'When will we see mum?'"

Mrs Ditta regularly phones her children and last week received a £400 telephone bill. "Why should I spend £400 on phone calls to children who are not mine?" she said.

She added: "I am willing to have a blood test on me, my husband and our three children in Pakistan." In her house there are a collection of photographs that show the development of the three children at different ages.

Foot size

Mrs Ditta also has a copy of the first letter written to her by her youngest son, Imran, and a piece of paper on which the three children drew the shape and size of their feet so that their mother could buy the correct shoes to send back to them.

A bewildered Mrs Ditta said: "Nobody knows the hell I'm going through. It's easy for the Home Office to

Mother's claim to Lahore children 'not proved'

say they're not my children, but they can't prove a thing."

"I want them to investigate the case properly. I'm even willing to pay for them to send someone to Pakistan to find out the facts."

The children and their grandmother were interviewed by British Embassy officials in Islamabad in February 1978.

After the interview, the Embassy wrote to Mr Ud Din on two occasions asking for "legally attested copies of all pages of the passports on which your wife travelled to Pakistan in 1962 and to the UK in 1975."

Last August the Home Office ordered Mr Ud Din to state the dates of birth of his children.

In December, said Mrs Ditta, she and her husband were interviewed at Ringway Airport, Manchester, by Mr David Lyons, an immigration officer.

On Monday Mrs Ditta received a letter from the Home Office which shattered her dream of a family reunion in England.

The Minister responsible for immigration, Mr Brynmor John, was not available for comment but Mrs Mary Palau, Home Office Press Officer, explained the decision.

Home Office view

"The Minister felt there were serious unresolved discrepancies," she said. "He is not satisfied they have established that they are the parents of the three children."

The discrepancies concern Mrs Ditta's age, her husband's arrival in the UK and his subsequent overstay, and their second marriage in England in November 1975.

"Mrs Ditta says that she claimed to be 20 when she married in Pakistan," said Mrs Palau, "but that does not conform to our knowledge of Pakistani customs."

She added: "Mrs Ditta tells us that she returned to the UK on her mother's passport which seems hard to understand since she would have been 20 or 21."

"Her own passport was issued in Rawalpindi in 1973. We can't understand why there were no Pakistan exit or entry signs."

"When Mr Ud Din came to the UK in 1974, he was granted a one-month stay with a prohibition on employment," continued Mrs Palau. "He overstayed and took employment in another name until May 1976 when he was granted indefinite leave in England because of his marriage."

"He made no mention of any children or of a previous

marriage in Pakistan. If he had been married in Pakistan, he would have been able to come to the UK as the husband of a British subject."

Mrs Palau stated that Mrs Ditta now had the right of appeal to an independent body.

Mrs Ditta met Mr Cyril Smith on Thursday to discuss her case.