

Minister looks again at ban on Ditta children

THE Home Office is to reconsider the case of Mrs Anwar Ditta after medical evidence showed it was "99.9 per cent certain that three children in Pakistan are hers.

Mrs Ditta and her husband, Mr Shuja Uddin of 127 Crawford Street, Rochdale, have fought for almost five years for the children's entry to Britain.

This week Professor Barbara Dodd, a Home-Office-accredited medical expert, said blood tests showed "beyond reasonable doubt" that Mrs Ditta and Mr Uddin were the parents, and "with 99.9 per cent certainty" that Mrs Ditta was the mother.

The chances of being wrong were at least one in 250 million, Professor Dodd told an ITV World in Action team.

Mrs Ditta, aged 27, told the Observer after Monday night's half-hour programme: "I was not at all surprised by the tests. How could I be when I know the children are mine?"

"We are not an exception. There are many people in Rochdale suffering like me because they cannot have their children with them or they cannot stay in Britain.

"Although I am more hopeful, the fight will continue until I get my children."

Mr Timothy Raison, Home Office Minister said on Monday he would reconsider the Home Office's decision to bar the children.

Entry was originally refused in 1976. The decision was upheld by a Manchester appeal tribunal last year. The Home Office claimed Mrs Ditta was never in Pakistan and was not the children's mother.

Fourteen people told the World in Action team that British-born Mrs Ditta lived in Pakistan for several years, married Mr Uddin there, and had the three children there. Five witnesses swore that evidence to the British vice consul in Islamabad.

The ITV investigation team found the children living in Lahore with Mr Uddin's mother. They were dressed in clothes from Rochdale, and supported by £60 or £70 sent monthly from the town.

Mrs Ditta's sister, Saima, described her journey to Pakistan with Anwar in 1963.

Verified

A Pakistani official examined Mrs Ditta's Pakistani identity card, which has already been verified by a British fingerprint expert.



THE children who, doctors say, belong "beyond reasonable doubt" to Mrs Anwar Ditta and Mr Shuja Uddin are (from left): Imran, aged eight, Saima, aged seven and Kamran, aged 10.

The official said it was genuine and produced Mrs Ditta's application form which stated Mr Uddin was her husband.

A marriage registrar found the 1968 wedding certificate. He testified that he had performed the ceremony and had signed the certificate.

A midwife described the birth of one of the children, in the room where she delivered the baby.

Mr Uddin's mother produced a telegram he sent her

from Barking, Essex, in 1975, which said: "Anwar reached OK."

The team flew a London doctor to Pakistan to take blood samples from the children and Mr Uddin's sister and brother-in-law, whom the Home Office claimed were the true parents. Within two hours, the samples were on an aeroplane to London where they were tested alongside blood from Mrs Ditta and Mr Uddin.

Consistent

The conclusion was that the couple in Pakistan were definitely not the parents. The results were "perfectly consistent" with the couple in Rochdale being the parents.

The Home Office has also shed doubt on the couple's credibility because Mrs Ditta said she was 20 (not 14) when she was married in Pakistan, and because Mr Uddin

overstayed his entry visa in the mid-1970s.

The television team found deception about age on wedding certificates was common in Pakistan.

Ruth Bunday, Mrs Ditta's solicitor, said she had never known such a "quantity and quality" of documentary evidence in an immigration case. The couple were treated worse than a murderer, as the case was not decided on a balance of probability but they had to remove all shadow of doubt.

Inflexible

Mr Alex Lyon, former Home Office Minister, said appeal tribunals in immigration cases were "almost inflexible" and needed "quite startling new evidence" to overcome the original decision. People like Mrs Ditta and Mr Uddin were citizens and taxpayers in Britain.

"The only reason we do not kick up a bigger fuss is because they are black," he said.

Mrs Ditta told the Observer that her solicitor had conducted a separate investigation in Pakistan and her evidence would also be handed to Mr Raison.

Mrs Ditta said: "I cannot see what more proof the Home Office needs now. I am willing to provide any evidence it wants.

Injustice

"Injustice has been done to us all these years. White families have not been split up like mine. If a white person lied about supplementary benefit or national insurance he may be fined. He would not be separated from his children."

Mr Joel Barnett, is backing Mrs Ditta's case.

Mr Raison declined to take part in the television programme, called These Are My Children.