

Gandhi denies blaming the CIA

GUARDIAN

7-AUG-84

New Delhi: The Prime Minister, Mrs Gandhi, yesterday denied local press reports that she had accused a US espionage agency of fomenting Sikh secessionist activity.

Mrs Gandhi told reporters in Himachal Pradesh state, in the foothills of the Himalayas, that she had merely quoted a Washington-dated press report. She did not identify the report.

Addressing a public meeting, Mrs Gandhi said that when she spoke to a gathering in another part of Himachal Pradesh on Sunday she "did not mention any country or organisation."

Mrs Gandhi said that the gist of her Sunday speech was

that, "there are some people (Indians) in foreign countries who have gone abroad and who have become rich. They do not know what is the position in India and they are helping such people — extremists in India — and inciting them."

"She was only reiterating what she had stated earlier, that separatist movements have their origin and support from abroad," a government spokesman, Mr S. G. Lal, said in a press statement.

The entire Opposition yesterday walked out of the Lower House of Parliament to protest against tough new anti-terrorist legislation introduced by the Government.

Opposition leaders charged that the proposed law, designed to replace a special presidential decree issued last month, would impose "Draconian and anti-Democratic" restrictions on the rights of suspects.

The Home Minister, Mr P. V. Narashima Rao, countered that the proposal, offered as an amendment to India's existing National Security Act, was constitutional and would have only limited use.

"This will not apply to the whole country, but only to an area declared terrorist-affected," he said.

The Government last month adopted two special ordinances, signed by the President, Mr

Zail Singh, giving itself extra legal powers to deal with terrorist activity.

It subsequently put one of the ordinances into effect in Punjab by officially declaring the area to be "terrorist-affected."

Three special courts yesterday began closed trials of alleged Sikh extremists in Patiala, Jullundur and Ferozepur in Punjab state. Nine more suspected extremists were arrested in the past 24 hours.

The army moved into Punjab nine weeks ago, and about 1,000 Sikhs and 92 soldiers died when troops stormed the Sikhs' holiest shrine, the Golden Temple in Amritsar, on June 6. — AP/Reuter.